Technology Committee Report:

Community Feedback on School Chromebook Use

Montgomery County Council of PTAs

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Executive Summary 4

Background and Objectives 4

Survey Method 5

Survey Results 5

I. Demographics 5

A. Responses by Role 5

B. Responses by School 6

II. Clear Majority Stated There Was Too Much Overall Chromebook Use and Had Concerns About Permitted Chromebook Use 7

A. The overall time spent on screens is excessive, especially for younger students. . 9

B. Use of education technology is harming learning and student wellbeing. 9

C. Use of Chromebooks has harmed the way teachers teach. 11

D. Using online assignments prevents caregivers from seeing graded work and helping students study at home. 11

E. Using screens as a reward leads to distraction and rushing through work.....12

F. Students lack handwriting skills. 13

III. Minority of Respondents Had No Concerns About Overall Amount or Manner of Permitted Chromebook Use 13

A. Educational technology prepares students for screen-based testing, work, and life beyond school. 13

B. Some students with disabilities benefit from technology. 16

C. Providing Chromebooks to all families is convenient and equitable. 16

D. Some respondents questioned the fairness of the survey. 17

IV. Non-Academic Use is a Widespread Phenomenon 17

A. Distraction is a widespread, widely-known problem for students using internet-enabled Chromebooks. 19

B. MCPS's blocking software is inadequate and teachers cannot police widespread misuse by students. 21

C. Better controls or a completely different approach are needed. 22

D. Specific examples of non-academic use involve games, videos, chatting, and accessing inappropriate or disturbing content.....24

i. Games 24

ii. Watching Video Entertainment 25

iii. Chatting with Peers using Google Docs or Google Slides 26

iv. Disturbing and Inappropriate Content.....26

E. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Reports Home from Teachers 29

F. Student Misuse of Chromebooks as a Disciplinary Issue.....29

G. Student Misuse of Chomebooks – Self-Control.....30

H. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Lack of Parental/Teacher Control.....32

V. Desire for Transparency on School Screen Use by Caregivers 34

VI. Problems With Chromebook Access at Home 35

VII. Overwhelming Majority Favor Increasing Use of Textbooks, Results Are Mixed on Opting Out.....37

A. Many responses suggest limiting the use of screens for learning and increasing book-based, face-to-face learning.....38

B. Just over half of respondents favored an opportunity to opt out of screen-based instruction and homework. 39

Conclusions 42

Appendix A: Survey Questions 44

Appendix B: Full Survey Results 47

Executive Summary

The MCCPTA Technology Community disseminated a survey seeking community feedback on school Chromebook use on November 20, 2025. Based on the 1,003 responses received from November 20, 2025 to January 12, 2026, the clear majority of respondents

- Believe there is too much overall Chromebook use,
- Have concerns about how Chromebooks are used,
- Have encountered students misusing the school-issued Chromebooks for non-academic uses like playing video games and watching videos, including age-inappropriate or disturbing content, and
- Would like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper for instruction and homework.

Additionally, the free-written responses express a desire for more effective controls on what students can access through school-issued Chromebooks and for more information from schools and teachers about how Chromebooks are used in school in terms of overall screentime and in terms of what content their student accesses.

Background and Objectives

On November 20, 2025, The MCCPTA Technology Committee launched a survey to collect parent and caregiver feedback on school Chromebook use. The survey was motivated by a recently published article in the New York Times by Dr. Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, titled "The Screen That Ate Your Child's Education" (November 16, 2026). The survey was also motivated by a desire to create a forum where parents and caregivers can share their own observations and experiences with school Chromebooks, as anecdotes have been circulating informally for many years regarding observations of technology use in classrooms.

Concurrently, the Technology Committee was also working on issues relating to the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in MCPS schools, because MCPS was revising its technology policy, IGS, to account for generative AI and other "emerging technology"). In the course of that work, the Technology Committee discovered that generative AI features were already accessible on students' school Chromebooks (in the form of chatbots like CK-12 Foundation's Flexi). It became clear that any learning impacts of generative AI would be inextricably tied to the existing technology ecosystem in MCPS schools – including how much access – especially un-monitored access – students had to their school Chromebooks during the school day. That said, this survey does not specifically seek

caregiver input about AI. Rather, it seeks to understand caregiver views of Chromebook use and misuse more broadly.

Survey Method

The Technology Committee primarily disseminated the survey through existing MCCPTA listservs for PTA presidents and PTA delegates, as well as the committee's own listserv. Under Article XI of MCCPTA's bylaws, "[e]ach member local PTA shall be eligible to be represented by 2 delegates or their alternates as selected by the local PTA according to its own bylaws." This method is dependent on local PTAs' presidents and delegates to share the survey with their local school through local communication methods (e.g., newsletters, ParentSquare messages, etc.).

Survey Results

The survey consisted of several questions that offered respondents pre-determined answers to select as well as three opportunities to share free-written responses. *See* Appendix A. For this summary, we have combined and organized the free-written responses to provide samples that help elaborate and illustrate the rest of the data. The full responses to all questions, excluding any personally identifying information, are linked in Appendix B.

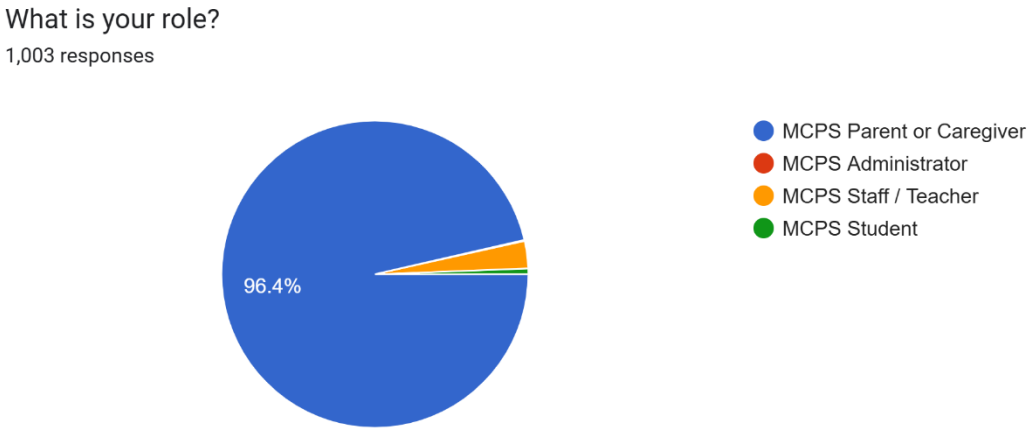
I. Demographics

The survey was open to MCPS caregivers, students, teachers, and administrators. The survey collected a total of 1,003 responses as of January 12, 2026, at 2:00 pm.

A. Responses by Role

The vast majority of respondents self-reported as a parent or caregiver. This is likely because the survey was distributed through PTA forums. Some of these respondents also serve as MCPS staff (e.g. teachers, substitute teachers).

Twenty-nine respondents self-reported as MCPS staff or teachers, six self-reported as MCPS students, and one self-reported as a MCPS administrator. Respondents are affiliated with many different schools and grade levels (due to multiple children or different roles, i.e., caregiver and teacher).



B. Responses by School

There was a particularly large volume of responses from Tilden Middle School, Thomas W. Pyle Middle School, and Wyngate Elementary School. The following are the top ten schools by number of responses to the question: "Which school does your child attend?"

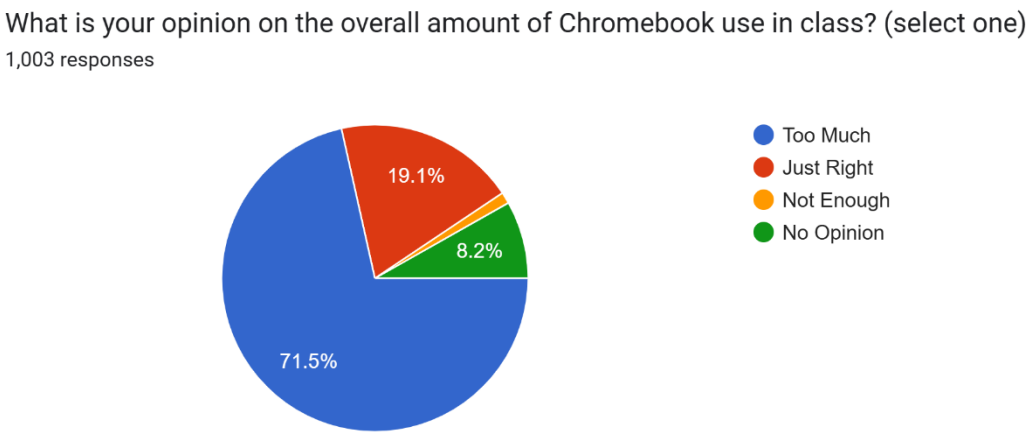
Which school does your child attend?	# of Responses
Tilden Middle School	97
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School	75
Wyngate Elementary School	57
North Bethesda Middle School	44
Poolesville High School	38
Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School	29
Sligo Creek Elementary School	28
Walter Johnson High School	25
Silver Creek Middle School	22
Forest Knolls Elementary School	22

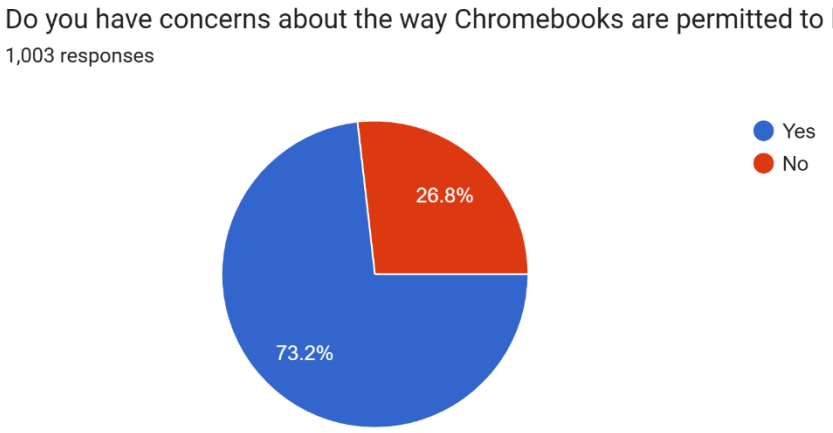
The following are the top ten schools by number of responses to the question: "If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable." Three of the top ten responding schools in this category were also in the top ten responding schools in the category above: Walter Johnson High School, North Bethesda Middle School, Wyngate Elementary School, and Thomas W. Pyle Middle School.

If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable.	# of Responses
Other	40
Walter Johnson High School	23
North Bethesda Middle School	21
Garrett Park Elementary School	21
Wyngate Elementary School	20
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School	17
Walt Whitman High School	16
Farmland Elementary School	16
Chevy Chase Elementary School (3-5)	16
Albert Einstein High School	16

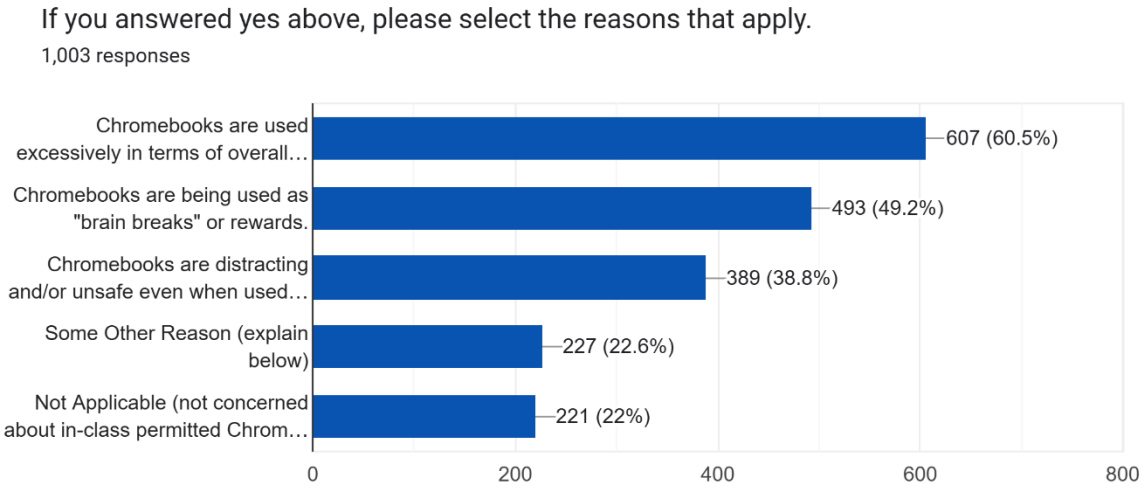
II. Clear Majority Stated There Was Too Much Overall Chromebook Use and Had Concerns About Permitted Chromebook Use

Over 70% of respondents thought there was too much overall use of Chromebooks in class (71.5% said there was too much use, 19.1% said there was just right use, 1.2% said there was not enough use, and 8.2% had no opinion). Over 70% of respondents had concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class (73.2% said YES they had concerns, and 26.8% said NO they did not have concerns).





Those respondents who had concerns about the permitted uses of Chromebooks were offered possible reasons for concerns and could check more than one box. Concerns selected included excessive overall screen time (60.5%), use of Chromebooks as “brain breaks” or rewards (49.2%), and that Chromebooks are distracting or unsafe even when used for educational applications (38.8%).



The free-written responses expanded on respondent concerns. Representative samples of these responses are provided below.

A. The overall time spent on screens is excessive, especially for younger students.

“I volunteered in my children’s classrooms weekly when they were in K-2 (at TPES). I was shocked at the amount of Chromebook use even by grade 2.”

“Credible, peer-reviewed, scientific studies show that screen use causes all kind of damage to children's brains and recommended use for children 6 and older is no more than 30-60 minutes a day, and yet students spend much more time than that just using their Chromebooks at school and doing homework on a device at home.”

“During open house in K, the children were on screens (either using Chromebooks or engaging w videos on smart board) for nearly 2 hours. I did not expect children so young to be so heavily using technology when developmentally they need movement, play, read-alouds and relational interaction”

“Screen time is detrimental to kids’ attention, and take away from valuable time when kids can be engaged in true learning or socializing with peers. This generation of kids will have plenty of screen time in their lifetime, and starting them at Kindergarten at school is absolutely unnecessary and detrimental.”

B. Use of education technology is harming learning and student wellbeing.

“The post-pandemic reliance on screens in school is clearly linked to poor learning for kids of all ages.”

“[A]ll of this investment in technology has not shown any improvement in achievement; on the contrary, performance has dramatically declined to crisis levels for both math and literacy.”

“I am a statistic[i]an and psychological scientist. Research shows that student use of screens in class is, on average, a huge negative. Students simply do not use screens to learn or take notes nea[rly] as often as they use them inappropriately. In fact, a careful experiment showed that students who took notes using paper and pen outperformed students who took notes using a computer.”

“I think this technology does not actually promote learning in any way that cannot be achieved or exceeded by pencil and paper. In addition, it increases overall child [] screen time and poses temptations to playing games anytime a student is bored, which is something we should be trying to reduce rather than increase. I think we need to bear in mind that these kids' brains are developing and it is not just the outcome on any given test or homework that matters, but the mental development that occurs. All indications right

now are that doing things on screens decreases learning and proper mental development relative to, e.g., writing with a pen or pencil on paper."

"Research is clear: chromebooks are terrible for learning."

"It contributes to declining literacy, attentional problems, unfettered access to our children's data, and screen addiction. Perhaps most alarmingly it decreases social skills because they're staring at a screen instead of collaborating with their classmates. Further, when the tech is down, the teaching stops, which is unacceptable."

"Most EdTech and 'educational' applications are a scam, do not teach kids as well as pencil/paper and hands-on methods, and do not improve performance."

"As a substitute teacher I have seen the students become fully unengaged with their work as Chromebook use has become nearly 100% of so much class time. In resource rooms I see kids with most or all of their assignments not turned in."

"Use of Chromebooks has been extremely detrimental to my children. It has made their education worse and put them in danger."

"In many classes like history and English, students are supposed to and required to access multiple sources which means opening multiple tabs and reading documents online and then highlighting information and copy/pasting it into a graphic organizer on a different window. As someone in my 40s, this kind of activity makes my brain go crazy because I'm constantly clicking back-and-forth and I can't figure out what window is what window. Children we know, scientifically, there is data that handwriting paper and pencil and reading on paper are better for creating memories and better for learning because of the visual distance and the speed at which they hand write versus type. It's not age-appropriate to require a 11 or 12 year-old sixth grader to have to do this."

"I've also seen assignments my older child (5th grade) completes on his Chromebook, and much of his time appears to be spent formatting slides, choosing images, and making projects visually appealing rather than engaging deeply with the content. My children are strong students and complete their work, but the unstructured access to Chromebooks creates unnecessary distractions. Even so-called 'educational' games often function as little more than mindless entertainment."

"I keep hearing that the benefits of EdTech are overblown and in many cases detrimental. A 2023 report by a UN body found that not only is there little evidence to support the benefits of digital technology use in classrooms, but the 'studies' that claim it is beneficial are funded by the very companies trying to sell it. Our kids are already on screens enough without having to be bombarded with them at school."

C. Use of Chromebooks has harmed the way teachers teach.

From an MCPS teacher: “Some teachers have stopped teaching. They play a pre-recorded video or have students lead themselves through online lessons. Classes are no longer interactive, our kids are spending 6 hours a day on chromebooks followed by 2-3 hours on them at home for homework.”

From an MCPS teacher: “I now call chromebooks pacifiers. They are being used to manage student behavior instead of engaging students or provide education opportunities. MCPS is not monitoring screen time. MCPS is not monitoring what/ how students access. Students are becoming if not already have been addicted to screens. You have removed telephones but continue to allow free reign of chromebooks. . . . As a teacher, I see students who are no longer comfortable writing on a piece of paper. They struggle to be without an electronic device in a 90 minute block. They assume that they can just find the answers later on the computer.”

“Too much exposure to screen throughout the day. It also feels like teaching has moved virtually, there are classes where kids spend time looking at lessons for a good chunk of the class - kids need teachers to teach.”

“After attending a full day with my child in class, I noticed that for some subjects, teaching is much more digitally done than I had expected. The teacher(s) were not teaching using the black board, but rather assisting the students to read the lesson on their laptop, and to do the lesson individually on their chromebook. I am surprised, that normal teaching: explaining concepts, challenging the students with a Q & A, and using stories to tell concepts didn't really happen. I think the question should be much broader than asking about the use of laptops.”

“It wasn’t until halfway through my child’s 6th grade year that I realized that she didn’t have textbooks. She was asking Siri to answer a question for her Spanish homework and I asked her why she wasn’t referencing her text book. She is now in 8th grade and said that though her teachers post slides online, some of them annotate their slides during class but don’t provide the annotated slides to the students. Therefore, the posted slides are not always useful for studying or helping with homework.”

D. Using online assignments prevents caregivers from seeing graded work and helping students study at home.

“My 4th grader is now taking all her math quizzes online only. This is a horrible way to do math. It means the parents do not get graded quizzes sent home. We cannot easily see how are kids are doing. We cannot see where they are struggling. How are we supposed to help

them? If I see in the online grade book that my child failed a quiz or test, but I never get to see that test, the questions she missed, or her work to try to solve them, I have no way to help her improve. MCPS seriously needs to rethink doing all of this online. It's NOT a good way to teach math."

"We can't see many assignments if they are submitted electronically"

"Without textbooks at home, it's hard for us to assist with homework and studying for quizzes and tests. I'm always looking for the material with my child."

"It is exceptionally difficult as a parent to support my children's educational journey where there is not a textbook being used to guide that journey. Each teacher uses canvas differently and there doesn't appear to be cohesiveness in approach and there for as parents and caregivers we are in a very difficult position when our kids ask questions of us and we can't revert back to the lesson from that day/week!"

E. Using screens as a reward leads to distraction and rushing through work.

"I don't like that they 'get to use it' in elementary school when done with work because I feel like my kid rushes through their work."

"Children being given time on chromebooks when work is done: promotes desire to rush through work and then makes is a challenge to transition back to class."

"[C]hromebooks as rewards have resulted in my child rushing through work to finish to get to the reward. Last year, my child expressed relief when they took the chromebooks back at the end of the year. I think there's a real love/hate relationship with the technology that leads to a point of stress or tension that isn't necessary in the classroom."

"In my experience letting kids (my son in particular) play even educational games on their Chromebook after their assigned work is done only motivates h[im] to rush through his work."

"According to the teacher my child will rush through the in class assignment to play games afterwards. I fear the learning portion is cut short. It also makes it hard for the teacher to complete in depth lessons with distraction in the class."

"Children rush through assignments so that they can spend time playing games."

"In first grade French immersion, students with a native French speaking parent are ahead of the class and often finish in-class work earlier than non-native French speakers. Those students have been permitted to use the Chromebook to fill time. To other students this feels like a reward that they will not be able to achieve. It is also distracting for a student

who is completing paper work when the student next to them is opening up a Chromebook and viewing content on the screen. It seems disruptive for class concentration and work completion as well as inequitable allotment of screen-time as a reward."

F. Students lack handwriting skills.

"My children's handwriting is atrocious despite our attempts at home to improve it."

"Bringing back handwriting lessons would be another terrific idea. My son is in 9th grade - he and all of his friends have completely illegible handwriting. Dropping that from the curriculum in 2011 was a huge mistake. If we go back to paper and pens, which we should - we also need to bring back handwriting. I'm so upset that my son missed out on this."

"The children are not practicing their handwriting, and some can barely write."

"PLEASE teach handwriting again. We know kids in high school who can't sign THEIR OWN NAMES for their driver's permits."

"Handwriting is terrible and we are also discovering that typing isn't taught at the ES level. If students are using computers to write they should know how to type."

"My 6th grader's hand writing is horrible - he rarely has to write by hand at school, so there isn't much practice for him."

III. Minority of Respondents Had No Concerns About Overall Amount or Manner of Permitted Chromebook Use

A minority of respondents felt that Chromebooks are used just right or not enough and are not concerned with how Chromebooks are permitted to be used. The free-written responses supplied by those in the minorities for these two questions express views with a few recurring themes.

A. Educational technology prepares students for screen-based testing, work, and life beyond school.

"It is realistic - when they graduate and become employed they will be using computers all day in many professions."

"Many kids benefit from Chromebooks and need to learn how to use the tech/programs for real world purposes. We can't just hand them pencils and papers and expect them to be prepared for college and future careers."

“I think the amount of computer work is appropriate to the current state of the workforce, etc. If we went to paper and pencil, we would only be backsliding. The way of the future is through computer.”

“This is something children/students will have to learn to navigate in life; I welcome them learning to navigat[e] the best practices and uses of tech.”

“I think it’s unreasonable to expect a kindergarten child to complete the Maps test without very much or any training at all on a Chromebook.”

“Our kids need to be computer literate and the best way for them to learn to be so is to use computers for school work. Once kids are out of school, the majority of the additional education and careers they will pursue will require them to know their way around a computer. Not every class should require them to use computers - and there should be ample time for things like PE, art, and other electives that don't require use of a computer. But some use is warranted as a way to train our kids to be successful in the future.”

“Our students need to learn how to use technology responsibly. A lot is done on the computer these days and students should be comfortable using it. I do recognize that it poses a challenge for teachers to monitor and make sure they are being used appropriately.”

“I think using a computer in school is an important skill that needs to be developed in our current society.”

“Mindfully integrating technology in schools is essential, because children must learn to navigate the digital world they will eventually live and work in. They need to understand how algorithms work and shape their experiences and develop the ability to manage distraction. Those are skills that can only be taught through guided, hands-on use of technology, not by avoiding it.”

“I think learning to use technology is key and there needs to be robust safeguards for kids so that they are not able to access content they shouldn't be accessing during times they should be learning.”

“I think Chromebook use is fine. The reality is that most white collar work is done on computers. Learning how to responsibly use the technology is important. I think schools have found a good balance. Math should be kept primarily on paper though.”

“Chromebooks are a tool that support lea[r]ning and access to content like Khan Academy.”

“Whether some people like it or not, the world beyond grade school INCLUDES technology and digital literacy. THEREFORE, I 100% think that if we decreased digital use, we would be doing a disservice to students as we would not be preparing them for what they will be required to know and use in the future. It is imperative that kids do learn how to use digital devices appropriately and in a variety of ways.”

“I think learning how to use computers is very important for our children’s future.”

“The permitted Chromebook uses I have observed so far in early elementary have been a huge benefit to my student. Applications like Happy Numbers and Boost allow my student to proceed at his own pace and get reinforcement and enrichment on specific skills as needed or appropriate. This level of individualized instruction wouldn’t be possible at a classroom level without the Chromebooks. It also allows the teacher to spend more time with the students who will most benefit from one-on-one in-person instruction. Additionally, because the curricula within the applications are taught consistently across learners, I believe these resources could be a significant boon to students who may not have a great connection with their teacher in a given year. . . . Facility with computers is an important skill and the engaging applications permitted by MCPS encourage students to learn to use computers in ways that will serve them well in the future.”

“Once a kid is in high school we need to be preparing them to be adults. I understand moving from middle to high school is an adjustment with restrictions on computers but at some point parents need to cut the cord and let the teachers decide what is best for their class. Computers are a part of every day life and trying to shield the teens from it is a waste of time. If lessons and a teacher is engaging then teens pay attention. If kids are distracted, then let them fail. That’s a life lesson. . . . Let teachers be in control of their classroom in high school. Teens need to learn how to work with distractions and still get the job done. That is life. We coddle the teens too much and they are unprepared for college or trade school or jobs. Once they leave mcps they are not being babysat anymore. If they are distracted they fail or get fired. Let them learn this in the environment of high school.”

“Computer use is a part of everyone's future. The kids need to know how to use this tool. Those who don't learn will be left behind and disadvantaged. They need to know how to type, how to take notes, how to compose and edit documents, how to research information…the list of computer skills they need for the future is quite lengthy. Another skill they need to learn is how to self-regulate their computer use. Furthermore, computers provide excellent interactive learning tools that would be unavailable without one (for example, Desmos, Duo Lingo, Quizlet, Delta Math, Khan Academy) and virtual textbooks that would be prohibitively expensive if purchased in hardcopy. I come from the generation where people were wringing their hands that calculators were going to be the end of people

learning math--the current debate over Chrome Books in the schools seems like the same discussion all over again with different words substituted. We look back at that and think how silly that was, and I predict that some day we will look back at this and think the same."

"Modern work environments for many of use requires the use of computers. Everyday life requires the use of computers, as we see through the sending of this survey via computer. Colleges require the use of computers for study. Withholding computers from our students will only set them behind as they further their education, enter the workforce, and the real world. We need to emphasize proper use, but they need to learn to use computers as part of their learning environment. And yes, computers offer distraction - but students who want to be distracted will always find ways to entertain themselves and others with computers or without."

B. Some students with disabilities benefit from technology.

"I'd appreciate better monitoring software and some breaks from staring at screens, but my child has an IEP and needs a Chromebook to support his learning/processing. Handwriting isn't an option for him and I don't want him to be singled as the lone Chromebook user forced to sit with the teacher."

"The appropriate use of Chromebooks depends on the student. Students with learning disabilities can benefit from more time on them. I trust the teachers, the learning center, and FIT/special ed teachers on making that judgement."

"My son does better typing than writing, and it is in his IEP he has access to a Chromebook."

"The use of the Chromebook has really helped my high schooler with ADHD to stay on top of his assignment submission and to focus on learning the content rather than being penalized for grammar and spelling mistakes and bad handwriting. Chromebooks provide great tools for children with learning difficulties and should therefore be allowed at school."

"First of all, thank you very much, MCPSMD, for providing Chromebook to students. My child is a special need child. He thrives on using technologies such as Chromebook at school as he learns to coordinate his hand writing. Even though he is getting better with hand writing thanks to his highschool teachers' patience, we think that our son would not be able to finish his schoolwork on time without the chromebook."

C. Providing Chromebooks to all families is convenient and equitable.

"Not everyone can afford a chromebook so it is a good thing that MCPS provided them to everyone. It is helpful especially to lower income families with multiple students."

“Chromebooks are useful for students as a source of information and access[. T]hey level the playing field and provide greater equity for students who couldn’t otherwise afford personal computers. However, too often in high schools students view them as a vehicle through which they can detach from class and disengage, rather than simply an easier way to complete work (particularly writing).”

“It's been enormously helpful to our family to have these offered free of charge.”

“The option to have one at home is fantastic. My child has used it at home for school sanctioned apps and learning platforms.”

D. Some respondents questioned the fairness of the survey.

“Don't ban or restrict the use of computers in school. Don't waste everybody's time by considering the musings of a few parents with too much time on their hands and a chronic inability (or unwillingness) to help their own children learn how to responsibly use learning technologies. The solution to parental confusion and laziness is not to go back to parchment and quill. Thank you.”

“This survey is incredibly biased. Decisions on Chromebook and tech use should be framed by teachers, MCPS instructional staff with professional expertise, and students. Parents are clueless.”

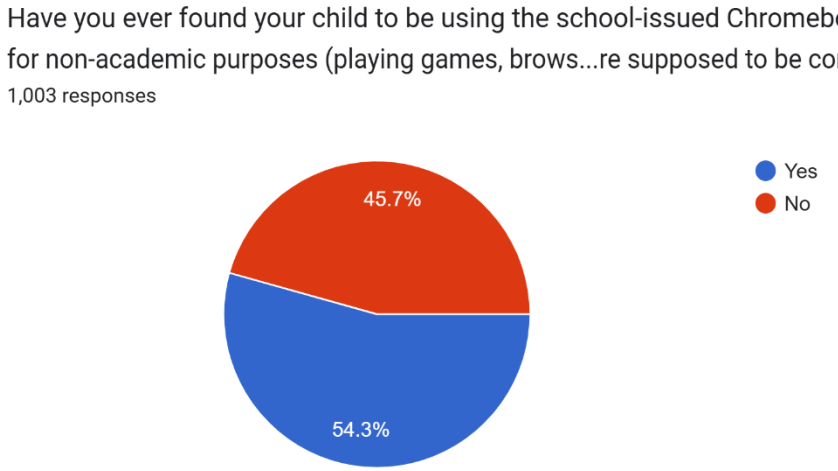
“I’m extremely concerned that the results of this survey may be used to advocate for a reduction in Chromebook usage that may not reflect the actual interests of the MCPS community. The survey distribution channels, messaging, and even the survey design (almost all questions have a negative valence) all seem likely to elicit negative feedback. . . . I sincerely hope that any reporting of the results of this survey will fully contextualize the negative biases that may have skewed responses.”

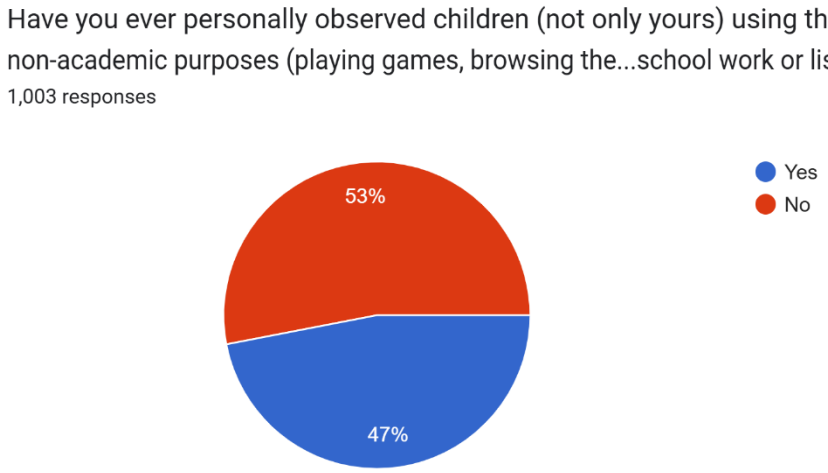
IV. Non-Academic Use is a Widespread Phenomenon

Roughly half of respondents stated that they had found their own child to be using a school-issued Chromebook or home computer for non-academic purposes at home when the student was supposed to be doing homework (“Have you ever found your child to be using the school-issued Chromebook or personal home laptop for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they are supposed to be completing homework at home?”).

Similarly, roughly half of respondents stated that they had personally observed a student in school using a Chromebook for non-academic purposes when the student should have been doing school work or listening to the teacher (“Have you ever personally observed children (not only yours) using the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes

(playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?").

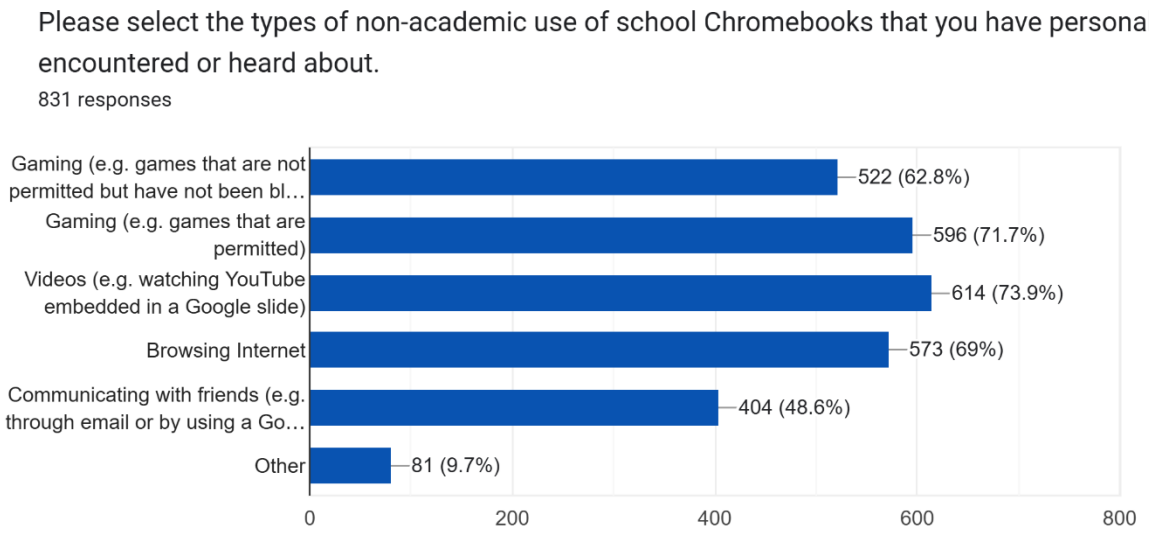




The types of non-academic uses most encountered by respondents were

- playing video games (62.8% selected "Gaming (e.g. games that are not permitted but have not been blocked yet)" and 71.7% selected "Gaming (e.g. games that are permitted)"),
- watching videos (73.9% selected "Videos (e.g. watching YouTube embedded in a Google slide)"), and
- generally browsing the internet (69% selected "Browsing Internet").

Just under half of respondents had encountered students communicating with peers (48.6% selected “Communicating with friends (e.g. through email or by using a Google doc)”).



Free-written responses regarding non-academic uses were voluminous and detailed, with several recurring themes.

A. Distraction is a widespread, widely-known problem for students using internet-enabled Chromebooks.

“I am in MCPS classrooms fairly frequently and pretty much every time students have chromebooks open and an adult is not actively watching their screens (and even sometimes when they are), there are at least a few students playing games or watching videos. It is endemic and not isolated in my experience.”

“As a substitute teacher who often works as a co-teacher I see the students playing games or otherwise using their Chromebooks inappropriately in every single class that I teach. I walk around to monitor them and redirect constantly, but they are fully addicted to the distracting activities they access on their Chromebooks. They can access any video they want and are often watching YouTube shorts. They use the cameras to take selfies and text each other through messaging programs.”

“My son has regularly - for years - spent a lot of time playing online games in school. He and his friend (and hundreds of others) regularly share links to online games, which are never blocked. If things are blocked, students find a way to get around them.”

“Any time the kids are on the computer, whether at home or at school, their attention is divided between their work and the myriad of other tabs they open at the same time - YouTube videos, games, etc. It's distracting and it leads to too much screen time.”

“[T]he effects of digital distractions are profound. They negatively impact focus, productivity, mental health and social skills. And the research backs this up. There truly is no controversy. We must be so much more vigilant when it comes to what is available on their chromebooks in the classroom. And it should be common knowledge that these distractions are built to be stronger than our will power. . . . I do think this is one of the great challenges of our time, and I hope that schools and policy makers will act aggressively to promote what is best for students, teachers and parents. Teams who help with technology in the schools must be made aware of what students can access on school sanctioned devices like chromebooks and work with school staff and students to prioritize a healthy learning environment.”

“The students use Chromebooks to access YouTube and other ‘blocked’ games during the school day. They are a constant distraction, and detract from overall learning.”

“Students use Chromebooks for steady non-academic activity. During an open house I watched an entire class switch into games when the teacher turned away. Every student near my line of sight was off task. They stayed this way until the teacher walked closer, then they switched back to the assignment without hesitation. This was not a small issue. The pattern showed deliberate avoidance. The device made it easy for students to hide their screens and ignore the lesson. The teacher had no way to maintain steady engagement. This undermines instruction and weakens the classroom environment.”

“I think Chromebooks use should be limited. Having attended class during the open doors days, I personally witnessed MANY kids on their Chromebooks playing games while the class was ongoing. It's incredibly distracting and they do not have the maturity / willpower / tools, to fight it.”

“While the chrome book can be used for educational purposes. I find my child gets distracted and is able to access YouTube and watch video when she should be focusing on her class work. Doing homework she also focus[es] more on googling things she likes instead of focusing on her homework.”

“I do know that my son uses his Chromebook for playing games and watching youtube.”

“The kids were often assigned ‘research projects’ using online encyclopedias like pebble go. As I circulated around the classroom trying to assist the teacher, I would usually find that more than half the kids had gotten totally distracted by the encyclopedia within 5 minutes (for example, they would be looking at articles about cute animals instead, which

had fun embedded features). Others wasted massive amounts of time dealing with technical glitches with their Chromebooks (dead/low battery or wouldn't boot up correctly), or playing around with silly fonts and animations in their documents."

"I observed a 9th grade history class this year at Blair. Students had laptops out for taking notes (in theory). I was seated in the back of the room and could see one child watching youtube during class, one playing a crossword puzzle, one doing another game, and one shopping. I was shocked - how can they learn in such a situation? My husband similarly observed a 7th grade comp sci class at TPMS where some kids were just playing games instead of completing assigned work, and the teacher was focused on helping one group for a long time, so others just did whatever they wanted."

"The problem is this: Kids are not learning and yet teachers are just letting it happen because the kid is sitting quietly, not making noise or disrupting class openly for others. If there is a disruption, it's in the form of the kid next to him seeing that he's playing a game, so the second kid starts playing a game. The teacher still has quiet in the classroom and just blames the kids, possibly calling the parent to complain that the child is distracted or has missing assignments, but more likely simply ignoring it and allowing the kids to miss out on learning. It's incredibly widespread. At open house, when I sat in the back of a classroom, every single computer screen I could see was at least sometimes switching between the lesson and some other window-- girls appeared to tend toward shopping and chatting and boys were browsing and gaming. Every single screen. I believe any teacher would readily acknowledge this reality if they could feel like they would not be blamed for allowing it to happen. At the same time, I don't exactly blame teachers. There are 25-30 kids in a class with one teacher. They have a lot of content to cover. This problem of screen distraction is so widespread and so continual that it would completely eat up a teacher's time and goodwill with the students if she focused on it."

"Kids have all the ways to do things they are not supposed to be doing. My kids email each other during class rather than passing notes. We all know computers are distracting."

B. MCPS's blocking software is inadequate and teachers cannot police widespread misuse by students.

"The kids easily access YouTube and Games- putting the pressure on teachers to police this- rather than actually teach. My kids play games every day! Despite multiple complaints. The teachers have no chance of keeping up."

"[T]he kids have discovered all of the workarounds to sites and materials MCPS says it blocks."

“MCPS can't keep up with the security and access of inappropriate material on the internet.”

“There is not enough monitoring/control of what the kids can access. Kids share Google docs full of info on how to circumvent controls and use shared docs as makeshift social media.”

“The Chromebooks are insufficiently secure to prevent students from accessing inappropriate content. The educational advantage of web-enabled Chromebooks is vague, at best. However, if we must have Chromebooks to achieve educational outcomes, then we should only have locked-down Chromebooks without web access. They should come pre-loaded with the necessary educational materials, and nothing else. Fundamentally, the issue is not that children are looking at screens, but rather what they are seeing on the screens, and MCPS' inability to lock down the devices.”

From an MCPS teacher: “[W]ith one teacher and 28+ students, we cannot keep them all on track at all times. There is monitoring software, but it is not perfect and teachers are never trained how to use it to its fullest potential.”

From another MCPS teacher: “It is very hard to monitor Chromebook use since losing go guardian in the classroom. Students build workarounds via zip files. I feel like I’m always chasing my tail. I have better things to do with my time but MCPS refuses to block sites we tell them are problematic.”

“[I]t would be SO HARD for teachers to have to discipline misuse because it is so rampant.”

“Teachers have no idea what the kids are doing on their Chromebooks. Our kids have told us many stories of how to bypass the filters and kids playing on their devices all day in class and then not keeping up with their classwork because they are getting distracted.”

“Students’ use is *not* monitored consistently and they are often using the computer for other activities besides the lesson. ALL the students know this.”

“Students can get around the controls and do things they aren’t supposed to be doing.”

“Chromebooks should be locked down as much as possible. Students do not have the ability to control their technology use during class time and teachers use instructional time managing misuse.”

C. Better controls or a completely different approach are needed.

“[E]verything should be locked down besides the exact website needed for the assignments. The kids can get around all of the controls and are distracted and looking at things unrelated to the assignment regularly. Expecting a child to be able to ignore all of the

fun and exciting things on the internet to focus on their assignment is unrealistic. Even we as adults are prone to wasting time when online."

From an MCPS teacher: "There is no control over these devices. Please restrict them to carts. Please manage their time. They are not old enough to manage this themselves, and you do not give families any supports to help them manage it. MCPS admin does not support teachers when they try to enforce proper use (of phones or any electronic). I am seriously considering a private school for my son that limits screen time because I see how rampant misuse is in high school, and how teaching has declined because all assignments need to be on Canvas. It's disappointing."

"My kids are using their Chromebook most of the time to watch YouTube, playing with minecraft. The Chromebook is not able to block the kids to enter to those websites. Considering this fact, either you should block those websites or just simply collect all laptops from Kids"

"What the students are doing is not being monitored or guided."

"I think kids will always find a way to get around any screen limits put in place, except if no screens are used, or are used sparingly with monitoring software. The teachers . . . seem to have given up trying to enforce or monitor anything. I think it is too hard for them to monitor everyone and discipline everyone since it is such a widespread problem. It is asking too much for teachers, especially with large classes, without an outright ban or more stringent monitoring software."

"The students who are using the tools put in front of them aren't the ones who need to be punished. It's like punishing a child for eating a cookie after putting it on their plate. MCPS who needs to clean up their digital health. The firewalls need to be stronger, YouTube needs to be a black listed, and only a white list of approved resources should be allowed in a restricted manner. If you look at the modern research, computers and social media have become a plague on the mental health and ability to learn for children of this rising generation. Furthermore, with platforms increasing the push for AI, continuing to allow free digital access is just begging for students to rely on AI resources like chatgpt instead of actually learning the content they need to be successful in life."

"The non-educational use of school-issued Chromebooks should not be treated as a disciplinary issue nor as one of "personal responsibility" on the part of children and parents. It is a classroom and educational design issue. First, screens are overused in general. Chromebooks should not be the default in the classroom but rather be held in a docking station and used for specific activities. Second, the current design of the chromebooks is inappropriate for a learning environment. The district as a whole needs to

renegotiate the relationship it has with its Educational Technology providers are demand devices and software programs that are designed from the beginning with learning in mind and that are appropriate to the brain development and self-control capacities of children and teens. Were they to do this, the result would be far different than handing kids daily access to the general internet or google documents with unlimited connectivity to classmates. It would likely be something more like a library built with education as its principal purpose. This would not be censorship, it would be common sense. There's no reason why an access-to-everything-machine needs to be the default for children and teens (nor for adults). I would like to see MCPS take this situation far more seriously than they currently are. It's possible that this is an issue that cannot be resolved within the school district - even as district as large as MCPS - but rather through a consortium of school districts (together with national parent organizations, PTAs and groups like Common Sense media) pushing ed tech providers to take a much more learning-centric/anti-addiction approach to product design."

D. Specific examples of non-academic use involve games, videos, chatting, and accessing inappropriate or disturbing content.

i. Games

"In our kindergarten year the chromebooks were used daily. They were allowed to play games and accessed some that did not seem appropriate for a school setting. My child described one where you play as a character with a gun and shoot other characters. Pixelated blood would come out when you shot someone. It was a pixelated game that was very rudimentary and not realistic which is probably how it got through into being acceptable for Chromebook. We were still disturbed that this game was accessible in school."

"In addition to my son's gaming, I observed half of a class playing video games during a middle school science class during parent open house."

"Roblox, and Bedwars"

"My son has told me that all his friends are on the same 'realm' on Minecraft on their school chromebooks. There is a 'code' they have all shared with each other to get on this Minecraft realm. My son, and I have observed at Open House, plays games when he gets bored in class and the teacher didn't notice/say anything about it."

"My son often tells me all the shenanigans he and his friends are up to on the chromebook. They share cat and anime videos in google drives. They play videogames for what seems to be hours a week (many non educational- geometry dash). He and other students have been

able to search other inappropriate topics for 9 year olds, and the MCPS protections have not protected them."

"My high school age son constantly has tabs to youtube videos (usually associated with gaming) open while he is doing homework. He is a good student and *wants* to do a good job. The distraction associated with the chromebook prolongs the time it takes for him to complete his homework resulting in a later bed time and less than sufficient sleep."

"My child does not complete class work because her internet history shows that she is using other websites for games, videos, and reading age-inappropriate, non-school appropriate materials that include explicit language and mature, sensitive topics."

"I have seen my child playing several games that were inappropriate (e.g., 1st person shooters)."

"My daughter said last year her classmates have links to 'games' that work and then find ways to make it about excluding others from playing the games by selectively sharing the secret links."

"An adult, violent video game called 'Five Nights at Freddy's' that my son was familiar with through other kids at school playing it on chromebooks. I emailed MCPS technology services about my concerns and never got any response."

ii. Watching Video Entertainment

"My son will take his school issue[d] Chromebook to his room and stay up late at night watching YouTube videos. He wakes up the next morning super tired and not ready for the school day. While we can put controls on devices we personally own, school issues devices do not give us the control of putting restrictions on them."

"My son tells me that he spends his third grade reading rotation watching YouTube videos of soccer matches."

"My middle schooler zones out on YouTube for HOURS and I loathe it. I can't log on to the laptop because he keeps [changing] the password and hearing the stupid YouTube videos or games enrages me. We took away our home Chromebook to try and cut off the YouTube access about this is a workaround that we cannot control in our house and is frying my kid's brain because he hasn't learned this type of impulse control. It undermines our parenting and creates tension and outbursts when we take it away or try to lessen the time. I want to throw the computer into the street."

"While volunteering at a class party, I saw a child watching Lord of the Rings on his computer in the corner."

“Playing games and watching youtube videos, primarily; youtube kids, in particular, is challenging as it seems that 90% of the videos are not educational but have not been blocked at least on home-use chromebooks.”

“Using the Chromebooks to access pirated movie sites - 6th graders were watching R rated movies”

“My child reported that kids were able to access movie trailers and were watching inappropriate movie clips during class time when there was a sub. They also reported kids googling inappropriate content via voice to text on the browser.”

“Kids are playing minecraft and watching Mr Beast brain rot videos via YouTube Kids, which is strangely not blocked. I understand the need for research or typing for elementary school kids, but having full internet access is like giving all the sweets in the world and hoping the kid would just sit and look at them and describe what colors and shapes they have.”

“My 2nd grade daughter has found Wild Adventure Girls on a school computer. After reviewing their youtube channel, there are videos such as ‘the horse chose my Christmas present’ which provides zero educational value and ‘POV parents at the park with their kids’ which shows kids screaming at their parents to ‘shut up’ in an attempt to make fun of different parenting styles. 99% of their channel has garbage material. When my kids are home, I've made a conscience effort to keep them off of youtube and screen time like this. Are there not simple math games that can be offered instead? Why is the school system introducing my children to brain rot type of videos when they're supposed to be learning?”

“The ability to watch YouTube videos on Google slides is appalling. My child has seen things on the internet at school that we do not allow access to at home.”

iii. Chatting with Peers using Google Docs or Google Slides

“[K]ids using google doc or slides to share memes, live updates of non-blocked websites to play games, watch youtube, etc.”

“They were putting porn into a google doc with their chromebooks at one point”

“Using Google slides to have inappropriate and unmonitored conversations.”

“Use of canva as a text thread. Ability to share with anyone with MCPS email”

iv. Disturbing and Inappropriate Content

“Children are using Chromebooks to learn gambling, develop screen addiction, and access pornography in elementary school!”

“Many [4th grade] boys in the school are already using [C]haracter AI to have very inappropriate interactions for their age level. [MCPS] must put a stop to this or it will only make the district open to liability for when students become addicted to a very dangerous interface and make destructive choices. A child in my son's class has already developed inappropriate relationships with an AI girlfriend through [C]haracter AI that he contacted at school. Now all the children in class have heard about extremely inappropriate things that are being glorified that are horrific even for adults to wrap their brains around, let alone children whose first knowledge of sexuality is now being led by completely unaccountable and unacceptable AI programs accessible to the kids at school.”

“My child was exposed to other children watching and sharing inappropriate (pornographic) content during instructional time and because these Chromebooks are far under-regulated for smart middle-schoolers.”

“Not enough sites are blocked- elementary school age kids were able to watch graphic violence videos on YouTube.”

“[T]he Epstein files are not blocked and you can easily get the redacted information so kids now know a lot of bad and gross stuff.” (from a middle school student)

“Elementary students easily get around restrictions on their Chromebooks. Explicit content on youtube is abundant.”

“Unintentionally reaching pornography on the school laptop because they put in the word explosion and it returned images of oral sex gifs. Having Elementary School aged kids having access to AI programs like character AI that allow unmonitored and unfettered access to pornographic relationships.”

“Last year he and his friend researched bombs and rifles during Chromebook reading rotations!”

“[I]n 4th grade my child was exposed to pornography on the school laptop in school and I reported to the school and nothing was done.”

“Another student took my child’s device and began to browse inappropriate Internet sites.”

“My daughter reports that a classmate watches Anime porn in class.”

“I have heard of multiple instances of elementary kids getting around firewalls and accessing extremely inappropriate content during school hours such as the adult role playing game ‘BitLife,’ which has sexual role-playing content that one of the children engaged in, or using the paste functions to paste inappropriate gifs into google docs.”

“I also asked my kids to share what they have heard about people watching on school-issued Chromebooks. Here is what they shared as being widely known at the high school level: videos of cartel executions, video of a group of men copulating with a cardboard box, video of a Ukrainian man sticking a large jar in his butt and the jar breaking, the movie Saving Private Ryan and all three Terrifier movies, livestream video of a man committing suicide by shooting himself in the head, video of a man being beaten to death with hammers, video of a man being beheaded with an ax, video of the Boston marathon bombing.”

“Youtube watching of explicit content - 4th grade.”

“Elementary and MS students have access to games with explicit content (e.g. rape, drugs, prostitution, suicide, gun violence, etc.) as well as YouTube, unsupervised.”

“Circumventing content restrictions to view mature content while in class.”

“Games, pornography, chatting with adults.”

“Gaming, watching and reading inappropriate sexual content.”

“Movies, porn, chatting, games, YouTube. Conspiracy theories, explicit music videos, literally everything bad on the internet.”

“Porn and drugs. There is rampant pornography being spread on students Chromebooks. Have also found student interacting with adults online including using Chromebook webcam inappropriately. This includes coordinating illegal drug sale/use and sexual content. This has been reported and school has done nothing to stop.”

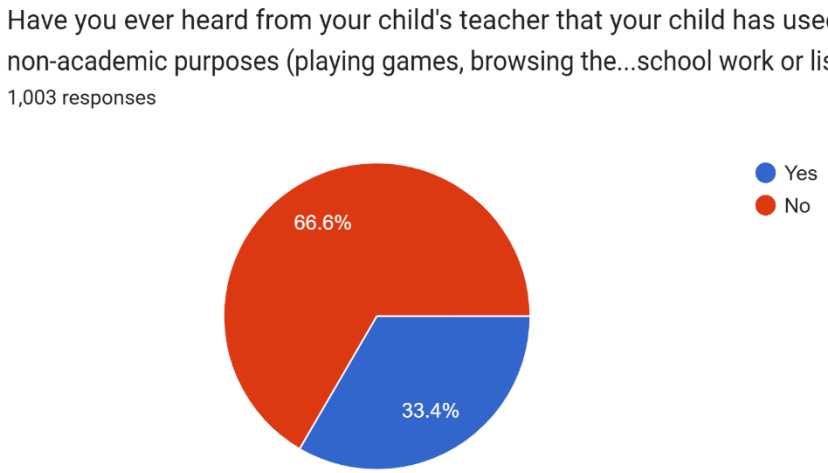
“Fifth graders are using the Chromebook's to find pornography on the Chromebooks. They have found ways around controls to watch pornography. In addition, innocent searches for GIFs can return in pornographic results. This happened when my now fourth grader was in third grade.”

“Our kids have encountered pornography using chromebooks via images/the insert image option from Google Docs. This is very troubling to us and we request stronger filters and more oversight.”

“In grade 5 my child often reported use of games with explicit sexual and violent content (by herself and others); the use of google docs/slides to communicate links to such content; the use of games with math titles that have no content related to math, etc.”

E. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Reports Home from Teachers

Only 33.4% of respondents had ever heard from their child's teacher that their child had used the school-issued Chromebook for non-academic purposes ("Have you ever heard from your child's teacher that your child has used the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?"). The other 66.6% had not heard anything from their child's teacher.



In some cases, parents were told their child was misusing the school Chromebook, but parents were unsuccessful at having the Chromebook removed from their child:

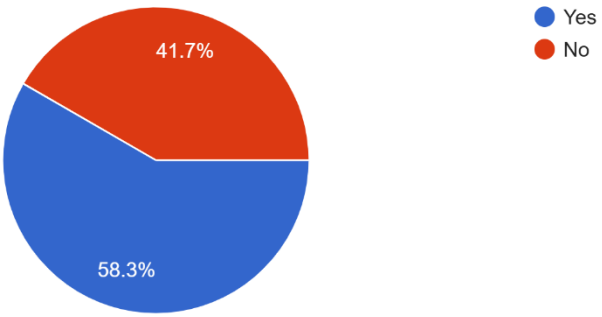
"At the middle school level, my oldest child (now in high school) was repeatedly admonished for not being on task because he was playing video games or watching YouTube videos during class. His ADHD brain just could not stay on task if he had a screen. I spoke with teachers and begged them to give him paper work, but they said that was not possible because the curriculum was online (and written work was expected to be typed, not handwritten, and the typing and submission programs were also online.)"

F. Student Misuse of Chromebooks as a Disciplinary Issue

Over half of respondents believe that misuse of school-issued Chromebooks should be handled as a disciplinary issue. Further, those respondents favored classroom-based responses and parent/guardian outreach as appropriate consequences.

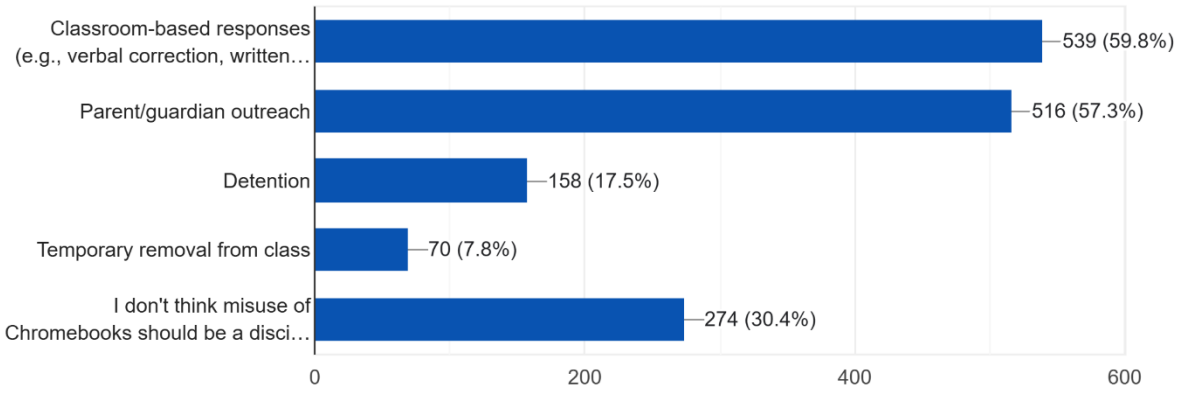
Should misuse of school-issued Chromebooks be handled as a disciplinary issue?

1,003 responses



If yes, what consequences would be appropriate for a child found to be misusing a school-issued Chromebook in class?

901 responses



G. Student Misuse of Chomebooks – Self-Control

“The problem is not that the kids are disobedient. The problem is that they have been given access to an addictive substance with no outside controls, and then are told to just resist it. You wouldn't have an alcoholic work next to an open container of alcohol. Why are we having children try to learn and focus just a click away from the dopamine hit of games, memes, videos etc. It is ridiculous. Some say they need to learn to work while having distractions, but their brains are not fully developed yet. Let them learn this in college, not as children. If anything they are learning to be become dependent on the continual stimulation available on the internet.”

“Simply having the possibility of browsing the internet, playing games, chatting with friends makes a kid's mind go toward that distracted feeling of should-I-or-shouldn't-I go for the more exciting option. Even if they exercise self control and stay on task, the energy put into exercising self control, the considering of straying off task already degrades the ability to concentrate and learn.”

“[I]t is absurd to put the blame on students when the responsibility should be on school systems to not allow such highly addictive distractions to be readily available. As I mentioned in my comments earlier, these distractions are built to hijack our brains and are stronger than us.”

“My daughter is very conscientious, but she is often browsing the internet when she should be doing classwork because it is so tempting.”

“Students are not developmentally programmed to be able to practice consistent discipline in their Chromebook use. It's not really fair to them or the teachers to have the distraction of other things besides schoolwork readily available through the Chromebooks. Teens are on their screens too much outside of school. I would strongly encourage 1) limits on the use of Chromebooks and a shift to more active discussions or paper-based work 2) stronger tech controls on Chromebooks 3) when Chromebooks must be used, please use time limits and deadlines so that students are motivated to stay on task (ie, work on this assignment for 30 minutes and turn it in).”

“Punishing kids for their Chromebook use is treating the symptom, not the disease. They are asked to sit in front of incredibly distracting technology all day before their brains have matured enough to self-regulate, and then expected not to succumb to temptation. We are setting kids up for failure and they should not be punished when so many adults struggle with the same issues. The problem is the technology, not the children.”

“When students are given tools DESIGNED for distraction (i.e. internet, chromebook) it then becomes extremely difficult to manage in classrooms. The value-add does not come close to the cost to student management, discipline, and and distraction. I would love to move to a Chromebook-free (or HIGHLY limited) environment.”

“The Chromebooks have an inherent design defect-- they are supposed to be a learning tool, but they inherently distract from learning. They are like if a text book had been printed with a comic book, a pinball machine, and a Playboy magazine right in the middle of the book. Everyone knows that children and teens are still developing their self control. It's insane to think any child or teenager can resist such temptation.”

“I don’t think misuse is a disciplinary issue, I think it’s an educational failure.”

“Putting kids in front of highly addictive, dopamine-triggering devices and then disciplining them for lack of control is like forcing an alcoholic to go to work in a bar. Adults need to step up and set limits because many kids are not mature enough to handle these devices responsibly and it’s not developmentally appropriate to expect them to.”

H. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Lack of Parental/Teacher Control

“Chromebooks in the classroom is creating unnecessary friction between students and teachers and parents who lack oversight for these Chromebook because they [are] MCPS property, are caught in the middle. Unlike in many organizations where there are systems in place to block access to many websites, MCPS decided to allow full access to many sites and then parents get daily emails and complain[t]s about students playing games while the teacher is teaching. It is my hope that the information being gathered can be used to make a quick decision to block access to all social media sites and frankly web browsers on school Chromebook.”

“Chromebooks are over used and under monitored. Kids should not be allowed to go on the computer without proper supervision including random checks of platforms, sites, and content. Kids quickly share how to get around blocked content. There should be strong consequences for misuse (these are necessary to establish safe use). Parents should get a report of their child’s use as well.”

“I have tried for years emailing our daughters teachers, counselors, and even principals about this but my concerns are almost never addressed. Her teachers try to police her internet usage after I send an email, but her counselors and principals NEVER do anything to address it. I do not think that our daughter is the only kid in the school who engages in this. We might be the only parents who know that it is happening and are concerned with it. I no longer know what to do about it, as the teachers are too busy to focus on it, and the leadership of the schools seemingly do not care.”

“Chromebooks used in class do not have sufficient supervision and the firewalls preventing students from playing games and accessing inappropriate content are wildly insufficient. While attending White Oak MS last year, my child frequently got into trouble surrounding Chromebook use in the classroom and I had to fight with the administration to get him banned from using them. The teachers didn't like that because it's 'easier' to dump the kids into IXL or some other program instead of actually teaching and reviewing their homework.”

“This is hard to say because parents hear so little from the school/teachers about Chromebook use. This feels really intentional -- the school doesn't want parents to know how much time kids are on computers because it's likely way too much.”

“Last year his math teacher said he played snake the whole semester. The math teacher did nothing about it in real time and said he couldn't enforce not paying attention. He only alerted us at the end of semester -- very frustrating!”

“In [middle school], we only learned of our student’s non-academic use of Chromebook when we requested feedback from the school. There is no process in place for the school to communicate with families about this. When we approached the school about it, teachers and administrators simply shrug their shoulders and say it is out of their hands, impossible for them to monitor use.”

“Chromebooks seem to be the default tool for assignments in the classroom. Sure, they are used for assignments, but often times, instead of doing assignments, students play games or do other things besides schoolwork. And it seems like a lot of teachers just don't care/want to police their use. Some teachers even give their own games for students to play, of low or questionable educational value. It all just seems to be too much of a distraction for students and for doing good work. I'd like to see a return to more paper assignments.”

“My MS child has said he used his computer to play video games during class when there’s “nothing to do.” He said students exchange URLs of websites that MCPS hasn’t blocked and update Google Sheets daily with new links. He said lightspeed doesn’t work very well and that there was a better software to detect what kids were doing before. I have asked my child’s guidance counselor how to block these sites and was given the email of an IT person who covers his MS. I wrote that person asking for help to ensure my child is not using forbidden links and providing specific URLs that my child was using and never received a response.”

“The most concerning incident involved my child accessing some dodgy pirate version of Grand Theft Auto on a Chromebook during school hours. I got a call home about that one. YouTube and other video sites are also available in its entirety, which is also incredibly unsafe. The fact that these kinds of games and videos are available on school computers is utterly unacceptable. MCPS has prioritized the ease of teaching programs over actual teaching and supervision. I didn't believe that this is a disciplinary issue for the students so much as for the teachers and administration who are openly allowing it to happen.”

“I have heard that in several classes, many students are openly playing games but that the teachers allow it because it keeps them quiet.”

“I would love to get my hands on MCPS data about school use of chromebooks, and grades or any other parameters. I bet, there will be negative correlation. My generation did not grow up as digital natives, and yet, a ton of people (Gen X and Millennial) are founders of

high-tech start-ups. If I had more time and resources, I would research and show if there is even any benefit in having 2-5K having access to laptops with lax rules. Kids would break all of MCPS controls, since these controls are Chromebook/Admin based. Don't you see a huge conflict, where Chromebook/Android Operating system, owned by Google does not really have good parental controls since they want our kids hooked on YourTube and Mr. Beast and all the other brain rot on YouTube? Having full control over my kids screen viewing and use at home, and being EXTREMELY well read into what is happening with young people and screens, I find it immensely difficult to regulate and control. YouTube may have some educational content, but 90% of it is short, bad, made to hook you up. Google does not have the well-being of our kids as their interest/goal. They want more users of their services, more viewing, more scrolling shorts - all things that are against the well-being of our kids, our society and what is left of the thing we call democracy. Be more progressive and walk the walk. Screens out of schools, or if you have screens, create a parent-joint committees to decide on use. Gen AI is important for kids to understand, but at this point MCPS is likely not ready to even introduce the topic. The mental and other issues that GenAI will cause pale in comparison to the brain rot from YouTube or video games. This is one of the most important things for us as a society and we are all failing at this collectively."

V. Desire for Transparency on School Screen Use by Caregivers

"Can parents receive reports about how many minutes their child is logged onto a school chromebook?"

"I think they should have screen time logs attached to their account that can email parents (and/or teachers) so we know where their time is being used. Most phones and home devices have this tracking system."

"They are able to access video games and introduced to programs and platforms without sufficient feedback to parents. I am continually surprised by what my child is learning to do on a computer and what they have access to that I didn't know they had access to."

"As a parent I would like to see a weekly report for daily screen time for class/ grade in elementary school Chromebook use."

"I am supportive of limited use of Chromebooks for specific educational platforms such as Zearn or Kahn Academy. However, at the younger grades, there is inadequate communication and transparency with families about what programs are being used in class, and for how long each day/week. Additionally, my child has described playing games on chromebooks at school. As a parent, I have no way of knowing what apps or websites the children are accessing."

“I am concerned about the lack of information shared about how much screen time students are getting.”

“I don't feel like I know enough about the amount of and purposes for Chromebook use.”

“[P]arents should be told more explicitly and at the beginning of the year just how much time and in what ways their students are using the chromebooks. I have had to ask my kids’ teachers this every year. I think there needs to be a way for parents to give consent for the amount of time and for what purpose their kid uses the chromebook.”

“I worry that overall the younger kids at least are having more screen time at school than we realize. I would like more information about how many hours/minutes of screen time the kids are having, especially in elementary school.”

“My impression is that parents may be under the belief that because the Chromebook is school-issued, that all of the content is educational, and that if they allow their child on the laptop or in one of its applications, it is a good thing for their child, when in reality much of the content is totally mindless, potentially harmful, and requires close supervision. It is our job to protect kids from this content by keeping their devices on EXTREME lock down so they cannot access inappropriate material. It may be beneficial to provide training and orientation to families on what content is on the laptops and how it is used and how to manage it to best protect the child.”

VI. Problems With Chromebook Access at Home

“My child is nearly screen free at home and is starting to show signs of ‘addiction’ to the Chromebook, getting upset if we tell them no for using it or just needing ‘a little more time’ to get to the next level of whatever educational game they're playing. Its very frustrating bc we've worked her to not allow video gam[e]s or excuses screens and now we still have a kids who is borderline obsessed with the games on the Chromebook.”

“I wish the Chromebooks had better ‘parental controls’, so that they cannot games and videos at home. My home computer has better ‘parental controls’.”

“Chromebooks are overruling all of the hard work I have done as a parent to limit access to certain websites, paid handsomely to teach my special needs kid to write, and now I see signs of screen use addiction that I cannot control. . . . Now I need to police my child’s room at night because they use their school issued Chromebook - which I do not have the ability to set parent controls on- to watch more YouTube.”

“My kids got limited screen time at home. But ‘permitted’ Chromebook use during breaks in school got them used to browsing the internet and playing games, so that now they want to do that even at home.”

“We restrict screens at home but our kids come home having learned computer games at school and wanting to play them. There's no way to keep the kids from secretly playing games w/o constantly supervising them.”

“If chromebooks are to be sent home with kids for homework, you MUST allow parents access to monitoring/blocking software so that we can create a more defined structure to control the access and usage”

“Not being able to control what your child do online is really harmful. My daughter has a personal laptop which I monitor through parental controls. But she is able to evade these controls by using the school laptop.”

“Worst of all, parents have no control over them. We have locked down every device in our house significantly more tightly than the school Chromebooks, which we can't even set with basic screen time limits. It's hard enough for parents to monitor their kids' screen time and Internet access without schools giving every child a device that we can't control.”

“My kids are often watching videos or playing games when they should be doing homework. The ready availability of distractions on the computer make it very difficult for kids to focus and stay on task- its really too much to expect a tween to fight the constant temptation. As a parent, it is nearly impossible to police this situation. The kids are able to do most of their homework without help, but we are constantly nagging them to stay on task. Its frustrating for everyone and creates a LOT of tension in the home.”

“My child has been found watching YouTube in his bed with his Chromebook. All family devices have parental controls at our house, but I cannot control the Chromebook. So my child, if they find a way to sneak it into their room, can get access to websites and information that are not approved in our house. MCPS is enabling addictive and destructive behavior in children. These kids have developing pre-frontal cortexes and have huge struggles with impulse control. This is a moral hazard to give kids so much free rein and more or less tell them “just don’t go where you shouldn’t”. Even during tests administered in Chromebooks (which I also think is wrong) they have access to the entire internet and can easily toggle away from the test. My child said that their teacher doesn’t care and basically looks the other way, there is willful ignorance on behalf of adults.”

“My kids weren't familiar with any computer games until they were introduced to them at school. Now all they want to do at home is play internet games. And they can do this easily

because they have a school issued device which they are req[u]ired to use for their homework, so I cannot even take it away. I'm pretty annoyed about this."

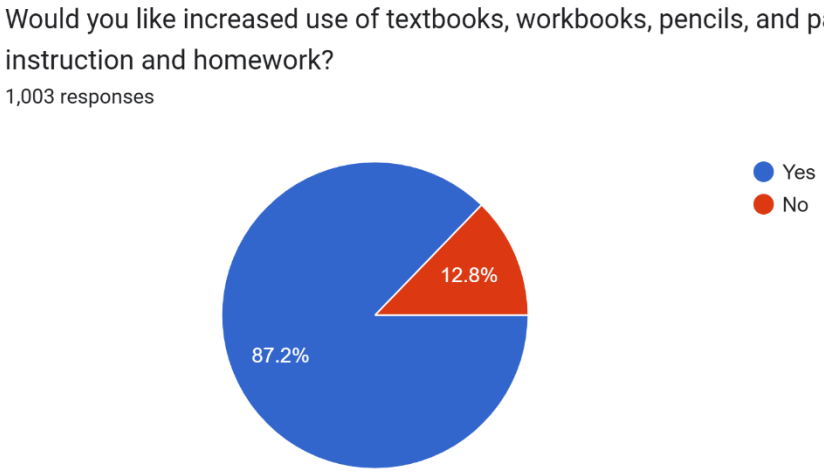
"I am VERY UNHAPPY that MCPS forced us to bring computers into our home that I cannot control and that give my children access to sites that I do not want them accessing. I regularly take their Chromebooks away from them and have to monitor them closely when they do homework. This has created a new problem for our family and additional burden for us as parents to police their activities on the Chromebooks. With our own personal computers I can control what they have access to and lock their accounts if they don't use them responsibly. I have no such control over the Chromebooks. My daughter is in high school and she has even told us she doesn't want to be distracted by YouTube videos, but cannot resist the temptation when doing her homework."

"Other schools in Rockville, not Title 1, are not allowing chromebooks to be taken home over the weekend. Our School is sending them, which makes it very hard for parents to say no computer use. Kids would be asking, why, if I have it right here."

"I don't like Chromebook usage at school especially since we have a no screens policy at home."

VII. Overwhelming Majority Favor Increasing Use of Textbooks, Results Are Mixed on Opting Out

The overwhelming majority of respondents (87.2%) would like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper in place of screen-based instruction and homework.



A. Many responses suggest limiting the use of screens for learning and increasing book-based, face-to-face learning.

“I would strongly support a move to ONLY use the Chromebooks for computer-necessary lessons, e.g., typing (as a skill, not as the sole method of writing) and online research (as a complement to physical library research). These tasks could be achieved through a media center/computer lab, not with a 1-to-1 issuance of Chromebooks. The children would be better focused if we returned to written work and paper lessons.”

“I've also noticed that my children do not learn as well from their computers - they retain the lessons much better when they use a textbook and pencil and paper. I’ve purchased textbooks for their classes so they have an organized and reliable reference they can read in a non-distracting environment. I am convinced that Chromebooks are doing our children a disservice and that more traditional teaching methods would be better. I also hear from my children that other students regularly use AI and other tools to complete assignments fraudulently. Requiring pencil and paper would mitigate that problem.”

“Children should be using more pencil and paper for brain development.”

“Studies have show[n] that humans, especially children, learn best and better remember material they read from a physical book . . . Also, studies show that humans learn much better when writing notes and writing essay/problem sets versus typing. The tactile nature of writing helps us learn, understand more deeply, and remember.”

“Chromebooks weaken instruction, lower retention, reduce accountability, and strip classrooms of structure. They do not serve students. The district should remove them from daily instruction and return to books, paper, and direct teaching. Students need learning tools, not digital distractions.”

“I would love to see the kids, be doing more actual reading of books, less reading on their Chromebook, more writing.”

“Anything that can be done on paper, should be done on paper. And more effort needs to be placed in having curriculums that are accessible on paper.”

“Going back to pens, paper and textbooks would be the biggest service we could do so for this generation.”

“I wish more assignments involved physical books and writing with paper.”

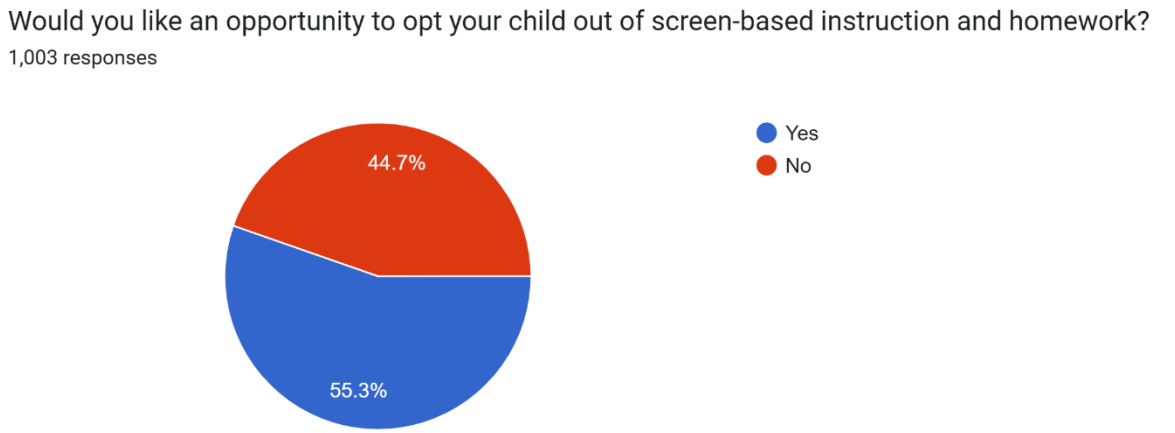
“Students should use books instead of computers. Better and long term learning and chance to review materials.”

“Please remove or severely cut back on the usage of chromebooks in the classroom. There are non technology based ways to teach children that can actually improve learning outcomes and prepare them better in the future. With artificial intelligence increasing in usage our children need to learn how to develop their critical thinking skills and have original thoughts and ideas that are not influenced by AI. Developing handwriting skills and writing down ideas on paper is much studied for overall benefits to growing minds. These all stand the test of time and are foundational skills our children need in a future destined to be influenced by artificial intelligence. While they will need to be taught how to navigate AI and use it to their benefit, they first need to know how to think on their own.”

“Chromebook are nuisance and as a parent i want no screen time in school and traditional way of learning. I have not heard from teachers but know first hand from kids that they play games in school on chromebooks.”

“Writing BY HAND has proven benefits to learning. I hope/want my kids to be writing every day in school and not just via their laptops.”

B. Just over half of respondents favored an opportunity to opt out of screen-based instruction and homework.



“Giving parents the option to opt out sounds reasonable, but is wrong. It puts parents in an impossible situation. Basically everyone would need to choose it...or no one will. Same reason why schools should ban phones outright or stick them in bags/pouches (and their use should result in formal discipline)”

“I also have mixed feelings about an option to 'opt out' of screen based instruction and homework. I suppose it would be a better option than overuse and exposure to digital distractions. But it could also provide an excuse for schools to not address the problem

and rely instead on parents opting out. I do want to make sure my children are comfortable using technology, and I am sure many parents feel this way, so opting out entirely, especially when it comes to computer science, would seem like a potential handicap."

"Rather than my children having to opt out and do something differently than the rest of the class, I think it's much more appropriate for the class as a whole to be less dependent on screens. I believe all students should have more non-screen time, not just my children. I am greatly concerned about the long-term ramifications of excess screen time, and I believe that MCPS's overreliance on screens is amplifying this problem for MCPS students."

"I do not want to opt my child out of screen-based instruction. I want MCPS to use computer-based instruction sparingly and strategically, so that children graduate with necessary computer skills but are not reliant on the computer for their ability to think. To use the opt out method is to complicate the issue - isolating children into groups beyond their choosing and putting an undue burden on teachers who would undoubtedly have to increase their workload to support the learning of all their students."

"The changes (opt out of screens, increased use of paper) need to be implemented ASAP. It is not right that my kids (6th & 7th grade) are suffering through all of this now, while it is clear that the trend is in the opposite direction. These kids started kindergarten on screens during COVID and they are being treated as a "lost" cohort. We are going to look back on all the screen use for these kids as a mistake. It is important that action be taken now to mitigate the damage that has been done. Thank you for considering these comments."

"Chromebooks are misused all day long. Please get rid of them. They are not conducive for any kind of serious or effective class instruction. Parents should be able to opt out."

"The responsibility lies with the school district, schools, and teachers to reduce use of Chromebooks and go back to teaching without them. Kids should not be disciplined for being unable to control their impulses when they are handed this tool. They shouldn't have access to this at all, for the sake of their education and that of the children around them. And if we must keep Chromebooks for whatever reason, there should be a way for families to opt-out of this. Not all parents use screentime mindlessly outside of school, many of us are mindful and limit what our kids have access to. We should expect that taxpayer funded schools are properly taking care of our children, which includes making sure they are not viewng inappropriate content and actually receiving an education."

"Limiting chromebooks usage should be done evenly for all students. If limits to chromebooks are just an opt out situation, positive changes will not occur throughout the

schools. The dichotomy of screens versus no screens will create an even larger distraction with greater attention on screens."

"While I would like the option to 'opt out' of screen-based instruction, my experience with my HS student has taught me that they will be at a disadvantage if I do that since there will be class assignments that they won't have access to but still be expected to complete. I think that we cannot prevent use of computers among our students. However, in MCPS, we have not taken the time to consider the research, pros and cons, or various proposals for how to embark on using chrome books (age/grade appropriateness; value in specific subjects or topics in a year vs. available all the time; teaching students and teachers about safe and learning-focused use vs. for ease or keeping students busy when you aren't able to accommodate different learning paces and styles, etc.). The lack of this due diligence and thoughtful, research-informed approach to chrome book use in the classroom has only served to perpetuate and even widen pandemic learning loss; contributed to greater inequities among students from different race, socio-economic, and multi-language learners, and is undermining our next generations in ways that we are yet to uncover."

"Don't let parents opt out of stuff, parents don't know best."

"Everyone needs to have the same rules, so even though I'm very opposed to the overuse and misuse of chromebooks in class, I don't think parents should be able to opt out, I think the system as a whole needs to be fixed. I love technology, I embrace it, but MCPS is not doing it right. You need to ban phones in schools (have kids check them at the door) and use Chromebooks judiciously. If a kid is on a Chromebook, the teachers have no idea what is on the screens. Force the kids to pay attention and figure out how to block non-school applications - or get rid of the Chromebooks."

"Providing the option to opt out is just going to create more stress. Adjust the policy across the board."

"It should not be an opt out—all students should have more written work and less homework or in class work on the Chromebook."

"I don't think having an opt out is a valid option; the approach should be universally applied to the class."

"I think making Chromebook a teacher based management system is not right. I think they should be removed so they are a nonissue in class. I do not like the "opt out" idea bc that is the same as some parents giving their kids iPads and phones vs not. It becomes a social issue."

“Making an opt out is not a sustainable idea as it just creates more work for the teacher handling two sets of kids. Writing papers is a good use of chromebooks in elementary school but they have been overused to outsource other things like reading, match, and social studies.”

“In regards to the option above, I would never want to completely opt out of using a Chromebook —that doesn’t make any sense, but there should be a balance.”

“I would never opt my child out if you have an opt in/opt out option you’re going to have a significant equity issue in a classroom and that’s not fair to any of the students or the teacher who would have to teach very differently.”

Conclusions

The results of this survey make clear that a significant number of MCPS parents and caregivers believe Chromebooks are excessively used, are a pervasive source of distraction in class, and current controls on Chromebook use are inadequate and place too much burden on teachers. An even more significant number of parents and caregivers would like more textbooks, workbooks, pencil and paper-based learning, as well as more face-to-face interaction in schools, in place of screens.

Many respondents who believe Chromebook use is harmful to learning correctly cite to research showing that there is a strong negative correlation between the amount of time spent on digital tools and student performance. On the contrary, those who believe educational technology prepares students for a screen-based work life beyond school confuse curriculum with pedagogy. A tech-based curriculum (teaching students to type, to effectively use a Word processor, to code, etc.) can boost students’ digital literacy. Chromebook use, and use of software programs to learn, is a pedagogical tool. In most cases, use of digital tools as a pedagogical tool has not been shown to be more effective than the alternative. Ironically, based on international testing, digital literacy among teens has actually declined over time.

The most valuable results from this survey are the hundreds of testimonials in the responses. We urge MCPS leaders to read every single one of them. The wide perception that Chromebooks are overused in schools, that students can access all kinds of inappropriate and distracting content in class and at home, and that parents and caregivers struggle to advocate on behalf their children, directly undermines families’ trust in the school system, especially when coupled with the declining levels of proficiency in core subjects over time, and the low level of students who demonstrate they are College and Career Ready. Many families are also aware of the crisis in colleges and workplaces, where

young people arrive unable to adequately read, write, or demonstrate threshold level cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

We urge MCPS to:

- Closely review the testimonials provided in this survey,
- Conduct its own survey to seek additional feedback from families and especially teachers,
- Review evidence of whether digital tools, such as one-to-one Chromebook use, has yielded results that are superior to alternative, non-digital methods,
- Consider reassessing the way Chromebooks are used in schools so that use is intentional rather than by default, so that it boosts learning, rather than detracts from it.

In addition, the Technology Committee asks that these survey results be considered as part of the public comment on the proposed amendments to Board Policy IGS, Emerging Technologies in Education, to update guiding principles for integrating emerging technologies into MCPS operations and instruction. It is clear that the current technology policy has not adequately curtailed these trends, and the revised policy must set better guardrails.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Survey Title: MCPS Chromebook Use - Share Your Experiences

Survey Description: The MCCPTA Technology Committee would like to hear from the MCPS community on what you have observed regarding use of MCPS Chromebooks either in school or at home. Please share your observations as well as your perspectives and concerns. This information will be incredibly important in our advocacy work on behalf of MCPS families, and will be anonymized and shared with MCPS decision-makers.

You have the option to share your feedback anonymously, but we invite you to share your name and email if you are willing, so we can contact you with updates on our work on this issue.

- Full Name (Optional)
- Email (Optional, if you are willing to be contacted with updates)
- What is your role?
    - MCPS Parent or Caregiver
    - MCPS Administrator
    - MCPS Staff / Teacher
    - MCPS Student
- Which school does your child attend?
- If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable.
- If you are affiliated with any additional school(s), please write the name(s) of the school(s) here.
- Please indicate the grade level(s) you are affiliated with (either as parent, student, teacher, or administrator).
    - Elementary (K-5)
    - Middle (6-8)
    - High (9-12)
- What is your opinion on the overall amount of Chromebook use in class? (select one)
    - Too Much
    - Just Enough
    - Not Enough
    - No Opinion

- Do you have concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- If you answered yes above, please select the reasons that apply.
    - Chromebooks are used excessively in terms of overall screen time.
    - Chromebooks are being used as "brain breaks" or rewards.
    - Chromebooks are distracting and/or unsafe even when used for educational applications.
    - Some Other Reason (explain below)
    - Not Applicable (not concerned about in-class permitted Chromebook use)
- Please share any specific opinions you have about permitted Chromebook use in class.
- Have you ever heard from your child's teacher that your child has used the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- Have you ever found your child to be using the school-issued Chromebook or personal home laptop for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they are supposed to be completing homework at home?
    - Yes
    - No
- Have you ever personally observed children (not only yours) using the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- Please select the types of non-academic use of school Chromebooks that you have personally encountered or heard about.
    - Gaming (e.g. games that are not permitted but have not been blocked yet)
    - Gaming (e.g. games that are permitted)
    - Videos (e.g. watching YouTube embedded in a Google slide)
    - Browsing Internet

    - Communicating with friends (e.g. through email or by using a Google Doc)
    - Other
- Please share non-academic uses that you've personally encountered or heard about, including any that especially concern you.
- Should misuse of school-issued Chromebooks be handled as a disciplinary issue?
    - Yes
    - No
- If yes, what consequences would be appropriate for a child found to be misusing a school-issued Chromebook in class?
    - Classroom-based responses (e.g., verbal correction, written reflection/apology, reminders/redirection)
    - Parent/guardian outreach
    - Detention
    - Temporary removal from class
    - I don't think misuse of Chromebooks should be a disciplinary issue.
- Would you like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper in place of screen-based instruction and homework?
    - Yes
    - No
- Would you like an opportunity to opt your child out of screen-based instruction and homework?
    - Yes
    - No
- Please share any other views (positive or negative) you or your child may have about the school-issued Chromebooks.

Appendix B: Full Survey Results

All survey data, minus personally identifiable information, are available here.

- The first sheet contains all survey data except for personally identifiable information.
- The second sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share any specific opinions you have about permitted Chromebook use in class.” The responses are sorted by responses to the question “Do you have concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class?”
- The third sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share non-academic uses that you've personally encountered or heard about, including any that especially concern you.”
- The fourth sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share any other views (positive or negative) you or your child may have about the school-issued Chromebooks.” The responses are sorted by responses to the question “What is your opinion on the overall amount of Chromebook use in class? (select one).”