



## **HB 3489 Supports Digital Health and Wellness, Which Are Essential to Supporting Students**

**IDRA comments in support of HB 3489, Submitted by Christina Quintanilla-Muñoz to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 20, 2021**

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Christina Quintanilla-Muñoz, and I serve as an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA supports HB 3489 and its role in the development of health and safety guidelines for best practices for effective integration and appropriate use of digital devices in public schools.

Digital technologies, such as the Internet, devices, and online educational programs, are instrumental resources in schools for student learning. Remote virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic made the use of digital devices and other online resources an essential part of students' learning experience. However, appropriate health and safety guidelines are critical.

Learning that occurs through digital platforms entails extended periods of screen time that can impact students' physical and mental health and well-being. Through stakeholder convenings with students, IDRA has found that students' ability to navigate digital learning environments while considering their own physical and mental health is a major concern (Muñoz, 2021a). Recent research around mental health and screen time suggest prolonged screen time is associated with adverse psychological health effects, such as issues with focus and inattention, weakened emotional stability, and difficulty navigating in-person social interactions with peers (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

The state of Texas must strive to create the safest online learning experience for students, and HB 3489 works toward this goal. We must pursue viable solutions to appropriately address student mental health and wellness concerns and their impact on academic engagement that include the safe practices of interacting with digital technologies in schools (Muñoz, 2021b).

IDRA suggests adding a section pertaining to school and family communication about best practices for managing at-home screen time and digital device use for student learning. Virtual instruction extends to the student's home environment, and families should have the opportunity to implement such best practices while using school digital devices at home. When schools use strategies for authentic family engagement, they successfully work in partnership to promote students' academic and social-emotional engagement and success.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., IDRA Deputy Director of Policy, at [chloe.sikes@idra.org](mailto:chloe.sikes@idra.org).

**Resources**

Muñoz, C. (March 2021). Mental Health Implications of Virtual Learning on Student Engagement. IDRA Newsletter. <https://idra.news/NLMar21a>

Muñoz, C. (March 2021). Digital Divide Directly Impacted Student-School Engagement During COVID-19. IDRA Newsletter. <https://idra.news/NLMar21e>

Twenge, J.M., & Campbell, W.K. (October 2018). Associations Between Screen Time and Lower Psychological Well-being Among Children and Adolescents: Evidence From a Population-based Study. Preventive Medicine Reports, Vol. 12 271-283. doi:10.1016/j.pmedr.2018.10.003

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.*