

FORWARD CORNER

The 1st Week in May is Screen Free Week

As staff and families receive their immunizations and we get closer to herd immunity, hopefully life as we used to know it will reemerge. Over the past year, many of us have been lax in limiting screen time. On-line learning, limited social opportunities, boredom, looking for in-home entertainment and such had many of us gravitating to screens to find comfort and “something to do”. Screen Free Week (and the entire month of May) is a great time to remind ourselves (and recommit to) of the importance of getting back to no screen time for children under two and two or fewer hours for children in general. Screentime.org (click here to see the specific citations) reminds us of the dangers of too much TV and screen time for young children.

- Seventy percent of day-care centers use TV during a typical day.
- In a study of preschoolers (ages 1-4), a child’s risk of being overweight increased by six percent for every hour of television watched per day.
- Research now indicates that for every hour of television children watch each day, their risk of developing attention-related problems later increases by ten percent.
- The more TV preschoolers watch, the less well they do academically in the first grade; also, the more TV preschoolers watch, the less well-socialized they are in the first grade.
- Children in households where the TV is on “always” or “most of the time” are less likely to read than are children in other homes.

Screen time is also unhealthy for these reasons: ([Reducing Screen Time Kit](#))

- Children are spending more time sitting and little time moving their bodies.
- Children learn unhealthy eating practices from advertisements.
- Sitting in front of the TV can increase the desire to snack. We associate TV viewing with food.
- Overstimulation can prevent children from getting the sleep they need at nap time.

During this annual event, children and families (and ECE programs) are encouraged to turn off screens and “turn on life”. Instead of relying on television programming for entertainment, let’s read, daydream, explore, enjoy nature, and spend time with family and friends. Early childhood educators can take advantage of Screen Free Week/May to educate parents, share information and coach and support parents in limiting their children’s screen viewing. [Share Skip the Screen](#) (English and Spanish version) with the families in your program.

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

May Call to Action for Families: Set a goal to reduce screen time in your home. For example: No TV on week nights. No TV during the day on weekends. Two or fewer hours a day. Pick steaming options over television programs with food-related advertisements. No screen time for babies and tots. Match at least one hour of outdoor play for each ½ in front of a screen, etc.

May Call to Action for Early Childhood Providers: If your program is one of the 70% using screen time daily, begin to wean children off TVs/screens by “turning off the TV” and engaging in other activities.

For information on healthy eating and activity initiatives in DuPage, check out www.forwarddupage.org.