


New Study: Home Computers Affect Grades Negatively

Waldorf educators are delighted that research is finally catching up with what they have known all along: excessive screen media has a negative impact on growing children. Recently added to the growing body of research correlating screen media with obesity, impairment of neurological development, aggressiveness, desensitization, and stereotyping, is new evidence that academic results are also negatively impacted.

A recent study has shown that middle school students who have access to home computers and high-speed Internet achieve lower scores in reading and math assessments than their counterparts who do not have a home computer. Students who do have home computers but use them twice a month or less achieved better scores than those who used computers indiscriminately.

Three researchers from Duke University in Durham, N.C. used data gathered from a survey given to 1 million fifth through eighth graders for their [paper](#): “Scaling the Digital Divide: Home Computer Technology and Student Achievement.”

In their Abstract the researchers Charles T. Clotfelter, Helen F. Ladd, and Jacob L. Vigdor write: “Does differential access to computer technology at home compound the educational disparities between rich and poor? Would a program of government provision of computers to secondary students reduce these disparities? ... we ... demonstrate that the introduction of home computer technology is associated with modest but statistically significant and persistent negative impacts on student math and reading test scores. Further evidence suggests that providing universal access to home computers and high-speed internet access would broaden, rather than narrow, math and reading achievement gaps.”