

# GROWING UP DIGITAL

- *Towards digital wellness for all*

WAPPA – ACEL Issues & Insights webinar series #3  
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 [pasi\\_sahlberg](#)



**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY  
PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION**



Australian Council for  
Educational Leaders

*“How to enjoy the benefits of digital media and technologies without compromising learning, wellbeing and relationships?”*

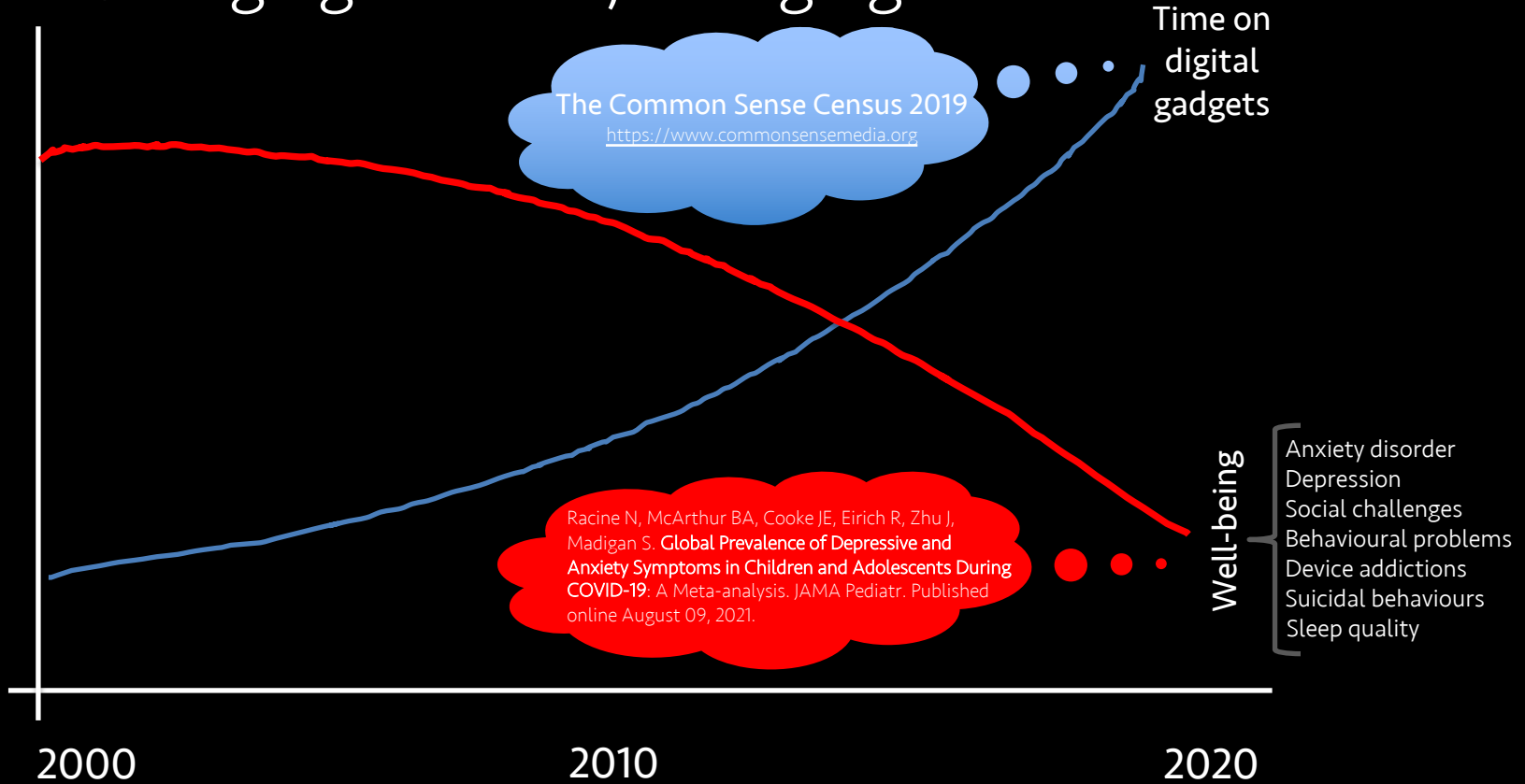
Goal:

1. Provide evidence-based view to the role of digital media and technologies among primary school-aged children in Australia;
2. Understand the consequences of digital lifestyle for wellbeing and learning;
3. Explore practical ways to improve digital wellness for all of us.



## **1. WHAT DO WE KNOW?**

# Changing children, changing times



Learning  
vs.  
Distracting

Connecting  
vs.  
Disconnecting

Digital media  
&  
technologies

Safety  
vs.  
Risks

Tool  
vs.  
Treat



We need to understand better the scope of physical, mental and social consequences of digital media and technologies on children.

**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**.



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



**YET**  
**78%** have noticed a **decrease in student empathy**.



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



Sync commissioned a groundbreaking survey on the topic of digital wellbeing, involving more than 15,000 participants across 30 countries. Its results, which will be unveiled at the summit, highlight society's relationship with technology at a global scale

**88%** of global citizens believe technology is mostly a force for good and positive progress



YET

**40%** of global citizens find it harder to focus on basic tasks due to heavy use of technology



**69%** believe social media improves their quality of life



YET

**40%** of those bullied or harassed online report higher levels of anxiety and loneliness, while a fifth have considered self-harm



**83%** believe technology has improved their lives by making it easier to stay in touch with friends and families



YET

**53%** would rather live without a close friend than without their mobile



Source: Digital Wellbeing Global Report (2021)

**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.**



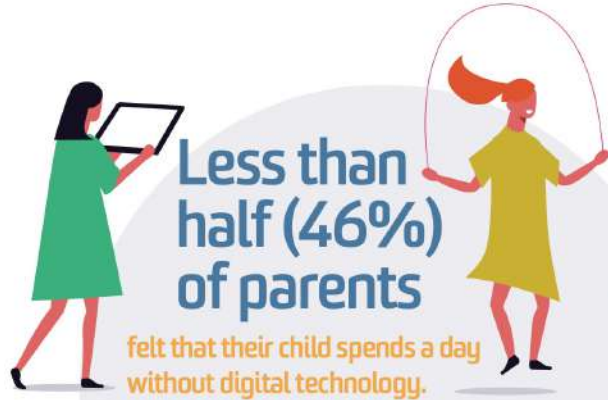
**24%**

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.



# Childhood has changed.



Less than  
half (46%)  
of parents

felt that their child spends a day  
without digital technology.



Personal  
ownership of  
gadgets starts  
as young as

**4 years old.**



Parents were most worried about the  
negative impacts of screen use on their  
child's physical activity levels,  
attention span and time to play.





**2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

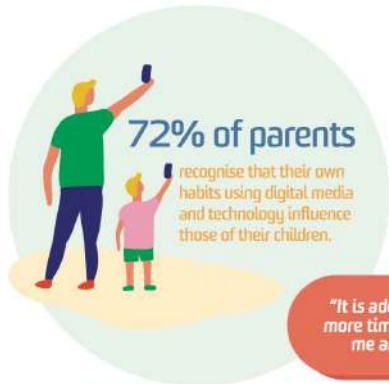
# Parenting is harder than it used to be.



**3 of 4 parents**

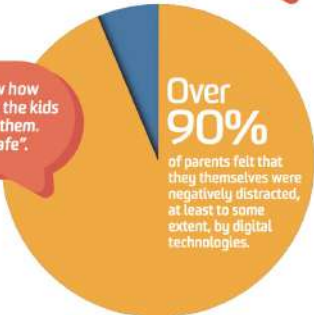
think it is harder to control their child's digital habits since they have got their own screen-based device.

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



*"It is addictive, I yearn for more time away from it for me and my family".*

*"As a parent I need to know how to work the programs and site the kids access to be able to protect them. I do not assume they are safe".*



Three in four believed that this distraction is growing.

## Digital inequity and how it affects young people.



**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.

# “Teaching is harder than it used to be.”

## 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%**



**59%**

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



### 3. WHAT CAN WE DO?

# 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".*

1. Conditions for productive teaching and learning in many schools are declining
2. Parenting is more complicated than before due to parents' and children's digital lifestyles
3. Most of us want digital wellness but we don't know how to do that

# So, what can we do?

Avoid simple binary solutions to complex challenges

**PUT LIMITS, NO BANS!**

**ASK THE KIDS.**

**SAME RULES FOR YOU AND ME.**

Talk about the benefits and risks of digital lifestyles

**FOCUS ON BENEFITS.**

**BE AWARE OF RISKS.**

**USE GOOD EVIDENCE.**

Set digital wellness as a common goal

**DISCOVER GOOD DIGITAL HABITS.**

**SET SIMPLE FIRST STEPS.**

**DISCUSS THE IMPACT.**

Be a role model for good life

**KNOW YOUR OWN DIGITAL HABITS.**

**NOTE PROGRESS.**

**LEAD THE CHANGE BY EXAMPLE.**



## 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!

