

K-5 Purposeful Technology Use Guidelines

Purpose First. Minutes Second.

WCASD is committed to preserving the experiences that matter most in childhood and learning. Through continuous reflection, stakeholder feedback, and thoughtful decision-making, we strive to create balanced learning environments where technology is used purposefully, and students remain at the center of every decision.

Not all screen time is equal. A classroom with less screen time is not automatically a better classroom, and a classroom with more technology is not automatically a better classroom. The value of technology depends on its purpose, how it is used, and the learning experiences it supports.

The accompanying K-5 Purposeful Technology Use Guidelines translate this vision into practice. They provide shared expectations, planning guardrails, and developmentally appropriate guidance while preserving the flexibility needed for high-quality teaching and learning. The guidelines support reflection and decision-making, not minute-by-minute compliance tracking.

Building on Established Practice

These guidelines build upon years of district work, including digital resource reviews, a rigorous app approval process, and professional learning focused on accessibility and purposeful technology integration. They bring these efforts together within a shared framework for balanced learning that will continue to evolve through implementation, reflection, and stakeholder feedback.

Why This Work Matters

As technology has become increasingly integrated into teaching and learning, educators, families, and community members have raised important questions about balance, developmental appropriateness, passive use, student privacy, accessibility, and student well-being. WCASD welcomes those conversations as part of its responsibility to examine how curriculum, instruction, technology, and learning environments work together to support students.

Technology can improve access, support communication and collaboration, foster creation, offer meaningful feedback, and expand how students participate and demonstrate learning. At the same time, digital experiences should not crowd out teacher interaction, relationships, reading, writing, discussion, movement, play, hands-on exploration, collaboration, or creativity.

This work is not about choosing between technology and traditional learning. It reflects a unified approach that protects balance while preparing students to learn, contribute, and develop the skills and dispositions reflected in WCASD's Portrait of a Graduate.

Our Vision for Balanced Learning

Guided by the district's Portrait of a Graduate, WCASD designs learning experiences that help students communicate, solve problems, empathize, adapt, and act responsibly. Technology has value when it strengthens these experiences, but it is a means to learning, never the outcome.

Balanced learning intentionally combines purposeful technology use with essential experiences such as discussion, movement, hands-on learning, creativity, collaboration, and teacher interaction.

From Vision to Practice

The K-5 Purposeful Technology Use Guidelines are a practical outcome of this broader vision. They create a shared framework for educators, school leaders, families, and community members while recognizing that classroom learning cannot be captured by a single number.

The Guidelines Are Designed To:

- Support planning, reflection, and conversation about purposeful technology use.
- Provide grade-band ranges and guidance that reflect developmental differences.
- Clarify what counts as independent student screen time and what does not.
- Promote awareness of the stacking effect, in which activities can accumulate across the day or week.
- Preserve flexibility for occasional extended use, accessibility, and other student-specific needs.
- Help maintain consistency in the student experience across classrooms and schools.

Implementation

These guidelines were shaped by input from educators, school leaders, district departments, families, and community partners across WCASD. Continued dialogue, reflection, and partnership will help ensure technology is used purposefully, thoughtfully, and in ways that best support students.

Continuous Review

As instructional practices, curricular resources, student needs, and research evolve, WCASD will continue to revisit and refine its approach. What is learned through K-5 implementation will also help inform the future development of purposeful technology use guidance for grades 6-12.

Purpose First. Minutes Second.

Purposeful technology use supports curriculum, learning goals, and student needs. Technology should be appropriate for the students, setting, and moment, and selected for the value it adds to learning rather than simply because it is available. Across these experiences, WCASD promotes active use over passive consumption.

Minutes Still Matter

“Minutes Second” does not mean minutes are irrelevant. Time on a device remains an important consideration, especially in the elementary grades. WCASD provides grade-band ranges to help educators reflect on practice, consider cumulative use, and plan balanced learning experiences. These ranges are guardrails, not rigid limits.

Continuous Use

The continuous-use guidance refers to uninterrupted attention to an individual device screen, not the total length of a learning activity. It reflects broader principles of developmentally appropriate instruction, including movement, changes in focus, and regular opportunities to look away from a screen.

An activity may continue beyond the suggested interval. Teachers can continue the learning by incorporating discussion, movement, hands-on work, or another change in focus rather than keeping students continuously fixed on a screen.

K-5 Purposeful Technology Use Guidelines

Purpose First. Minutes Second.

How the Planning Ranges Were Developed

Current research emphasizes the purpose and quality of technology use rather than prescribing specific time limits. The district planning ranges were developed by considering required instructional tools, existing classroom practices, grade-level differences, stakeholder input, and the district's goal of preserving balanced learning experiences. They are practical planning guidance, not research-defined limits or compliance thresholds, and will be revisited as implementation experience, instructional needs, resources, and research evolve.

Defining the Guidelines

- **Districtwide Philosophy:** The principles of purpose first, active use, balance, and screen-free boundaries apply across all classrooms and learning environments.
- **Student Screen Time:** Student screen time includes any time students use a device, whether individually, with a partner, or in a group. For some students, technology is an essential support for access, communication, or other specific needs and may appropriately extend time.
- **Teacher-led Instruction:** Teacher-led instruction may include displaying content, modeling with a projected screen, or using a short video to support discussion and learning. When students are not using individual devices, this time is not included in the screen-time ranges.
- **Grade-Band Minutes:** The time ranges reflect a typical week in students' grade-level classrooms and do not include Unified Arts experiences. Additionally, district benchmarking, state assessments, and other required assessments may add to students' overall device use.

Purposeful Technology Use in Practice

The examples below provide a snapshot of current district-approved resources, not a complete list. Teachers may have access to additional tools, and resources may vary slightly by building based on each school's state-submitted continuous improvement plan or other specific instructional needs.

Instructional Purpose	What Students Are Doing	District-Approved Resources
Create & Communicate	Creating original work, sharing ideas, collaborating, and demonstrating learning.	Canva, Seesaw, Google Workspace, Procreate Digital Illustration
Practice, Apply & Problem-Solve	Reinforcing skills, applying learning, coding, computational thinking, intervention, enrichment, and targeted practice.	IXL, Happy Numbers, Typing Agent, Kodable, Scratch Jr, Micro: bit, Raz-Kids, Teach Your Monster
Explore & Build Knowledge	Reading, researching, investigating, accessing content, and deepening understanding.	TCI, BrainPOP, DiscoveryEd., Newsela, PebbleGo, Britannica, MackinVIA, Epic! Modern Classrooms, Snorkl
Assess & Receive Feedback	Demonstrating understanding, monitoring progress, receiving feedback, and participating in required assessments.	Schoology, Seesaw, IXL, Happy Numbers, Firefly, PSSA, Acadience
Watch the Stacking Effect: Teachers often plan technology use one activity at a time, but students experience it cumulatively across the day and week. Before adding an activity, consider students' total experience. In departmentalized settings, coordinate with colleagues so device use across classes remains balanced.		

Grade-Band Guidance

	Grades K-1	Grades 2-3	Grades 4-5
Required Use <i>District tools students are expected to use weekly as part of core instruction, practice, assessment, or feedback.</i>	Happy Numbers Math: 30 min/week	IXL Math: 30 min/week ELA: 30 min/week	IXL Math: 30 min/week ELA: 30 min/week
Flexible Use <i>Teachers have flexibility in how remaining technology time is used beyond required weekly tools. The focus remains instructional, not time spent on a specific application.</i>	Approximately 40-80 minutes per week	Approximately 60-120 minutes per week	Approximately 140-240 minutes per week
Total Use <i>An estimate of student screen time including required plus flexible use.</i>	75-125 min/week Approx. 15-25 min/day	120-180 min/week Approx. 25-35 min/day	200-300 min/week Approx. 40-60 min/day
Extended Use <i>Occasionally, additional time may be appropriate for purposeful work such as research, writing, publishing, or projects. This time is not intended as an additional weekly target.</i>	May add approximately 30 minutes in some weeks	May add approximately 60 minutes in some weeks	May add approximately 90 minutes in some weeks
Continuous Use	Aim for a break after 10-15 minutes of uninterrupted screen time.		
Screen Free Boundaries Technology should not be used as a reward or during recess, free time, or routine transitions such as arrival, snack, and dismissal. Passive viewing should also be avoided, including video read-alouds used in place of an available book, and videos shown without teacher-led interaction. Homework should not require a device because students do not take iPads home, excluding Flexible Instruction Days.			

A Small Part of a Balanced School Week

