

Technology with Intention: District 742 PK-12 Screen Time Framework



Purpose: Establishes district-wide, developmental guidelines for instructional screen time to balance digital literacy with student mental health and physical well-being.

What Research Tells Us About Screen Use

A growing body of research from national health, education, and child development organizations indicates that both unrestricted device use and the complete elimination of screens are ineffective approaches (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2026; Sved, 2025). Unstructured, prolonged recreational screen use is associated with adverse outcomes involving sleep, mental health, and well-being (American Psychological Association, 2025; Canadian Paediatric Society, Digital Health Task Force, 2019; Zablotzky et al., 2024). Conversely, health and pediatric organizations recognize that digital tools meaningfully support learning, communication, and accessibility when integrated with clear purpose and structure (Munzer et al., 2026; Sved, 2025).

Crucially, research demonstrates that the impact of screen use is not determined by clock time alone, but by content, purpose, context, and developmental fit, with different forms of screen media showing different relationships with academic performance (Adelantado-Renau et al., 2019; Munzer et al., 2026). Purposeful, goal-aligned technology use can support cognitive engagement and learning, whereas passive or excessive screen use may crowd out physical movement, sleep, and interpersonal interactions (Canadian Paediatric Society, Digital Health Task Force, 2019; Kolb, 2017, 2020; Munzer et al., 2026).

Active vs. Passive Screen Use Distinction:

- **Purposeful Active Use:** Students actively engage to think, design, problem-solve, code, or collaborate—driving the technology experience to extend cognitive engagement (Kolb, 2017, 2020; Sved, 2025).
- **Purposeful Passive Use:** Students consume digital content (reading, audiobooks, text-to-speech, instructional viewing) to gain essential access, provided it supports an overarching instructional goal without crowding out off-screen experiences (Munzer et al., 2026; NCDPI, 2026).

Core Guiding Principles (The AAP 5 Cs)

Screen impact is determined by context and quality, not clock time alone. All classrooms evaluate screen use through five key areas (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d.):

- **Child:** Aligned with the student's developmental age and individual learning needs.
- **Content:** Prioritizing high-quality, active creation over passive consumption.
- **Calm:** Supporting emotional regulation without using screens as default coping mechanisms or behavioral fillers.
- **Crowding Out:** Protecting essential off-screen time (sleep, movement, face-to-face communication).
- **Communication:** Maintaining transparent dialogue between educators, students, and families regarding technology norms.

Grade-Level Guidance:

The following grade-level guidelines translate the research principles above into district policy expectations.

Grade Band	Primary Driver of Screen Use	Core Focus	Daily Screen Limits	Student Skill Focus
Pre-K – K (Early Childhood)	Adult-guided: Structure, Model, Co-engage	Minimal to Zero Use Tactile, hands-on, outdoor play	Minimal to zero screen use. Individual device use is limited to required assessments and applicable student supports. Individual screen use must include engagement with a teacher or other students, consistent with Minn. Stat. § 124D.166 (2025).	Standard instruction relies on non-digital, tactile media.
Grades 1 – 2 (Early Elementary)	Adult-guided: Structure, Model, Co-engage	Duration Caps Lesson-bound in short bursts	Standards-based, curriculum-aligned, and paired with active adult co-engagement not to exceed 15 minutes per day *(State required assessments may add additional time)	Foundational Technology Literacy, Attention Building, Purposeful Engagement
Grades 3 – 5 (Upper Elementary)	Adult-guided: Model, Scaffold, Monitor	Duration Caps Lesson-Bound Targeted skill practice	Standards-based, curriculum-aligned, and focused on active problem-solving or adaptive practice not to exceed 25 minutes per day * (State required assessments may add additional time)	Attention, Digital Citizenship, Foundational Skills, Understanding Purpose
Grades 6 – 8 (Middle School)	Shared responsibility: Teach, Scaffold, Reinforce	Active Creation Creation over passive consumption	Lesson-bound, standards based, and curriculum aligned.	Self-regulation, Habit Formation, Emotional Awareness
Grades 9 – 12 (High School)	Student-managed: Set Expectations, Coach, Hold Accountable	Digital Health & Self-Regulation Workplace readiness	Flexible and outcome based lessons, activities, and projects.	Autonomy, Accountability, Real-world Readiness

Accessibility & Inclusion: These district screen-use limits do not apply to technology required to provide accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, or language-access supports specified for individual students.

Family Resources

- [AAP Family Media Plan \(American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)
An interactive online builder that helps families create a customized media contract based on children's ages,

establishing rules for tech-free zones, screen curfews, and digital balance.

- **Common Sense Media**

The premier resource for age-based reviews and ratings for movies, apps, TV shows, and games, alongside practical family tip sheets on digital well-being and privacy.

- **The 5 Cs of Media Use (AAP Digital Toolkit)**

A practical framework designed by pediatricians to help parents evaluate media quality and context (*Child, Content, Calm, Crowding Out, Communication*) rather than counting minutes alone.

- **The Smart Talk (National PTA & Norton)**

An interactive digital agreement tool designed to help parents and kids have open conversations about privacy, cyberbullying, screen limits, and social media habits.

- **AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health**

A parent Q&A portal providing evidence-based answers from pediatric specialists on current digital health concerns, algorithm exposure, and sleep protection.

- **Mayo Clinic Parent Guide to Screen Time**

An accessible health article offering clear advice on managing screen fatigue, setting boundaries, and encouraging unplugged play for younger children.

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