



Community Education Council for District 4
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Resolution to Establish Developmentally Appropriate Screen Time Limits, Data Transparency, and Student Privacy Protections in New York City Public Schools

Date: May 13th, 2026

Sponsors: Dr. Kaliris Y. Salas-Ramirez, Lacey Jordan, Lawanda Joyner, Vandana Bonilla, Tia Jackson and Kiera Jerez Alston.

WHEREAS, Community Education Council District 4 (CEC4) is charged under New York State Education Law to represent the interests, well-being, and educational outcomes of students and families in East Harlem. Parents, students and teachers have raised significant concerns about the amount of screen time students are exposed to and the potential introduction of AI platforms into our classrooms; and

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) serves under one million students whose cognitive, social, and emotional development must be supported through evidence-based, developmentally appropriate educational practices; and

WHEREAS, NYCDOE students and educators regularly utilize digital tools during the school day to access instructional platforms, individualized interventions, assessments, communication systems, and digital content, including but not limited to i-Ready, Google Classroom, Zoom, and YouTube; and

WHEREAS, emerging national policy trends demonstrate growing concern regarding excessive screen exposure in schools and the need for clear, developmentally grounded limits; and

WHEREAS, the [Los Angeles Unified School District \(LAUSD\)](#) adopted a 2026 resolution establishing grade-level screen time limits, restricting device use during non-instructional time, and limiting or prohibiting device use for early elementary students, signaling a major shift toward safeguarding student well-being and academic engagement; and

WHEREAS, statewide action in [Iowa reflects bipartisan recognition of the need to rebalance technology use in schools](#), including legislation requiring school districts to restrict student use of personal electronic devices during instructional time and proposals to limit elementary school screen exposure to approximately one hour per day; and

WHEREAS, these policies across both large urban districts and statewide systems reflect a growing national movement to ensure that technology in schools remains a supportive tool rather than a dominant mode of instruction; and

WHEREAS, research in neuroscience and education, including the work of [Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath](#), demonstrates that learning is strengthened through active, social, and hands-on engagement, and cautions that passive or excessive screen-based instruction may reduce retention, attention, and deep learning³; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of developmental and public health research links excessive screen exposure in children and adolescents to increased anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and diminished executive functioning, particularly during critical periods of brain development; and

WHEREAS, while access to and fluency in technology are essential skills in the modern world, excessive screen time has been associated with vision problems, increased anxiety and depression, reduced attention span, difficulty with emotional regulation, lower academic achievement, and weakened cognitive development, as noted by the American Academy of Pediatrics and other public health authorities; and

WHEREAS, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends that for school-aged children, screen use should be consistent with a family media plan that prioritizes adequate sleep (8–12 hours depending on age), at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity, and limits on entertainment screen time, emphasizing that digital media should not displace essential developmental activities such as sleep, physical play, in-person interaction, and learning; and

WHEREAS, recent legal challenges, including litigation related to the use of the i-Ready platform, have raised concerns regarding student [data privacy, surveillance, and the collection of sensitive educational data without adequate transparency or safeguards](#); and

WHEREAS, a [2026 audit by the New York State Comptroller](#) found that New York City Public Schools does not consistently follow all laws and regulations regarding the privacy and security of student data, and identified significant weaknesses in oversight, transparency, and technical safeguards protecting student information; and

WHEREAS, the audit further found that NYCDOE maintains vast amounts of sensitive student data, including millions of records within centralized systems, yet lacks sufficient controls, full alignment with national cybersecurity standards, and consistent compliance across schools and systems; and

WHEREAS, the Comptroller’s audit also raised concerns regarding limited transparency and incomplete cooperation during the audit process, including the failure to provide timely and comprehensive information to state oversight bodies, undermining public accountability and trust; and

WHEREAS, analysis and advocacy from [Class Size Matters emphasize that these findings reflect broader systemic issues within NYCDOE](#), including a lack of clear understanding of what student data is collected, how it is used, and who has access to it, particularly as the use of digital platforms expands in classrooms; and

WHEREAS, the [New York City Department of Education](#) recently experienced a cybersecurity incident involving the Canvas platform that exposed vulnerabilities in third-party educational technology systems and raised concerns regarding the potential unauthorized access to student and staff data, underscoring systemic risks associated with the widespread use of digital platforms in schools; and

WHEREAS, such incidents highlight the increasing frequency and impact of data breaches in education systems, and demonstrate the need for stronger safeguards, transparency, and oversight to protect sensitive student information, particularly as reliance on multiple external vendors and digital tools continues to expand; and

WHEREAS, data breaches and cybersecurity failures can disproportionately harm students by exposing personal information, undermining trust in public education systems, and compounding existing inequities for vulnerable student populations; and

WHEREAS, these findings are especially concerning in light of the widespread use of multiple digital instructional platforms across NYCDOE schools, which increase the volume of student data collected and shared, often without clear, accessible, or disaggregated reporting to families, educators, or policymakers; and

WHEREAS, the expansion of screen-based instruction and EdTech platforms—without corresponding transparency, safeguards, and oversight—creates compounded risks related to student privacy, data security, and the commercialization or misuse of student information; and

WHEREAS, the recent technical failures and instability of the digital platform used for New York State standardized testing in [New York City Public Schools disrupted student testing experiences, undermined confidence in the assessment system](#), and highlighted the risks of overreliance on digital infrastructure for high-stakes exams; and

WHEREAS, paper-based assessments provide a more stable, equitable, and developmentally appropriate alternative, particularly for younger students and students with disabilities, by reducing technological barriers, cognitive load, and test anxiety associated with digital interfaces; and

WHEREAS, New York City public schools significantly expanded digital device use during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, often without consistent systemwide standards governing appropriate instructional use, privacy protections, or developmental limits; and

WHEREAS, families, educators, and students across District 4 and New York City have raised concerns about the overreliance on screens replacing direct instruction, independent reading, social interaction, and play-based learning; and

WHEREAS, equity in education requires not only access to technology but also protection from overexposure, algorithmic bias, data privacy risks, and the erosion of critical thinking associated with excessive reliance on digital platforms; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Education Council District 4 calls upon the New York City Department of Education to develop and implement a systemwide Screen Time Policy that:

1. Establishes Developmentally Appropriate Limits - based on recommendations from the American Association of Pediatrics and [American Psychological Association](#)

- **Early Childhood: Pre-K – Grade 1**
 - *No routine individual device use*
- **Exceptions only for:**
 - IEP/504 accommodations
 - Short, teacher-led instructional activities
- **Emphasize:**
 - Play-based learning
 - Language development
 - Hands-on activities
- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - Maximum: **0–15 minutes/day (only if necessary)**
 - No independent screen use
- **Elementary School: Grades 2–5**
- **Prioritize foundational learning:**
 - Literacy
 - Numeracy
 - Social development
- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - Maximum: **60 minutes/day total screen time**
 - Of that:

- No more than **30 minutes passive use** (video, viewing)
- **Require:**
 - Teacher-guided use
 - Clear instructional purpose
- **Additional protections:**
 - **No screen use during:**
 - Recess
 - Lunch
 - Transitions
- **Middle School: Grades 6–8**
 - High-risk period for:
 - Anxiety
 - Social comparison
 - digital dependency
- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - Maximum: **90 minutes/day total screen time**
 - Require:
 - Structured, purposeful use
 - Reduced passive consumption
 - Prohibit:
 - Student-led access to YouTube/social media during school
 - Digital literacy instruction:
 - Algorithm awareness
 - Media literacy
 - Mental health awareness
- **High School: Grades 9–12**
 - Recognizes:
 - Academic tech needs
 - Increasing independence
- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - Maximum: **120 minutes/day total instructional screen time**
 - Strong emphasis on:
 - Active learning
 - Creation (writing, coding, analysis)
 - **Limit:**

- Passive viewing
- Non-instructional digital activity

2. Prioritizes High-Quality Instruction

- Requires that digital tools be used only when they:
 - Demonstrably enhance learning outcomes
 - Do not replace direct teacher instruction, discussion, or independent thinking
- Encourages **paper-based, experiential, and collaborative learning models**

3. Strengthens Data Privacy Protections

- Conducts a comprehensive audit of all educational technology platforms used in NYCDOE schools
- Establish stronger safeguards to ensure:
 - Minimal data collection
 - Transparency with and for families
 - Compliance with federal and state student privacy laws

4. Restricts Harmful and Non-Educational Use

- Limits access to non-instructional digital content (including social media and entertainment platforms) on DOE-issued devices during school hours

5. Supports Educators and Schools

- Provides funding and professional development to:
 - Reduce overreliance on digital platforms
 - Expand access to non-digital instructional materials
 - Support culturally responsive sustaining education (CRSE), human-centered pedagogical practices, play-based curricula

6. Ensures Equity and Accessibility

- Maintains full access to assistive technology for students with IEPs and 504 Plans
- Ensure implementation does not exacerbate inequities across schools or districts

7. Engages Families and Communities

- Requires transparency with families regarding student screen use
- Provides mechanisms for families to request reduced screen exposure
- Engages:
 - Community Education Councils
 - Students and families
 - Educators and school leaders

8. Establishes Accountability and Oversight

- Requires annual reporting on:
 - Student screen time usage
 - Academic and wellness outcomes
 - Policy implementation across schools

9. Restores Paper-Based Assessment Options

- Calls on the NYCDOE and the New York State Education Department to:
 - Immediately provide **paper-based options for all New York State standardized assessments**, particularly in elementary and middle school grades
 - Conduct a full review of the reliability, equity, and developmental appropriateness of digital testing platforms
 - Ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to technological failures, access issues, or interface-related challenges

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that CEC4 calls upon the New York City Council, New York State Education Department, and public health agencies to collaborate with NYCDOE to align policies on student well-being, digital learning, data privacy, and equitable assessment practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution affirms that technology must serve as a tool to support, **not replace**, teaching, relationships, and human development, and that NYC Public Schools must lead in creating healthy, balanced, and developmentally appropriate learning environments for all students.

CEC4 Council members voted unanimously:

Motion by Tia Jackson seconded by Elizabeth Soto-Cardona.

D4 CEC Council members as follows:

Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Sophie Oulai, Lacey Jordan, Lawanda Joyner, Johanna Dominguez, Elizabeth Soto-Cardona, Adriana Tlacomulco, Vandana Bonilla, Tia Jackson and Kiera Jerez Alston.

This Resolution was approved unanimously by the members at D4 CEC Calendar Meeting held on May 13th, 2026.