

# GROWING UP DIGITAL AUSTRALIA

*- In Search of Digital Wellness for All*

Australian College of Educators PL Webinar

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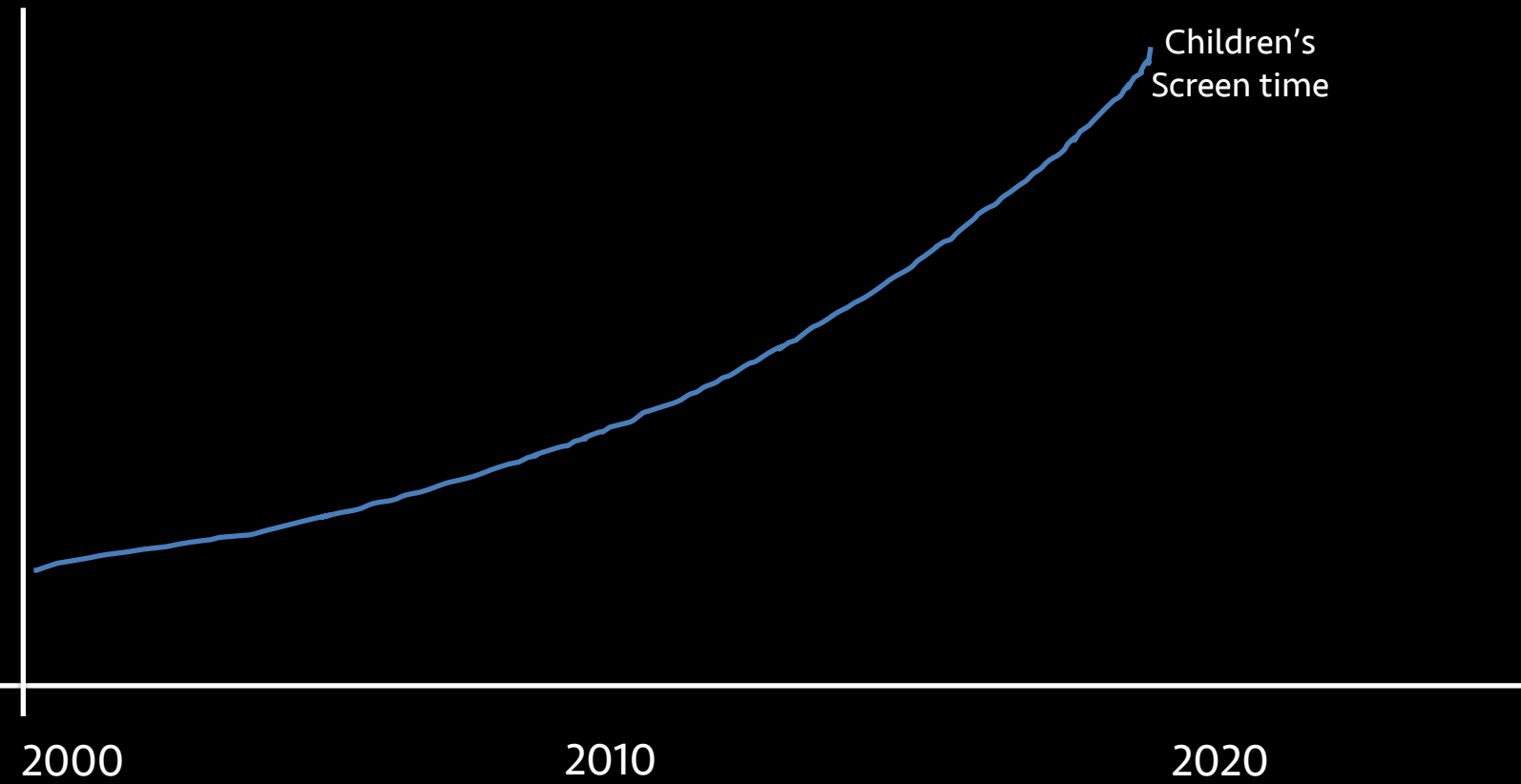
1 What is Growing Up Digital?

2 Teachers' & principals' views

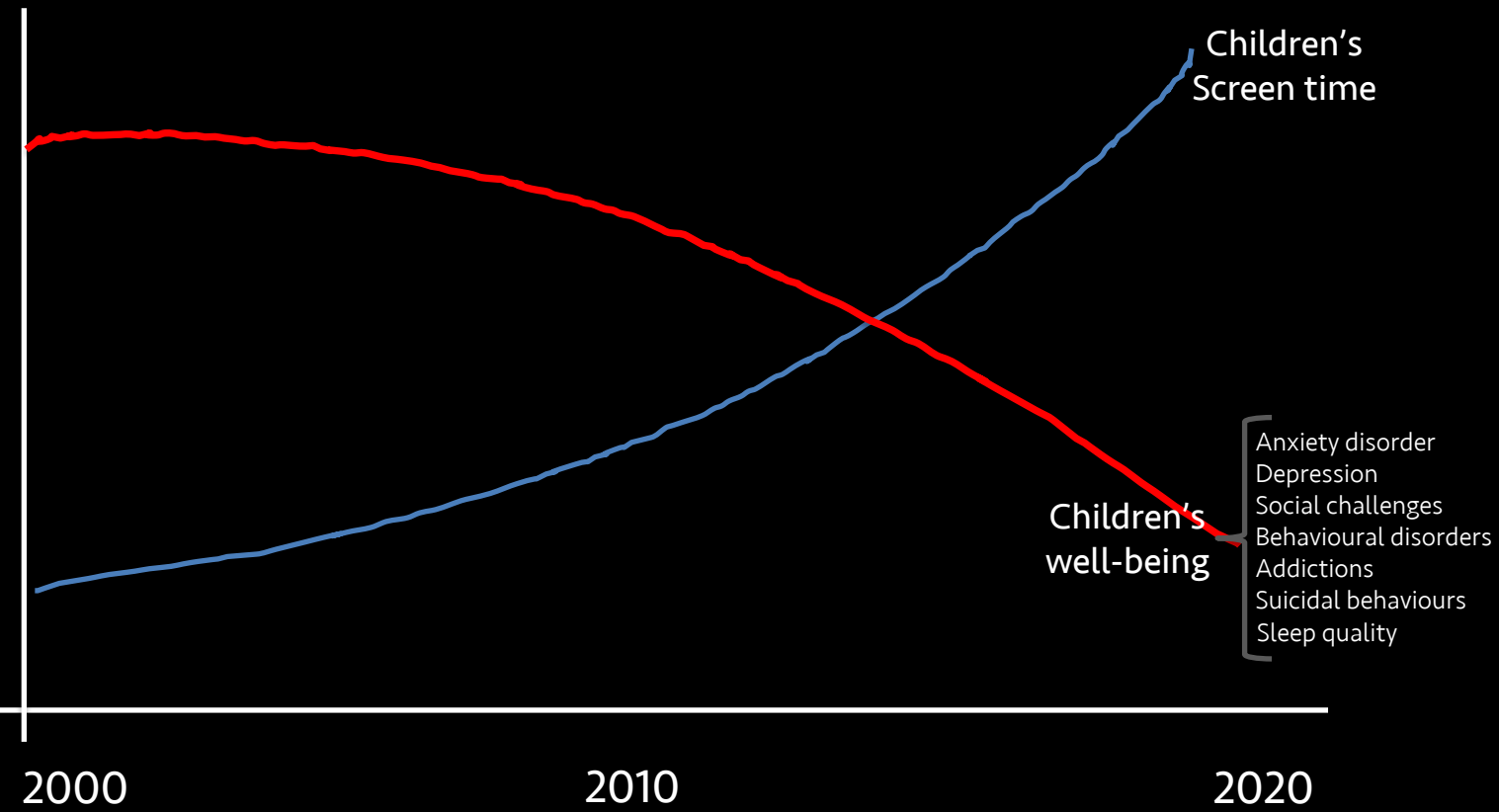
3 Parents' and grandparents' views

4 Digital wellness for all

What is the '*Growing Up Digital*' project?



Children's  
Screen time



Enhancing  
vs.  
Distracting

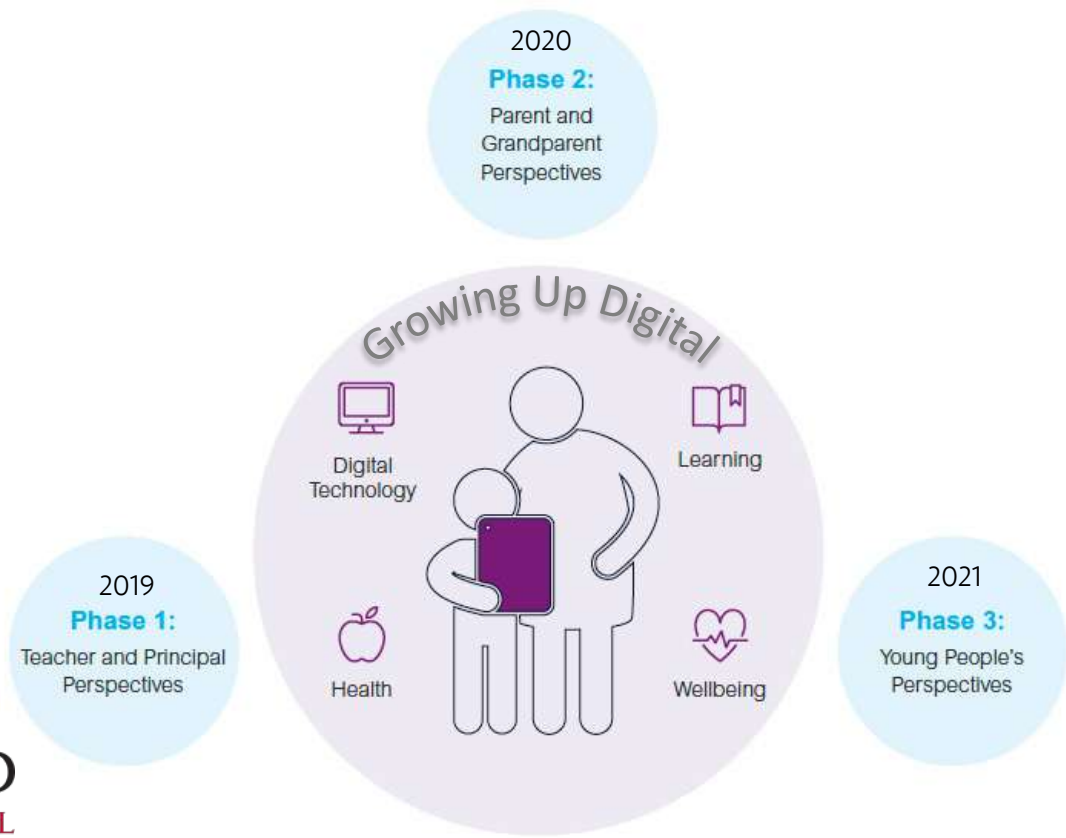
Connecting  
vs.  
Disconnecting

Safety  
vs.  
Risks

Tool  
vs.  
Treat



The aim of Growing Up Digital *is to better understand the scope of physical, mental and social consequences of digital media and technologies on children and youth.*



Teachers' and principals' views



# Phase 1 in Australia in 2019



**1876**  
respondents



**48%**  
have more than **20 years**  
teaching experience



**73%**  
are female



**48%**  
are teachers



**31%**  
are principals



**16%**  
are administrators



**95%**  
work in primary  
and secondary  
schools



**26%**  
work in rural,  
remote and  
regional schools

# Key findings:

“Technology is a powerful tool...”

**43%**

believe that digital technologies **enhance their teaching and learning activities**, rather than detract.



**68%**

believe that opportunities to facilitate inquiry-based learning are **enhanced by technology**.



# Key findings:

“...but it’s also a great distraction”

**84%** of educators in Australia believe that digital technologies are a **growing distraction** in the learning environment.



Educators used terms such as:



when describing their observations of students and reactions to having devices removed.



**78%** say that students' abilities to focus on educational tasks has decreased.



have noticed a **decrease in student empathy.**



**60%** have noted declining levels of **physical activity.**

# Key findings:

“Students come to school with many challenges”

**Australian classrooms are becoming more complex places to teach and learn.**

In the last 3-5 years, students with:



**Emotional challenges**  
have increased  
**94%**



**Social challenges**  
have increased  
**93%**



**Behaviour problems**  
have increased  
**93%**

**Cognitive challenges**  
have increased  
**84%**

# Key findings:

“More students come to school not ready to learn”



59%

observed a **decline**  
in students' overall  
**readiness to learn.**

# Key findings:

## “Digital technologies affect teachers, too”

**2 in 3**

say technology is a growing distraction in their life.



**89%**

aged 25 or younger agreed that digital **technology poses an increasing distraction.**



**24%**

felt they were addicted to digital technology, and this number increased to **61% aged 25 or younger.**

These results indicate that **younger educators** are most at risk of the **negative effects of technology** overuse.

Parents' and grandparents' views

# Phase 2 in Australia in 2020



## Who participated in Phase 2?



**95%** had completed post-secondary school education or training.

**78%** were living in metropolitan or urban areas.

**22%** were living in regional, remote or rural areas.



The mean number of children in each family was 2.1.



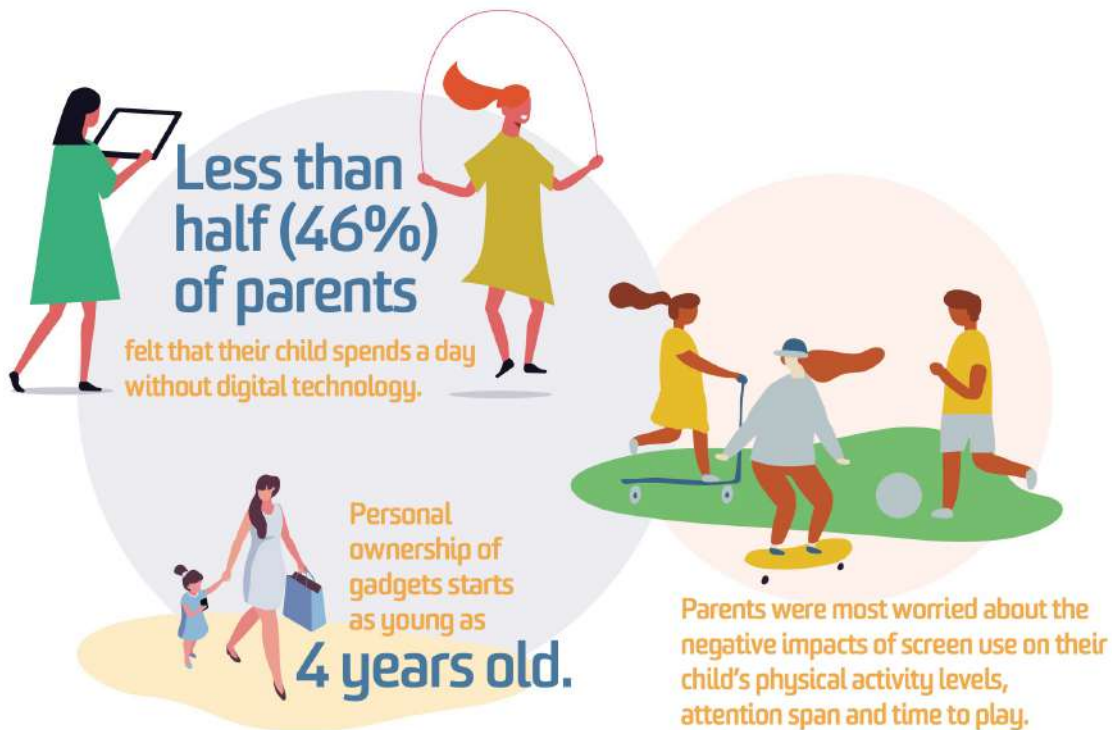
**2450 parents and grandparents**

Source: Growing Up Digital Australia (2021)



# Key findings:

## Childhood has changed.



Key findings:

# Parenting is harder than it used to be.

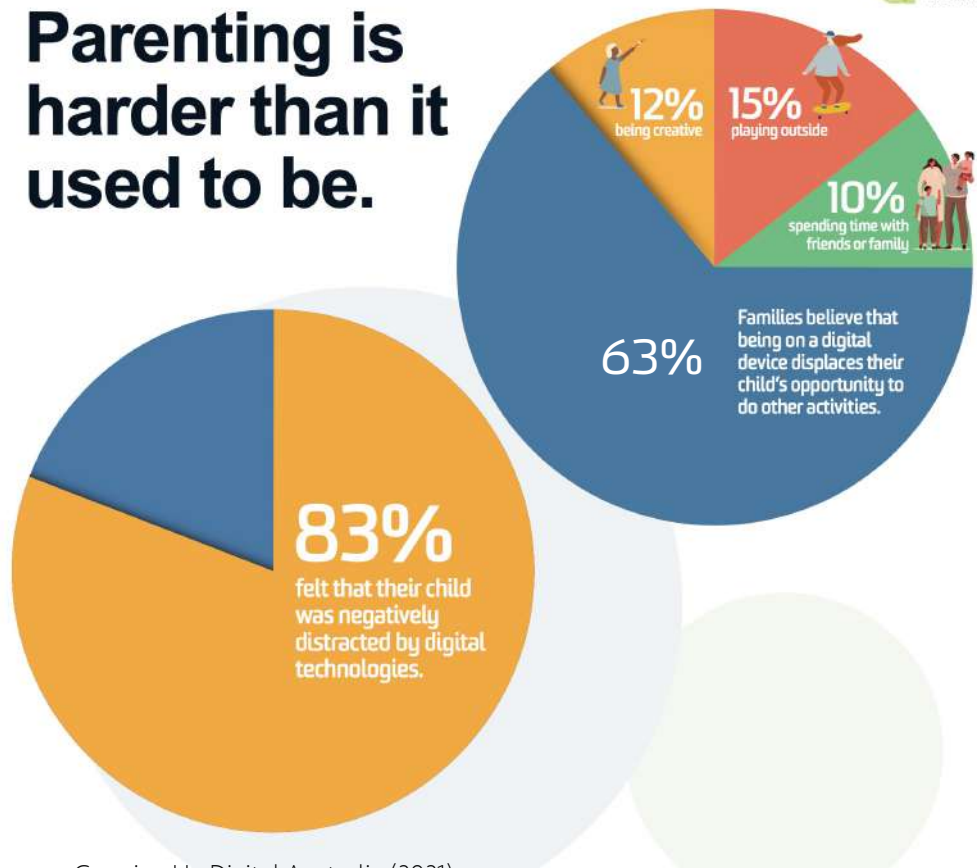


**3 of 4 parents**

think it is harder to control their child's digital habits since they have got their own screen-based device.

# Key findings:

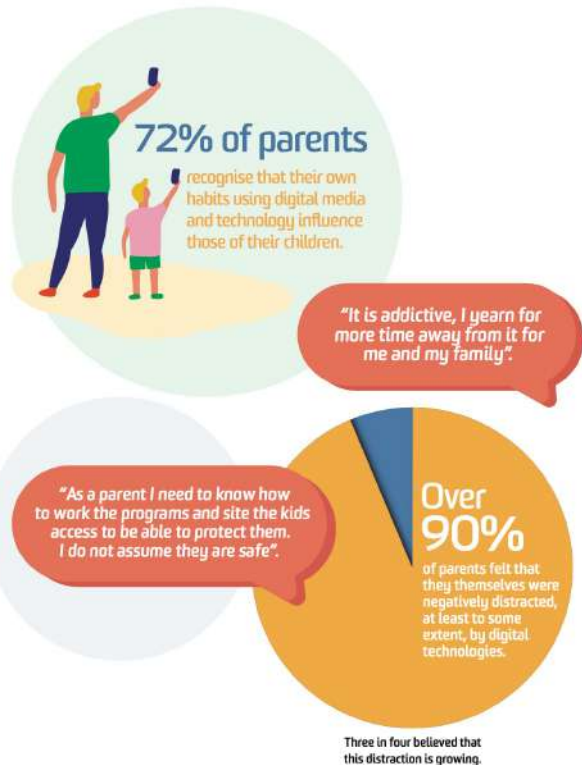
## Parenting is harder than it used to be.



# Key findings:



## Parents know they are role models but are distracted.



# Key findings:

## Digi-grandparents.



Grandparents care a lot about how the digital world is affecting their grandchildren. 42% of grandparents never or rarely share the digital space with their grandchildren.

"With all of my 9 grandchildren, ages 3 to 17, I see very negative effects on their behaviour when using devices, they become moody, argumentative, throw tantrums, they can't self-regulate their time and have to be told to stop. The ability to complete schoolwork on devices at home is positive, the ones of primary school age do that well, however their handwriting skills are not great and their ability to spell check makes them lazy and doesn't help with their spelling abilities".

# Key findings:

## The thin line between leisure and learning.



### More than half

of parents primarily allow their children to use digital media and technology for entertainment value. Comparatively, only one in five predominantly use it for learning purposes.



### About half of parents

agreed that they would welcome more support from their child's school to help them and their child to manage digital media and technologies use at home.

*"Our dependence on technology for connection and schoolwork has increased, therefore the requirement for screen time after school has increased. It has forced us to have more conversations about striking the right balance between technology and off-line schoolwork".*

# Key findings:



## Digital inequity and how it affects young people.

The proportion of parents who felt that their personal use of digital media and technologies had no impact.



Parents who provided their children a mobile phone was significantly higher in the lowest income bracket than any other group, and lowest in high achieving children.



**3 in 5 children** who are struggling at school go to bed with their devices.

**30% of families** allow their children to use their devices in their bedrooms after bedtime every single day.



**Nearly half (47%)** of lower-income parents allow their children to sleep with their smartphones every single night.



Lower-income parents and lower-achieving students are most at risk of problematic interactive media use.

# CONCLUSIONS

1. Conditions for productive teaching and learning have gone down
2. Parenting is more complicated than before due to digital lifestyle
3. We all experience negative distraction caused by digital devices



# The declaration of hope: Digital wellness

“There is no power for change  
greater than a community  
discovering what it cares about.”

*- Margaret Wheatley*



# What can we do?

1. Avoid simple binary solutions to complex human challenges.
2. Teach children how to self-regulate their digital habits.
3. Start together taking small, concrete steps towards digital wellness.
4. Lead better informed conversations with colleagues, parents and kids.
5. Be a role model: Lead by example for safer, healthier and happier life!

# More information:

Growing Up Digital Australia: Phase 1 Technical Report. UNSW Gonski Institute, 2020.

<https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/UNSW%20GIE%20GUD%20Phase%201%20Technical%20Report%20MAR20%20v2.pdf>

Growing Up Digital Australia: Phase 2 Technical Report. UNSW Gonski Institute, 2021.

[https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/GONS5000%20Growing%20Up%20Digital%20Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/GONS5000%20Growing%20Up%20Digital%20Report_FINAL.pdf)

Graham, A. & Sahlberg, P. (2020). Schools are moving online, but not all children start out digitally equal. The Conversation, March 27. <https://theconversation.com/schools-are-moving-online-but-not-all-children-start-out-digitally-equal-134650>

Sahlberg, P. & Graham, A. (2020). Teaching changing children in the changing times. Journal of Professional Learning, Semester 2. <https://cpl.asn.au/journal/semester-2-2020/teaching-changing-children-in-the-changing-times>

Sahlberg, P. & Graham, A. (2021). Children own around 3 digital devices on average, and few can spend a day without them. The Conversation, April 28. <https://theconversation.com/children-own-around-3-digital-devices-on-average-and-few-can-spend-a-day-without-them-159546>

PLUS: eSafety Commissioner's website: <https://www.esafety.gov.au>

THANK YOU!

