Rethinking Screen Time in the Classroom

What the Research—and Arizona's Standards—Tell Us

Across the country, schools are reexamining student screen use. Arizona's Educational Technology Standards and Computer Science Standards remind us that the key question is not just *how much* screen time students have, but *how* and *why* technology is used for learning.

Consideration #1: Not All Screen Time Is the Same

Screen time is often discussed as a single category, but research and standards show that the purpose and type of use matters more than time alone.

The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) describes screen time in three contexts:



- smart phones & social media
- educational technology (EdTech)
- screen-based entertainment

The U.S. Department of Ed's Office of Educational Technology defines two types of technology use:



Designing, Collaborating, Problem Solving | **Watching, Reading, Scrolling**

This distinction is reinforced by Arizona's standards, which support student-driven learning, critical thinking, and creating solutions using technology, rather than passive consumption.

Special Consideration: Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive Technology (AT) is required under IDEA to ensure students receive FAPE and can access grade level standards and curriculum. Some necessary AT devices may exceed screen-time limits but are essential for learning, participation, and communication.

Consideration #2: Finding Balance

Arizona's Educational Technology Standards & Computer Science Standards prioritize:



Intentional integration of technology to support learning goals.

Purposeful use of technology that engages students in active, meaningful learning.

Thoughtful selection of when to use digital tools, and when non-digital approaches are more effective.

Effective technology integration combines digital and non-digital learning approaches, using each where it best supports learning.

Consideration #3: Developing Responsible and Empowered Digital Citizens



By integrating Arizona's Standards, teachers can:

- Empower students to understand and practice digital citizenship.
- Build knowledge of privacy, ethics, and responsible use.
- Support student agency for safe and respectful participation in the digital world.

Special Consideration: Early Childhood

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no screens for children under 18 months, and limited screen use with active caregiver involvement for ages 18 months to 5 years.

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