

# Media Release

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## **Screen challenge gets kids off the sofa and having fun**

Whakatane parents are shocked to discover that their children spend more time in front of screens than they think.

School kids at Whakatane Intermediate School spend an average of five hours per day in front of a screen; whether it's the TV, a computer or their mobile phone, according to a recent study carried out by Toi Te Ora – Public Health.

“This is time spent watching screens outside of school and is a lot higher than the recommended two hours per day maximum,” says Toi Te Ora health promoter Candice Porter.

The study highlighted that parents and caregivers are largely unaware of just how much time kids spend on screens.

“On an average day, parents and caregivers estimated their children spent 2.3 hours on screen activities, when it's actually five hours,” says Candice. “It was also surprising that there were little or no restrictions put on the amount of time children were allowed in front of a screen, with only 18 percent of parents not allowing more than four hours screen time per day.”

However, from the pre-challenge survey it was clear that kids were keen to be more active with 61 percent saying they would like more information on active things to do at home.

The main aim of the study was to raise awareness amongst 11-13 year olds of how much time they spend on screens and how that time could be used to get active.

Following the initial pre-challenge survey the children were challenged to reduce their screen time over a four week period and were encouraged to take part in more physical activity.

“After the four weeks we found that the average number of hours spent on screen activities had reduced to 3.7 hours, down from five hours,” says Candice. “We gave the schools sporting equipment for the kids to use like skipping ropes and hacky sacks and some ideas on fun, cheap activities like egg and spoon races.”

As a result of the challenge 78 percent of the students spent more time being physically active. 79 percent increased the amount of organised out of school activities like sports, swimming and music, they were involved in, and 60 percent spent less time watching screens at home.

The challenge was well supported by the teachers at Whakatane Intermediate.

“The kids loved it and it gave us an introduction for discussion about health, nutrition, screen time and physical activity,” says teacher Rosey Kara.

The screen challenge will be offered to all schools throughout the Bay of Plenty as an interschool competition from 2009 including incentives and prizes. Toi Te Ora will provide a toolbox to encourage children to participate in activities away from screens.

### **School kids don't need much persuading to be more active**

- 61 percent of school kids said they would like more information on active things to do at home
- Following a survey aimed at making students more aware of how much time they spent in front of screens, 78 percent spent more time being physically active,
- 79 percent increased the amount of organised out of school activities like sports, swimming and music they were involved in, and
- 60 percent spent less time watching screens at home.



*Whakatane Intermediate students win great prizes for making the greatest reduction in time spent in front of screens.*

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