Purpose
Adolescents on the autism spectrum spend more time using technology than their peers (Mazurek et al., 2012, 2013). In a recent study of high school students with autism regarding their use of technology, Hedges et al. (in press), found that teens report widespread use of technology to enhance their learning, increase their social interactions, and to help reduce stress. This current study seeks to confirm those findings by asking similar questions to parents of the adolescent study participants.

Research Question:
➢ What are parent and adolescent perceptions of the benefits and challenges of technology use?

Methods
Paper surveys were completed by 321 parent of high school students with autism receiving special education services across 3 states in the United States (California, North Carolina, and Wisconsin).

The questionnaires covered topics related to their children’s technology use at home and at school. Technology was described as computers, cell phones, tablets, etc.

Results
Parents/Caregivers reported their perceptions of benefits and challenges regarding their adolescent’s technology use.

Benefits
➢ Strength (92%)
➢ Reduction of anxiety (86%)
➢ Socialization (57%)
➢ Increased independence at school (80%) and home (76%)

Challenges
➢ Becomes a distraction (71%)
➢ Excessive use (84%)

57% of adolescents reported feeling distracted by technology.

96% of adolescents indicated that they are "good at using technology".

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Report</th>
<th>How Teen Reduces Anxiety</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83% Listen to Music</td>
<td>59% Phone to Call or Text</td>
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94% of adolescents reported they use technology to communicate and socialize.

Parent & Teen Report | Communication & Social Use
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent (%)</td>
<td>Adolescent (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>Video Calls</td>
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Conclusion
➢ Parent reports of the benefits and challenges of technology are similar to what their children reported.
➢ Within interventions consider the benefits of providing access to technology tools for their students with autism to help increase independence, communication, and social interactions as well as reduce anxiety.
➢ There is a need to identify ways to mitigate the distracting aspects of technology for adolescents with ASD.

References

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