Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Members of the Strategy and Operations Committee

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: November 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence in Maryland Public Schools

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Purpose

The Strategy and Operations Committee will discuss the State Board's Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence that encompasses early childhood through K-12 students and will receive an overview of the evidence, research, and community feedback that informed its development.

Executive Summary

This resolution establishes a statewide vision anchoring educational technology in learning science, developmental readiness, and the primacy of the educator–student relationship. Recognizing that excessive or poorly designed screen exposure risks undermining student attention, mental wellness, and foundational skill development, the resolution urges local school systems and early childhood programs to move beyond default digitization and ensure all technology serves a clear, evidence-based instructional purpose. It calls on districts to re-evaluate one-to-one device models, sharply limit individual screen time in Pre-K through Grade 2 in favor of hands-on and paper-based learning, strictly discourage student-facing generative AI in elementary grades (barring individual accessibility needs), and build strong family-school partnerships alongside critical digital literacy instruction. At the same time, the resolution emphasizes safeguarding equitable digital access for rural and high-poverty communities, protecting legally mandated assistive technologies for students with disabilities, and ensuring efforts to reduce screen time do not eliminate access to online research databases and high-quality digital content.

The resolution encourages local boards of education to adopt transparent procurement practices, conduct public discussions on major technology investments, and utilize MSDE's AI evaluation rubric—aligned with Governor Moore's AI Framework—to ensure classroom tools demonstrably improve student outcomes and supplement, rather than replace, educator-led instruction. Finally, the resolution directs MSDE, in consultation with stakeholders, to conduct a review of current practices and research to inform final statewide policy recommendations by December 2027.

Action

Information only.

Attachments

Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence in Maryland Public Schools

Maryland State Board of Education Resolution 26-03
Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence in Maryland Public Schools

WHEREAS, the Maryland State Board of Education is committed to ensuring that every student receives high-quality, evidence-based instruction grounded in the science of learning; and

WHEREAS, a fundamental responsibility of public education is to focus students' attention on learning, growth, and development, recognizing that sustained attention and meaningful engagement are essential to academic success and student well-being; and

WHEREAS, the relationship between educators, instructional staff, and students is the foundation of effective education, serving as the catalyst for deep learning, personal growth, and cognitive development; and

WHEREAS, the successful and safe adoption of educational technology and emerging artificial intelligence (AI) tools requires ongoing, high-quality professional learning that supports educators in mastering purposeful, evidence-based integration; and

WHEREAS, local school systems and early childhood programs vary in their capacity to evaluate emerging technologies, negotiate vendor agreements, and protect student privacy, necessitating stronger statewide procurement guidance, shared resources, and transparent local decision-making;

WHEREAS, the rapid expansion of educational technology, school-issued devices, personal cell phones, and AI has transformed the learning environment, creating both opportunities and challenges for student attention, instructional quality, and well-being; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of research links excessive, unmoderated screen exposure and compulsive device use to adverse impacts on child and adolescent well-being, undermining students' emotional regulation, cognitive stamina, and mental wellness; and

WHEREAS, research on learning and cognitive development underscores the importance of focused, systematic instruction, social and physical interaction, hands-on learning, and sustained daily practice in supporting healthy development—particularly in early childhood and the early grades, where excessive or poorly designed screen exposure in Pre-K–12 risks displacing the handwriting, reading, writing, and mathematical practice essential to foundational learning; and

WHEREAS, technology can expand access, support differentiated instruction, reduce administrative burdens, and strengthen learning when used intentionally, but its deployment must be directly tied to a clear instructional purpose and vision and its educational value demonstrated in student outcomes rather than presumed; and

WHEREAS, equitable access to educational technology remains essential, particularly for students in rural and high-poverty communities who may have more limited access to devices, connectivity, and digital learning resources, requiring a thoughtful balance between protecting student attention and development and ensuring access to meaningful educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS students with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 rely on assistive technology devices and services to communicate, engage, access the curriculum and demonstrate learning, such devices are excluded from screen-time limitations, device restrictions, or other technology prohibitions set forth in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the purposes of the MDK12 Digital Library, equitable access to high-quality digital content supports effective teaching and learning for Maryland students, and efforts to reduce unnecessary screen time should preserve access to these instructional resources; and

WHEREAS, preparing students for success in an increasingly technology-driven economy requires ensuring equitable opportunities to develop foundational digital competencies, technological fluency, and AI literacy aligned with evolving college and career pathways; and

WHEREAS, policies governing educational technology, student cell phones, screen time, and AI should be aligned to coherent, evidence-based instruction that protects student attention, support educator judgment, comply with related policies, requirements, and regulations, and promote developmentally appropriate learning;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Maryland State Board of Education affirms the importance of intentional, developmentally appropriate technology use tied to a clear instructional purpose and encourages school systems and early childhood programs to prioritize learning environments that sustain student attention, promote deep engagement, support learning and social-emotional skills, and strengthen the relationship between educators and students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local boards of education, in partnership with their local communities, to develop coherent approaches to educational technology, personal devices, and AI that prioritize student attention, instructional quality, developmental readiness, and digital well-being; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems and community-based providers participating in Maryland Momentum Pre-K to critically examine and reconsider the role of technology in the delivery of instruction, including the use of digital-only curricula, screen-based assignments, and electronic submission of student work, ensuring that technology serves a clear, evidence-based instructional purpose and adds meaningful value to learning rather than displacing systematic instruction, educator judgment, and appropriate paper-based and hands-on practice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems and early childhood programs to revisit one-to-one student device policies, including the educational justification for individually assigned devices across grade bands, the frequency and duration of student use, the practice of sending devices home, and opportunities for shared or classroom-based alternatives, with particular attention to developmental appropriateness, equitable access to technology and connectivity, and demonstrated instructional value; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems and early childhood programs to sharply limit individual student screen time in preschool through Grade 2, particularly using hand-held devices or tablets, recognizing the importance of play-based and joyful learning, systematic instruction, physical books, handwriting, mathematical reasoning and practice, and hands-on learning in developing foundational literacy, mathematics, and writing skills; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems to strictly discourage student-facing generative AI in elementary grade bands, except where specifically justified by individual accessibility needs, and to introduce student-facing generative AI tools progressively in later grades with intentional supervision and robust developmental safeguards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems and early childhood programs to strengthen partnerships with families in promoting children's digital wellness, including sharing age-appropriate guidance and research on screen time, technology use, attention, and healthy digital habits; providing clear and accessible information about the technologies students use in school and have access to at home, their instructional purposes, and relevant safeguards; and engaging families in ongoing conversations about how schools and homes can work together to support children's learning, development, and well-being; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local boards of education to hold public discussions of major technology investments and utilize the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) AI tool evaluation rubric in line with Governor Moore's AI Framework to do no harm and ensure that any digital or AI tools deployed in classrooms demonstrate positive outcomes for student learning, function strictly to supplement educator-led instruction, and are implemented with clear, accessible information for families regarding their instructional role and data safeguards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages local school systems to prepare students to critically evaluate digital technologies, including AI, algorithmic influence, information reliability, and data privacy, and to develop the knowledge and habits necessary to navigate an increasingly digital world safely, ethically, and responsibly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board encourages the State of Maryland to consider dedicating a portion of proceeds from litigation or settlements involving social media and technology companies, including Meta, directly to public education-based initiatives, classroom instructional resources, and school and district family engagement programs consistent with applicable legal restrictions and funding priorities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board directs MSDE, in consultation with local school systems, educators, families, and relevant experts, to review current practices and research on educational technology and share evidence-based practices and age-appropriate guidance on digital and media literacy and AI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that nothing in this resolution shall restrict, limit, or prohibit the use of assistive technology devices or services required under a student's Individualized Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, or Section 504 Plan; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that MSDE shall provide an initial update to the State Board by June 2027 and present findings and recommendations by December 2027, informing the Board's continued work to establish a coherent, evidence-based approach that protects student attention, strengthens foundational learning, and ensures technology serves rather than displaces effective instruction.

Adopted this ___ day of December 2026.



Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence in Maryland Public Schools

Presented By | Hannah Oakley, Deputy Director, State Board of Education
Dr. Stefan Redding Lallinger, MSDE Chief Policy Officer

Maryland
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Research on Screen Time and AI in Schools

1. Adoption & Guidance Gap

9 in 10 Schools 1:1 | 86% Student AI Use

- **Pervasive Usage:** Student reliance on AI for homework rose from 48% to 62% in late 2025.
- **The Guidance Gap:** ~50% of teachers and students receive school AI training or risk guidance, leaving educators to navigate rules alone.

2. Cognitive & Learning Risks

~90% Faculty: AI Will Harm Critical Thinking

- **Cognitive Bypassing:** 67% of students agree AI use harms critical thinking skills.
- **Classroom Off-Task:** 1 in 3 students use laptops for non-academic tasks during class (texting/scrolling).

3. Distraction & Early Childhood

40% of U.S. 2-Year-Olds Own Tablets

- **Academic & Engagement:** Each additional daily hour of screen time at age 2 corresponds to a 7% decrease in classroom participation and a 6% decrease in math proficiency by Grade 4.
- **Development:** 2+ hours per day of screen time negatively impacts vocabulary acquisition and behavior.

4. Privacy & Vetting Deficiencies

50% Ed-Tech Tools Fail Privacy Audit in One State

- **Compliance Gaps:** State audit in Utah revealed widespread failure in meeting student data privacy standards.
- **Commercial Risks:** Concerns over vendors monetizing student data, pushing un-disable-able embedded AI, and bypassing COPPA consent.

5. State & Local Action

83% Parents and Students Emphasize Critical Thinking Focus without AI

- **Legislative Action:** Hundreds of AI education bills across 31 states; NYC & LA Unified enacted 1-year student AI moratoriums.
- **Maryland:** Multiple LEAs capping screen time, moving away from 1:1, reevaluating AI tools, and auditing ed-tech tools.

6. Human-Centered Integration

Purposeful Limits Over Blanket Bans

- **“Worst of Both Worlds”:** Blanket bans and overly prescriptive limits harm students’ ability to think critically or use AI responsibly.
- **Emerging Framework:** Pair early-grade limits with teacher PD and product certification and verification.

Actions from Other States and Districts

1. Early Grade Device Bans

Near-Total Bans in K-2

Eliminating or strictly prohibiting school devices in early grades.

2. 1:1 Hardware Shift

Shared Laptop Carts & Storage

Shifting focus from cell phones to district laptops and tablets by limiting 1:1 ratios, storing tech when inactive, and using shared labs.

3. Active vs. Passive Use

Purposeful Tech Focus

Differentiating teacher-led instruction from passive screen time (e.g., Utah's screen-time definition)

4. Generative AI Controls

Moratoriums & Oversight

Enacting targeted bans, moratoriums, and strict authorization protocols on classroom generative AI tools.

5. Take-Home Device Limits

Family Opt-In/Opt-Out

Curtailing take-home device requirements and expanding parental opt-in and opt-out.

6. Web & Media Filtering

Allow-List Firewalls

Cutting YouTube access, restricting gaming sites, and deploying strict network-level allow-lists.

7. Analog & Print Methods

Balanced Media

Rebalancing digital instruction with intentional paper, print-based, and hands-on tactile learning tools.

8. Vetting & Inventory Audits

Rigorous Tech Standards

Auditing embedded AI, accounting classroom tech, and requiring proven educational value without focus-reducing design features.

Resolution on Intentional Technology Use, Student Attention, and Artificial Intelligence in Maryland Public Schools

Whereas Clauses

The Case for Intentionality

- **Clear Direction:** The State Board establishes clear principles and direction for screen time and educational technology.
- **Student Wellness:** Unmoderated screen exposure undermines student wellness and displaces foundational hands-on practice.
- **Instructional Value:** Educator-student relationships drive deep learning, and technology must prove instructional value rather than presume it.
- **Literacy and PD:** Balances student AI literacy with educator professional learning to prepare students for success in a technology-driven economy.

Resolved Clauses

Statewide Action & Guardrails

- **LEA Guidance:** Encourages LEAs to develop coherent approaches to educational technology, personal devices, and AI.
- **Pre-K–2 Limits:** Calls for sharp limits to Pre-K–2 screen time; strictly discourages elementary generative AI outside accessibility needs.
- **Device Re-examination:** Urges districts to re-examine 1-to-1 take-home devices and digital-only curricula.
- **Tool Vetting:** Promotes transparent technology tool vetting and community partnerships.
- **MSDE Review Timeline:** MSDE to review statewide practices, delivering an initial update in June 2027 and a final report in December 2027.