# Critics call for reassessment of device reliance amid screen addiction in elementary schools



In recent discussions surrounding educational technology policy in elementary schools, a compelling argument has emerged advocating for a reevaluation of reliance on devices in the classroom. Critics assert that current approaches may inadvertently cultivate a dependency on technology, which could hinder the learning process rather than enhance it. Educators and parents alike have voiced concerns over the potential negative ramifications of excessive screen time, often linking it to sleep disorders, obesity, mental health challenges, and declines in academic performance.

A firsthand account from a private school reveals that many fourth-graders openly express a preference for working on iPads over paper, with some even admitting to feelings of addiction to their devices. One student poignantly noted that they would concentrate better on paper assignments if, ironically, their papers emitted blue light. This suggests a disconcerting trend where technology not only influences engagement but also distorts students' perceptions of traditional learning methods. Further compounding the issue, these students reportedly feel distressed when their iPads are taken away, opting for indoor recess over outdoor activities primarily to remain on their devices. This reliance starkly contrasts with experiences at a Montessori school, where students achieved comparable focus and task completion without the aid of technology, indicating that effective learning can flourish in the absence of screens.

The current scenario is underscored by a broader context stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced a rapid digital transition in education. UNESCO reports reveal that over 1.6 billion learners were affected by school closures, exacerbating existing educational inequalities. This transition to technology-centric education left many children struggling, illuminating the limitations of technology-focused solutions in addressing diverse learning needs. As funds were poured into educational technology—evidenced by Clark County schools investing over $70 million in various digital solutions—questions about the effectiveness and impact of these expenditures loom large. Reports indicate that many of these technologies, rather than improving learning outcomes, reflect the influence of marketing rather than proven educational benefits.

The shift towards paperless classrooms has sparked mixed feelings among educators and parents. While some advocate for the integration of digital tools to align with government initiatives aimed at providing every student with devices, concerns persist about the long-term health impacts of prolonged screen exposure and the engagement of parents in their children's learning. Teachers have also faced challenges adapting to these new formats, all while managing students’ increasing screen dependency.

As educational institutions reevaluate their technology policies, a balanced approach emerges as critical. Understanding that excessive screen time can be counterproductive, a shift towards blended learning—where digital tools complement rather than replace traditional methodologies—may offer a path forward. Integrating hands-on learning experiences alongside technology could foster creativity, enhance social skills, and ultimately support better educational outcomes, allowing students to navigate the complexities of both digital and physical worlds successfully.

This ongoing dialogue about technology’s place in education underscores the need for thorough assessments of educational policies. Stakeholders must consider not just the allure of tech-driven learning but also the tangible impacts on students’ experiences and well-being, ensuring that the future of education is not just innovative but also equitable and effective.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.startribune.com/three-reasons-to-abandon-11-tech-policies-in-elementary-schools/601368012), [[2]](https://time.com/6207134/how-i-got-my-students-to-stop-staring-at-screens/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.startribune.com/three-reasons-to-abandon-11-tech-policies-in-elementary-schools/601368012), [[4]](https://www.axios.com/2023/09/07/covid-education-inequality-technology)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/e2c803a30c5b6d34620956c228de7987), [[5]](https://time.com/3483905/the-paperless-classroom-is-coming/), [[7]](https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/12/19/131155/classroom-technology-holding-students-back-edtech-kids-education)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://hechingerreport.org/glued-to-the-screen-a-third-grade-class-where-kids-spend-75-of-the-day-on-ipads/), [[4]](https://www.axios.com/2023/09/07/covid-education-inequality-technology)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.startribune.com/three-reasons-to-abandon-11-tech-policies-in-elementary-schools/601368012> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://time.com/6207134/how-i-got-my-students-to-stop-staring-at-screens/> - This article discusses the increasing concern among educators and parents regarding excessive screen time among children. It highlights the negative impacts of prolonged device use, such as sleep disorders, obesity, mental health issues, and poorer academic performance. The author shares personal experiences of students' dependence on screens and offers practical strategies for parents and educators to limit screen time, including setting no-tech zones, monitoring online activities, and encouraging screen-free days. The piece advocates for a balanced approach to technology, emphasising the importance of hands-on learning experiences and fostering creativity and social skills.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/e2c803a30c5b6d34620956c228de7987> - This article examines the impact of pandemic-related spending on educational technology in U.S. schools. It reveals that many large school districts invested millions in technology and educational programs without sufficient evidence of their effectiveness. For example, Clark County schools in Las Vegas spent over $70 million on various edtech solutions, yet actual usage and impact varied considerably. The piece highlights the need for better oversight and validation of educational products to ensure funds are spent effectively, as current investments often reflect marketing prowess rather than proven educational benefits.
4. <https://www.axios.com/2023/09/07/covid-education-inequality-technology> - This article reports on a UNESCO report highlighting how the sudden shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated educational inequality, leaving many children behind. School closures from 2020 to 2022 affected over 1.6 billion learners, negatively impacting their achievement levels and physical and mental health. The report indicates that technology-focused solutions created significant disparities, suggesting a need to reassess how schools and governments managed pandemic-related educational disruptions. It underscores the importance of ensuring in-person schooling and teaching even as technological advancements continue.
5. <https://time.com/3483905/the-paperless-classroom-is-coming/> - This article discusses the rapid transition to paperless classrooms, exemplified by a sixth-grade class in California where students use digital devices for learning instead of traditional paper materials. The initiative aligns with federal efforts to provide laptops or tablets to every student in the U.S. by 2017. However, the shift has raised concerns among parents who prefer physical books and worry about being disengaged from their children's homework. Teachers also face challenges adapting to new technology, and there are concerns about potential negative health impacts on children from prolonged screen use and physical strain from using devices.
6. <https://hechingerreport.org/glued-to-the-screen-a-third-grade-class-where-kids-spend-75-of-the-day-on-ipads/> - This article provides an in-depth look at a third-grade class where students spend 75% of the day using iPads. The teacher integrates digital and paper-based learning, with students conducting research online and in books, and writing on paper. The piece highlights the balance between technology and traditional methods in the classroom, showcasing how digital tools can be incorporated into education while maintaining the benefits of hands-on learning experiences.
7. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/12/19/131155/classroom-technology-holding-students-back-edtech-kids-education> - This article examines the growing recognition that technology can be counterproductive in classrooms. It discusses how some school districts, aiming for a one-to-one ratio of devices to students, have seen test scores slip and parents express skepticism about the effectiveness of screen-based learning. The piece highlights the need to consider the mounting evidence of technology's flaws and the importance of balancing digital tools with traditional teaching methods to ensure educational equity and effectiveness.