

PAA EdTech Summary Brief

Parents raise alarm about EdTech's harmful effects on children's academic, intellectual, emotional, physical and social development



PAA has spent extensive time looking into quantities of writing and research that raise red flags about the impact of the EdTech explosion on our children. This high-pressure movement has brought a mishmash of digital devices and online and other pre-packaged programs into our schools, where they are promoted as “personalized,” “competency-based,” “student-centered,” or “self-directed” learning, terms which we refer to together as EdTech.

What we have found out about the EdTech push alarms us, and should alarm any parent. First of all, there is actually very little research addressing the many news ways that EdTech is being used in our schools -- our children are truly being used as guinea pigs. What we do know about children and screen time is based in part on new studies and in part on previous research into children's use of television, video games and computers, which can help us anticipate some of EdTech's health effects. And EdTech's teaching and learning track record is not positive. Yet corporate reformers and the new federal education law, the Every Child Succeeds Act, or ESSA, are investing heavily in EdTech and increasingly pressuring its widespread use.

PAA recognizes that technology has many benefits, but until our concerns about the misuse and overuse of EdTech in schools are effectively addressed, we will continue to speak out and advocate for policies and practices that protect our children from harm.

Below are some of the summary points that reflect what we have discovered about the proven and potential problematic effects of EdTech. More detailed information about the following points can be found throughout the set of informational papers we have prepared which can be found here (<http://tinyurl.com/PAAEdTechreports>). The numbers below refer to entries in our EdTech Documentation paper (<http://tinyurl.com/edtechdocu>).

EdTech may:

- interfere with children's brain development (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 18, 20, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32)
- impact children's mental health (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 30, 39, 43, 46, 70)
- undermine learning (10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 40, 31, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 55, 52, 61, 75, 78, 82, 83)
- increase sitting time which can cause many physical problems (6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 20, 30, 35, 35, 37, 38, 39)
- negatively impact sleep (6, 9, 11, 20, 28, 30)
- contribute to screen addiction (2, 13, 31)
- contribute to eyestrain and potential myopia, macular degeneration, and blindness (33, 34)
- expose children to excessive radiation (6, 27)
- encourage constant testing and data collection without adequately informing or obtaining permission from students or parents, undermining student privacy (42, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73)
- benefit corporations without improving education (12, 21, 22, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 64, 66, 68, 71, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86)