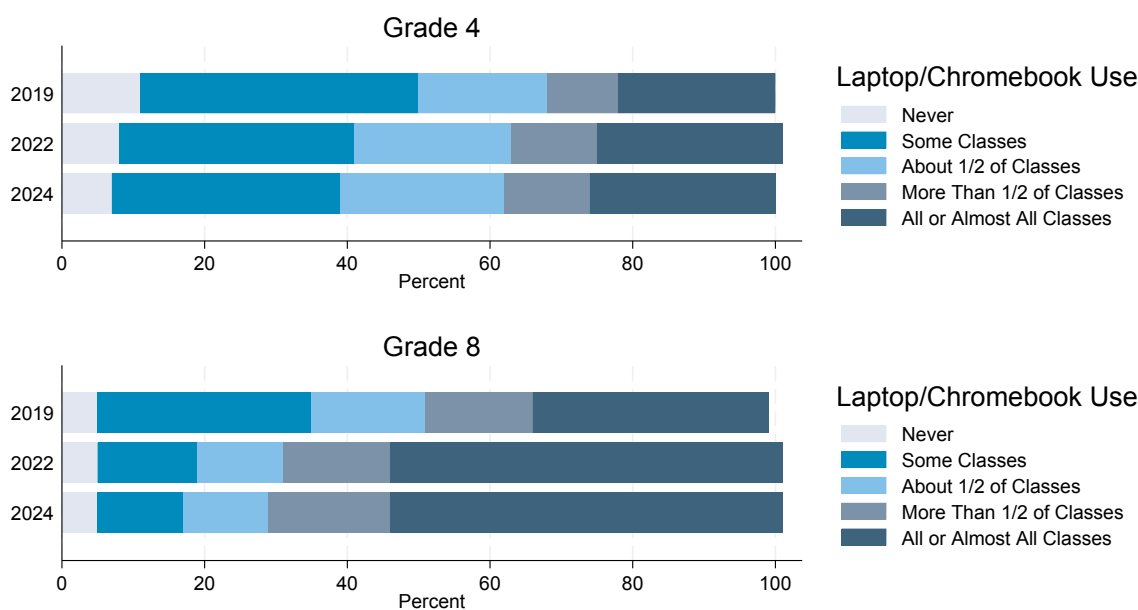


STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR

Re: *Ensuring Children's Safe Use of Screens and E-Rate-Funded Services; Modernizing the E-Rate Program for Schools and Libraries; Establishing the Emergency Connectivity Fund to Close the Homework Gap; Promoting Fair and Open Competitive Bidding in the E-Rate Program*, WC Docket Nos. 26-133, 13-184, 21-93, 21-455, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, (June 25, 2026).

Over the last decade, school districts across the country experimented with a massive increase in screen time for students. In many classrooms, turning pages in books, penciling out answers to math problems, and asking teachers questions were replaced for long stretches of time by kids swiping on tablets. Indeed, the data show that more than half of students now use a computer for up to four hours a day, and a quarter of them spend more than four hours on screens.¹ Kids as young as eight have been spending up to five and a half hours daily on screens.² By Grade 8, more than 50 percent of kids report using computers in all or almost all classes, up from 30 percent in 2019.

Percent of students using computers for any class



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress Student Survey

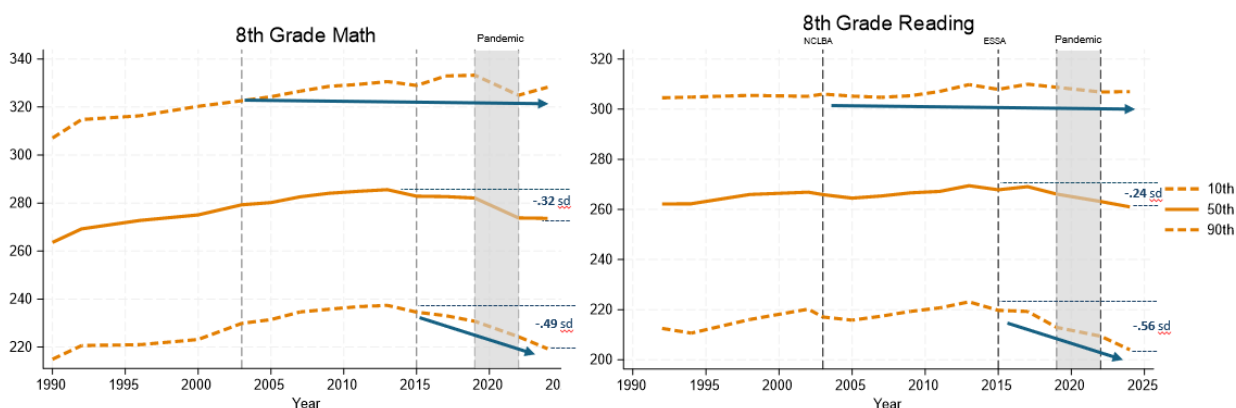
¹ Emma Kate Fittes, *How Much Time Are Students Spending Using EdTech?* (Mar. 1, 2022) <https://marketbrief.edweek.org/meeting-district-needs/how-much-time-are-students-spending-using-ed-tech/2022/03>.

² Children's Hospital of Orange County, *The Effects of Screen Time on Children: The Latest Research Parents Should Know* (Aug. 27, 2024), <https://health.choc.org/the-effects-of-screen-time-on-children-the-latest-research-parents-should-know>; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *Surgeon General's Warning on the Harms of Screen Use, An Advisory and Toolkit on How to Protect Children and Adolescents*, at 12 (2026), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/us-surgeon-generals-advisory-warning-on-the-harms-of-screen-use.pdf>.

In many cases, school districts were not freelancing. There had been a strong push at the local, state, and federal level by policy makers to increase screen time. Many argued that increasing screens in schools was an unalloyed good. The more the better. For their part, many tech companies supported the surge in screen time, benefiting from increased device sales.

In any setting, but particularly in educational ones, it is important to look at the data. The results from America's experiment with pervasive screen time in school are now starting to pour in. The data show that reading and math skills have declined and increased screen times have been associated with lower reading and math achievement on standardized tests in elementary school.³ Achievement gaps have also widened between students in the 90th and 10th percentiles. One researcher has described these downward trendlines as one of the largest declines in human capital we have ever observed.

U.S. achievement was declining before the pandemic.



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress.

We are not the only ones concerned about screen time and poor educational outcomes. Researchers are consistently finding that excessive screen time use has a detrimental impact on the well-being of kids and teens. Professor Jonathan Haidt, social psychologist and professor at NYU's Stern School of Business, has found that screen time is linked with the rise of youth depression and anxiety.⁴ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent

³ National Assessment of Education Progress, NAEP Report Card: Reading (2024), https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/; National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Facts, Long Term Trends in Reading and Mathematics Achievement, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=38> (last visited June 24, 2026); Xuedi Li et al., Screen Time and Standardized Academic Achievement Tests in Elementary School, 8 JAMA Netw. Open 10 (2025), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2839927>.

⁴ See Gili Malinsky, *'The Anxious Generation' author's No. 1 rule for kids' screentime at home: 'We have to roll that back if we want any hope for them to grow up healthy'*, CNBC (Oct. 8, 2025), <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/10/08/jonathan-haidts-parenting-rules-for-screentime-at-home.html?msockid=3673412deb1d6308130b54d9eab062d7>; see also Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*, <https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/> (last visited June 24, 2026).

Psychiatry have both similarly found that too much screen time may lead to lower grades in school and reading fewer books, among other negative outcomes.⁵

These trends have grabbed the attention of federal policymakers. A number of bills have been introduced in Congress that are aimed at reducing kid screen time. For example, in 2023, Senators Ted Cruz, Ted Budd, and Shelley Moore Capito proposed the “Eyes on the Board Act” to require schools and school districts that participate in the E-Rate program to block social media access on subsidized services and networks, and to adopt policies to limit screen time in school.⁶ And other agencies are also taking a close look at this issue, including the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, where Administrator Roth launched an initiative to examine the role of educational technology and screen use in K-12 schools, beginning with a listening session focused on “Kids’ Excessive Screen Use in Schools.”⁷

School districts are taking action too. As of last month, at least six states have imposed bans or limits on screen time and more than a dozen other states have introduced bills that would result in bans or limits.⁸ Just this week, the Los Angeles Unified School District Board adopted new rules that prohibit screen time for kids before second grade, cap it at 60 minutes for kids between second and fifth grade, and allow middle-schoolers and high-schoolers a total of six hours and 10 hours weekly, respectively.⁹ The San Diego Unified School District Board also adopted rules limiting screen time this week, including removing computers from transitional kindergarten classrooms and banning YouTube.¹⁰

Against this backdrop, it is appropriate for the FCC to look at its own programs. As relevant here, the FCC has a \$3 billion a year program, E-Rate. The program has been in place since 1997 and has played an important role in expanding connectivity to schools and libraries. It began with a clear focus—supporting basic internet access to schools and libraries for educational purposes. Kids could experience digital opportunity for the first time in computer labs at school or at the library. Since then, however, the E-Rate program has expanded exponentially, supporting a much broader list of services. And the number of devices connecting to these E-Rate supported networks has continued to grow as well. Gone are the days when schools focused predominately on connecting computer labs. Instead, nearly 100 percent of public schools report that they provide devices to students who need them, up from only 23 percent in the

⁵ See American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, *Screen Time and Children* (June 2025), https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *Surgeon General’s Warning on the Harms of Screen Use, An Advisory and Toolkit on How to Protect Children and Adolescents* (2026), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/us-surgeon-generals-advisory-warning-on-the-harms-of-screen-use.pdf>.

⁶ Eyes on the Board Act, S. 3074, 118th Cong. (2023).

⁷ Kids’ Excessive Screen Time Listening Session, Nat’l Telecomm. & Info. Admin. (Dec. 10, 2025), <https://www.ntia.gov/events-and-meetings/kids-excessive-screen-time-listening-session>.

⁸ *Screen Time Legislation Is Moving Fast. Here’s What’s Actually Enacted*, Whiteboard Advisors, K-12 Education (May 15, 2026), <https://whiteboardadvisors.com/screen-time-legislation-is-moving-fast-heres-whats-actually-enacted/>.

⁹ Lauren Lumpkin, *Nation’s second-largest school district passes strict new screen time rules for students*, Washington Post (June 23, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2026/06/23/nations-second-largest-school-district-passes-strict-new-screen-time-rules-students/>.

¹⁰ Pranati Kotamraju, *San Diego Unified unanimously approves proposal to reduce screen time for students*, San Diego CBS 7 News (June 23, 2026), <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diego-unified-technology-limit-student/4040447/>.

2019-2020 school year.¹¹ This is in addition to the many computers and phones that students are bringing to school from home.

In today's item, we are asking important questions that will allow us to ensure that the program continues to support educational opportunity while also considering whether additional safeguards, refinements, or updates are needed to better protect kids online. We seek comment on whether the program should be reoriented in light of all of the above developments, as well as the increase in connectivity to schools and libraries across the country since 1997.

We also explore whether our current interpretation of the Children's Internet Protection Act is the best reading of the statute, or whether there is more that the FCC, and schools across the country, can be doing to protect kids online when they are using E-Rate supported networks. Finally, we are proposing steps to strengthen integrity of the E-Rate program, including increasing oversight over consultants, to help safeguard the program against waste, fraud, and abuse.

Concerned citizens support our action today. I received a letter signed by hundreds of individuals and more than thirty-five organizations including Digital Progress Institute, NCOCE (National Center on Child Exploitation), Internet Accountability Project, and Independent Women's Forum urging the Commission to adopt this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

I welcome the discussion that this item will generate and look forward to reviewing the record. Thanks to Allison Baker, Bryan Boyle, Matt Baker, Kristin Berkland, Rachel Bixby, Joseph Calascione, Kate Dumouchel, Gabby Gross, Molly O'Connor, Johnnay Schrieber, Veronica Garcia-Ulloa, Jonathan Lechter, and Malena Barzilai for their great work on this item.

¹¹ Elementary and Secondary Education, Technology Support, *Annual Reports and Information Staff (Annual Reports)*, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/covid/theme/elementary-and-secondary-education-technology-support/> (last visited June 23, 2026).