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 the age-appropriate time and usage guidelines regarding various digital devices.

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.

Devices 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. When possible, include other educational platforms to motivate students to choose rewards that help them grow academically.
- 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 the use of devices to comply with Board of Elementary and Secondary Education policy 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 daily 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. Teachers should work to intentionally carve out time so students may personally connect with each other to meet social needs.
- Structure online homework assignments (such as limiting the amount of time or setting deadlines) to ensure students have adequate time to engage in outdoor play and can turn devices off 1-2 hours before sleep. The rate of obesity has tripled in children over the last 50 years and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Body Mass Index (BMI) in kids aged 2-19 doubled during the covid-19 pandemic. Screen use interrupts childrens' circadian rhythm, and this disruption in the circadian rhythm is a risk factor for obesity. Kids need screen-free evenings in order to prepare their brains for sleep.
- Have monitors 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 in 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.
  - Example: Allow screens only toward the end of each class or during transition times, giving students a built-in break at the beginning of each class.
  - Allow for more break options teachers can use in the classroom during testing. Add breaks before and after testing, lasting a minimum of 10 minutes and including some type of physical activity.
- When possible, increase physical activity at school. [Recess](#) is a regularly scheduled period in the school day for physical activity and play that is 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 or screen use should not be used during recess or outdoor play.
- Take breaks from the screen every 20-30 minutes, as research suggests, and incorporate [classroom physical activity](#) 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 avoid dry eye disease., Encourage students to frequently stand up and stretch.
- Consider proper monitor positioning (18-24 inches away and at a height looking straight ahead or slightly down to reduce glare).
- Encourage outdoor play (exercise) at school at every opportunity to offset increased sedentary behavior and indoor assignments.
  - [The Walking Classroom](#)
  - [SHAPE America](#)
  - [OPEN Curriculum Modules](#)
  - [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#)

Ergonomics and Posture

- Sit up 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 that include proper seating, screen height, and angle of the keyboard for each user to achieve manufacturers' recommended positioning.
- Adjust monitor glare/lighting in the classroom and use proper brightness/contrast settings for each monitor to reduce eye strain; guarantee that blue light filtration is activated on every device, as available.
  - Top of the computer screen should be elevated to eye level with the screen tilted back roughly 10-20 degrees and 20-30 inches from one's face.
- Set safe default settings for corded headphones/earbuds and an established process for daily review of volume settings.
- Position elbows at 90 degrees when working to keep a relaxed position on the keyboard.
- For seated desks, the chair should be placed high enough to keep the hips and knees 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. Also, consider using the proper posture of the neck and back with an additional 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.
  - [Digital Wellbeing-Sleep Guide](#)
- Devices should not be used after dark.
- Set up a designated space for learning and completing school work to eliminate distractions.