

MORE SCREEN TIME?

From the folks
who brought
you...

Charter schools!

High-stakes
testing!

Teacher
evaluations!

State takeovers!

Empowerment
zones!



It's New. It's Hot. It's backed by Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and all those other supercool champions of the working people.

It's *personalized* learning!

Who knew? Sitting kids down in front of a computer and having them follow the orders of its algorithm is (in corporate-reform-speak) “personalized.”

The former head of Google China has put forward his vision:

“In a new form that we are investing in, in China, which is a 1-to-1,000 student-teacher ratio. ... In the 1-to-1,000 classroom, we also have teaching assistants. ... The local teachers can be trained to be teaching assistants, so a job that’s much easier for each teacher to learn to do. ... So that kind of combination should replace the current type of lectures that people get.

If you think about the job of a teacher today, we just took away the lecture part and turned it into an assistant job. Teachers also have to take attendance. AI [artificial intelligence] can recognize students and the way in which they participate, and it can certainly save time from taking attendance. Now, some parents will start to worry, say, ‘Wait a minute, I don’t want my kids captured on video all the time.’ But the benefit is that the system will know the comprehension level of the students, not just by how they do on exam.”¹

The high-flyers in the tech industry want this for the kids you teach.

But they don’t want it for their kids: “Bill Gates banned cellphones until his children were teenagers, and Melinda Gates wrote that she wished they had waited even longer.”

The former editor of *Wired* explained: “On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, it’s closer to crack cocaine. ... We thought we could control it. And this is beyond our power to control. This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain.”²

End-of-year high-stakes tests will be replaced by testing and monitoring of students every day. The data from all those daily tests will belong to the commercial enterprise that provides the computer setup and software programs. But if they sell the data from your third-grader it will only be for the most noble of learning purposes, such as developing better software and making available helpful products. They promise.³

This doesn’t even mention the health effects, mental and physical, of kids spending hours and hours staring at a screen. Or the lack of human group interaction and development of social skills.

It sounds crazy and stupid beyond belief. But the ed “reformers” see it as the next big thing and insist on calling screen time “personalized.”

As educators, we have a responsibility to address these issues, and many parents want to work with us in doing so — they are worried about how much time their kids spend on screens and don’t want the schools pushing more of that. (Or helping big tech companies collect data on their children.)

As a union, the MTA is taking up these issues. The MTA Education Policy and Practice Committee is developing resources to help educators and locals tackle the issue of screen time.



We can help your local organize a forum for educators, parents and the community to talk about the issue of excessive screen time for students.

If your local thinks it might be interested in organizing such a discussion, either just for educators or for the broader community, please get in touch with the Education Policy and Practice Committee. We are eager to have conversations with people about their thoughts and experiences, as parents or as educators. Please stop by our table and chat.

**— send us an email —
*EPP@massteacher.org***

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- 1** Betsy Corcoran, “How Google’s Former China Chief Thinks AI Will Reshape Teaching,” *EdSurge*, December 11, 2018.
 - 2** Nellie Bowles, “A Dark Consensus About Screens and Kids Begins to Emerge in Silicon Valley.” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2018. Ask for references to additional articles in *Business Insider*, *The Washington Post*, NBC News, etc.
 - 3** Dipayan Ghosh and Jim Steyer, “Kids Shouldn’t Have to Sacrifice Privacy for Education.” *The New York Times*, December 13, 2018. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/opinion/children-privacy-online.html>. “The Summit ‘personalized learning’ educational tool — a platform for online lessons and assessments that was developed by a charter school network with the help of Facebook engineers and is backed by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative — has been criticized for asking parents to consent to sharing their children’s personal data, including their names, internet activity and grades.”