

Our Children @ Risk

How EdTech undermines quality teaching and learning



PAA believes that high-quality education is child-centered, requires skilled professionals, and promotes justice, equity and democracy.* We are concerned that EdTech actually undermines these principles, and we know that it has failed to improve achievement.

EdTech is actually **a threat to quality teaching and learning**. As educator Alfie Cohn explains, “If you haven’t given much thought to the kind of intellectual life we might want schools to foster, then it might sound exciting to ‘personalize’ or ‘customize’ learning. But...we shouldn’t confuse *personalized* learning with *personal* learning. The first involves adjusting the difficulty level of prefabricated skills-based exercises based on students’ test scores, and it requires the purchase of software. The second involves working with each student to create projects of intellectual discovery that reflect his or her unique needs and interests, and it requires the presence of a caring teacher who knows each child well.” (31)**

EdTech charter school chains like Rocketship put 150 students in a room in front of computers for hours at a time and call that schooling. (31a) Too often, EdTech simply provides new tools to increase “drill and kill” style teaching to the test. (31b).

And study after study say that EdTech has had **a negative effect on achievement**:



- An international study in 2015 found that “students who used computers very frequently at school do a lot worse in most learning outcomes.” (48)
- A 2009 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that the overall effect of EdTech was “zero” and that in sixth grade math, students who used software got lower test scores – and the effect got significantly worse in the second year of use. (50)
- Results in Chicago showed that “More than half – 53 percent - of students in the face-to-face course earned an A, B or C compared with just 31 percent of students in the online course” – and, the online classes cost more. (52)
- (A) [study published in July 2016](#) looked at high-achieving eighth-graders across North Carolina who took Algebra I online. The study found that they did much worse than students who took the course face-to-face — about a third of a letter grade worse, in fact. (48)
- SRI found that “students didn’t get higher grades from using adaptive-learning software, nor were they more likely to pass a course than in a traditional face-to-face class.” (53)
- “Their results (using Competency-Based Education) have been nothing stellar, no evidence of academic improvement was apparent. In fact, many, many, three year comparisons showed downward trends in Math, ELA and Science at all grade levels.” (54)

There are many creative and rich ways to use technology in the classroom. However, each classroom teacher should be given the autonomy about when and how to utilize it.

*Our full position paper on Quality Schools is here: <http://parentsacrossamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/QualityEdfinal12-2014.pdf>

Please see the rest of our EdTech materials at (<http://tinyurl.com/PAAEdTechreports>) for a fuller picture of the problems with EdTech.

** The parenthetical numbers indicate entries in our EdTech documentation paper <http://tinyurl.com/edtechdocu>