

Screen Time Policy: Instructional Guidance

Core Principles

- **Teacher-led instruction is best:** Digital tools are best utilized in limited amounts, when facilitated by a teacher with direct instruction rather than students sitting independently guided by a software program.
- **Prioritize Print:** Prioritize print materials for reading, writing, mathematics, practice, and sustained learning.
- **Use Digital Tools Purposefully:** Digital tools should be used only when they meaningfully support the instructional goal, help teachers provide timely feedback, or increase access to learning for students that require assistive technology and MLLs. Teachers may need students to use computers to access required instructional programs, conduct research, complete curriculum end of module tasks, and take interactive assessments or access assessments that are not available in print or PDF formats. When technology is necessary to accomplish the instructional objective, it should be used, while taking into consideration recommended screen time limits, for 3-5 no more than 30 minutes, for 6-8 no more than 45 minutes, and always with teacher oversight.
- **2K–2 Screen Time Guidance:** 1:1 screens should not be used in K–2 classrooms, except for narrow, approved exceptions in grades K-2 including screener completion, computer or library classes for specific, necessary purposes.
- **Grades 3–8 Screen Time Guidance:** Teachers and content areas should coordinate to ensure instruction stays within recommended screentime limits across the day. Teachers and schools should work together to minimize students' overall screen time across the school day, ensuring that technology is used purposefully and only when it supports meaningful teaching and learning while under direct teacher supervision.
- **Essential Digital Tools:** Digital tools that are necessary for core instruction, assessment, accessibility, or intervention should continue to be used as needed, subject to screen time recommendations. For K-2, digital tools should only be used during computer or library classes which should also serve as the designated space for students to practice the technology skills, teach digital citizenship, and routines they would need in the event of a pivot to remote learning.
- **Use Assessment Data to Inform Instruction:** Digital screeners and diagnostic tools can provide timely information to identify student needs, monitor progress, and inform instructional adjustments.

****Across all grades, this policy does not apply to assistive technology and associated screen time, provided through a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. Students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) will continue to have access to other necessary tools.**

Scenarios

This section is intended to clarify the scenarios in which technology use may be permissible:

- **Preparing 2nd Graders for 3rd Grade State Exams:** Strong literacy and math instruction provides the best foundation for state testing, and instruction should focus on teacher-led preparation. Consider brief opportunities with computer class or library class for students to practice digital technology skills such as typing.
- **Preparing K–2 Students for Remote Learning Pivots:** Consider brief opportunities with computer class or library class for students to log into Google Classroom or another school platform to ensure they can access and navigate the system. Schools may also consider occasional at-home assignments that allow students to practice connecting and interacting with digital platforms.

****FAQs coming soon. If you have any questions, please email ALandScreentimePolicy@schools.nyc.gov.**

Key Takeaway

- The goal is to minimize unstructured technology use while maximizing learning and prioritizing print. Technology should be used purposefully when it meaningfully supports instruction, while ensuring students have rich opportunities for reading, writing, discussion, collaboration, hands-on learning, and direct interaction with their teachers.