

Welcome !



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Nurturing Young Children in the Digital Age



Schola Au ~ Dawn Cooper

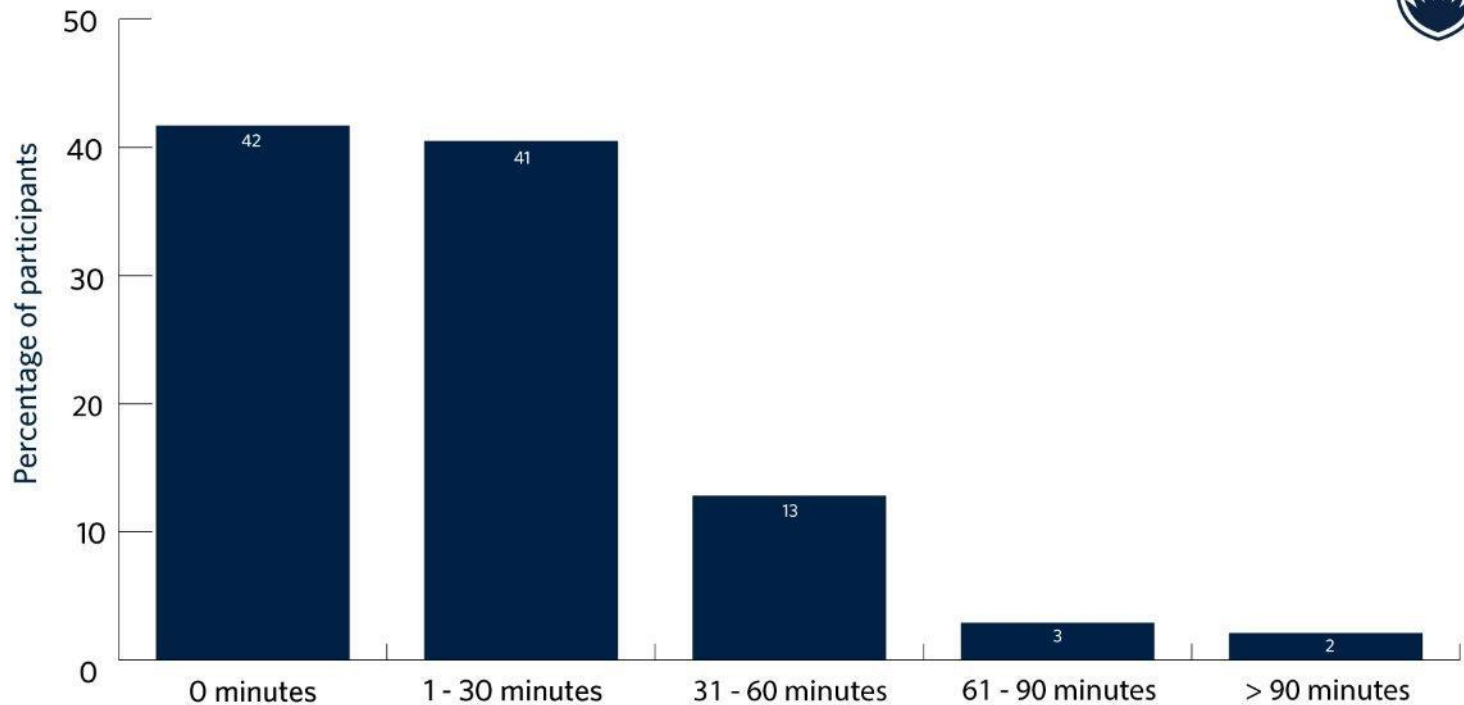
Recommended screen time for young children

- For children under 2 years of age, not recommended.
- **For children 2 to 5 years old**, limit routine or regular screen time to less than **ONE** hour per day.



2018 Survey - Vancouver

Average screen time per day for children under two



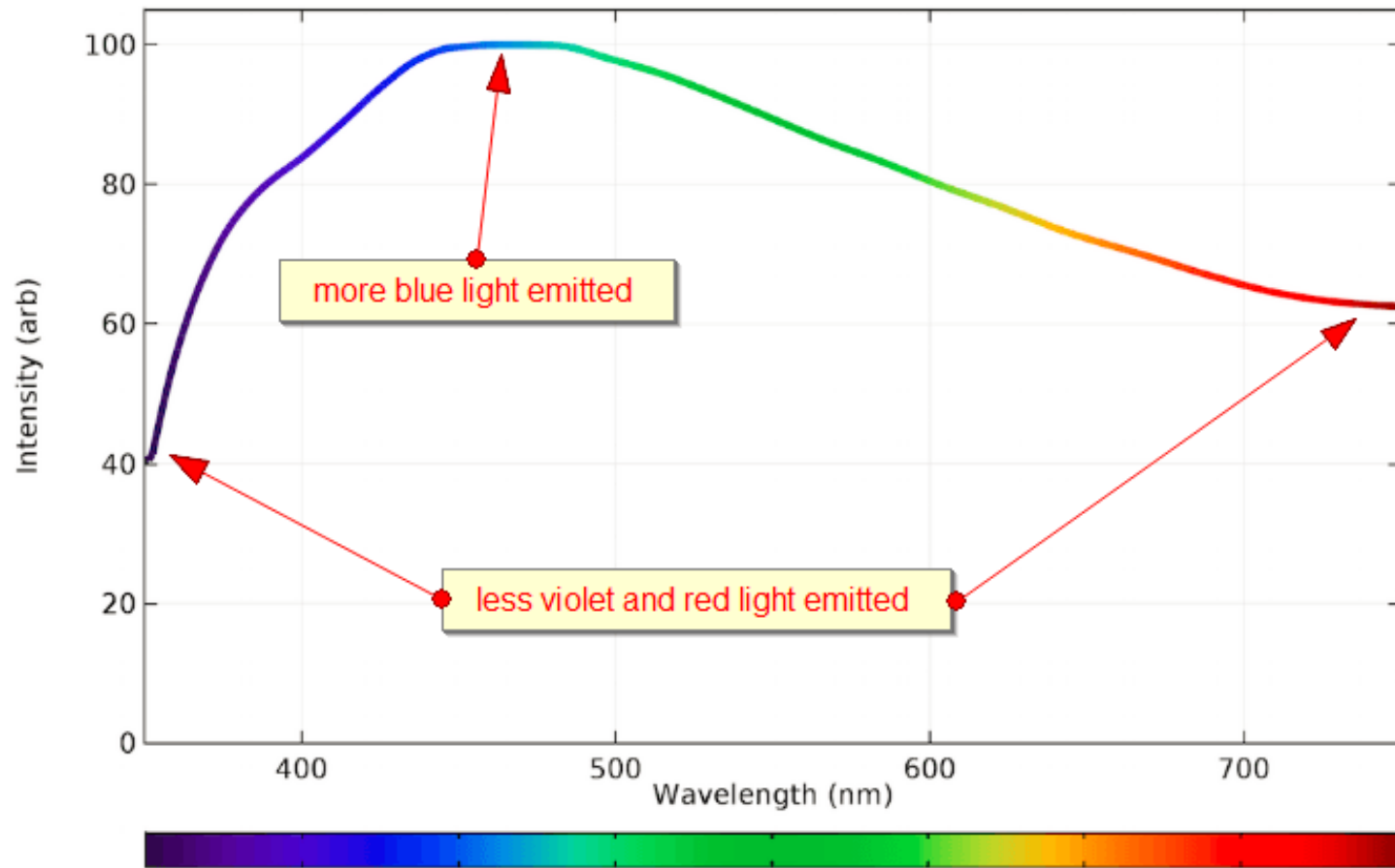
Source: Parental Awareness of Screen Time study

Screen time in minutes

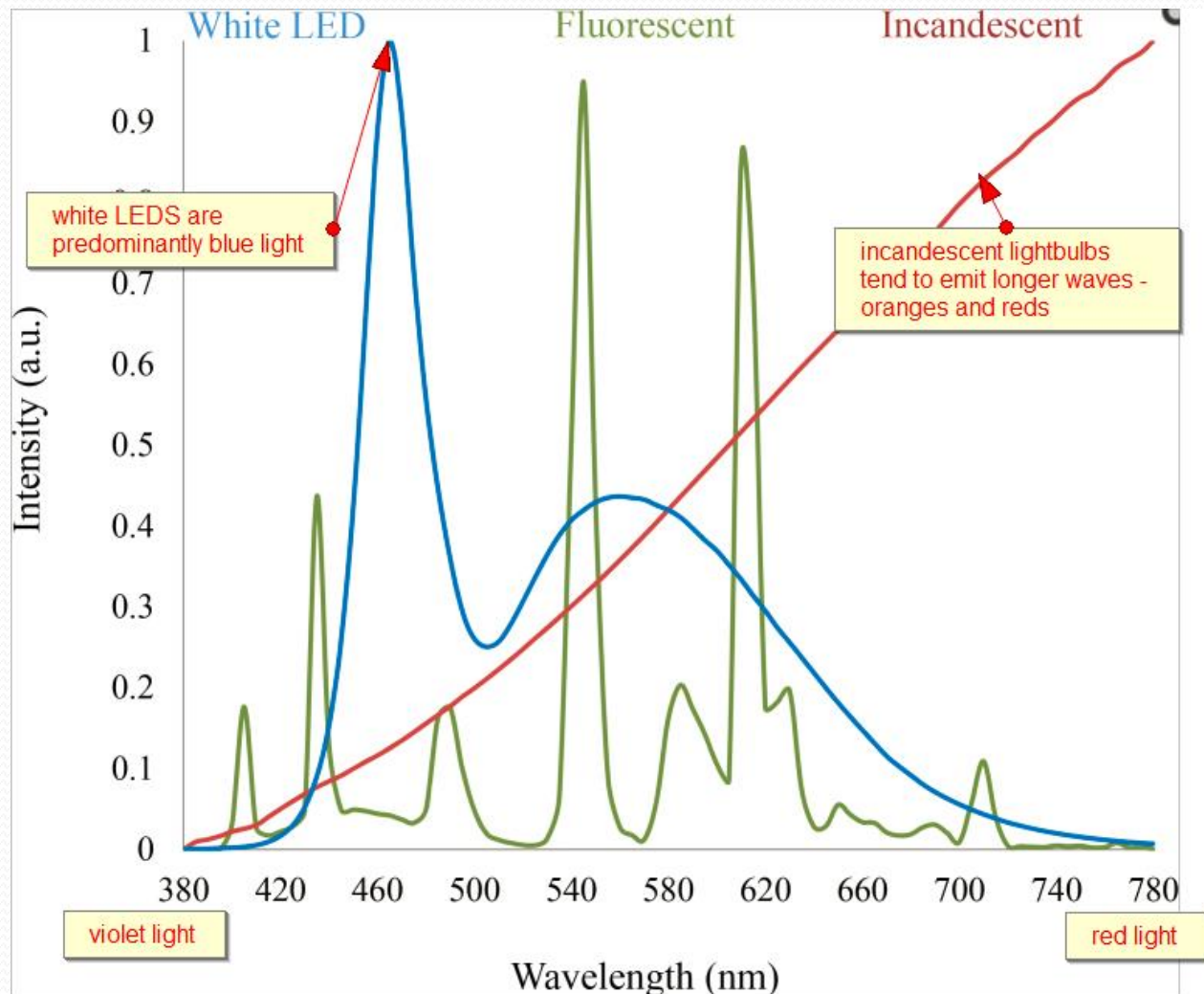
The child will stay focus on the screen but are they learning?



Light from the LED screen



“White LED” emits mostly blue light



**IF I
DON'T
SLEEP,
NO
ONE
SLEEPS.**



pishposh
BABY

Feeding Relationship



Speech Development

- The best way to learn language is to hear it and use it
- Transfer of knowledge (from 2D to the real world)
- Retain of knowledge
- Background TV
- The quality vs quantity of the interaction

How Brains are Built



Nurturing Young Children in the Digital Age: Knowledge is Power

- *Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers* (2013) by Gordon Neufeld, PhD and Gabor Mate, MD
- *Rest, Play, Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers* (2016) by Deborah MacNamara, PhD
- *i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming and Social Media are Changing Our Brains, Our Behaviour, and the Evolution of Our Species* (2016) by Mari Swingle, PhD

Nurturing Young Children in the Digital Age: Knowledge is Power

Some sobering statistics:

- Close to 30% of children under age 1 watch TV or videos approx 90 mins a day
- More than 60% of children between ages 1-2 watch TV more than 2 hours a day
- Conservative estimates of screen time for children 2-5 years are more than 2 hours a day, some research cite it as high as 4.5 hours per day

How did we get here: A quick survey

A Unique Period in History – The Technology

- The impact of the television – predecessor of i-Media
- The development of tools to measure digital exposure on the brain
 - ✓ Changes seen in: biological, neurobiological and social levels
 - ✓ In the very young, changing the brain itself!

How did we get here: A quick survey

A Unique Period in History – The Modern Family

- Loss of “the village” : impact on child rearing
- Cultural Factors - concerns for safety and levels of security in communities
- Childhood as a Target Market, Commodity



What do children really need?

1. Parents (Primary Caregivers)
2. Play, Play, Play

Our Role as Parents

"If parents wish to preserve childhood for their own children, they must conceive of parenting as an act of rebellion against culture." - Neil Postman

- To be the primary figure that children attach to – they need us (persons), not just information (things)
- To be the buffers between our children and the onslaught of digital stimuli
- Parent as Gardener vs. Parent as Sculptor
- Etymology “to attend to” (Latin) - “*attendere*” to stretch towards: like a bridge, a branch that provides shade
- For everything, there’s a season: age and stage very crucial to levels of exposure

Attachment Parenting 101

- Bidirectional neuronal communication
- Face to face interaction and touch crucial to a toddler's learning
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>
(Tronick's Still Face Experiment - 0:42 to 2:48)

Question:

- Is giving a toddler an iPod, smartphone or tablet just the same as giving him/her a set of keys, a soother, a stuffy?
- What's the difference?

6 Ways of Attachment

(Neufeld and MacNamara)

1. Attachment through the Senses – at Birth
2. Attaching through Sameness – Age 1+
3. Attaching through Belonging & Loyalty – Age 2+
4. Attaching through Significance – Age 3+
5. Attaching through Love – Age 4+
6. Attaching through Being Known – Age 5+

What is PLAY?

Let's take a serious look at play

- Play is the primary motor for brain and psychological development – where the self is born!
- Play is not about putting into... it's about drawing out
- Play develops cognitive, language, motor and social emotional skills
- Play preserves psychological health and well-being

What is PLAY?

True (Emergent) Play

- Spontaneous
- Non-competitive with caregiver attachment
- True play is for play's sake
- Strategy development is organic to the player and environment
- Open-ended, unstructured
- Not work: has no goals, not obligatory
- Not for real-life outcomes: Risk Free
- Expressive: the child is not a bystander
- Exploratory: reality vs. fantasy, abstract vs. concrete, function and meaning
- Allows for experimentation and frustration, problem solving

Digital “Play”

- Mostly designed around a structure, outcome-based (not exploratory)
- Video games are for winning
- Player is mesmerized rather than creative: eclipses the larger environment, thwarts curiosity of function/meaning, and all forms of learning
- Does not allow for deep futility and sadness at losing (adaptation, resilience building): as there's always a new round, a next level
- Videogames are not designed for parent-child togetherness

The Freedom to Play exists when there is...

- enough freedom from pain, hunger, tiredness
- enough freedom from instruction and schooling
- enough freedom from scheduled activities
- enough freedom from screens and entertainment
- enough freedom from peers and siblings
- enough freedom from having to work at attachment

Question:

Is giving a toddler an iPod, smartphone or tablet just the same as giving him/her a set of keys, a soother, a stuffy? What's the difference?

- When infants and young children interact with i-technology it is exclusive rather than additive
- They do not engage with their environment nor with their caregivers to the same degree
- They, like older children and adults, can become mesmerized (not actively learning)

Beware: The Making of an i-Brain

Introducing i-tech too much and too early...

- Reconditions a young child's social, emotional, and later cognitive development
- Trains young brains to need entertainment vs. seeking it /creating it
- Decreases their powers of observation and of curiosity – this stunts learning!
- Misaligns attachment: orients the child from

**bidirectional neuronal
communication:**
observation of environment & the
seeking parental approval



a narrow focus of
an object
(i-device)

Ideas for a Positive Action Plan

Integration vs. Interference

Integration: when a technology, due to superior efficiency, replaces other methods or expands a desired trait.

Interference: when a technology overrides a desirable trait or eclipses a developmental phase

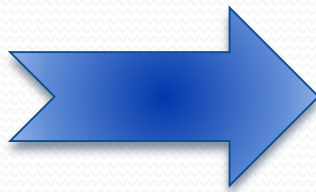
Ideas for a Positive Action Plan

Some Helpful ANALOGIES

Driving

Drinking Alcohol

Voting



Risk

Responsibility

Require degree of
maturity (Privilege)

Establishing Rules & Rituals: Technology + Togetherness

1. But first, “collect” your child
2. Take back TRUE Play
3. Create sacred space and time for hobbies
4. Select schools that align with your tech values
5. Choose programs carefully
6. Establish “No Tech Zones”
7. Remember: You own the device
8. Ensure high Visibility during tech use

In Summary

- “Nothing wrong with a little i-media, a lot wrong with a lot!” – Dr. Mari Swingle **
- It’s not about i-tech or No i-tech, but rather is there **i-tech override** on the primary attachment between caregivers and children?
- To keep questioning, keep examining, and be equally open to change

“To teach feels like you are a guardian of time itself, protecting the future happiness of the world via the minds that are yet to shape it.”-

from How to Stop Time, Matt Haig

Some common questions

Q1: Won't my child fall behind if he isn't exposed to digital media early on?

Young children learn best from face-to-face interactions with caring adults.

A study on the effects of Baby Einstein: For every hour spent viewing, infants understood between six and eight fewer words than infants with lesser exposure

The higher-order thinking skills and executive functions essential for school success, such as task persistence, impulse control, emotion regulation, and creative, flexible thinking, are best taught through unstructured and social (not digital) play, as well as responsive parent–child interactions.

Some common questions

Q2: Is it OK to use screens to calm/distract my child?

Screen time might help in the moment, but used repeatedly: your child won't learn how to self-soothe.

The medium does exactly the reverse:

- It revs children up, emotionally deregulates them, and makes them less capable of self-entertaining and sustaining focus.
- Irony: They will be more demanding of their parents time, increasing the burden and pressures on parenthood.

Professional voices are rather unanimous:

- NO i-media before the age of 2, limited exposure 4-6yrs.
- For older children and adults, the healthy cut-off is 1 hour per day. More than this leads to increased anxiety, agitation, general restlessness and related boredom when “not connected”.

Some common questions

Q3: My child gets upset when I take away screen times. What should I do?

Setting shared family limits at an early age. In the moment:

Remember the different forms of attachment, and “collect” the child first: fill up the child’s need for YOU

3-Step Dance of Adaptation (Neufeld):

1. Present the Futility (Disappointment, frustration, tears)
2. Hold in the Emotion
3. Draw out (more) Sadness

Questions for Discussion

1. When is the best age to start using personal technology?
2. What is the longest amount of time a toddler ought to be allowed to use a smart device daily?
3. Some parents think that a child is ready to have his/her own personal device when they can maintain consistent order in the state of their bedrooms. What do you think?
4. How do we guide our children's use of technology so that they are being enriched, rather than being addicted?
5. What are some ways your family has exerted limits and appropriate use depending on age?

Thank you!



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