



Mindful Tech: Guide to Screen Time and Generative AI

A MEASURED, BALANCED, AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE APPROACH • 2027

Our Commitment to Your Child's Well-being and Learning

At the Edgemont Union Free School District (EUFSD), we recognize that technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are becoming integral parts of modern society. However, our primary responsibility is to nurture students who can think critically, act ethically, and remain deeply human in their learning.

Technology can serve as a powerful partner in professional practice and personalized learning, but it must never replace human connections, active collaboration, genuine curiosity, or the essential productive struggle that lies at the heart of true education.

This document outlines Edgemont's updated 2026–2027 guidelines regarding instructional screen time and generative AI. The development of these guidelines followed several iterations of policy and research alignment. We want to ensure our families know our mindful, highly balanced, and student-first approach to classroom technology. Designed to protect student well-being while building age-appropriate digital literacy, it details our structured, highly monitored framework for introducing AI tools. Our instructional staff is fully versed in these guidelines and required to follow them in all their pedagogical output, ensuring that technology consistently enhances meaningful, active learning without compromising foundational offline instruction and personal interaction.

Our Core Digital Principles

- **Purpose Before Device:** Technology is used strictly when it offers clear pedagogical value (e.g., enhanced feedback, active collaboration, or differentiation) rather than simple paper-substitution.
- **Protecting the Productive Struggle:** We protect the natural learning process by ensuring students engage in independent thinking and inquiry before turning to assistive digital tools.
- **Visual Health & Well-Being:** Every digital lesson is balanced with structural breaks to prevent eye strain, support healthy posture, and ensure screen-free peer collaboration.



Instructional Screen Time Guidelines: Purpose Before Device

We take screen time seriously. In our classrooms, devices are used exclusively for appropriate instructional tasks and never merely because they are available. We ensure that technology does not displace hands-on learning, physical activity, reading, play, or critical face-to-face interactions. Our philosophy is "[Purpose Before Device](#)," meaning we use screens only when they meaningfully improve access, feedback, collaboration, creation, research, or differentiation.

Edgemont's guidelines focus exclusively on school-directed, active academic screen use (such as active research, collaborative design, writing, and analytical tasks) rather than passive, recreational media. Our screen time limits are designed with visual health and developmental appropriateness in mind, incorporating regular breaks for posture, movement, and distance vision.

Current educational and pediatric research emphasizes the quality and cognitive purpose of the digital task rather than a single, arbitrary time quota. The daily ranges below guide our educators in maintaining a balanced classroom schedule.

Grade Level	Daily Academic Screen Limit	Focus & Approach
Kindergarten	15-20 minutes (Max 30 mins for active projects)	Brief, teacher-guided activities. Prioritization of screen-free play with manipulatives and interactive read-alouds.
1st Grade	20-30 minutes (Max 40 mins for active projects)	Balanced digital tasks with reading, writing, discussion, and movement.
2nd Grade	30-35 minutes (Max 40 mins for active projects)	Use of structured platforms (e.g., math & spelling). Device tasks capped at 15-20 min blocks followed by screen-free transitions.
3rd Grade	35-45 minutes (Max 60 mins for active projects)	Collaborative peer feedback, introductory research, and creativity. Off-screen learning balances every digital task.
4th Grade	45-60 minutes (Max 80 mins for active projects)	Active writing, collaborative slide design, and multimedia tasks. Breaks at least every 30 minutes.
5th Grade	60-80 minutes (Max 160 mins for active projects)	Advanced research, coding, and writing. Occasional longer project blocks with built-in visual breaks every 30 minutes.

Artificial Intelligence: Prioritizing Original Thought and Privacy

As Artificial Intelligence becomes more prevalent, it is our responsibility to teach students how to protect their own voices. **We strictly do not give students free, unstructured, or unsupervised access to AI tools.** AI may support educational practice, but it will *never* substitute human creativity, ethical responsibility, or the *productive struggle* that leads to deep, authentic learning.

Core AI Principles at EUFSD

- **Academic Integrity:** AI must support, not bypass, original student thinking and fairness. Students remain fully responsible for the accuracy and originality of all submitted work.
- **Privacy First:** No student-identifying, staff-identifying, or confidential information is permitted in AI platforms unless formally approved and legally compliant.
- **Productive Struggle:** Students must attempt tasks independently and engage with peers before any AI example is introduced. AI is never used for initial idea generation.
- **Strict Teacher Direction:** *All AI use is subject to teacher direction* and assignment expectations. Independent, unsupervised student use is completely prohibited.

Developmental Scaffolding Framework

- **Grades K–2 (Awareness):** No direct student AI interaction. Tools are teacher-facing only, for customizing lessons and materials.
- **Grades 3–4 (Guided Demo):** Teachers lead whole-class interactive demonstrations to teach students how to evaluate AI outputs for biases and errors; tools are not used to generate student work.
- **Grades 5–6 (Guided Trial):** AI serves as a secondary resource only. Students learn about AI limits and bias evaluation after completing independent efforts.
- **Grades 7–10 (Responsible Use):** Students may use vetted AI tools as study aids, for drafting and proofreading, or for brainstorming, with mandatory tool disclosure.
- **Grades 11–12 (Bounded Workflow):** Limited bounded AI workflow integration prepares students for college/career success. Students analyze counterarguments and refine structural outlines, ensuring final submissions are strictly original student work.



CRITICAL DATA PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Edgemont enforces strict compliance with NYS Education Law §2-d and FERPA. **No personally identifiable, confidential, or protected student information** (including student's last name, date of birth, ID, or email address) may ever be input into AI systems. All approved systems are formally vetted to ensure complete data security.

Partnering with Families

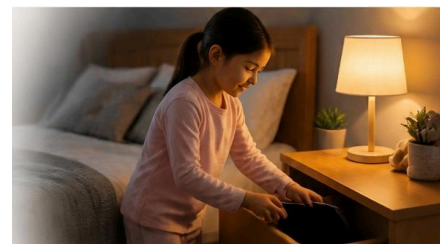
We encourage families to mirror these measures at home when establishing recreational media routines. By working together, we can ensure our students navigate the digital world safely, ethically, and responsibly, while keeping human connection at the heart of their educational journey.

Supporting Eye Health & Well-Being at Home

To prevent computer vision syndrome and physical fatigue, EUFSD teachers utilize visual pacing and physical stretch breaks during the school day. We encourage families to establish similar supportive eye habits at home to protect children's developing visual and physical well-being:

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR FAMILIES AT HOME

- **The 20-20-20 Rule:** Encourage your child to take regular visual breaks by looking at something at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds after every 20 minutes of screen time.
- **Proper Distance & Lighting:** Ensure screens are kept at a safe viewing distance of 18 to 24 inches (about arm's length). Never use devices in dark rooms; maintain natural or ambient light to reduce eye strain.
- **Limit Before Bed:** Implement a screen-free boundary 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime to prevent disruption of the sleep cycle and allow for cognitive cool-down.
- **Visual Variety:** Counterbalance academic schoolwork and home screen time with daily outdoor activities, physical play, and paper-based reading to support distance-vision development.



For research & information, visit our website: <https://www.edgemont.org/departments/curriculum>

Further Reading

Books

- Haidt, J. (2024). *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin Press.
- Heitner, D. (2016). *Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World*. Routledge.
- Kamenetz, A. (2018). *The Art of Screen Time: How Your Family Can Balance Digital Media and Real Life*. PublicAffairs.

Articles & Websites

- Common Sense Media for Parents (commonsensemedia.org): Offers extensive, age-based reviews on apps, games, and media, along with practical advice on navigating digital parenting.
- AAP HealthyChildren.org (healthychildren.org): The official American Academy of Pediatrics site for parents, offering customizable Family Media Plans and guidance on developmental milestones.
- Child Mind Institute (childmind.org): Provides evidence-based resources and articles regarding how technology and social media impact children's mental health, focus, and development.

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UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report: Technology in education—A tool on whose terms?* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/technology>

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*.