Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks generates and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences will ultimately benefit all students, Hidden Sparks’ programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one-on-one coaching.
Children and Screen Time: A Practical Guide to Media Use for Children

With Jeannie Crowley
December 11, 2013
Jeannie Crowley is the Manager of Digital Media and Learning at Bank Street College. Her background includes years as a K-12 special education teacher and teacher trainer in the Bronx. With Master’s degrees in both elementary education and digital media, she works with educators to create innovative, constructivist digital learning experiences for students. She received the Samsung Hope for Education and ING Unsung Heroes awards for her work with young children and technology.
Overview of the Session

• Media survey and notes p.7
• What are the effects? p.8
• How much is too much? p.10
• When should I really not use screen time? p.11
• Tips for reducing screen time (and tantrums) p.12
• A Case study: Kitchen Routines p.15
• Passive vs Active Media p.18
• When I need a break, how do I choose the right media? p.22
• As our children get older: the realities of bullying p.23
Session Goals:

- Learn the impact of too much screen time on children
- Learn how to reduce screen time for your children (parents)
- Learn how to evaluate screen time
- Learn how to talk to parents about screen time (educators)
MEDIA SURVEY & NOTES

How much screen time does your child have each day?

When does your child spend the most time watching TV or other media?

How much screen time do you have each day and what do you like doing? (Movies, favorite TV shows, work, etc.)
What effect can too much media have on my child?

WHAT EFFECT CAN TOO MUCH MEDIA HAVE ON MY CHILD?

We’re starting with the truly scary facts so we know what we’re dealing with. Don’t worry, we’ll talk about practical solutions for busy parents.

SOURCE: The American Pediatrics Association
What effect can too much media have on my child?

- **Obesity.** Children who watch more than two hours of TV a day are more likely to be overweight.
- **Irregular sleep.** The more TV children watch, the more likely they are to resist going to bed and to have trouble falling asleep.
- **Behavioral problems.** Elementary students who spend more than two hours a day watching TV or using a computer are more likely to have emotional, social and attention problems. Exposure to video games also increases the risk of attention problems in children. Children who watch excessive amounts of TV are more likely to bully than children who don't.
- **Impaired academic performance.** Elementary students who have TVs in their bedrooms tend to perform worse on tests than those who don't.
- **Violence.** Too much exposure to violence in media can desensitize children to violence. As a result, children may learn to accept violent behavior as a normal part of life and a way to solve problems.
- **Less time for play.** Excessive screen time leaves less time for active, creative play.
How much is too much?

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

• The APA found no benefit for passive media in children under 2. Small children learn much better (and more efficiently) from interacting with someone. Yes, even the “educational” baby programming such as Baby Einstein, Dora and Super Why! are included in the bunch.

• Children of any age should watch no more than 2 hours per day (total). This does not mean a two hour session of TV is a good thing, just the upper limit.

• Remember to calculate the total amount of screen time throughout the day...it all adds up to the two hour limit. Five minutes here and there add up.

• A recent survey by Common Sense Media found children 8 and younger are spending over two hours per day looking at screens.
## How much is too much?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV, DVDs or Video on TV set, computer, iPod or iPad</td>
<td>1 hour 44 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing media games</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other computer activities</td>
<td>6 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other apps on cell, iPod or iPad</td>
<td>1 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Media Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 hours 17 minutes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Really, seriously don’t use media...

REALLY, SERIOUSLY DON’T USE MEDIA....

• Right before bed. It makes bed time so much harder and it can cause sleep troubles.

• During dinner. Watching TV during dinner has been shown to lead to obesity and it really cuts into an important family ritual.

• All the time as background noise. The constant presence of TV or video can draw your child’s attention away from other activities.

• As a reward. There are a lot of wonderful things you and your child can do together that can be used as a reward. If you rely on TV for good behavior, you’re stuck rewarding your fantastic child with something you don’t want them to have.
Tips to reduce screen time (and tantrums)

Reducing screen time can be tough. We’ve all tried it and hit the wall of tantrums and crying that greet us when we say “No more TV” or “Turn it off”. There will be a brief period where those tantrums are inevitable, but if you persist you will break through it.

Choose short segments rather than full movies. If you only have 15-20 minutes of time before you leave the house or transition to another activity, chose a video that fits that time period so you don’t have to turn it off in the middle. Turning off the screen is much easier at the end of a show.

Talk ahead of time about the plan and stick to it. Knowing how screen time fits into a larger set of activities makes it easier for your child to transition. “When we get home, we are going to watch one episode of Curious George and then we are going to eat dinner. Afterwards, we will read two books before bed.” Remind your child of the plan several times and don’t add another episode to avoid a tantrum.
Tips to reduce screen time (and tantrums)

Talk to caregivers. Consistency is key and it’s important everyone is on the same page when it comes to media use.

Look at when you’re using media and change routines. For example, do you find yourself turning on the TV so you can cook dinner or finish up some work? Think about ways to incorporate your child into your evening routines so the TV doesn’t have to be a baby sitter. (See case study next page.)
A Case Study: Kitchen Routines

If you find yourself using media to give you time to complete routine tasks, such as cooking, think about how you can include young children in the activity.

• Babies love to mash and play with food in their high chair while watching you cook. They just want to be near you.

• Toddlers can mix, separate vegetables, pull leaves, remove paper from onions, get ingredients from the fridge or supplies from the cabinets, and much more. It might require a bit of reorganizing of your cabinets so they can reach some items.
A Case Study: Kitchen Routines

• Find ways for them to “help” you. Do you want them to move all of the beans from one bowl to the next? Can they shake the jar of dressing while you use the stove?

• Allow for some extra time for dinner prep and turn it from a chore to a family activity.

• If you have to rush through dinner because you child is hungry, try saving some food from the meal the night before for him/her to nibble on so you don’t have to rush.

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A Case Study: Kitchen Routines

• If you have a little extra space in your kitchen, pull out some pots and pans so your child can engage in creative play. He/she can “cook” and copy what you’re doing. Young children love to do things “just like mommy and daddy”.

• If cooking is just not in the cards for your child tonight (too little space, too many hot items, just not enough patience today), try taping some paper to the fridge so they can stand nearby and draw while you work.
Passive vs. Active Screen Time

There are different types of screen time. With some minor adjustments, you can make screen time more meaningful for your child (and have a positive impact!).
PASSIVE SCREEN TIME

• Your child is alone in front of the TV
• Your child is zoning out and not responding to his/her name
• He/she is consuming, not creating
• If you’re watching it, they’re watching it. Are you vegging out?
• Your child is being distracted from other activities to watch TV or a movie in the background
ACTIVE SCREEN TIME

- Your child is talking, moving & engaged
- Sit with your child and ask questions
- Engage them with the media by narrating and highlighting elements of the story
- Think of alternate media sources: pictures or videos of your child that you’ve taken during outings and other activities. It’s an opportunity to talk about their day, help them remember favorite pastimes, develop language and bond with you.
ACTIVE SCREEN TIME

• Short video clips on the internet that the child has expressed an interest in. For example, if he/she saw a peacock today you could go look at YouTube videos about Peacocks.

• Think about how your child can be a media creator instead of a consumer. There are great programs out there (such as Turtle Art and Scratch) that help kids learn how to program at a very young age.

• Use media to connect them with others (such as grandparents on Skype)
Questions to Ask Yourself When Selecting Media

Let’s face it--sometimes it is just impossible to include our child in our activities. During those moments, how do we choose the right media?
Questions to Ask Yourself When Selecting Media

1. Have I previewed this before showing it to my child?

We have fond memories of childhood videos and sometimes forget that we watched those videos at much older ages (and at a different time) than our children. We forget how scary many things are to young children. Many old Disney films, while classics, reinforce stereotypes that we missed when watching it as children. Make sure the videos you show have the content you want your children to see.
Questions to Ask Yourself When Selecting Media

2. Is the narrative/action at the right level for my child?

If it’s too young for them, they will lose interest. If the narrative is too complex, they will zone out and just watch the images. Each child is different, so you’re the best judge of what videos are age-appropriate for your child.
3. Have I watched my child while watching video recently?

Children’s tastes change as they develop and it’s important to be aware of their changing needs. The quick pace of Sesame Street might be right for a 2.5 year old, but they might want the slower storytelling of Curious George as they reach 3. Pay attention for signs of boredom.
Questions to Ask Yourself When Selecting Media

4. Am I going to have to turn off the video half-way through?

If yes, choose a shorter video so you don’t set yourself up for a fight.
Questions to Ask Yourself When Selecting Media

5. Have I looked closely at the video from the perspective of a child?

Children can’t distinguish between real and cartoon/pretend violence. A historical film about the American Revolution, for example, seems perfectly safe from your perspective but the violence is very real to a young child. Cartoon violence is also very real to children.
Turning Our Focus to Bullying as Children Age

81% of youths say bullying online is easier to get away with than bullying in person... which might be why 1 in 3 kids have been threatened online.

3 million kids are absent from school each month because they fear bullies.

Bullied kids are twice as likely to commit suicide as non-bullied kids.

42% of teenagers with tech access report to being cyberbullied over the past year.
Turning Our Focus to Bullying as Children Age

1 in 5 cyber-bullied teens think about suicide
1 in 10 attempt suicide and each year 4,500 teens succeed in killing themselves

Suicide is the No. 3 killer of teens in the US

From 1985 to 2007, internet and tech consumption grew dramatically. And so did teen suicides.

Suicide rates in girls aged 15-19 rose 32%. The rate rose 76% during that time for girls 10-14.

Only 2 in 5 victims will tell their parents. You have to be aware of cyberbullying and the devastating impact it might have on your child. Talk about it. Frequently.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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</table>
| Tuesday 12/17/13 | For Parents:  
**Sustaining Motivation - A Delicate Balance** with Meryl Silver  |
| Tuesday 1/7/13  | For Teachers and Parents:  
**Passive vs. Active Screen Time** with Jeannie Crowley                      |
The Hidden Sparks coaching program is currently in 32 Jewish day schools/yeshivot in the New York tri-state area, Baltimore and Chicago.

Since inception, Hidden Sparks has provided school-based coaching to 16 schools through its External Coach Program and has provided training and mentoring to 80 Internal Coaches from 45 Internal Coach Program participating schools.

Over 3,700 teachers have participated in Hidden Sparks programs. Of that number, more than 1,200 teachers have benefitted from Hidden Sparks training, impacting an estimated 12,000 students.

If you are interested in bringing Hidden Sparks to your school or city, please contact us at: 212-767-7707 or news@hiddensparks.org
Hidden Sparks thanks our supporters and partners who have made our work possible.

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