**Can students be overconnected?**

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In the pursuit of happiness, Aristotle famously wrote “Meson te kai ariston”:moderation, staying away from both excess and deficiency, is best. The past weeks of holiday celebrations reminded many of us how there could be too much of even the good things in life, e.g. too much eating and too much drinking.

Similar advice may apply just as well to young people’s use of the Internet. Most 15-year-olds in OECD countries spend at least some time each day wandering through cyberspace as part of their media diet. As this month’s[PISA in Focus](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/does-it-matter-how-much-time-students-spend-on-line-outside-of-school_5jm5fb7cq0zp-en) reports, in 2012, every day or almost every day, a large majority of 15-year-old students (71%, on average across OECD countries) browsed the Internet for fun, e.g. on video-streaming sites, and participated in an online social network (73%). In most OECD countries, more than one in two students reported spending two hours or more on line every day on weekends.

While spending up to about two hours on line every day is the norm, some students consume Internet services (or video games, particularly if they’re boys) for much longer than this. In fact, for quite a few students, the time spent every day on the Internet does not appear to have many limits – apart from the 24 hours that make up a day. On average, about 7% of students in OECD countries reported spending more than six hours on line every day outside of school – including on schooldays. In the Russian Federation and Sweden, one in eight students so reported.

Children gain access to a host of educational resources and engaging experiences through digital devices and the Internet, but concerns are also mounting about the possible harmful consequences of unrestricted Internet use.[Children clearly need to be protected from online threats](http://www.oecd.org/sti/ieconomy/childrenonline_with_cover.pdf) , such as exposure to harmful content or contacts (think pornography or cyber bullying), online fraud or abusive marketing practices, and privacy-related risks, such as identity theft. Many of these risks existed well before the Internet, but measures to protect children from the corresponding offline threats (such as physical barriers, age-related norms that prevent access to certain spaces, and adult supervision) are difficult to migrate and enforce in a virtual space that is inherently open.

Research has also shown that extended screen time in itself may have negative consequences, e.g. [on adolescents](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2010.02.006)**,**[sleep](http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006748), [physical activity](http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-7-46)and [social well-being](http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/archpediatrics.2009.280).

PISA data confirm a troubling relationship between the time teenagers spend on line outside of school and their sense of belonging at school. Results clearly indicate that extreme Internet users (those who spend six or more hours per day on line during weekdays) are twice as likely as moderate Internet users (those who spend between one and two hours per day on line) to report that they feel lonely at school (14% compared to 7%). Extreme Internet users are also particularly at risk of being less engaged with school and of scoring below their peers in the PISA assessment of mathematics.

While these findings cannot prove cause and effect, they suggest that avoiding excess, when it comes to using technology, is important not just for students’ leisure time, but also for how effective school systems are in promoting students’ learning. A concerted effort by schools and parents can help students to become critical consumers of Internet services and electronic media. Schools can raise awareness about the risks that children face on line and how to avoid them; and parents can help their children to moderate their screen time and balance it with other recreational activities, such as sports and, equally important, sleep.

The bottom line: A concerted effort by schools, parents and society can educate students as critical consumers of Internet services and electronic media, helping them to make informed choices and avoid harmful behaviours. Schools can raise awareness in families about the risks that children face on line and how to avoid them. And parents must help children to balance leisure uses of ICT with time for other recreational activities that do not involve screens, such as sports and, equally important, sleep.

<http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/does-it-matter-how-much-time-students-spend-on-line-outside-of-school_5jm5fb7cq0zp-en>

Sherry Turkle:

**Connected, but alone?**

**TED2012**· 19:48 · **Filmed** Feb 2012

Watch video and take notes

“I share, therefore I am.”

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore:

**The mysterious workings of the adolescent brain**

**TEDGlobal 2012**· 14:26 · **Filmed** Jun 2012

Watch video and take notes

**Reflection on the adolescent brain, connections and loneliness (Mentorship Year One)**

For those of you in Mentorship Year Two, it is time to take your learning a step further. Read the article, “How Emotions Affect Learning” instead of redoing the work above, and answer the following in the spaces below. Link these ideas clearly with your workshop topics and activities.

What have science learned about the connection between emotion and reason?

How can we integrate emotional expression in classroom life?

What can we do in our workshops to focus on metacognitive activities?

What can we do in our workshops to draw out emotions in our grade 8s so they have a higher chance of informational recall?