

Neil Postman warned us not to say yes to a technology without giving serious consideration not only to what it will *do* but also what it will *undo*. He said we accomplish that by asking better questions.

I'm Katie Longhauser, a mom, nurse, and founder of Kids Digital Health Hub and Screen Guardians—organizations created to protect children from unintended digital harm. I'm here to help you ask better questions – in 3 minutes or less 😊

Let's play devil's advocate and first consider this question:

(1.) What problems may be solved when every student has access to their personal devices during the school day?

Possibly these three:

- Ability to constantly communicate with parents
- Convenience for after-school logistics
- Parents feel safer in case of emergency

Now, imagine a student's access to a personal device does in fact solve those three issues. However, we owe it to our children to think more deeply and ask a follow-up question:

(2.) What new problems may be created because we “solved” those three?

Constant interruptions: Unrestricted access leads to continual interruptions which increases cortisol leading to increased BP, heart rate rhythm instability and a lowered immune system. And those are only the physiological consequences

Continuous partial attention: When students know they have the ability to access their devices that possibility is front of mind. At the same time, what their teacher is teaching is also front of mind (at least in theory!) It's like they have one foot in the real world and one foot in the digital world. The impact on understanding, memory and focus is probably worse than you think.

Fractured Focus: Students who can check their devices during the day do so as often as they can get away with. And then, whatever they see during those check-ins leaves a “mental residue.” As Gloria Mark states, it's like erasing a whiteboard but still being able to see what used to be there. It takes the brain time to recover and focus on what it is “supposed to be” focusing on, losing valuable instructional time. As you may imagine, this experience is worsened if what they saw is emotionally laden. All this “residue” negatively impacts understanding, memory and recall. And actually, recalling information will now be tied to what they were dealing with online prior to that class period because the two will entangle in their memory.

At Screen Guardians our motto is to protect and preserve childhood. We believe voting in favor of this bill would help do just that.

A vote in favor of this bill says you are asking better questions, not only of what technology can do, but also what it can undo, so children get a chance to spend more of their lives in just one place at a time.

Thank you.

