

NEWSLETTER

SCREEN TIME VS GREEN TIME



In 1922, Christie Lake Kids (CLK) began with a vision of getting at-risk kids into the outdoors to be actively engaged with nature. This idea has become even more critical in the modern era, when screen time (on televisions, smart-phones, iPads and computers) is eclipsing green time for many children.

The statistics paint a startling picture:

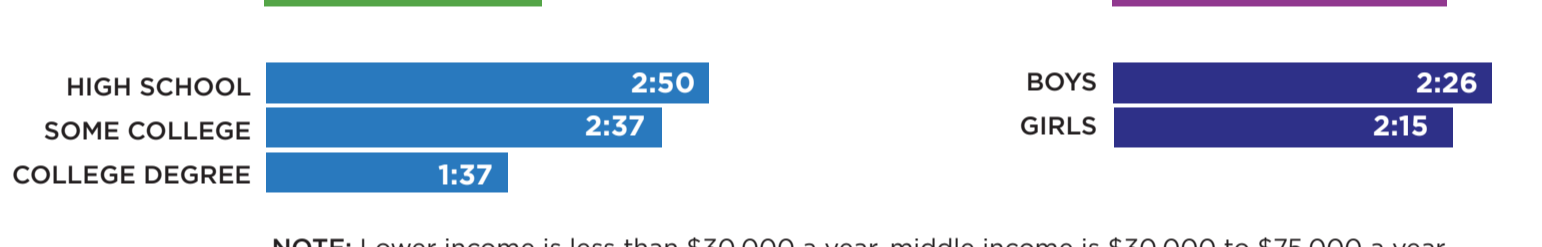
- 85% of school-aged children do not meet the guidelines for adequate sleep, physical activity and screen time;
- Students in grades 7 to 12 are spending up to 7 hours a day on screens, more than 3.5 times the recommended limit of 2 hours per day;
- Higher durations of screen time have been linked with poorer behavioural conduct and lower self-esteem;
- Adolescents who spend more time on social media and smart phones are more likely to report mental health issues such as anxiety and depression;
- The 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth assigned a D+ for overall physical activity, with 65% of children aged 5 - 17 not meeting the recommended level of physical activity; and
- Dr. Michael Cheng, a professor at the University of Ottawa and a psychiatrist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, is sounding the alarm as mental health professionals are noting that excessive use of technology appears linked to increased demands for mental health services to help with anxiety and depression.



Of particular concern to CLK is the fact that, for a variety of reasons, children from lower-income families spend an average of 3.5 hours each day on screens, according to a nationwide survey conducted by the non-profit organization Common Sense Media. This is 40 percent greater than middle-income children (2.42 hours) and almost double that of affluent children (1.83 hours). The figure below depicts the correlation between family income and screen time.

FIGURE 3. Screen Media Time, by Demographics, 2017

Among 0-to 8 -year-old, average time spent with screen media per day (hours:minutes)



NOTE: Lower income is less than \$30,000 a year, middle income is \$30,000 to \$75,000 a year, and higher income is more than \$75,000 a year.

It's easy to appreciate that there are many physical and mental benefits to being more active and spending more time outdoors. Numerous studies have shown that decreasing screen time enhances children's health and overall well-being, as well as improving their resiliency, academic performance and social skills. Time in nature can boost children's moods and help them manage stress and anxiety. Outdoor activities help children find opportunities to learn, explore, discover and understand the natural environment. The effects are long-lasting, too, as time spent in nature helps to build a strong connection with and lifelong love of the natural world.



CLK's camp programs, including those offered during the school year on weekends; over the March Break; and in the summer months, are intentionally structured for disadvantaged kids to learn about the joys of green time versus screen time. We find that being encouraged and guided to spend time exploring nature helps develop curiosity and inquire skills that they can continue to practice when they return home.



With your support, we are working hard to help some our city's most economically disadvantaged children and youth to achieve a healthier balance of green time versus screen time.

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