

Garland ISD Devices Health & Safety Guidelines

Based on current research and policies from Texas and U.S. school districts, the SHAC recommends the following evidence-based recommendations to promote healthy digital device use in schools. By implementing these recommendations, GISD can create a balanced approach to digital device use that supports student health, well-being, and academic success.

Recommendations:

I. Digital Device Breaks Frequency

Adopt a dual screen time breaks approach, especially effective for younger students who may struggle with sustained focus and physical discomfort.

- **Implement the 20-20-20 Rule:** Encourage students to take structured 20-second breaks to look at something 20 feet away every 20 minutes to reduce eye strain.
 - Post visual reminders of the 20-20-20 rule in classrooms and libraries.
 - **Schedule Regular Breaks:** Incorporate short, scheduled breaks every 30 minutes during extended digital device use to mitigate physical and mental fatigue.
 - Integrate short movement or mindfulness breaks every 30-45 minutes of screen use.
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II. Digital Device Physical Positioning Best Practices

Implement ergonomic digital device best practices in the classroom. Ensure **adequate lighting** to prevent glare and screen reflection, and screens are at eye level and at an appropriate distance to promote good posture.

- **Proper Device Positioning:** Train students on the **90-90-90 posture rule**: knees, hips, and elbows at 90° angles.
 - Encourage device placement at eye level to avoid neck strain.
- **Training on Posture:** Provide training for students and staff on maintaining ergonomic postures during device use to prevent musculoskeletal issues.
- **Education and Awareness:** Include ergonomic awareness in digital literacy and/or health curriculum.

- **Support Special Needs Students:** Collaborate with occupational therapists to create ergonomic plans.
 - Utilize assistive tech or adaptive tools such as alternative keyboards or mounts.
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III. Daily Student Screen Time Usage Guidelines

- **Age-Appropriate Screen Limits:** Follow guidelines from organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to establish clear screen time guidelines, which recommend:
 - **Children aged 2-5:** Limit screen use to 1 hour or less per day for recreational programming.
 - **Children aged 6+:** Limit recreational screen time to no more than 2 hours per day.
 - Place consistent limits on the time spent using media and the types of media.
 - **School Screen Time:** Should be balanced by ample physical activity and interpersonal interaction.
 - **Monitor Homework Screen Time:** Set expectations for screen time related to homework to ensure balance with offline activities.
 - Recommend 1-2 hours of screen time for homework for middle and high school students.
 - Younger students should have minimal digital homework, with paper-based alternatives when possible.
 - **Encourage Balanced Learning:** Integrate project-based learning, offline reading, and handwritten assignments.
 - Provide **printable homework assignments** for families with limited screen access.
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IV. Restrict Personal Device Use During School Hours

Ensure that any use of digital devices during school hours is restricted to educational activities under teacher supervision.

- **Implement Device-Free Policies:** Adopt policies where students are required to keep personal devices turned off and stored away during school hours to minimize distractions (liken to Dallas, Richardson, Houston, and Lake Travis ISDs).

[Dallas ISD Approves Cell Phone Ban](#) [Houston Area School Enforce Cell Phone Policies](#)

- **Use Technology for Educational Purposes Only:** Schools should limit **non-essential device use**, particularly in elementary school.
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V. Utilize Content Filtering and Monitoring Tools

Use tools like Securly, GoGuardian, or Lightspeed Systems to block access to inappropriate content and monitor student activity online.

- **Implement Filtering Software:** Customize filters for different grade levels to balance protection and accessibility. [CT Insider](#)
 - Block VPN traffic at the network level.
 - **Educate on Digital Citizenship:** Provide instruction on responsible internet use and the importance of digital safety.
 - Train students on the risks of bypassing filters and update codes of conduct to address violations.
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VI. Provide Ongoing Training for Best Practices

Offer regular training sessions for teachers on integrating technology effectively into the curriculum and managing classroom device use.

- **Professional Development:** Stay updated on best practices as a district and train teachers on the latest research and recommendations regarding digital device use in education.
 - **Mandatory and Ongoing Training:** Require annual teacher training on digital device implementation and management.
 - Focus on **effective tech integration**, screen time balance, and device health impacts.
 - Integrate technology only when it aligns with **pedagogy, content, and meaningful engagement**.

- **LMS Use:** Increase staff Canvas training to streamline communication, minimize screen time, and centralize resources.
 - Provide flyers and videos to parents on best practices for home ergonomics.
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VII. Family-School Collaboration

Engage and inform parents about school policies regarding digital device use and encourage families to establish similar screen time rules at home to reinforce healthy habits.

- **Communicate Policies:** Use LMS, email blasts, and school newsletters to share at-home screen time monitoring strategies.
 - **Promote Consistent Practices at Home:** Encourage parents to mirror break schedules at home and participate in informational sessions on digital wellness.
 - **Avoid Screen Use Before Bedtime:** Educate parents on the impact of blue light exposure in the evening, significantly disrupting a child's natural melatonin production, leading to sleep problems.
 - Promote school-wide screen-free bedtime routines and tools like "night mode" or device curfews (Ex. no screen use 1-hour before bed).
 - **Train and Empower Families:** Conduct digital citizenship training for students, emphasizing how to identify phishing, scams, and online predators.
 - Distribute screen time tracking tools and guides to families.
 - Encourage home non-screen-related family activities ("digital device detox" and "tech curfews").
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