

W I C H I T A P U B L I C S C H O O L S



WICHITA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS®

Future Ready Learning with Purposeful Technology

A Teacher's Guide to Balanced, High-Quality
Instructional Technology Use

Every Student Future Ready

Balance • Quality • Digital Citizenship
2025–2026 School Year

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to be a quick-reference resource, not a binder to collect dust.

You do not need to read it cover to cover. Find your grade band, scan the tables, and start there. The research is in the appendix for anyone who wants to dig deeper.

If you need...	Go to...
A snapshot of acceptable technology use for your grade band	Grade-Band Guidelines
Examples of what high-quality tech use looks like	What Quality Looks Like
A list of practices to avoid	Unacceptable Uses
Digital citizenship talking points for students	Digital Citizenship
Practical next steps you can take this week	Making It Work
How to respond when a parent or family member has concerns	Responding to Parent Concerns
Advice on device management	Device Management: Your Authority as a Teacher
The research behind these guidelines, including the debates	Appendix: Research Base

A Note on Students with IEPs, 504 Plans, and Specialized Needs

These guidelines apply to all students in all settings. Technology is a learning tool, like a pencil or a textbook, and its use should be purposeful for every student, whether in general education, special education, or any other instructional setting.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans may require increased or different technology use as part of their legally mandated accommodations. Examples include augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools, assistive technology specified in a student's IEP, sensory or behavioral supports, and visual or auditory supports for students with sensory impairments.

Important: Assistive technology use (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, AAC devices, and other IEP/504-specified tools) should not count toward daily technology-use guidance. These tools provide access to learning and are not discretionary screen time.

If a student's IEP or 504 plan specifies technology use that differs from these guidelines, the IEP or 504 plan takes precedence. Always consult with your building's child study team or the student's case manager if you have questions about a specific student's needs.

Why This Matters

Our District's Commitment

WPS Vision

Wichita Public Schools will be the premier district of choice and inspire each student and staff member to thrive and become future ready within the greater community.

WPS Mission

Wichita Public Schools prepares each student to achieve readiness for life, college and career through an innovative and impactful educational experience.

The **Every Student Future Ready** strategic plan calls for innovative and impactful educational experiences. That means technology should amplify great teaching, not replace it. It should deepen thinking, not just keep students occupied.

This guide exists because we believe in getting it right, not just getting it digital. Our three goals for instructional technology are straightforward:

Balance	Quality	Digital Citizenship
Technology supplements and enhances instruction; it does not dominate the school day. Students also need hands-on learning, direct instruction, peer interaction, movement, and creative time.	When students use technology, the experience should involve active learning: creating, collaborating, problem-solving, and thinking critically, not passive consumption.	Students learn to be responsible, ethical, and healthy in their digital lives, building habits that serve them well beyond the classroom.

We Know This Is a Debate

Technology in schools is not a settled question. Parents, researchers, policymakers, and educators hold a range of views, and some of those views are deeply critical. Books like Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* have raised important questions about screen exposure and youth mental health. Sweden reversed its national push for early-childhood tablets. Parents across the country have organized to push back on what they see as excessive and unstructured screen time in classrooms.

We take these concerns seriously, and we built this guide because of them, not in spite of them.

The research is not one-sided (see the Appendix for a full treatment of both supportive and cautionary evidence). What the evidence does tell us clearly is this: *how* technology is used matters far more than *whether* it is used. Passive, unstructured screen time is harmful. Active, intentional, teacher-guided technology use supports learning. These guidelines exist to maximize the latter and eliminate the former.

The Research in a Nutshell

This section is a brief introduction to the research principles behind our guidelines. It is not a comprehensive review. For a deeper look at the evidence, including the studies that challenge these positions, see the Appendix: Research Base at the end of this document.

- **Quality over quantity.** The American Academy of Pediatrics now emphasizes the quality of digital interactions rather than rigid time limits for school-age children. Active, purposeful use supports learning; passive scrolling does not. This is why our guidelines focus on what students do with technology, not just how long they use it.
- **Active beats passive.** The 2024 National Education Technology Plan distinguishes active technology use (creating, coding, collaborating, designing) from passive use (clicking through videos and quizzes without thinking). Active use supports deeper learning. This distinction drives every acceptable-use recommendation in our grade-band tables.
- **Standards-aligned technology works—when implemented well.** Research mapped to the ISTE Standards for Students shows measurable learning gains across all seven student standards when technology is integrated thoughtfully. The key phrase is “when implemented well.” Technology without good teaching does not produce results, which is why the teacher’s role is central to every section of this guide.
- **Balance matters for well-being.** Technology should not crowd out physical activity, face-to-face social interaction, creative play, or sleep. Setting intentional boundaries protects both learning outcomes and student health. This is why every grade band includes daily time recommendations and non-negotiable screen-free expectations.
- **Digital citizenship is a skill, not an add-on.** Students need explicit instruction in responsible digital behavior, online safety, media literacy, healthy digital habits, and the ethical use of AI. These skills must be woven into everyday instruction, not taught once and forgotten.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strengthens technology integration.** When technology is used to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression, it reaches more learners. Quality technology use naturally aligns with UDL principles by offering students choices in how they access, engage with, and demonstrate learning.

Bottom Line

The goal is not less technology or more technology. The goal is better technology use, intentional, active, and balanced, so that every student is future ready. Where the research raises legitimate concerns, our guidelines address them directly.

Grade-Band Technology Guidelines

The following guidelines reflect the current WPS device environment, research on developmentally appropriate technology use, and our commitment to balance. Use these as your go-to reference for what is acceptable at your grade level.

A note on guidance, not rigid limits: The recommendations below describe the general rhythm and proportion of technology use appropriate at each grade band. They are not stopwatch rules. Curriculum-required technology (district-adopted platforms, assessment tools) and assistive technology specified in IEPs/504 plans exist outside these guidelines. The emphasis throughout is on the quality and purpose of technology use, not on counting minutes.

A Note on Technology Magnet and Specialty Programs

Some WPS elementary buildings have specialty programs embedded into their curriculum that involve additional, structured technology use beyond what these guidelines describe. Examples include Spaght Consumption to Creation Magnet (Code to the Future), McLean Science and Technology Magnet, L'Ouverture Computer Technology Magnet, and similar programs.

In these buildings, students may spend more time on devices as part of their magnet or specialty curriculum, for example, coding instruction, robotics, or computer science coursework that is central to the school's educational model. This additional time is expected, intentional, and part of the approved program design.

The guidelines in this document still apply to general classroom instruction in these buildings. The specialty or magnet curriculum operates in addition to, not instead of, these baseline expectations. In practice, this means:

- General classroom teachers in specialty buildings follow the same daily guidance for non-specialty instruction.
- Specialty program instruction (coding, robotics, computer science) is governed by the approved program curriculum, not by the daily screen time guide in this table.
- The quality standards still apply to all technology use in every building: students should be actively engaged, the teacher should be facilitating, and no screen time should be passive or purposeless.

If you teach in a specialty building and have questions about how these guidelines apply to your specific context, talk with your building administrator or an IST team member. The goal is not to restrict programs that are working, it is to ensure that all technology use across the district, regardless of building model, is intentional, teacher-facilitated, and in service of learning.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten: Minimal Technology

Device Environment

Kindergarten classrooms do not have assigned student devices. Technology use is limited and teacher-directed.

Why These Limits?

Research on early childhood development consistently shows that children ages 5–6 learn best through physical play, direct social interaction, and sensory exploration. The AAP and multiple developmental studies caution against screen-based instruction replacing these foundational experiences. Our kindergarten guidelines reflect the most conservative position in this document.

Guideline	What This Looks Like
Daily technology use	Minimal to none. The priority at this age is hands-on play, social interaction, and physical movement. Many school days will include no screen-based activities at all.
Teacher-directed whole group	When technology is used in kindergarten, it is always: • Teacher-led and interactive — the teacher is actively guiding the experience, pausing, asking questions, and connecting it to the lesson. Students are never passively watching. • Whole group on the projector or display — no individual student devices, tablets, or logins. • Brief — most sessions should be approximately 5–10 minutes. This is not a hard timer, but a research-informed guide. Developmental research on sustained attention in 5- and 6-year-olds consistently supports short, focused exposures over extended screen use (Madigan et al., 2019; AAP, 2024). Professional judgment applies. Some instructional routines naturally extend beyond 10 minutes and are appropriate when the teacher is actively facilitating. Examples: • A phonics decoding routine that uses the display as part of a structured, interactive lesson • A virtual guest speaker or live virtual field trip where students are asking questions and participating • A science simulation where the teacher stops frequently to discuss what students are observing <i>The guiding question is not "How many minutes?" but "Is the teacher actively mediating the experience, and are students engaged and not just watching?"</i> What does NOT count as screen time: A teacher using a presentation (slides, document camera, or projected text) to guide instruction is not screen time for students. The screen is the teacher's tool, not the student's experience. This is no different from using a whiteboard.
Acceptable uses	Teacher-led virtual field trips, shared reading on screen, interactive songs or movement videos (where students are physically participating), brief whole-group digital modeling, and structured phonics or decoding routines that incorporate the display.
Digital citizenship	Begin conversations about being kind online, taking care of shared technology, asking a trusted adult before clicking, and understanding when it is time to put screens away

	and play. These early conversations build the foundation for responsible technology use in later grades.
Key principle	Learning at this age is primarily physical, social, and sensory. Technology should be a brief supplement — never the primary mode of instruction. When technology is used, the teacher is always actively present, guiding the experience, and connecting it to learning. If the same learning goal can be achieved through hands-on activity, that is always preferred.

Managing Shared Devices

These are school-issued devices, and you are responsible for ensuring they are used safely and appropriately. If a student is misusing a shared device (for example, accessing content that is not part of the assigned task, being unkind to peers through the device, or refusing to follow directions), you are empowered to remove the device from that student for the remainder of the activity or class.

Best practice: Log brief device-related incidents in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This creates a record of Level 1 behaviors. Consistent documentation is required by the Student Code of Conduct if a pattern of behavior needs to escalate to Level 2.

If the behavior is more serious or repeated, contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy.

Grades 1–2: Building Foundations (Shared iPads)

Device Environment

Shared iPad carts. Students rotate through technology as one of several learning options or activities.

Why These Limits?

At ages 6–8, children are developing early reading, writing, and math fluency. Research supports short, positive impacts of focused digital sessions as an option for learning and applying skills, but sustained screen time at this age can displace the hands-on practice and teacher interaction these learners need most. The 30–45 minute daily maximum reflects AAP guidance and is spread across multiple subjects in short segments, not a single block.

Guideline	What This Looks Like
Recommended daily screen time	Approximately 30–45 minutes total across all subjects, broken into shorter segments of 10–15 minutes per session. This is a research-informed guide, not a rigid cap. At ages 6–8, children are developing early reading, writing, and math fluency. Research supports short, focused digital sessions as one option for learning and practice, but sustained screen time at this age can displace the hands-on interaction and teacher engagement these learners need most (AAP, 2024; Madigan et al., 2019). The 30–45 minute daily range reflects this evidence and is spread across multiple subjects in short segments, not a single block. Many days will be less. Not every lesson requires technology, and there will be days where screen time is minimal or zero. The number above is a ceiling for planning purposes, not a target to reach. What does NOT count toward this time: A teacher using a presentation, projected text, or document camera to guide instruction is not screen time for students. The screen is the teacher's tool in those moments and is no different from a whiteboard.
Acceptable uses	District-provided targeted skill apps (aligned to what students are learning in class), teacher-assigned creative activities (digital storytelling, voice recording, drawing), interactive simulations, and structured practice within a rotation or learning option. The guiding question: Is the student creating, practicing, or demonstrating understanding, or just clicking through? If the activity is passive consumption with no teacher interaction, it does not belong here.
Teacher role	Actively circulate, monitor, and connect technology activities to learning goals. When students are using devices, the teacher should be moving through the room, checking in, asking questions, redirecting, and assessing understanding in real time. Technology is never set-and-forget. An app running in the corner while the teacher works with another group is only acceptable if the teacher has a plan to check in, the activity has a clear learning purpose, and the session is time-limited. If a student is off-task or struggling, the teacher intervenes, just as they would with any other learning activity.

Digital citizenship	Teach basic device care (carrying with two hands, keeping screens clean, returning to the cart), appropriate app use (only using what the teacher assigns), asking before clicking on anything unfamiliar, and beginning media balance awareness (understanding that screens are one part of learning, not all of it).
Key principle	Technology is one option for students to learn or demonstrate understanding but it is not the default. Most learning at this age should still be hands-on, collaborative, and teacher-led. Before reaching for a device, ask: Could this learning goal be met equally well with pencil and paper, manipulatives, or conversation? If the answer is yes, the non-digital option is preferred.

Managing Shared Devices

These are school-issued devices, and you are responsible for ensuring they are used safely and appropriately. If a student is misusing a shared device (for example, accessing content that is not part of the assigned task, being unkind to peers through the device, or refusing to follow directions), you are empowered to remove the device from that student for the remainder of the activity or class.

Best practice: Log brief device-related incidents in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This creates a record of Level 1 behaviors. Consistent documentation is required by the Student Code of Conduct if a pattern of behavior needs to escalate to Level 2.

If the behavior is more serious or repeated, contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy.

Grades 3–5: Expanding Skills (Shared iPads)

Device Environment

Shared iPad carts. Increased access, but devices are still shared and should be used with clear instructional purpose.

Why These Limits?

By grades 3–5, students can engage in more sustained digital tasks, research, multimedia creation, collaborative writing, that genuinely extend what is possible on paper. The 45–90 minute range is distributed across multiple subjects with breaks between sessions. The ceiling exists because research shows diminishing returns beyond this point and because students at this age still benefit significantly from non-digital collaboration, handwriting practice, and physical activity.

Guideline	What This Looks Like
Technology use	Quality over quantity. The focus at this level is not how many minutes students spend on a device, but whether the technology is enabling learning that would be difficult or impossible without it. As a planning reference, most general classroom technology use at this level falls in the range of 45–90 minutes per day, distributed across subjects in sessions of approximately 15–25 minutes. But this number is a reference point for planning, not a target, not a timer, and not a measure of good teaching. Some days will be well below this range. Some project-based days may exceed it. What matters is whether the use is purposeful. What counts toward this reference: Time when students are actively using a device to create, practice, research, or demonstrate understanding. What does NOT count: - Teacher using a projector, Clear Touch, document camera, or slides to deliver instruction (this is a teaching tool, not student screen time) - District-required curriculum components that use technology as part of their design (for example, a core reading or math program that includes digital lessons). These are curriculum requirements, not discretionary screen time. - Intervention tools used to address specific, documented student needs (for example, a targeted reading intervention assigned by an interventionist or documented in a student's support plan).
Acceptable uses	Active, purposeful technology use includes: - Research projects using guided or teacher-vetted sources - Multimedia creation — slides, video, audio, digital posters — where students are building something - Collaborative documents and shared workspaces - Standards-aligned adaptive software tied to specific learning goals - Coding activities and computational thinking - Virtual simulations that support science, social studies, or math concepts - Teacher-guided use of creative tools (for example, Canva for a classroom project, SchoolAI for a structured learning activity) where the teacher is directing the experience and reviewing the output.

	The guiding question: Is the student thinking, creating, or solving, or just clicking, scrolling, or watching? If the answer is the latter, reconsider the activity.
Teacher role	Frame, monitor, and debrief — not just assign. • Before the task: Set clear objectives. Tell students what they are learning (not just what they are doing) and what successful use of the tool looks like. • During the task: Circulate. Check in. Ask questions that connect the technology activity to the learning goal. Redirect off-task behavior immediately — the same way you would during any other learning activity. • After the task: Debrief the learning, not just the product. What did students figure out? What was hard? What would they do differently? This step is what separates meaningful technology integration from digital busywork. • Technology is never set-and-forget. A device in a student's hands without a teacher actively facilitating is the single most common way screen time becomes passive.
Digital citizenship	At this level, students are ready for more explicit instruction on: • Responsible searching and evaluating whether online sources are trustworthy • Respecting others' work and understanding plagiarism in age-appropriate terms • Password safety and protecting personal information • Understanding that what you do online leaves a digital footprint • An introduction to what AI is and how it works — in teacher-guided, age-appropriate contexts A note on AI: "No independent AI interactions" does not mean students cannot use tools that happen to incorporate AI features (for example, image creation in Canva or a structured lesson in SchoolAI). It means students should not be independently prompting, chatting with, or relying on generative AI to produce their work. The teacher should be guiding the experience, setting the parameters, and reviewing the output. The goal is AI literacy. understanding what these tools are and how they work, not AI avoidance.
Key principle	Students should be transitioning from consumers to creators. The measure of good technology integration at this level is not how many minutes students spent on a device — it is whether the technology enabled something that would have been significantly more difficult, less engaging, or impossible without it. Before reaching for a device, ask: Is the technology adding value that pencil, paper, manipulatives, or conversation cannot? If the answer is yes, use it with purpose. If the answer is no, the non-digital option is preferred.

Managing Shared Devices

These are school-issued devices, and you are responsible for ensuring they are used safely and appropriately. If a student is misusing a shared device (for example, accessing content that is not part of the assigned task, being unkind to peers through the device, or refusing to follow directions), you are empowered to remove the device from that student for the remainder of the activity or class.

Best practice: Log brief device-related incidents in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This creates a record of Level 1 behaviors. Consistent documentation is required by the Student Code of Conduct if a pattern of behavior needs to escalate to Level 2.

If the behavior is more serious or repeated, contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy.

Grades 6–8: Developing Independence (1:1 Laptops)

Device Environment

1:1 laptops. Students carry their device throughout the day, but devices stay in the building and do not go home.

Why These Limits?

Middle school students have 1:1 access, which increases both opportunity and risk. Research on adolescent self-regulation shows that explicit structure is essential at this age, students are still developing the executive function skills needed to manage open access responsibly. The “screens down” requirements and daily non-tech activities are directly informed by studies showing that even the presence of an open device reduces attention for nearby students (Sana, Weston, & Cepeda, 2013).

Guideline	What This Looks Like
Daily technology integration	Intentional and varied — not constant. Middle school students have 1:1 laptops, which increases both opportunity and risk. Having a device does not mean using it every period, and not every lesson should involve a screen. Technology use varies by lesson, subject, and day. Some class periods will be heavily digital (collaborative writing, research, data analysis). Others should be intentionally device-free (Socratic discussion, lab work, hands-on projects, group problem-solving). The goal is balance across the week, not a fixed daily quota. What counts as technology integration: Time when students are actively using their device to create, collaborate, research, analyze, or demonstrate understanding with a clear learning purpose. What does NOT count: - Teacher using the projector, Clear Touch, document camera, or slides to deliver instruction - District-required curriculum components that include digital lessons as part of their design - Intervention tools or assessment platforms used for documented student needs or required formative/summative assessments
Acceptable uses	Active, purposeful technology use at this level includes: - Collaborative writing, peer editing, and real-time feedback on shared documents - Research with source evaluation — students learning to assess credibility, bias, and relevance - Data collection, organization, and analysis using spreadsheets or visualization tools - Multimedia projects: video, audio, presentations, digital portfolios - Coding, computational thinking, and digital design - Simulations that support science, social studies, or math concepts

	Teacher-guided use of AI-powered tools (for example, structured lessons in SchoolAI, AI-assisted research activities) where the teacher sets the parameters and reviews outputs The guiding question: Is the student thinking, creating, collaborating, or solving, or just clicking, scrolling, or watching? If the answer is the latter, reconsider the activity.
Screens-down expectations	Establish clear, consistent “screens down” or “lids at 45” routines. This is not optional — it is a core expectation at the middle school level. Research shows that even the presence of an open device reduces attention for the user and for students nearby (Sana, Weston, & Cepeda, 2013). When to use screens-down: - During direct instruction and teacher modeling - During whole-class and small-group discussion - During collaborative group work that does not require a device - During transitions between activities - Any time student attention should be on a person, not a screen Practice this routine until it is automatic. Introduce it on the first day, model it explicitly, and enforce it consistently. Students who have had structure in elementary will adapt quickly. Students who have not will need more practice, not less structure.
Teacher role	Design with purpose. Monitor actively. Redirect immediately. Design: Choose technology when it enables something not easily possible without it — collaboration across a shared document, real-time data analysis, multimedia creation, source evaluation at scale. If the task could be done equally well on paper, ask whether the device is adding value. Monitor: Circulate continuously when devices are open. Position yourself to see screens. Use district-provided device monitoring tools for appropriate guidance — these tools support your awareness but do not replace your physical presence in the room. Redirect: Off-task behavior on a device is no different from off-task behavior anywhere else — address it immediately and without hesitation. You are empowered to take the device for the class period if needed. This is your classroom, and these are school-issued devices. Build in non-tech activities daily. Every day should include learning experiences that do not involve a screen: discussion, writing by hand, lab work, movement, collaborative problem-solving. This is not a concession — it is how middle school students build the self-regulation skills they will need in high school.
Digital citizenship	This is a critical age for digital citizenship. Middle school students are old enough to encounter real risks online but still developing the judgment to navigate them. Explicit instruction is essential — not a one-time lesson, but an ongoing part of how you talk about technology use. Core topics at this level: Media literacy: How to identify reliable sources, recognize bias, and spot misinformation

	• Cyberbullying prevention: What it looks like, how to respond, and how to be an upstander • Digital footprint: Understanding that online activity is permanent and traceable • AI literacy: What AI tools are, how they generate content, when they are useful, and why they cannot replace thinking • Privacy and data management: Who can see what you share, and what information should stay private • Healthy screen habits: Recognizing when a break is needed and building self-awareness around device use • Respectful online communication: Tone, intent, and the difference between how something reads and how it was meant A note on AI at this level: Students may interact with AI tools in teacher-guided contexts, for example, structured lessons on how AI generates text or evaluating AI-produced content for accuracy. The emphasis should be on understanding and critical evaluation, not on using AI as a productivity shortcut. Students should be able to explain what an AI tool did and why they would or would not trust its output.
Key principle	Having a device does not mean using it all day. Middle school students are developing self-regulation skills like the ability to manage their attention, resist distraction, and make independent choices about how to use a tool responsibly. These skills do not develop through unrestricted access. They develop through explicit structure, consistent expectations, and graduated independence. Your role is to build the bridge from elementary structure to high school autonomy. That means being clear about when devices are open and when they are closed, modeling the thinking behind those decisions, and gradually giving students more ownership as they demonstrate they can handle it. The students who arrive in 6th grade from elementary will have had structured, limited technology use. The guidelines at this level are designed to honor that foundation while expanding expectations — not to undo it by handing students a laptop with no guardrails.

Managing Student Devices

These are school-issued devices, and you are empowered to take them when student safety or appropriate use is at risk. You do not need permission to act. These are not personal devices.

Short-term removal (one class period): If a student is off-task, accessing inappropriate content, or misusing the device, you may take the device for the remainder of that class period. Log this in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This documents Level 1 behaviors and is required by the Student Code of Conduct to establish patterns that may need to escalate to Level 2.

Extended removal: If the behavior is more serious (for example, accessing harmful content, cyberbullying, repeated defiance, or any safety concern), take the device and contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy. The administrator will determine next steps.

Remind students regularly: These laptops belong to the school. Using them is a privilege that comes with the responsibility to follow classroom and district expectations.

Grades 9–12: Future-Ready Application (1:1 Laptops)

Device Environment

1:1 laptops. Students carry their devices throughout the day and take them home in the evening.

Why This Approach?

High school students are preparing for college and career environments where digital literacy is a baseline expectation. The shift from structured limits to guided autonomy reflects developmental research on adolescent decision-making, while maintaining teacher-facilitated expectations for when technology is and is not the right tool.

Guideline	What This Looks Like
Daily technology integration	Fluid, subject-dependent, and driven by purpose. High school students are preparing for college and career environments where technology is embedded in everything, but where knowing when not to use it is just as important as knowing how. The shift at this level is from teacher-structured use to guided autonomy. Some days will be heavily tech-integrated, examples are collaborative research, co-authoring, creative production, data analysis. Others should be intentionally low-tech with activities like Socratic seminars, hands-on labs, live presentations, written reflection by hand. Balance across the week matters more than a daily formula. What counts as technology integration: Time when students are actively using their device to create, collaborate, research, analyze, produce, or demonstrate understanding with a clear learning purpose. What does NOT count: • Teacher using a projector, Clear Touch, document camera, or slides to deliver instruction • District-required curriculum components that include digital lessons or assessments as part of their design • Intervention tools, assessment platforms, or college and career readiness systems (for example, Naviance, scholarship portals) that are part of standard school operations
Acceptable uses	At this level, the range of acceptable technology use is broad and reflects the skills students need after graduation: • Advanced research and synthesis using multiple sources with critical evaluation • Collaborative platforms for group projects — co-authoring, shared workspaces, real-time feedback • Creative production: podcasts, videos, websites, graphic design, data visualizations • Coding, data science, computational thinking, and simulation tools • Career exploration tools, digital portfolios, college applications, and scholarship submissions

	AI tools used with teacher guidance and transparency, students should be able to articulate what the AI did, what they did, and why they trust (or do not trust) the output The guiding question: Is the student doing the thinking, or is the technology doing the thinking for them? If the device is doing the cognitive work, the activity is not learning.
Screens-down expectations	Screens-down routines still matter in high school. The research on device-related distraction applies to adolescents just as it does to younger students (Sana, Weston, & Cepeda, 2013; Ravizza, Uijtvlugt, & Fenn, 2017). Even college students perform worse when laptops are open during lectures. Expecting high school students to self-regulate in every moment without structure is not developmentally realistic. Build in non-tech learning regularly: - Socratic seminars and class discussions where eye contact and listening matter more than screens - Lab work, hands-on projects, and maker activities - Student presentations where the audience is expected to be fully present - Collaborative problem-solving, debate, and Socratic discussion - Written reflection by hand — research consistently shows benefits for retention and processing The difference from middle school: At this level, begin involving students in the decision. Ask them: <i>"Do you need your laptop for this activity, or would it be better closed?"</i> Teaching students to make that call themselves is preparation for college, where no one will close the laptop for them.
Teacher role	Facilitate ownership. Model professional practice. Maintain authority. Facilitate: Help students develop judgment about when technology is the right tool and when it is not. Frame choices explicitly: <i>"For this discussion, laptops closed — your thinking needs to happen out loud, not on a screen."</i> or <i>"This research task is complex enough that your laptop will help — here is what I expect to see."</i> Making the reasoning visible teaches the skill. Model: Demonstrate professional digital practices yourself. How you use (and don't use) technology in front of students communicates expectations more powerfully than any policy. If you ask students to close their laptops, close yours. If you expect focused work, show focused work. Monitor: Continue to circulate when devices are open. Use district-provided device monitoring tools for appropriate guidance. Position yourself to see screens. Even as students gain independence, your active presence communicates that the expectation for purposeful use has not changed. Maintain authority: Even though 9–12 students take devices home, in-school use remains under your authority. You are empowered to take the device for a class period if a student is misusing it. These are school-issued devices and guided autonomy does not mean unrestricted access. Set expectations on the first day and enforce them consistently.

Digital citizenship	At this level, digital citizenship is no longer a standalone lesson — it is embedded in how students use technology every day. The topics are real, consequential, and directly connected to life after graduation. Core topics: • Digital identity and reputation: What you post now can surface in college admissions, scholarship reviews, and job searches. This is not hypothetical — admissions officers and hiring managers routinely review online presence • Academic integrity in a digital world: What constitutes original work when AI tools, collaborative platforms, and online sources are all available. Students need a clear framework for when to use these tools, how to cite them, and where the line is • Effective and ethical use of AI: Students should be able to use AI tools as thought partners, research accelerators, and editing assistants — while clearly distinguishing their own thinking from AI-generated output. The standard: if a student cannot explain and defend their work without the AI, the AI did the learning, not the student • Information literacy: Evaluating sources at a sophisticated level — recognizing bias, understanding how algorithms shape what you see, and distinguishing between credible journalism, opinion, and misinformation • Professional digital communication: Email etiquette, workplace-appropriate messaging, and understanding that tone in digital communication is easy to misread • Preparing for digital expectations in college and careers: Time management with devices, self-regulation in unstructured digital environments, and knowing when to disconnect
Key principle	The goal is self-directed, responsible technology use. Students should leave WPS prepared to navigate digital environments independently and ethically — in college classrooms where no one will close the laptop for them, in workplaces where digital professionalism is a baseline expectation, and in a civic life increasingly shaped by digital information and AI. This is where the K–12 arc comes together. Kindergarten established that technology is a brief supplement to hands-on learning. Elementary taught students that technology is one tool among many, chosen when it adds value. Middle school built the habits of screens-down routines, structured use, and developing self-regulation. High school is where students practice making those decisions themselves — with your guidance, your modeling, and your willingness to hold the standard when they are not yet ready.

Managing Student Devices

These are school-issued devices, and you are empowered to take them when student safety or appropriate use is at risk. You do not need permission to act.

Short-term removal (one class period): If a student is off-task, accessing inappropriate content, or misusing the device, take the device for that class period. Log this in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This documents Level 1 behaviors and is required by the Student Code of Conduct for establishing patterns that may escalate to Level 2.

Extended removal: For more serious infractions (accessing harmful content, cyberbullying, academic dishonesty involving the device, repeated defiance, or any safety concern), take the device and contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy.

Even though 9–12 students take devices home, in-school use remains under your authority. Set clear expectations on the first day and enforce them consistently.

Device Management: Your Authority as a Teacher

This section applies to all grade bands. Whether you are managing shared iPads or 1:1 laptops, you are empowered to act when student safety or appropriate use is at risk. You do not need permission to act. These are school-issued devices, not personal devices.

Shared Devices (K–5)

If a student is misusing a shared device (for example, accessing content that is not part of the assigned task, being unkind to peers through the device, or refusing to follow directions), you are empowered to remove the device from that student for the remainder of the activity or class.

Best practice: Log brief device-related incidents in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This creates a record of Level 1 behaviors. Consistent documentation is required by the Student Code of Conduct if a pattern of behavior needs to escalate to Level 2.

If the behavior is more serious or repeated, contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy.

1:1 Laptops (6–12)

Short-term removal (one class period): If a student is off-task, accessing inappropriate content, or misusing the device, you may take the device for the remainder of that class period. Log this in the Student Contact Log in Synergy (not the Notes section). This documents Level 1 behaviors and is required by the Student Code of Conduct to establish patterns that may need to escalate to Level 2.

Extended removal: If the behavior is more serious (for example, accessing harmful content, cyberbullying, repeated defiance, or any safety concern), take the device and contact your building administrator or submit an incident referral in Synergy. The administrator will determine next steps.

Remind students regularly: These laptops belong to the school. Using them is a privilege that comes with the responsibility to follow classroom and district expectations. Even though 9–12 students take devices home, in-school use remains under your authority.

Personal Devices During Instructional Time

Pending Board Policy.

What High-Quality Technology Use Looks Like

Not all screen time is equal. The difference between productive and unproductive technology use often comes down to whether students are **actively thinking** or **passively receiving**. Use the framework below to evaluate and plan your technology integration.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Quality technology use naturally aligns with UDL principles. When you offer multiple means of engagement (choice in how students interact with content), representation (varied formats for accessing information), and action/expression (options for demonstrating learning), technology becomes a powerful tool for reaching every learner. As you review the framework below, consider how each “active use” example can serve as a UDL strategy in your classroom.

Active vs. Passive Use

Active Use (Goal)	Transitional Use (With Purpose)	Passive Use (Minimize)
Students are creating, designing, or building something new	Adaptive practice software tied to specific skill gaps	Watching videos without a task or follow-up
Students are collaborating with peers in real time	Teacher-assigned videos with structured reflection or note-taking	Clicking through slides or modules with no interaction
Students are solving real problems using digital tools	Digital assessments and formative checks	Extended time on drill-and-practice apps with no teacher monitoring
Students are coding, analyzing data, or running simulations	Reading digital texts with annotation tools	Using devices as a time filler or reward
Students are researching, evaluating, and combining information from multiple sources		Free browsing without learning purpose

The Quick-Check Questions

Before assigning a technology-based task, ask yourself these five questions:

Five Questions for Quality Tech Use

1. **What is the learning objective?** (If you cannot name it clearly, the tech task may not be necessary.)
2. **Does the technology add value that a non-digital approach cannot?** (If pencil and paper work just as well, choose that.)
3. **Are students thinking or just clicking?** (Active engagement should be the standard.)
4. **How will I monitor and support students during this task?** (Plan your circulation, use of district provided device monitoring tools, and check-in strategy.)
5. **What will students do before and after the tech portion?** (Technology should be part of a larger instructional sequence, not the whole lesson.)

Examples by Grade Band

Grade Band	High-Quality Example	Why It Works
Pre-K and Kindergarten	Virtual Field Trip The teacher shows a 5-minute virtual zoo tour on the projector. Students watch together, then turn and talk with a partner about their favorite animal before drawing it.	Brief, teacher-directed whole-group experience. The follow-up drawing and discussion ensure the video is a springboard for thinking, not passive watching.
	Interactive Movement Video The class follows an interactive counting song on the big screen that requires students to stand, clap, and move. The teacher pauses to ask questions.	Technology is active and physical. The teacher controls pacing and adds instructional value. Session is under 10 minutes.
Grades 1–2	Voice-Recorded Retelling After a read-aloud, students open Seesaw and record a 30-second voice retelling of the story, adding their own drawing.	Students produce in their own voice—creating, not consuming. The teacher reviews recordings to check comprehension. Short session within a rotation.
	Word Sort on iPad During a word study learning opportunity, students use a teacher-assigned drag-and-drop activity to sort words by vowel pattern, then check answers with a partner.	Short, focused practice. The partner check builds collaboration. Technology adds interactivity that paper flashcards cannot.
	Shared Digital Story In pairs, students use Book Creator to write and illustrate a two-page story about a class science topic, each adding one page.	Combines literacy and science. Students collaborate, write, and create—not click through. Clear product at the end.
Grades 3–5	Multimedia Research Journal Students research an animal habitat, then build a multipage Seesaw journal with typed facts, hand-drawn diagrams (photographed and uploaded), and a recorded narration.	Combines research, writing, drawing, and speaking. Teacher sees evidence of thinking in multiple formats. Students create—they do not click through.
	Collaborative Data Project In pairs, students survey classmates about a real question (favorite recess activity, hours of sleep), enter data into a shared Excel spreadsheet, create a chart, and present one finding.	Real-world data students care about. Technology enables chart creation and sharing that would be impractical on paper. Structured with a clear product.
	Digital Citizenship Stations Students engage with different learning opportunities, where they read a scenario about sharing a classmate's photo without permission, discuss with their group, and record their decision in Seesaw.	Embeds digital citizenship into hands-on, discussion-based learning. Technology documents the conversation but does not replace it.
Grades 6–8	Source Evaluation Challenge	Builds media literacy with real critical thinking. Students must justify reasoning in writing, not just pick an answer.

	Students receive three online articles about the same event, one reliable, one biased, one satirical. Using a checklist in OneNote, they evaluate each and write a paragraph defending which source they would cite.	
	Peer Review in Word Students draft a persuasive essay in Word, swap devices with a partner, and use the Comments feature to leave two pieces of praise and one revision suggestion. Authors respond before submitting through Canvas.	Mirrors professional writing workflows. Comments teach constructive feedback. Technology enables a revision cycle that would take days on paper.
	Data Story in Excel Students collect survey data from their grade level, organize it in Excel, build two chart types, and write a one-page analysis. They present findings to the class with screens down for the audience.	Combines data literacy, writing, and presentation. The screens-down audience models balance—tech when it adds value, off when it does not.
Grades 9–12	Collaborative Policy Brief In groups of three, students research a local issue using vetted sources, co-author a two-page brief in Word via Teams, and share it with a community partner through Canvas.	Authentic audience, real-world issue, and collaborative writing with individual accountability. Teams co-authoring mirrors professional workflows.
	Podcast Production Students interview a community member or professional, record and edit a 5-minute podcast, then write a reflection connecting the interview to course content.	Interviewing, editing, and storytelling—skills that transfer across careers. The reflection ties creative product back to academics. No passive consumption.
	AI Literacy Debate Students are given a workplace scenario where AI could be used. Half argue for, half against, citing real sources. After the debate, each writes a position paper on when AI use is appropriate.	Addresses a pressing digital citizenship topic directly. Students engage with AI critically. The position paper requires independent thinking.

Unacceptable Technology Uses

The following practices do not align with our commitment to quality instructional technology. These are not listed to criticize, many emerged from good intentions during rapid technology adoption, but to help us collectively reset expectations. These are informed by both research and by concerns raised by parents and community members nationwide.

Unacceptable Practice	Why It's a Problem	What to Do Instead
Using devices as a reward or free-time activity with no learning purpose.	Reinforces technology as entertainment, not a learning tool. Contributes to passive screen time. This is one of the most common concerns raised by parents nationally.	Offer non-screen rewards (extra recess, choice seating, read-aloud time). If using tech for enrichment, assign a creative or exploratory task.
Assigning videos or digital content with no structured task, discussion, or follow-up.	Passive consumption does not produce learning. Students disengage quickly without accountability.	Pair any video or digital content with a note-catcher, reflection prompt, built-in questions, or discussion protocol.
Extended, unmonitored use of adaptive software as the primary mode of instruction.	Software cannot replace teaching. Without teacher monitoring, students may be off-task, frustrated, or practicing skills they have already mastered.	Use adaptive software for short, targeted sessions (10–20 minutes). Review data regularly. Supplement with teacher-led instruction.
Allowing personal earbuds or headphones for non-instructional content during class.	Signals that disengagement is acceptable. Creates classroom management challenges and equity issues.	Establish a clear headphone policy tied to specific instructional tasks only.
Using technology to calm or manage behavior (for example, giving a device to a dysregulated student).	Research shows this does not build coping skills and can reinforce reliance on screens for emotional regulation. (Note: IEP/504 plans may include technology-based supports, this applies to general education.)	Use SEL strategies, sensory tools, calm-down spaces, or other non-digital approaches.
Keeping devices open during direct instruction, discussions, or collaborative work that does not require them.	Open devices are a distraction. Research shows even the presence of an open device reduces attention for nearby students.	Build “screens down” and “lids at 45” routines as standard classroom practice.
Assigning digital busywork (for example, typing spelling words five times, or digital worksheets that replicate paper).	If the technology does not change the task in a meaningful way, it is not adding value, it is adding screen time.	Ask: Does the tech enable something new? If not, use the non-digital version.

Digital Citizenship Across Grade Bands

Digital citizenship is not a one-time lesson or a separate curriculum. It is an ongoing conversation woven into everyday instruction. When students use technology, they are practicing digital citizenship. Our role is to make that practice intentional.

WPS Digital Citizenship Pillars

1. **Be Safe:** Protect yourself and your information online.
2. **Be Responsible:** Use technology ethically, honestly, and with purpose.
3. **Be Kind:** Treat others with respect and empathy in digital spaces.
4. **Be Balanced:** Develop healthy habits around when and how much to use technology.

What AI Literacy Looks Like at Each Level

Pre-K–2: No AI tool use. Age-appropriate conversations about how computers follow instructions.

3–5: Introduction to what AI is and how it works. Teacher-guided exploration only (e.g., teacher demonstrates how a chatbot responds). No independent AI interactions. Creative tools like Canva or SchoolAI may be used with direct teacher supervision.

6–8: AI literacy instruction: understanding how AI tools generate responses, recognizing AI-generated content, learning when AI is and is not an appropriate tool. Supervised use of district-approved AI tools (e.g., SchoolAI or Canva AI) with clear guidelines on academic integrity.

9–12: Ethical and effective AI use: evaluating AI outputs, understanding bias and limitations, using AI as a thinking partner (not a replacement for thinking), professional applications. Students should be able to articulate when and why they used AI and how they verified its output.

Grade Band	Key Focus Areas	Classroom Integration Ideas
Pre- K–2	Device care and respect, asking adults before clicking, being kind online, recognizing when to take a break from screens.	Use Common Sense Education K–2 lessons. Create a class “Device Agreement” together. Practice “ask first” routines. Discuss media balance using age-appropriate language.
3–5	Password safety, evaluating online sources, respecting others’ creative work, understanding digital footprints, introduction to what AI is (not independent AI use), media balance.	Integrate source evaluation into research projects. Discuss: “Would you say this in person?” before posting. Create digital citizenship anchor charts. Use Common Sense 3–5 curriculum.
6–8	Cyberbullying prevention, privacy and data management, AI literacy, media literacy, healthy screen habits, academic integrity in digital work.	Analyze real-world examples of misinformation. Discuss digital footprint scenarios. Build screen-break routines. Address AI use and academic honesty directly. Use Common Sense 6–8 curriculum.
9–12	Digital identity and reputation, ethical AI use, information literacy, professional	Connect digital citizenship to college applications, career readiness, and civic engagement. Discuss

	digital communication, preparing for college and career digital expectations.	real consequences of digital choices. Model professional communication.
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Making It Work: Practical Next Steps

This guide is not asking you to overhaul your practice overnight. It is asking you to be intentional. Here are manageable starting points.

Start Small: Three Things You Can Do This Week

1. **Audit one lesson.** Pick a lesson where you currently use technology. Run it through the Five Quick-Check Questions on page 10. Adjust if needed.
2. **Establish a “screens down” routine.** If you do not have one, introduce a consistent signal for when devices should be closed. Practice it until it becomes automatic.
3. **Have one digital citizenship conversation.** The next time students use devices, pause for 60 seconds to connect the activity to one of the four pillars: Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Kind, or Be Balanced.

Over the Semester

- Review your grade-band guidelines and identify one area where your practice could better align.
- Try at least one new active technology use from the examples in the Quality section.
- Talk with your grade-level or department team about technology balance and share what is working.

Remember

This is not one more thing. This is about doing the things we already do with more intention. When technology is used well, it saves time, deepens learning, and prepares students for the future. That is the promise of Every Student Future Ready.

Responding to Parent and Family Concerns

Parents and family members are right to ask hard questions about technology in schools. These concerns come from a place of caring about their children, and they deserve honest, thoughtful answers. As a teacher, you are the most trusted voice in this conversation. This section gives you practical language for the most common concerns you may hear at conferences, open houses, or in everyday communication.

Before You Respond

1. **Listen first.** Acknowledge the concern before offering your perspective.
2. **Be specific.** Share what technology use actually looks like in your classroom, not in general, but today.
3. **Be honest about limits.** If you are still refining your approach, say so. Parents respect transparency.
4. **Avoid jargon.** Say “skill-building app” instead of “adaptive software.” Say “students create projects” instead of “students engage in active technology integration.”
5. **Follow up.** A brief email or note after a difficult conversation goes a long way.

Common Concerns and Suggested Responses

What a Parent Might Say	How You Might Respond
“My child spends too much time on screens at school.”	"I understand that concern, and I share your belief that balance matters. In my classroom, technology is not used all day. I build in hands-on activities, discussion, and movement every day. When we do use devices, students are [give a specific example from your class]. I'd be happy to walk you through what a typical day looks like."
“I’ve read that screens are harmful to children’s brains.”	"That’s a fair concern, and I’ve read some of that research too. What the studies show is that the type of screen use matters a lot. Passive screen time, scrolling or watching without purpose, is very different from what we do here, where students are creating, collaborating, and problem-solving. I also make sure we have plenty of non-screen learning time every day."
“Studies show kids learn better on paper.”	"There is some truth to that, especially for reading and note-taking. That’s actually part of our approach, if a task works just as well with pencil and paper, we use pencil and paper. We only use technology when it adds something we cannot do otherwise, like collaborating in real time, creating multimedia projects, or accessing resources we would not have on paper."
“It feels like schools are just using technology as a babysitter.”	"I understand why that worry exists, there have been real examples nationally of technology being misused in classrooms. In our district, we have clear guidelines about what’s not acceptable: no using devices as rewards, no unmonitored video time, no tech as a behavior management tool. Every time I use technology, I have a specific learning goal. If you ever have a concern about what you’re hearing from your child, please reach out to me directly."

"What about the effects on mental health?"	"This is an area where the research is still evolving, and I take it seriously. The biggest mental health concerns in the research are tied to social media and unsupervised entertainment, not structured classroom instruction. We also teach digital citizenship, including healthy screen habits and knowing when to step away, as part of our regular instruction."
"Why does my child need AI in school? They're too young for that."	"I hear you. We are not asking young students to use AI tools. What we are doing is starting age-appropriate conversations about what AI is and how it works, so that as students get older, they can use these tools thoughtfully rather than being caught off guard. Think of it like teaching internet safety before giving a child full internet access."
"Why can't you just teach the way things used to be done?"	"A lot of what we do is traditional, direct instruction, hands-on projects, class discussion, and collaborative work are at the heart of every day. Technology does not replace those things. But your child will enter a world where digital skills are a basic expectation, and part of preparing them for that is teaching them to use technology responsibly and skillfully, not shielding them from it."

If a Concern Goes Beyond Your Classroom

Some parent concerns may involve district-level policy, device management, app selection, or data privacy. If a question is beyond the scope of your classroom, connect the family with your instructional coach, building administrator, or the WPS Information Service and Technology team member. You do not need to have all the answers, you just need to make sure families feel heard and know where to go next.

Appendix: Research Base

This section is for those who want to explore the evidence behind the guidelines. It is not required reading for day-to-day use. The guidelines in this document are grounded in the following sources and findings.

Screen Time and Quality of Use

Source	Key Finding
American Academy of Pediatrics (2025). Digital Ecosystems, Children, and Adolescents.	The AAP recommends focusing on the quality of digital interactions rather than strict time limits for school-age children. High-quality content and prioritizing healthy activities (sleep, play, physical activity) are the most important considerations.
AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health (2024).	The relationship between screen time and health outcomes is complex and depends on developmental stage, content quality, context, and individual factors. The AAP uses a “5 C’s” framework: Child, Content, Calm, Crowding Out, and Communication.
U.S. Department of Education (2024). National Education Technology Plan.	Distinguishes active technology use (creating, coding, collaborating) from passive use (watching, clicking through). Calls for all students to have access to active, high-quality technology-enabled learning.
JAMA Pediatrics (2022). Screen Time Among Children Aged 3–18.	Children’s screen time increased by 52% globally since the pandemic, making intentional school-based technology practices more important than ever.

ISTE Standards and Learning Outcomes

Source	Key Finding
Crompton & Burke (2024). The Nexus of ISTE Standards and Academic Progress. TechTrends.	A scoping review found evidence that all seven ISTE Standards for Students are linked to learning gains when implemented with thoughtful technology integration.
Crompton & Burke (2023). ISTE Standards for Educators Leading to Learning Gains.	All practices within the ISTE Standards for Educators led to measurable student learning gains, including collaboration, data-driven instruction, and student-driven learning.

Digital Citizenship

Source	Key Finding
Common Sense Education (2025). Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum.	A free, research-backed K–12 curriculum with over 140 lessons covering healthy habits, privacy, cyberbullying, media literacy, and AI literacy.
AAP Center of Excellence (2024). Screen Time at School.	Recommends that schools set clear expectations for device use, block age-inappropriate content, avoid using technology to calm

	children’s emotions, and ensure screen use does not displace hands-on learning.
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What the Critics Say: Cautionary and Contradicting Research

Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging that the research on educational technology is not one-sided. Below are key findings from researchers who urge caution. We include them not to undermine the guidelines, but because understanding the full picture makes our practices stronger.

Criticism or Finding	Source	How Our Guidelines Address This
Reading on paper may produce better comprehension than reading on screens, particularly for longer texts.	Multiple meta-analyses (Delgado et al., 2018; Clinton, 2019; Kong et al., 2018). OECD (2015).	Our guidelines state: if a task works equally well with pencil and paper, use the non-digital version. Technology should add value, not replace effective analog practices.
The presence of open devices reduces attention—not just for the user, but for nearby students.	Sana, Weston, & Cepeda (2013). Ravizza, Uitvlugt, & Fenn (2017).	“Screens down” and “lids at 45” routines are a core expectation, not optional.
National EdTech spending has not produced measurable achievement gains.	U.S. Dept. of Education (2024). OECD (2015). Various policy analyses.	We agree. Simply having technology does not improve learning. This guide exists to move from “having devices” to “using devices with purpose.”
IQ scores and cognitive measures have declined in Gen Z, potentially linked to increased screen exposure.	Bratsberg & Rogeberg (2018). Various OECD PISA analyses.	This research is correlational and includes all screen time (entertainment, social media, gaming). It reinforces why our emphasis on balance and limiting passive screen time is critical.
AI overreliance weakens critical thinking and independent problem-solving.	APA (2025). Pew Research (2024). Emerging studies on AI and academic integrity.	Our digital citizenship standards include AI literacy at every secondary grade band. We teach when and how to use AI as a tool, not a replacement for thinking.
Early childhood screen exposure is linked to attention difficulties and reduced play.	Madigan et al. (2019). JAMA Pediatrics. Scienceline (2026).	Kindergarten has zero assigned devices. K–2 guidelines prioritize hands-on play, movement, and social interaction.
Excessive screen time is associated with anxiety, depression, and social isolation in adolescents.	Twenge & Campbell (2018). CDC (2025). Haidt (2024), The Anxious Generation.	Most research targets recreational and social media use, not structured educational technology. Our commitment to balance, screen-free activities, and digital citizenship directly addresses this.

Sweden reversed its national push for early-childhood tablets, citing lack of evidence for learning benefits.	Swedish government (2023) policy reversal. International media coverage.	Our K guidelines already align with this position: minimal technology, teacher-directed only, no individual device use.
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The Honest Takeaway

The research on educational technology is not settled. It is evolving, and reasonable experts disagree. What is clear is that how technology is used matters far more than whether it is used. Passive, unmonitored, purposeless screen time is harmful. Active, intentional, teacher-guided technology use supports learning. These guidelines are designed to maximize the latter and eliminate the former. We will continue to update this guide as new evidence emerges.

Recommended Further Reading

- 4. ISTE Standards for Students Practical Guide: portal.ct.gov (free PDF with age-band articulations for ages 4–7, 8–11, and 12–14)
- 5. Common Sense Education Digital Citizenship Curriculum: commonsense.org/education
- 6. 2024 National Education Technology Plan: tech.ed.gov
- 7. AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health: aap.org
- 8. Haidt, J. (2024). The Anxious Generation. Penguin Press.
- 9. Blended and Personalized Learning Practices at Work – Digital Use: practices.learningaccelerator.org