

Dear

I am urging you to review the way our school is implementing the Ministry of Education's (MOE) digital curriculum, to one where students use screens to learn at school and at home in a more considered and purposeful manner. The students of our school are spending a significant amount of their day on screens and they will have a greater chance of doing better academically and emotionally if our policy changes.

The digital curriculum has been designed to ensure students learn computer science principles, and about using digital technology to create digital content, including learning about electronic components and techniques to design digital devices.

The MOE were very clear that the curriculum means learning about devices, not on devices, and that meeting the curriculum does not mean more device time, particularly in primary schools.

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/digital-curriculum-changes-connect-young-people-future>

*"The goal of this change is to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to become digitally capable individuals. This change signals the need for greater focus on our students building their skills so they can be innovative creators of digital solutions, moving beyond solely being users and consumers of digital technologies."*

<https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Technology>

Below is a video link to the workshops the MOE ran in 2017 about implementing the digital curriculum for schools:

<https://education.govt.nz/our-work/consultations/recent-consultations/digital-technology-consultation/>

Digital technology can offer new ways of learning, and opens up many opportunities for our children. The 2015 [OECD report](#) on the use of digital technologies in school, 'Students, computers and learning,' agrees that digital fluency is important for equal opportunities for employment and study on leaving school. However, they found that there is a limit to the amount of technology use that can achieve this.

The report analysed data from 64 countries when reviewing this topic.

They found that students who used computers moderately, defined as 1 to 2 times per week, have some improvements in educational outcomes compared to students who rarely use computers. They noted improvements only occurred in certain areas, and there were no significant improvements in reading, science or mathematics.

Students who frequently used computers had significantly lower educational outcomes.

Testing was done both on paper, and digitally. This is highly relevant, as 'needing to be prepared for digital assessment in high school and university' is one of the reasons given to parents for Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies for young

children. Singapore, with only moderate use of technology, came out top for digital skills.

A recent report by the [Reboot Foundation \(2019\)](#) has also analysed the connection between educational technology and learning, using PISA and the 2017 NAEP (National Assessment of educational Progress) data, and their results have replicated the 2015 OECD results. They noted that "the results regarding tablet use in fourth-grade classes (equivalent of NZ Year 5) were particularly worrisome, and the data showed a clear negative relationship with testing outcomes. Fourth-grade students who reported using tablets in 'all or almost all' classes scored 14 points lower on the reading exam than students who reported 'never' using classroom tablets. This difference in scores is the equivalent of a full grade level, or a year's worth of learning."

In addition, some children are more at risk of problematic internet use, and BYOD policies in schools are causing wider issues in the community for many families with managing screen time. I question whether a BYOD policy is necessary to achieve the goals of the digital curriculum, particularly at primary and intermediate school level.

In summary, both the total time spent on screens as well as certain content such as reward-based teaching apps are causing concern, as research is showing negative associations with children's physical and mental well-being. Please find more information at [www.sensiblescreenuse.org](http://www.sensiblescreenuse.org).

Taking all this into consideration, I ask you to reflect on the way our school is implementing the digital curriculum. I would like to see digital technology used in evidence-based and purposeful ways, in the best interest of our children's academic and emotional outcomes.

I would appreciate it if you could please review our school's current practice against these questions:

1. Does our policy consider the health and safety of device users? Posture, length of time, content, etc.
2. Does our policy ensure the digital curriculum is followed or are staff inclined to use apps to teach core subjects?
3. Do you ensure parents are aware that, knowing their own child, BYOD is their decision? Do you have a policy to give homework in paper as well as digital form?
4. Does our technology use aim to go above and beyond what can be achieved on paper? Does our technology use simplify learning?

Thank you.