Board Policy IF: Instructional Resources **Status:** DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: Pending

Board Policy IF: Instruction Resources — Student Technology Use and Instructional Materials Policy

I. Purpose and Beliefs

Atlanta Public Schools believes that while students must be prepared to thrive in a digital, interconnected, and rapidly evolving world, technology should not replace the role of the teacher or the need for strong, explicit instruction. The district is committed to instruction that is primarily teacher-led, where the majority of explicit teaching, modeling, and guided practice occurs through direct interaction with educators.

Within this instructional foundation, Atlanta Public Schools values a balanced approach to teaching and learning in which students engage in both technology-rich and low-tech learning experiences that develop critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and responsible digital citizenship.

The district believes in high screen value rather than screen time alone. Technology is used intentionally to support, not supplant, high-quality instruction. It should deepen learning, expand access, and enhance opportunities for creation and collaboration, while remaining secondary to teacher-led instruction and student discourse. Atlanta Public Schools discourages passive digital consumption and prioritizes active, engaging, and meaningful instructional experiences grounded in strong teaching practices, student discourse, hands-on learning, and access to physical instructional materials.

Atlanta Public Schools recognizes that digital devices are important instructional tools in advancing meaningful teaching and learning when used purposefully and in balance with non-digital methods. When appropriately integrated, technology can enhance students' ability to interpret and construct multimodal texts aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence, engage in authentic problem-solving and research, and prepare for digital assessments and technology-rich environments.

Our commitment is not simply to provide access, but to ensure that technology is used with intention, impact, and appropriate restraint. Educators are encouraged to design purposeful, student-centered learning experiences using frameworks such as the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) model or Technology Integration Matrix (TIM), ensuring that all technology integration is aligned to instructional outcomes and responsive to student needs.

The purpose of this policy is to establish research-informed guidelines for student screen time during the school day while ensuring that instructional practices promote academic achievement, cognitive development, and student well-being, and future-ready learning experiences. This policy also prioritizes access to high-quality physical instructional materials, with digital tools serving as a supplement rather than a replacement.

II. Definitions

Balanced Instruction

A structured approach to teaching and learning that intentionally integrates multiple instructional methods, including:

- Direct teacher-led instruction
- Guided practice and modeling
- Independent student work
- Collaborative learning
- Hands-on and experiential activities
- Purposeful use of digital tools and resources to enhance learning

Balanced instruction ensures that technology is used as a **tool to enhance learning**, not as the primary mode of instruction, and that students engage in both digital and non-digital learning experiences throughout the school day.

Literacy Instruction

An evidence-informed approach to literacy instruction that combines:

- Explicit, systematic phonics and foundational skills instruction
- Vocabulary and language development
- Reading comprehension strategies
- Writing instruction across genres
- Opportunities for independent and guided reading

Literacy instruction prioritizes **direct, teacher-led instruction in foundational reading skills**, particularly in early grades, while also developing students' ability to engage with complex texts, think critically, and express ideas effectively. APS encourages the use of paper pen assignments. Additionally, instruction should include significant engagement with **print-based texts** to support comprehension, retention, and fluency and writing development.

Screen Value

Screen Value is a framework for evaluating how effectively digital devices are used for learning. Unlike "screen time," which measures how long students are on devices, Screen Value focuses on the quality and purpose of that use. It classifies technology use based on whether an activity promotes active, higher-order cognitive processing (High Screen Value) or fosters passive, low-engagement consumption (Low Screen Value).

Screen Time

Any period during which a student is actively or passively engaged with a digital device as part of the instructional day.

- Active screen use includes creating, problem-solving, collaborating, researching, and demonstrating understanding.
- Passive screen use includes consuming content with limited interaction or engagement.

III. Technology Use Expectations (Instructional Use Only)
Screen time during the instructional day must be purposeful, time-bound, and aligned to learning objectives, emphasizing active use over passive consumption. While teachers should always prioritize instructional quality and student engagement, age-appropriate boundaries remain important for student well-being. Therefore, the following screen time recommendations apply to Chromebooks, tablets, and similar devices during the school day:

Guidance

Grade Band	**Daily Technology Guidance**	**Instructional Guidance**
PK–2	Up to approximately 60 minutes of purposeful instructional use, primarily teacher-guided.	Hands-on, play-based, language-rich, and teacher-led instruction with minimal independent screen use.
3–5	Up to approximately 90 minutes of distributed and purposeful instructional use.	Blend teacher instruction with purposeful technology integration while avoiding screen-heavy rotations.
6-12	Prioritize instructional screen value and purpose rather than prescribed daily limits. Aim for technology to support no more than 1/2 of instructional activities, when appropriate, while avoiding prolonged passive or isolated digital engagement.	Balance with teacher-led instruction, discussion, writing, collaboration, and non-digital learning tasks. **Technology may be integrated to support:** • Research and analysis • Collaboration and communication • Creation and presentation • Intervention and supplemental learning • Access to digital resources and assessment

Additional Requirements:

- Screen time must be **chunked into intervals** (no more than 30 consecutive minutes for K–5; and no more than the length of the instructional course for 6–12 without a break).
- **Schools should monitor overreliance on passive or isolated digital learning experiences and ensure** each instructional block must include **non-screen engagement** (discussion, writing, collaborative work, or hands-on activity).

- K–5 Devices:
    - PK–2 students will not be assigned individual one-to-one devices and will not take devices home daily
    - Grades 3–5 will be assigned individual one-to-one devices and will not be required to take devices home daily but will have an option to opt-out
- While secondary instruction may appropriately include greater technology integration, digital activities should generally comprise only a portion of the instructional experience and should be balanced with teacher-led instruction, discussion, writing, collaboration, and non-digital learning tasks.
- Prohibit elementary and middle school student device use during non-instructional times like: passing periods, lunch, snack, and recess with limited exceptions for teacher-approved schoolwork.
- Prohibit and/or block the use of non-instructional gaming platforms (e.g., Roblox and Fortnite) on District-provided devices and networks and continue to block social media platforms. YouTube should be restricted to teacher use. Minecraft should be reserved for student use in extra-curricular clubs and/or activities.

IV. Instructional Material Priority

1. Physical Textbooks as Primary Resource
    - Atlanta Public Schools shall prioritize the **procurement and classroom use of physical textbooks**, particularly in core content areas (Math, Science, ELA, Social Studies).
    - Physical materials support:
        - Deeper reading comprehension
        - Annotation and retention
        - Reduced cognitive fatigue
2. Digital Access as a Supplement
    - Digital versions of textbooks shall be made available for:
        - Accessibility needs
        - Homework and extended learning
        - Emergency or remote learning situations
3. Procurement Guidelines
    - All future curriculum adoptions must include:
        - A **physical textbook option** as a standard offering
        - A **total cost of ownership analysis** (devices, software, maintenance vs. textbooks)
        - Evidence of effectiveness in improving student outcomes

V. Intervention and Supplemental Learning

In early grades (P-5), interventions should not be delivered primarily or exclusively through software programs and must include explicit teacher-led instruction, guided practice, progress monitoring, and opportunities for student interaction.

Technology-based intervention programs should supplement, not replace, direct instruction and evidence-based instructional practices.

VI. Exceptions and Flexibility

The following are allowable exceptions to screen time limits:

1. Standardized Testing

    - Screen use required for district or state assessments is permitted.
    - Where feasible, the district will **explore and offer paper-based testing options**, particularly for younger students.

2. Specialized Courses
    - Students enrolled in virtually classes that include, but not limited to, Atlanta Virtual Academy and Georgia Virtual Academy and in courses such as Computer Science, Digital Media, and Career Technical Education may exceed limits when necessary.
3. Students with Disabilities
    - Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans may require adjusted screen usage.
4. Teacher-Directed Instruction
    - Temporary extensions may occur when technology is essential to meet a specific learning objective.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop and implement administrative regulations necessary to carry out this policy. This policy will be reviewed annually and adjusted based on:

- Emerging research
- Student performance data
- Community feedback

VII. Effective Date

This policy shall take effect at the beginning of the 2026–2027 school year.

Policy Reference Disclaimer:
These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

Note: ***To access the policy references, CLICK HERE:*** State of Georgia Terms and Conditions ***and close the LexisNexis tab, which will return you to the policy. Click on the links below to be taken to each specific code. You should only have to do this one time per session.***

State	Description
O.C.G.A. 20-02-0319.1	Georgia Virtual School
O.C.G.A. 20-14-0044	Turnaround coaches; role

O.C.G.A. 20-14-0047	Individual assessments of low performing students in turnaround eligible schools
O.C.G.A. 20-14-0048	Resources and supports for turnaround eligible schools
O.C.G.A. 30-04-0002	Right to equal public accommodations; right to be accompanied by guide dog or service dog
O.C.G.A. 30-04-0004	Denial of or interference with admittance to or enjoyment of facilities or exercise of rights
Rule 160-8-1-.01	Georgia Virtual School Program
Rule 160-5-1-.13	Regional Educational Service Agencies
Rule 160-4-7-.13	Private Schools
Rule 160-4-7-.16	Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS)
Rule 160-4-7-.19	Services for Agency-Placed Students
Rule 160-4-7-.20	Mandatory Pre-Determination of Local Educational Agency''s Inability to Provide Services to a Student(s) with a Disability
Rule 160-4-4-.10	Instructional Materials Selection and Recommendation
Rule 160-4-7-.15	Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS)
Rule 160-4-8-.17	Case Management Consultation for Agency Placed Transfer Students
Rule 160-4-7-.02	Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)