

Appendix H: School Newsletter Inserts

These sample newsletter inserts can help parents to understand how various skills needed for success at school (and eventually in the workplace) are better served by decreasing screen time.

The following Screen Smart reminders can be included in the months before, during and after a Screen Time Awareness Event — or in any newsletter, anytime.

Additional newsletter inserts to will be provided each year on the Childhood Obesity Foundation website, <http://www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca/>.

Screen Smart Corner

Next Week is Screen Smart Awareness Week at our school!

Your child will take part in a number of activities designed to increase his/her awareness about how too much time is spent in front of a screen (e.g., television, video games, and Internet activities) each day. There are some activities for you to do together!

This event can help students to develop and maintain a balance in their lifestyle between real-world time and screen time - helping them to do well at school!

Watch this spot for tips and information about children and screens.

NOTE: There are eight additional newsletter inserts on the following two pages.

14. 'Screen Smart' is a broad based community education initiative in Revelstoke, BC helping families better understand how screen media - TV, computers and the Internet, - may influence their lives, and suggest ways that parents and children can best manage media at home and at school. To learn about 'Screen Smart' visit www.screensmart.ca

. It is especially important that young children have plenty of practice listening, speaking, and reading.

Too much 'screen time' can take away opportunities to interact with others. Studies show that the more children watch TV, the lower their reading scores; the less well they do in school; and the less well socialized they are in the first grade.

Be sure that you give your child many opportunities for listening, speaking and reading, by participating actively in his/her learning.

Curiosity & Imagination

Curiosity stimulates learning, and imagination fuels creation.

Most TV shows and video games do little to spark a child's curiosity or imagination. If a Canadian child spends the national average of 42 hours a week in front of a screen, there is not enough time to be curious, nor is there a need to imagine much of anything.

Help your child to find activities that will stimulate curiosity, e.g., play outside or hike in a forest together.

Attention

Children must pay attention to lessons, and keep focused to complete their work.

When children come to expect the level of excitement, stimulation, and instant rewards provided by fast-paced TV shows, video games, or from surfing the Internet, their brains are not ready for learning in the classroom. The danger is that kids expect to be entertained, which they will not be at school or in the workplace.

To help your child be ready to learn, limit recreational screen time to two hours a day (or less).

Patience & Persistence

Many school assignments test a child's ability to stick with an activity. A lot of screen content is instantly entertaining, and provides children few chances to practice patience. Children need opportunities to practice patience and persistence so they are ready for dull or challenging tasks at school, home or at work.

To help your child to be ready to learn, limit recreational screen time to less than two hours a day. Provide opportunities to practice patience through activities such as playing board games and the joys of conversation.

Problem Solving

Living in our world requires problem solving ability.

Across North America, teachers have noticed that intermediate and secondary students of all abilities are having more difficulty coming up with ideas, using 'higher level' thinking skills, and solving problems. Problem solving requires students to have the ability to think critically and creatively. They must also be willing to spend time thinking deeply about a problem. Unfortunately, with so many of their waking hours spent in front of screens, many students are left with little time for deep thought. Not only does 'screen time' interfere with 'think time', the rapid delivery of screen content only leaves enough time for shallow thinking.

Replace TV screen time with critical discussion!

Studies show that the more time people spend on computers, the less time they spend interacting with others, face-to-face. Children who do not get enough 'face time' can miss opportunities to develop nonverbal skills – such as reading facial expressions or body language. Misreading nonverbal messages can cause all kinds of social problems at school and later on in life.

Interacting with others also teaches children how to handle social situations and resolve conflicts. The methods for solving problems in many screen presentations are unrealistic and often violent. Children need to have active personal experience in dealing with social conflicts. Help your child build interpersonal skills through a variety of activities, such as reading together, encouraging him/her to join a community sports team, a school club, choir or band.

Multitasking

Multitasking is doing many things at once.

Once thought to increase brain power, scientists now know that the opposite is true. Although your child claims that watching TV, listening to an iPod, talking on the phone, and instant messaging helps him/her to finish homework, studies show the quality of work actually suffers!

Help your child to learn that doing one thing at a time gets better results than performing many tasks all at once.

Sleep

Children do the majority of their growing while asleep. During sleep, one part of the brain changes the chemistry of another part of the brain and short-term memories are turned into long-term memories. The functioning of the immune system is also enhanced.

On average, children are getting at least one hour less sleep each night than they need. TVs, computers, and cell phones in bedrooms interfere with students getting the rest that their minds and bodies need. Getting enough sleep is important for clear thinking, concentrating, making decisions, and memory. Children who sleep less are more likely to appear inattentive, distracted, and impulsive than their well-rested classmates. They also perform less well on tests, and get lower grades. Sleep deprivation increases the risk of obesity.

Remove screens from your child's room, and limit viewing and use of screens just before bedtime to be sure he/she gets a good night's sleep!