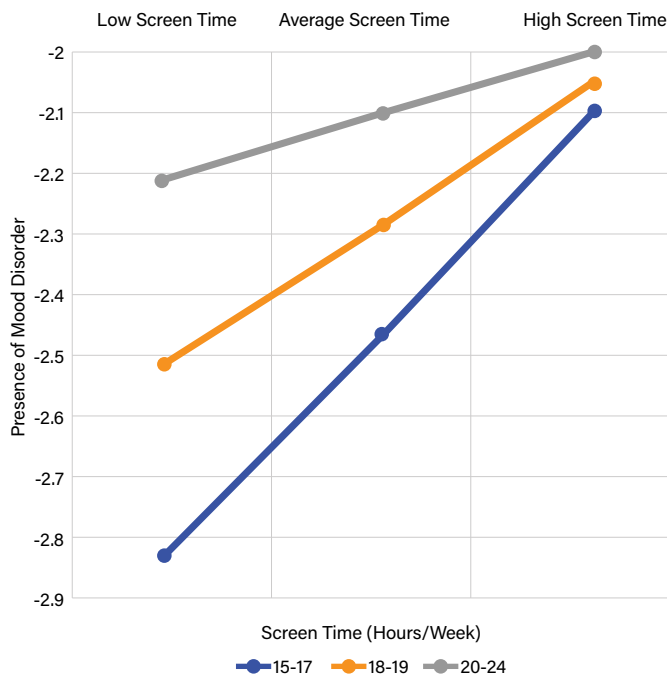


# State-Level Solutions for Addressing Social Media Risks

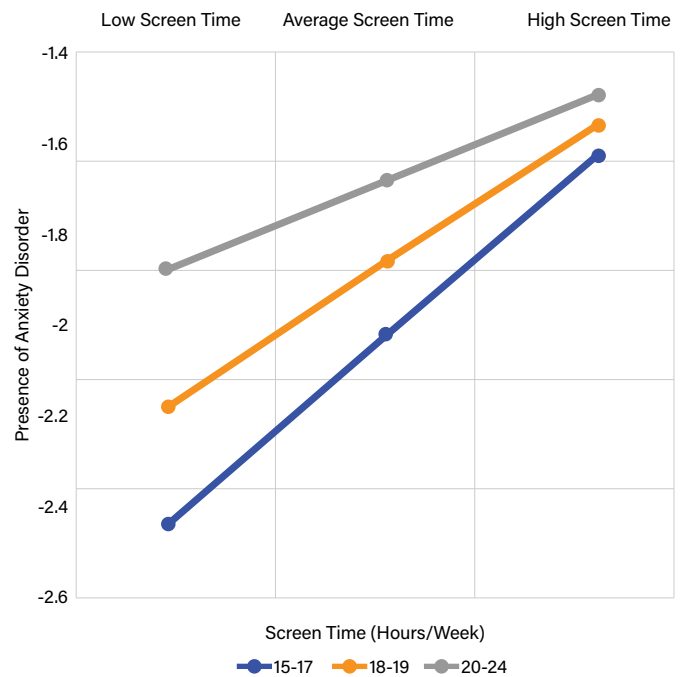
## The Problem

It takes an average of **23 minutes** to regain focus after an interruption, like a social media notification. The average student spends 5 hours a day on social media and receives around **237 notifications daily** from their personal device. These distractions redirect attention and hinder learning. Students who spend over 3 hours on social media daily also **double their risk** of poor mental health, including depression and anxiety.

**Figure 2:** Interaction plot for screen time and presence of mood disorder moderated by age.



**Figure 3:** Interaction plot for screen time and presence of anxiety disorder moderated by age.



Source: Atwal, S., & Browne, D. (2023). Screen time and mental health in Canadian youth: An examination of nationally representative data. *Psychological Reports, 127*(4).

## Why it Matters

The constant barrage of notifications disrupts the classroom environment, impacting student learning. Evidence from **both pre-** and **post-pandemic** suggests that the decline in NAEP scores since 2012 correlates with a rise in screen time for students.

Limiting social media in schools can boost engagement, improve academic performance, reduce cyberbullying, enhance mental health, and protect privacy. One **study** showed that students who did not use phones in class wrote 62% more information in their notes, recalled more information, and scored a full letter grade and a half higher on tests compared to phone users.

## Addressing the Challenge

Federal initiatives, such as the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) (COPPA), and proposed bills such as the [Protecting Kids on Social Media Act and The Kids Online Safety Act](#) (KOSA), aim to strengthen age verification, limit addictive algorithms that keep children glued to their phones, and enhance parental controls.

These federal policies are a good start, but states don't need to wait for Congress to act to address local needs and provide immediate protections, such as in-school device and social media restrictions.

The most effective way to restrict social media in schools is by blocking access to social media platforms on school-provided Wi-Fi and prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day



### Spotlight on Florida

In addition to restricting cell phone use during instructional hours, public schools are [required](#) to block students' access to social media on district Wi-Fi. Students in grades 6-12 must also receive instruction on social media's effects.

## A Comprehensive Approach

States can take additional steps to protect K-12 students online by enacting laws that protect minors' well-being and safety online, such as parental consent requirements, algorithmic safeguards, and data privacy protections.



### Spotlight on [Tennessee's Protecting Children from Social Media Act](#)

- Social media companies must verify the age of users and get parental consent for minors within 14 days of account creation.
- Companies must provide parents with tools to supervise their children's accounts, including privacy settings, daily time restrictions, and enforced breaks.



### Spotlight on [New York's Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation \(SAFE\) for Kids Act](#)

- Social media companies must display content chronologically and are prohibited from using addictive algorithms on minors' accounts.
- The states' [Child Data Protection Act](#) also restricts the collection and sharing of data of users under 18. privacy settings, daily time restrictions, and enforced breaks.

States can also develop digital literacy standards and mandate digital literacy instruction to educate students about the responsible use of social media and its potential impacts.

See ExcelinEd's [Digital Literacy in Education model policy](#) for more.

## Conclusion

States can protect students from social media-related distractions and challenges. These policies can establish safer, more focused learning environments by minimizing distractions and promoting responsible, thoughtful use of technology.

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