

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

459 BROADWAY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Katherine M. Christo

TEL: 617-349-6620 · FAX: 617-349-6624
kchristo@cpsd.us

CHAIR

DAVID J. WEINSTEIN

VICE CHAIR

CAITLIN DUBE

MEMBERS

LUISA DE PAULA SANTOS
RICHARD HARDING, JR.
ELIZABETH HUDSON
ARJUN JAIKUMAR
MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI

March 17, 2025

ORDERED to be added to the Calendar/Unfinished Business:

WHEREAS: The Cambridge School Committee has a duty to safeguard student health, well-being, and learning conditions; and

WHEREAS: There is increasing evidence and concern from families, educators, and health experts about the impact of excessive screen use on student attention, vision, sleep, and social development, particularly for younger children; and

WHEREAS: The Committee has already directed the District to conduct a comprehensive audit of student screen time and digital tool use; and

WHEREAS: Access to developmentally protective learning environments with minimal screen exposure currently varies across schools and programs within the district, creating inequitable conditions for students during the school day; and

WHEREAS: The continuation of current practices during the audit period risks unnecessary and inequitable exposure for students; and

WHEREAS: The American Academy of Pediatrics has repeatedly emphasized, including in recent guidance published in *Pediatrics*, that excessive or non-purposeful screen use during the school day can displace critical developmental activities such as physical movement, peer interaction, play, and self-regulation, particularly for younger children; and

WHEREAS: Recent large-scale observational research and surveys reported in *The Lancet* and its affiliated journals have raised concerns about associations between higher screen exposure in childhood and adverse outcomes related to attention, emotional regulation, mental health, and physical well-being, reinforcing calls for precautionary limits in educational settings; and

WHEREAS: The guidance cited herein is particularly urgent for younger children, for whom screen exposure most significantly displaces foundational activities such as play, movement, peer interaction, and self-regulation, and for whom the long-term consequences of early and excessive screen exposure are of greatest concern; and therefore the Committee has determined that a precautionary pause is most urgently warranted for students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, while evidence and audit findings for older grade levels are evaluated; and

WHEREAS: Both pediatric and public-health experts emphasize that screen use should not replace movement, recess, or restorative breaks during the school day, and that minimizing non-essential exposure is a reasonable protective measure while districts evaluate screen practices; and

WHEREAS: Pediatric and public-health guidance consistently affirms that caregivers have a right to know how much screen exposure their children experience during the school day, particularly when such exposure is required or unavoidable, in order to support student health outside of school; and

WHEREAS: The Committee affirms the professionalism, care, and expertise of educators, and recognizes that this temporary pause is intended to clarify system-level expectations and reduce inequitable conditions for students; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee directs the Superintendent to suspend all student-facing screen use for students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, pending completion and presentation of the screen time audit, or until the end of the 2025–2026 school year, whichever occurs first, unless extended by vote of the Committee.

This pause shall not apply to teacher-directed projection of district-approved curriculum materials onto a classroom display as part of direct instruction, where students are not individually operating a device.

This pause shall take effect upon issuance of written guidance by the Superintendent, which shall be issued no later than ten school days following adoption of this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the only permitted exceptions to this prohibition are:

1. Assistive technology, IEP or 504 accommodations, and legally required accessibility supports
2. Translation or communication supports necessary for student access
3. Health, safety, or other legally mandated services
4. State-mandated or district-required assessments where no paper-based alternative is legally permissible
5. Any additional exception explicitly approved in writing by the Superintendent, consistent with the intent of this resolution, reported to the Committee, and time-limited; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent shall issue guidance to schools clarifying expectations during this interim period and report back to the Committee on implementation challenges or needed adjustments; and be it further

RESOLVED: That for any required assessment-related student screen use for students PreK-5th grade, the District shall provide daily written notification to families by the close of the school day that includes:

1. The name and purpose of the assessment administered that day
2. The anticipated duration of screen use prior to administration
3. The actual duration of screen use once the assessment session has concluded

Such notification shall be provided on each day that a student engages in required assessment-related screen use. Where a paper-based alternative is legally or logistically permissible, the District shall offer that option as the primary choice; and be it further

RESOLVED: that the District shall establish a dedicated feedback channel, such as a named email address or online form, through which families and staff may submit concerns and suggestions regarding compliance with this resolution to the Superintendent; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent shall submit a written implementation report to the Committee every thirty (30) days during the audit period, which shall include:

- The number and nature of any exceptions granted
- Implementation challenges encountered
- Patterns of concern identified through the feedback channel, including concerns raised by families or staff

These reports shall be reviewed by the Committee as part of its ongoing oversight.

Motion #26-040

cc:

Vice Chair Dube
Member de Paula Santos
Chair Weinstein
Member Harding
Member Hudson
Member Jaikumar
Mayor Siddiqui
Superintendent