

Balancing Children's Screen Time



Angie Grove

Willamette Connections Academy
Guest columnist

Pandemic quarantines and social distancing changed many aspects of everyday life. Computers, tablets, and phone screens offer digital connections to the outside world for families – telecommuting, internet grocery shopping, telemedicine appointments, and distance education for students accustomed to attending traditional public schools.

Between remote learning, social media, video games, and other digital programs many kids have added ingredients to their digital intake this past year. Should parents be overly concerned about all this screen time? Experts say it may be more valuable to look at screens in the context of other aspects of your child's general wellbeing. Are they getting sufficient sleep, exercise, and eating healthy?

When the coronavirus hit, many parents tossed out limits on screens in order to keep restless children engaged and entertained. New data from Pearson shows 73% of parents have still altered or suspended rules about their child's use of technology, such as limits on screen time, restrictions on social media sites, or other tech-related rules.

Now that many schools are reopening for full-time in-person or hybrid learning, parents might rethink screen time limits. Putting the genie back in the bottle may be tough, but it's a good time for adults to revisit their child's internet activity.

Are concerns about the impacts of screens on children justified or exaggerated?

Even before COVID, researchers found school-aged children used screens for entertainment between 4 and 7 hours a day. Over the past year those numbers have probably increased with widespread remote learning across the country. The American Academy of Pediatrics cautions parents about mental and physical health impacts from excessive screen time, including behavior problems, obesity, impaired sleep, and

vision.

When the pandemic swept across the country and communities were locked down, students turned to technology as an important avenue not only for their education but also to cope with social isolation.

Managing screen time during this pandemic isn't easy for families but there are ways you can support your child.

House Rules

Establishing “no-screen” zones and times — for mealtime, or relatives visiting — can help a child's social-emotional development and improve family relationships. Digital devices disrupt sleep so keep them out of your kid's bedroom at night. Finally, make a rule to lead by example and monitor your own screen habits.

Quality, not Just Quantity matters

Researchers look at the use of screens instead of the total screen time. Not all time online is equal. An hour Zooming with grandparents is different than an hour alone in the basement playing Xbox.

Join your children when they go online to play a game or watch a video and ask them questions about the session. Not only will you get a better understanding of your student's digital experiences, but it could open up other opportunities for discussion.

Healthy Balance

To help balance an increased use of screens, make sure your child's daily routine includes play, exercise, and other off-screen activities. Schedule brain breaks for physical outdoor time, or a few minutes of stretching to boost energy and improve focus.

Go Old School

Encourage kids to spend non-screen time reading a physical book, playing a board game, or working on a puzzle. Hands-on learning like drawing, painting, and cooking, are also creative analog outlets.

Appeal Tribune

Address: P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309

Phone: 503-399-6773

Fax: 503-399-6706

Email: sanews@salem.gannett.com

Web site: www.SilvertonAppeal.com

Staff

News Director

Don Currie
503-399-6655
dcurrie@statesmanjournal.com

Advertising

Westsmb@gannett.com

Deadlines

News: 4 p.m. Thursday
Letters: 4 p.m. Thursday
Obituaries: 11 a.m. Friday
Display Advertising: 4 p.m. Wednesday
Legals: 3 p.m. Wednesday
Classifieds: 4 p.m. Friday

News Tips

The Appeal Tribune encourages suggestions for local stories. Email the newsroom, submit letters to the editor and send announcements to sanews@salem.gannett.com or call 503-399-6773.

To Place an Ad

Classifieds: call 503-399-6789

Retail: call 503-399-6602

Legal: call 503-399-6789

Missed Delivery?

Call: 800-452-2511

Hours: until 7 p.m. Wednesdays;
until 3 p.m. other weekdays

To Subscribe

Call: 800-452-2511

\$21 per year for home delivery
\$22 per year for motor delivery
\$30.10 per year mail delivery in Oregon
\$38.13 per year mail delivery outside Oregon

Main Statesman Journal publication

Suggested monthly rates:
Monday-Sunday: \$22, \$20 with EZ Pay
Monday-Saturday: \$17.50, \$16 with EZ Pay
Wednesday-Sunday: \$18, \$16 with EZ Pay
Monday-Friday: \$17.50, \$16 with EZ Pay
Sunday and Wednesday: \$14, \$12 with EZ Pay
Sunday only: \$14, \$12 with EZ Pay

To report delivery problems or subscribe, call 800-452-2511

Published every Wednesday by the Statesman Journal, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309.

USPS 469-860, Postmaster: Send address changes to Appeal Tribune, P.O. Box 13009, Salem, OR 97309. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID: Salem, OR and additional offices.

Send letters to the editor and news releases to sanews@salem.gannett.com.

Benefits

Navigating the delicate balance of on-screen time with off-screen time activities is different for every family, but it's also important to note that recent surge in screen use wasn't all bad.

Awareness and Acquaintances

Digital devices allowed students to become more informed about current events like the election and raise their awareness about civic engagement. Some learners who tend to be introverts became more empowered using technology to overcome social anxiety and engage with friends using games such as Minecraft.

Explore the planet

Screens can take students to distant places. A Willamette Connections Academy 5th grade teacher took her class with her “virtually” as she visited several national parks. The students

studied ecosystems, history, and many other subjects about each park using a trivia game, and scavenger hunt as creative activities for learning.

Tech Training

Having a front row seat to your child's online life, you may have seen how tech-savvy they're becoming. Students are learning new skills earlier in life, which will help them keep up with technology for the 21st century.

As the world starts to open up again, keep in mind children are still facing a lot of pandemic uncertainties. Give yourself some grace when it comes to managing screen time, and keep the focus on your child's overall happiness and wellbeing.

Angie Groves is Willamette Connections Academy Middle School Assistant Principal. ar. To learn more about the school or to begin the enrollment process visit www.WillametteConnectionsAcademy.com or call 888-478-9474.

DMV

Continued from Page 1A

could take – rather than promise too much and fall short of expectations. The process goes more smoothly if you submit an accurate application and fees, said Lauren Mulligan, another spokesperson for the transportation agency.

Before the pandemic, mail transactions would usually take less than five weeks, depending on how difficult the transaction was, Ridenour said.

Oregon police agencies have agreed to a rolling moratorium on citations through the end of April.

In a memo dated Dec. 22, interim DMV administrator Amy Joyce said police will “exercise discretion” when drivers present expired licenses, permits, ID cards, registration, trip permits or placards for people with disabilities that expired between Nov. 1, 2020 and April 30 of this year — and have been expired for less than three months. So at this point, if your license expired in November, you are beyond that three-month grace period.

“DMV and law enforcement will continue to monitor the COVID-19 public health emergency, and may upon mutual agreement extend this moratorium as needed,” Joyce wrote.

Oregon DMV field offices were closed between March 18 and June 2 last year due to the pandemic, but they opened up for limited appointment slots last summer.

Those appointments are pretty popular, and get snapped up quickly in more populated areas of the state, Ride-

nour said.

In-person appointments are required for some transactions, such as taking the knowledge test to get a driver's license.

Fee increases last year

In 2017, state legislators hammered out a deal to raise billions of dollars for transportation projects across the state.

That law raised the gas tax, as well as title and registration fees over a period of seven years. It also means you'll have to pay a \$15 tax if you buy a new bicycle that costs at least \$200.

The annual passenger vehicle registration fee used to be \$43. In 2018, the new law increased that fee to \$56, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

In 2020, the fees increased again, and the annual registration fee increased more if your vehicle was more fuel efficient. To register a car that is from 1999 or earlier, or a car that is newer but has 0-19 miles per gallon, you'll need to pay \$122 for a two-year registration, or \$61 per year.

You'll pay \$132 if your car is from 2000 or newer and gets 20-39 miles per gallon, and \$152 if your car is from 2000 or newer and gets 40 or more miles per gallon. Electric vehicle owners must pay \$306 for a two-year registration.

You might need to pay more depending on what county you live in and whether you need to get Oregon plates for your car.

Another fee increase will take effect next year.

Title and registration fees go to the state's Highway Fund and under the

state's Constitution can only be used for roads, according to ODOT.

If you buy a specialty plate, some of the money you pay might go to a particular cause. For example, the \$40 surcharge on the Gray Whale license plate – which is on top of ordinary title and registration costs – goes to the Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute.

New federal standards known as “Real ID” add another layer of cost and complication.

Starting Oct. 1, you will have to present a passport or a driver's license or other form of ID that complies with Real ID standards to fly domestically, enter a secure federal building or a military base.

Oregon started issuing driver's licenses that meet Real ID standards last July.

If you're getting a new driver's license, and want it to meet those standards, you'll be charged \$30 more. The state is charging that \$30, an increase that the legislature passed, because the DMV had to update its systems and machinery to accommodate the new standards, Ridenour said.

You can still get a standard driver's license and avoid paying the \$30, but you won't be able to use that license to board a plane starting Oct. 1.

What you'll pay in OR, WA, ID

Even with the increases included in the 2017 law, the taxes and fees associated with car ownership are still comparatively cheap in Oregon, according to Oregon Department of Transportation officials.

“Oregon will remain one of the cheapest states for vehicle taxes and fees,” officials wrote in a summary of the policy, “And Oregon's total automobile related taxes and fees will be tied with Montana as the lowest of any nearby western state.”

Let's say you own a 2012 Toyota Camry. In Oregon, since the car has a combined miles per gallon of 32, according to Car and Driver, and is newer than 2000, you'd pay \$132, or \$66 per year, to register the car, not including local fees that your county may charge. (This also doesn't include the cost of a title, which is a separate fee).

In Washington, you'll pay a base fee of \$43.25 per year. You'll pay an extra fee corresponding to the weight of the car. According to Car and Driver, a 2012 Camry weighs about 3,340 pounds. So that extra fee would be \$25.

So before local costs, your state registration fee for the year would be \$68.25. And depending on where you lived in Washington, you'd pay more in local taxes and fees.

In Idaho, for that same car, you'd pay a \$45 base fee to register the car, since the car at this point is more than seven years old. (You'd pay more for a newer car, or for a car that is electric or a plug-in hybrid). You might also need to pay more in local fees or taxes, depending on which county you lived in.

Claire Withycombe is a reporter at the Statesman Journal. Contact her at cwithycombe@statesmanjournal.com, 503-910-3821 or follow on Twitter @kcwithycombe. Support local journalism by subscribing to the Statesman Journal.

Oak

Continued from Page 1A

Six toppled over roots and all, and four snapped in two, including a prominent oak in the amphitheater.

The Signature Oak fared better than other trees. It lost a significant branch that snapped off about midway up the trunk, and an even bigger branch nearly broke off but remains attached, resting on the ground.

Ken Hector, chair of The Oregon Garden Foundation Board of Directors, invited us to view the damage after our story about Willamette University's “2021 Oregon Oak Salvage Project.”

Science professors Karen Arabas and Joe Bowersox joined us to collect cookies from some of the downed trees and branches for the project. They hope to



Willamette University Professor Karen Arabas labels a cookie from the Signature Oak on Wednesday at The Oregon Garden in Silverton. ABIGAIL DOLLINS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

better understand the history of Oregon white oaks and urban forest structure.

Hector and Kitchen escorted us to the

Signature Oak, where Bowersox used a chainsaw to cut two slices from the downed branch. He also collected one from another tree.

Kitchen said the partially-severed branch resting on the ground will not be removed, per the recommendation of Mountain View Tree Service, since it's far enough off the path and shouldn't pose a risk. She pointed out another branch of the tree that nearly split in half some time ago and continues to grow.

Mountain View installed the cable system, which relies on a strong upright branch to help support weaker branches. Aside from that, there may not be much else that can be done for the Signature Oak.

Hector said the garden eventually plans to bring in an arborist to do a more thorough assessment.

“We understand everybody loves the

tree,” Kitchen said, “but they're telling us it may be near the end of its lifespan. Maybe not next year, not even five years, but maybe in our lifetime.”

The Signature Oak was designated in 2002 as an Oregon Heritage Tree. A sign posted near the site lists the tree's height as 99 feet, 6 inches. Oregon white oaks are generally slow-growing trees, but unless they shrink with age like humans, this one must have grown over the past 19 years.

Maybe the next arborist to assess the state of the tree could get an official updated measurement.

Capi Lynn is the Statesman Journal's news columnist. Her column taps into the heart of the community – its people, history and issues. Contact her at clynn@StatesmanJournal.com or 503-399-6710, or follow her on Twitter @CapiLynn and Facebook @CapiLynnsJ.