What Schools Need to Support Screen Time

A District Leader's Guide to Navigating Productive, Healthy Student Screen Time

Linewize by Qoria

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Introduction

As more states **introduce legislation** aimed at regulating (or flat-out blocking) the way students use devices during the school day, district leaders are being asked to respond in real time, often without clear guidance.

Pressure from legislators

In April 2026, the **Los Angeles Unified School District** became the first major district in the country to vote to curb classroom screen time — and in some cases, to eliminate it entirely.

Since then, **many other districts and states** are watching California closely and considering their own policy decisions. At least six states have enacted new legislation in 2026 that mention screen time, varying from hard daily limits to the creation of policy frameworks.

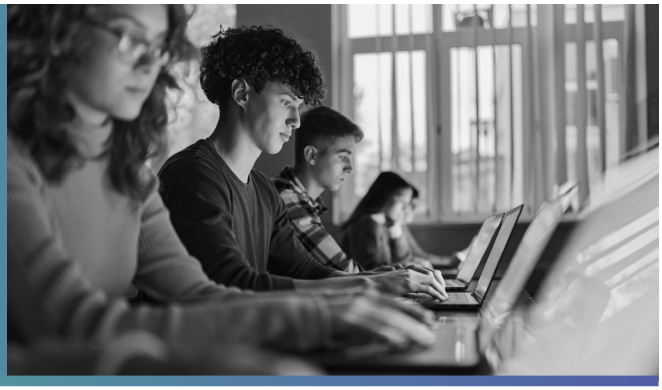
Pressure from parents

These legislative discussions are accompanied and prompted by a rise in parental concerns about screen time for their kids. In a recent **EdWeek Research Center survey**, 55% of educators shared that parents think the amount of screen time in schools is "too high." And yet, the same survey found that the majority (74%) of districts have no plans to reduce their EdTech investment.

The balance between parental concerns and operational plans is another factor weighing on district leaders as they consider what to do about screen time.

The bottom line: Either way, districts need more data

Regardless of how policies take shape, administrators must be ready to deliver transparent metrics to satisfy stakeholders. District IT teams are preparing for an influx of requests to gather, analyze, and report on student screen time data and they need reliable tools to do so.



Rethinking screen time goals: Moving from quantity to intention

While the push to limit screen time stems from very real concerns, fixating on time-based limits often misses a critical truth: Screens themselves aren't the core of the problem.

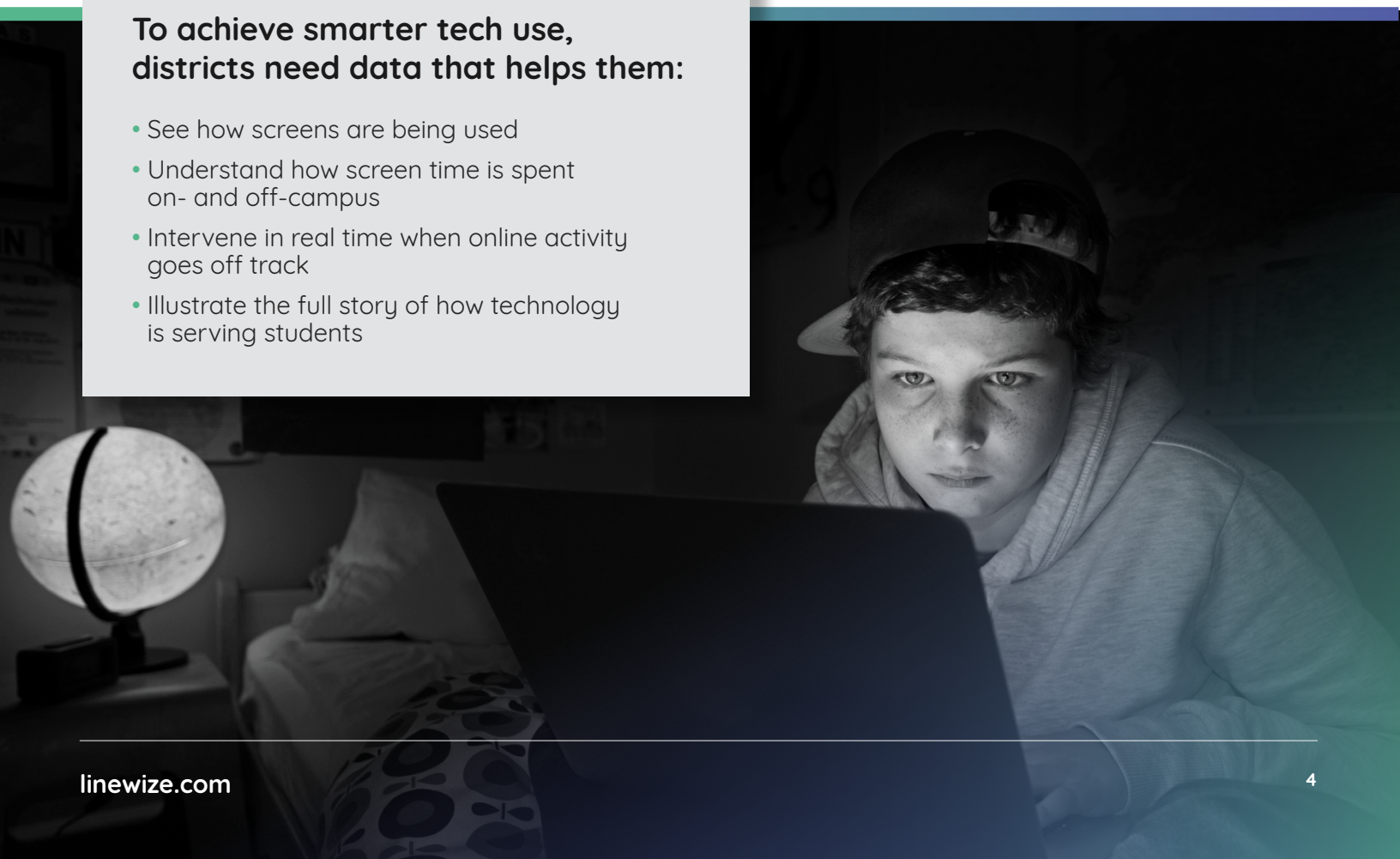
The main issue is passive, purposeless screen time. When students default to devices without intention, they miss out on real opportunities to enhance their learning.

A blanket reduction in screen time doesn't address the underlying root issue.

Students may spend less time on screens under such a policy, but if that time is still passive and unproductive, no progress is made. And restricting access completely can create a different set of problems, from digital illiteracy concerns to students who are more motivated to find workarounds and **"cheat" the system** as soon as they can. A better goal is smarter technology use, across the board.

To achieve smarter tech use, districts need data that helps them:

- See how screens are being used
- Understand how screen time is spent on- and off-campus
- Intervene in real time when online activity goes off track
- Illustrate the full story of how technology is serving students



What schools really need to support student screen time

1. Greater visibility into student technology use

In order to make informed decisions on guiding student screen time, district leaders need a clear picture of the way students are currently spending their time online.

It sounds straightforward, but in actuality, most districts are piecing together incomplete data. They may know which devices are connected to their network, for example, but be unaware of which platforms students spend the most time on and whether that usage aligns with learning goals.

According to Qustodio's **Lost in the Scroll report,** the most-used platforms on school-issued devices in the U.S. were learning management and assessment tools, like Google Classroom and Clever.

This suggests that students and teachers are often using school devices for their intended purpose.

However, we also know that **students are resourceful**. They use VPNs, share proxy links in Google Docs, and find workarounds faster than IT teams can flag them. Without real visibility into what's happening on the network at all times, leaders can't be sure that students are staying on task and, most importantly, staying safe.

Achieving that visibility requires tools that work at every level of the organization from the network, to the classroom, to the district admin office.

Types of visibility every district should have:

Direct role	Need	Tech to invest in	What to look for in a solution
IT teams	To move from reactive firefighting to proactive management.	Content-aware filtering with digestible reporting	**Look for:** • Filter features that allow IT to move from reactive firefighting to proactive management • Network-wide visibility • Real-time identification of new bypass strategies like proxy links, embedded games • Filter integration with classroom management tool, to reduce block/allow requests from teachers by empowering them in the classroom • Data to optimize network bandwidth • Hybrid capability to ensure policies are enforced across all devices on the network • Real-time view of sites and platforms students are accessing

Direct role	Need	Tech to invest in	What to look for in a solution
Safety coordinators, Counselors	To spot the silent signs of a student at risk that happen behind a screen, and support safety staff in conducting timely interventions before the point of crisis.	Real-time alerts to flag concerning student online activity that may go unnoticed.	**Look for:** • 24/7 real-time alerts • Tools that can assess for signs of self-harm, violence, grooming, cyberbullying, offensive behavior, terrorism/extremism • 24/7 human moderation for alerts • Screenshots to provide full-screen context around alerts • Ability to route alerts to the right staff members • Ability to catch risks whether device is online or offline, and on any network
Teachers	To protect instructional time and eliminate digital noise. To ensure devices are driving active learning rather than serving as a distraction during class.	Classroom management tools with granular, live-screen control	**Look for:** • Live view of every student's screen • Focus tools that allow teachers to limit students into accessing only websites for a certain lesson • Ability to redirect off-task behavior in real time • Integration with filter to empower teachers to block/allow approved sites for lessons, without submitting a help ticket
District administrators, IT teams	To defend educational budgets and satisfy legislative and/or parental feedback.	Clear, detailed reporting on screen time metrics and EdTech utilization	**Look for:** • District-wide data on how tools are actually being used • Ability to break down data by grade level, campus • Ability to compare whether usage is happening in school or at home. • Insight into per-student daily averages broken down by grade • Identify which platforms drive the most screen time.

With this data in hand, district leaders are equipped to have better conversations with their school boards, with parents, with each other, and with other school staff.

2. Real-time insight and intervention capabilities

Tracking patterns and trends is valuable, but there are also moments when leaders must react to what's happening in that exact moment.

Two distinct types of support are essential for agile responses: student safety monitoring and classroom management.

Risk monitoring for student safety

Real-time risk monitoring is critical in keeping students fully protected in their digital lives. Even on approved educational platforms, **students may engage in behavior** that puts them at risk (for example, expressing thoughts of self-harm, engaging in cyberbullying, or oversharing personal information with a chatbot). While web filtering can block dangerous or inappropriate websites, it can't detect what an individual student is typing in a Google Doc.

Qoria's **See the Signs report** surveyed nearly 1,000 schools in the U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand and revealed that 47% of U.S. schools experience digital harm incidents at least weekly. More than one-fifth (21%) see digital harm incidents daily.

How Linewize Monitor supports districts

Linewize Monitor, and its 24/7 team of human moderators, addresses this challenge directly. Monitor operates alongside the filter to track student risks across all online activity, no matter where the student is located. If a risk is found, the tool promptly alerts designated staff, providing the context needed to respond appropriately.

The impact is real. **Mustang Public Schools** in Oklahoma went live with Linewize Monitor and, within the first few days, received alerts for students expressing suicidal ideations and being groomed to meet with adults. In all cases, the staff were able to intervene quickly and provide students with critical support.

Keeping students on task in the classroom

Keeping students focused during instructional time is one of the biggest challenges teachers face. A device that's needed for class is also a source of distraction; students know that they're just a click away from their favorite games and social platforms. In a 1:1 device environment, **classroom management software** has become essential for teachers.

How Classwize supports districts

Classwize gives teachers granular control, providing a single dashboard from which they can see every student's screen in real time. Teachers can also easily focus student devices on specific apps and sites, close tabs that students have open, pause the internet entirely for periods of time, and send messages to the entire class or certain students.

Rather than forcing a blanket reduction in device usage, solutions like Classwize empower teachers to curate and guide intentional, productive screen time. At the same time, these tools reduce the burden on IT to respond to classroom management requests. When teachers have the discretion to allow or block specific sites, open resources on every student's device for teaching purposes, or safely unblock a filtered site for educational purposes, they can minimize passive scrolling and focus screen time on active learning.

"While web filtering can block dangerous or inappropriate websites, it can't detect what an individual student is typing in a Google Doc."

3. Context beyond time-based metrics

Time-based screen time policies sound straightforward in theory, but they don't reveal much about the quality of the time students are spending online. Logging 45 minutes on Khan Academy is fundamentally different from 45 minutes spent watching lifestyle videos on YouTube. Yet, both will register the same way if you're only tracking time.

Instead, districts should look for data that helps them understand what students are actually doing with their screen time and whether it's aligned with the district's learning goals.

How EdTech Manager supports districts

Linewize EdTech Manager gives district IT leaders a detailed view of tool usage, spending, licensing, and compliance across schools. With the newest Screen Time features, the picture expands to include the full context of how and when students are using their devices.

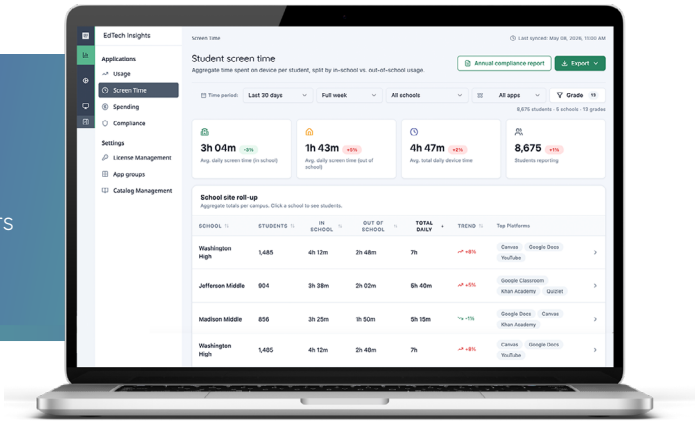
Screen time by grade level: Per-student daily averages broken down by grade, with in-school and out-of-school totals shown separately, plus the top platforms driving usage at each level.

School site roll-up: Aggregate screen time totals by campus, with data showing whether usage is trending upward or downward. That way, it's immediately apparent when one school departs from the district norm.

In-school vs. out-of-school comparison: This breaks down the grade groups and shows how much of students' total daily screen time happens at school vs. at home. For districts rolling out 1:1 programs, this helps with honest conversations with parents about device management.

Share of screen time: A ranked view of the platforms accounting for the most student screen time, with in-school and out-of-school splits available. This gives IT leaders direct evidence for license renewal decisions and helps uncover where budgets can be redirected.

Beyond screen time, EdTech Manager also surfaces compliance and privacy risks, flags unapproved apps, alerts IT when an app's security status changes, and helps districts identify unused or expired licenses. It is essentially a singular place where district leaders can see the full picture of their EdTech environment.



Conclusion

With these three factors working together — visibility across the district, real-time control, and full context — district leaders can begin to build the systems that foster safe, productive screen time. The goal is for every minute that a student spends on a device at school to be valuable, productive, and enhance their wellbeing rather than detract from it.

Linewize
by Qoria

Linewize is a unique response to the challenge of today's connected learning environments, supporting the integration of technology, education and engagement to create cyber safe communities where students thrive.

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Qoria

Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more
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