



Is Technology Hurting Your Student? 10 Ways to Rebuild Focus, Cognitive Stamina & Test Readiness

What the Research Is Saying

A recent article published by Fortune Magazine (February 21, 2026) is raising serious questions about the impact of classroom technology on student learning — and the findings are hard to ignore. <https://fortune.com/2026/02/21/laptops-tablets-schools-gen-z-less-cognitively-capable-parents-first-time-cellphone-bans-standardized-test-scores/>

The U.S. has spent more than \$30 billion over the past two decades putting laptops and tablets in classrooms. The intention was good: give students access to more information and better tools. But according to neuroscientist Jared Cooney Horvath, who testified before the U.S. Senate earlier this year, the results tell a very different story.

Gen Z is now the first generation in modern history to score lower on standardized tests than the preceding generation. International student assessment data shows a stark correlation: the more time students spent on computers in school, the worse their scores.

The core problem isn't the technology itself — it's how it's been used. Constant task-switching, addictive app design, and unrestricted screen access have eroded students' ability to sustain attention, struggle through difficulty, and retain what they've learned. As Horvath put it: *"Learning is effortful, difficult, and oftentimes uncomfortable. But it's the friction that makes learning deep and transferable."*

The good news? These are skills that can be rebuilt. Here are 10 strategies parents and students can start using today.

10 Ways to Rebuild Your Student's Focus & Cognitive Stamina

1. **Read physical books daily.** Even 20 minutes of uninterrupted reading builds the sustained attention that screens erode. No highlights, no apps — just a book.
2. **Practice "struggle time."** When your student hits a hard problem, resist the urge to help immediately. Let them sit with it for 5–10 minutes first. The discomfort is the learning.
3. **Go pencil and paper for math practice.** Working problems by hand strengthens memory formation and deepens conceptual understanding in a way calculators simply can't replicate.
4. **Implement phone-free homework blocks.** No phone visible, no notifications, no music with lyrics. Research shows that even a phone sitting face down on a desk reduces cognitive capacity.
5. **Replace passive screen time with active reading.** Swap a Netflix episode for a magazine article, a news story, or a chapter of a book. The goal is to build reading stamina over time.



6. **Practice summarizing out loud.** After reading something, have your student close the book and explain it back to you in their own words. This is one of the single most powerful learning strategies that exists.
7. **Timed writing without tools.** Have your student write a short paragraph or response by hand with no spell check, no autocorrect, and a timer. This builds working memory and the ability to organize thoughts independently.
8. **Play strategy games.** Chess, card games, word games, and logic puzzles build exactly the kind of sustained, effortful thinking that screens have replaced.
9. **Limit multitasking during study.** One subject at a time, one tab open, one task. Task-switching is one of the primary ways technology has weakened memory formation and retention.
10. **Work with a tutor who teaches how to think, not just what to do.** The difference between a student who memorizes steps and a student who understands concepts is everything when it comes to high-stakes testing.

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At Scholar's Edge, we see the impact of these trends every day. We work with bright, capable students who've been conditioned to skim instead of reading, to Google instead of think, and to give up when things get hard — not because they lack ability, but because no one taught them how to struggle productively.

Our STAAR, SAT, ACT, PSAT, and TSI preparation programs are designed around the exact strategies listed above. We don't just teach test content — we rebuild the cognitive habits that make learning stick. Our students don't just improve their scores; they leave our program thinking more clearly, reading more deeply, and approaching hard problems with confidence. With over 10 years of reading and writing expertise and a proven math curriculum, Scholar's Edge is a trusted partner for families throughout Keller, Fort Worth, and the greater DFW area — as well as students preparing online across the country.

If your student is struggling with focus, test scores, or academic confidence, we'd love to connect. **Schedule a free consultation today at [scholarsedge.co](https://www.scholarsedge.co)**