Digital Device Guidelines

Purpose

The prevalence and use of digital devices, e.g., computers, laptops, tablets, chromebooks, smart devices, project screens, smartboards, and smartphones, by students and educators is an everyday component of the school day and our individual lives. Therefore, these guidelines have been developed to provide school systems with health and safety resources relative to best practices for the effective integration of digital devices in public schools. These guidelines were developed in collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health and other stakeholders as a result of House Bill 548 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session. The resources are not exhaustive but are intended to provide school systems with age-appropriate time and usage guidelines regarding various digital devices.

RS 17:3921.3 states that the Department shall review the guidelines at least once annually and revise them based on updated medical information, as needed. The Department shall distribute revised guidelines to each public school governing authority.

Device and Educational Use

- In compliance with Louisiana Revised Statute 17:2112, the school Registered Nurse (RN) will conduct vision screenings.
  - Louisiana Vision Screening Guidelines
- Foster online safety in using digital devices, media, and social media by considering the benefits and risks.
- Limit the use of screens as a reward.
- Prioritize activities that focus on teacher-child interactions in early childhood programs serving children under the age of five years. Build best practices using the Louisiana Screen Time Regulations Toolkit and limit device use to comply with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education policy outlined in *Bulletin 137 - Louisiana Early Learning Center Licensing Regulations*.
- Utilize structures for teacher collaboration across academic discipline(s) and/or grade level(s) to plan and monitor student homework expectations and limit assignments to those that are:
  - Likely to improve student academic growth (aligned with evidence-based best practices), and
  - Are developmentally appropriate, ensuring that students have adequate time for outdoor play and supporting healthy sleep habits.
- Include a review of ergonomic and volume settings to ensure that the corded headphones/earbuds are set to a safe setting.
  - AirPods Health And Safety
- Incorporate assignments to ensure students have adequate outdoor play and peer-to-peer interaction time.
- Structure online homework assignments (such as limiting the time or setting deadlines) to ensure students have adequate time to engage in outdoor play and can turn off their devices 1-2 hours before sleep.

- The rate of childhood obesity has tripled over the last 50 years, and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monthly weight gain in kids aged 2-19 doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Screen use interrupts children's circadian rhythm, which is a risk factor for obesity. Kids need screen-free evenings to prepare their brains for sleep.
- Monitors should be positioned just below eye level for each student so that children are not bent over screens throughout the day.
- Louisiana's Data Governance and Student Privacy Guidebook provides educators across Louisiana with data governance resources to ensure the privacy, security, and confidentiality of student data while enabling that information to be used to improve student outcomes.
- Provide every student/family with the manufacturer's health and safety warning documentation that accompanies the shipment of the devices.
  - Include health and safety warning information in the student and parent handbook.
    - Blue Light Impact on Children
    - How to Save Your Eyes in the Digital Age

Screen Time and Break Frequency

- To the extent possible, stagger the use of screens between subjects/classes so that a break is guaranteed within each hour of the school day.
- When possible, increase physical activity at school. Recess is a regularly scheduled period in the school day for physical activity and play, monitored by trained staff or volunteers. During recess, students are encouraged to be physically active and engaged with their peers in activities of their choice at all grade levels, kindergarten through 12th grade.[1,3]
  - Keep Recess in Schools
  - SHAPE America
- Screens should not be used during recess or outdoor play.
- Research suggests taking breaks from the screen every 20-30 minutes and incorporating physical activity in the classroom throughout the day. Set a timer to keep track of when scheduled breaks are needed.
- Encourage students to blink frequently to reduce discomfort and blurriness, and to help prevent dry eye disease. Also, encourage students to stand up and stretch often.
- Consider proper monitor positioning (18-24 inches away and at a height looking straight ahead or slightly down to reduce glare).
- Encouraging outdoor activities for schoolchildren and reducing near-work and screen time can effectively prevent myopia development, offering a safe intervention that promotes healthier habits.
  - The Walking Classroom
  - SHAPE America
  - OPEN Curriculum Modules
  - Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- Laptops Health and Safety, Especially For Children

Ergonomics and Posture

- Sit straight at a table or desk, with feet flat on the floor.
- To prevent glare, set up workstations perpendicular to windows to the extent possible (remove light sources from directly in front of, or behind, the monitor.)
- Encourage safe ergonomics, including proper seating, screen height, and keyboard angle, to ensure each user achieves the manufacturer's recommended positioning.
- Adjust monitor glare and lighting in the classroom and use proper brightness/contrast settings for each monitor to reduce eye strain. As available, guarantee that blue light filtration is activated on every device.
    - The top of the computer screen should be positioned at eye level, with the screen tilted back approximately 10-20 degrees and 20-30 inches from the face.
- Set safe default settings for corded headphones/earbuds and establish a process for daily review of volume settings.
- Position your elbows at 90 degrees when working to maintain a relaxed posture on the keyboard.
- The chair should be placed high enough to accommodate seated desks, ensuring that the hips and knees are both bent at 90 degrees.
    - Desk Height Calculator: Plan an Ergonomic Space | Ergotron
- Laptops should be placed on a desk or table and at eye level. Additionally, consider maintaining proper neck and back posture when using a keyboard and mouse.

Family Engagement for Digital Devices at Home

- PTA Connected - Programs strive to help children act safely, responsibly, and thoughtfully online.
- The Smart Talk - PTA Connected - Program is a free tool that helps caregivers and kids (ages 5 to 17) have positive, proactive technology conversations and set healthy digital limits together.
- Schools should provide clarity to families about what to expect when students engage in virtual instruction and how to support children, aligning with LDOE guidance for educators and families to better equip students for success at home.
- Screens should not be used during the hour preceding bedtime and should not be taken into the child's room.
    - Media Use Guidelines: Big Kids (for Parents) | Nemours KidsHealth
- Devices should not be used after dark.
- Set up a designated space for learning and completing school work to eliminate distractions.