RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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High School Technology Guide

Ridgefield Public Schools | 2026–27 Academic Year

Technology decisions in Ridgefield's high school begin with the question that guides all of our work: does this serve the student's learning? At the high school level, the question looks forward. Students in grades 9 through 12 are preparing for college, careers, and civic life, and the tools they will meet there are more powerful and less forgiving than anything in earlier grades. Technology will be used when it supports learning in ways that other approaches cannot, and when it helps students learn to direct it with judgment of their own.

This Year's Direction

A great deal of high school coursework now runs through a device: research, extended writing, collaboration in Google Workspace, and digital assessments, including the SAT. The question we are asking is not how long students use a device. It is whether the use is purposeful: what students are making, analyzing, and learning with it, and whether they are becoming users who can make that determination for themselves.

Two frameworks guide every technology decision at the high school level this year. The first is Creation versus Consumption: is the student receiving, or producing? At this level, the standard is authorship. A polished essay, slide deck, or block of code is not evidence of learning unless the thinking originated with the student, and generative AI makes that distinction harder to see from the outside. The second is the Triple E Framework, developed by education researchers. Before a tool enters a Ridgefield high school classroom, teachers ask three questions: Does it engage students with the learning goal? Does it enhance the experience in a way another approach could not? Does it extend learning into something authentic beyond the classroom? A tool that cannot clear at least one of those bars does not belong in the lesson.

Digital citizenship and AI literacy receive deliberate attention this year, framed around decisions students will soon make as adults. The district is building a coherent, developmentally sequenced framework aligned to the ISTE Digital Citizen standards. At the high school level, the focus is applied judgment: establishing AI-specific instruction for grades 9 through 12, and deepening work on digital footprint and identity, media balance and well-being, and news and media literacy. The goal is for students to evaluate sources and claims, understand how algorithms and generative AI shape what they read and produce, and protect their own data and reputation.

Our commitment to families this year: **Listen. Align. Trust.**

What This Means in High School Classrooms

Ridgefield's high school classrooms are places where teachers teach, students debate, write by hand, read full texts, work problems on paper, and do the sustained thinking that college and careers demand. Technology does not replace those experiences.

Older students are not exempt from the need for productive struggle. Drafting a thesis from a blank page, working through a proof, and defending an argument aloud are the experiences through which

students become independent thinkers. Generative AI makes it possible to skip them at no visible cost, which is precisely why they must be protected. Teachers can and do choose paper, in-class writing, and discussion-based assessment when the process itself is the learning, and technology is not deployed to shortcut it.

Student well-being shapes our technology decisions at the high school level as deliberately as it does at every other level. Adolescents remain exposed to the behavioral design of consumer technology: notifications, recommendation algorithms, and engagement loops are built to compete for attention. RPS devices are not social platforms, and they are not configured to be. At the same time, students in grades 9 through 12 are approaching adulthood, and our approach reflects it. Structure comes first, and independence follows as students demonstrate judgment.

By graduation, students should be able to direct technology, not just operate it. That means knowing what a tool can and cannot do, checking its output, and deciding when using it strengthens their thinking and when it replaces it.

Technology should support the transition to adulthood, not compete with it. That is the organizing principle. The work ahead is building a district that earns that standard, year by year.

Preparing Graduates for Life and Work Beyond RPS

The tools students will use in college and the workplace will change several times over a working life. The skills that last are the ones built on judgment: knowing how to find and evaluate information, how to create something worth sharing, how to work with others, and how to learn a new tool without being taught. These are the capabilities we aim to build in every Ridgefield graduate, through coursework across content areas and in courses where they are the focus. They express the Ridgefield Vision of the Graduate, which describes graduates who are collaborative, innovative, mindful, communicative, knowledgeable, and resilient.

Skill	What Students Should Be Able to Do	Vision of the Graduate
Evaluating information	Judge the credibility of sources, recognize misinformation and manipulated media, and test claims against evidence.	Knowledgeable
Working with AI	Use generative AI as a tool, verify its output, recognize bias and error, and know when its use supports their thinking and when it replaces it.	Knowledgeable
Creating and communicating	Produce original writing, presentations, video, and data displays for real audiences, in professional formats.	Communicative
Collaborating digitally	Co-author, give and receive feedback, and manage shared work and deadlines in tools such as Google Workspace.	Collaborative
Data and quantitative literacy	Interpret, organize, and visualize data, and question how the numbers they encounter were produced.	Knowledgeable
Computing and engineering design	Apply computational thinking, programming, and design processes to build, test, and refine solutions to real problems.	Innovative

Skill	What Students Should Be Able to Do	Vision of the Graduate
Ethical and responsible citizenship	Treat others with empathy and respect online, weigh the ethical consequences of technology choices, and use digital tools in service of others.	Mindful
Security and privacy	Protect accounts with strong passwords and multifactor authentication, recognize phishing, and understand the data trail they leave.	Mindful
Professional digital identity	Build and manage an online presence that colleges and employers will see.	Mindful
Learning new tools independently	Adapt as platforms change, persist through problems, treat failure as information, and teach themselves what they need next.	Resilient

These skills are developed across content areas and in courses where they are the focus. Ridgefield High School students can study AP Computer Science Principles, Robotics, Product Design, Media Production, Technical Drafting and CAD, Electrical Engineering, and Principles of Engineering, and writing instruction includes a digital writing portfolio that students build across the grades.

Your Questions, Answered

How do teachers decide when to use technology in my child's classes?

The starting question is whether a tool helps a student learn something, create something, or do something they could not do as well without it. A student might analyze a data set, edit a documentary, collaborate with classmates on a shared research project, or use text-to-speech to reach a text that would otherwise be out of reach. When a book, a discussion, or hands-on materials would do the job better, teachers use those. Technology supplements teacher-led instruction, not a replacement for it.

Every tool and every lesson is held to the same two tests: Creation versus Consumption, and the Triple E Framework. The measure is not how much students use technology. It is what they make with it and what they learn from it.

Are AI tools being used in high school classrooms?

Yes, in a managed and limited way. RHS students may use Google Gemini for academic work under explicit guidance from their instructor, and teachers decide whether and how AI is used in each course and assignment. Most popular consumer AI products do not meet Connecticut educational privacy standards and carry an 18+ age rating, so students cannot use their district accounts. AI-specific instruction for grades 9 through 12 is a district priority this year, building on the Innovation Lab work students complete in the middle schools. The aim is for students to learn to evaluate outputs, verify claims, and recognize when a tool supports their thinking and when it stands in for it.

Students have personal devices and home internet outside school, so our approach is educational, not purely restrictive. Blocking alone does not build the judgment students need. Understanding how these tools work, what they do to a person's own thinking when misused, and where the line sits between support and substitution does.

How does RPS define academic integrity in an age of AI?

The standard has not changed: the work submitted must represent the student's own thinking. At the high school level, the stakes are concrete, reaching into grades, transcripts, recommendations, and

college applications. The student handbook treats presenting AI-generated work as one's own as plagiarism. Unless a teacher specifies otherwise, all drafts and final submissions must be the student's own work. Where a teacher permits AI, students must clearly acknowledge the source and the level of AI involvement, and teachers communicate their expectations through the course syllabus and in writing and conversation. Teachers may also require that work be completed in a monitored Google document. Students learn the difference between using AI to support learning, such as testing their understanding or getting feedback on a draft they wrote, and using it to produce work they submit as their own.

Will my child be expected to use a device for schoolwork?

Yes. Every incoming ninth grader receives a district-issued Chromebook and keeps it through graduation. Students are required to bring it to school fully charged each day, because it is used for classwork, collaboration, assessments, and communication. Some homework will also involve the Chromebook, Google Docs, or other approved tools, and assignments that require a device are communicated in advance through Google Classroom so families can plan accordingly. A student who forgets a device can borrow a same-day loaner from the Library Learning Commons. Students without reliable internet access at home should contact their school counselor or the Technology Office, who can connect families to Connecticut's internet assistance programs.

Which state and college assessments are taken on a device?

Connecticut requires all Grade 11 students to take the Connecticut SAT School Day and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) assessment. Both are administered digitally on school devices. This is a state requirement, not a district choice. Many College Board exams, including the PSAT and a growing number of Advanced Placement exams, are also delivered digitally, so students should expect to take some of their most consequential exams on a device.

How does the school manage device distraction?

RPS devices are managed through GoGuardian, which allows teachers to monitor activity, restrict browsing to specific sites during class, and close off-task tabs in real time. Social media platforms are blocked on the school network. Under Board Policy 5131.8, cell phones must be powered off and placed in the designated classroom storage area during instructional periods, and all other personal electronic devices must be powered off and out of sight. Students may use personal devices during non-instructional periods such as free periods and lunch. Beyond these structures, teachers establish clear norms for when school devices are open and closed. High school students are also learning to manage their own attention, a skill they will need long after graduation, and teachers address it directly. Research on adolescent attention consistently shows that the presence of a device, even a closed one, reduces sustained focus. Teachers are not required to use technology during every lesson, and many choose to keep devices off the desk during instruction that does not require them.

Are social media platforms accessible on school devices?

No. Social media platforms are blocked on the RPS network and on school-managed devices. Under Board Policy 5131.8, social media, gaming, and gambling are prohibited on any device during the school day, including students' personal phones. Cell phone infractions are referred to the deans.

What tools does my child use, and are they safe?

No tool enters an RPS classroom without completing a three-step review: a **data review** (what does the tool collect, and is it necessary?), a **privacy review** (does the vendor comply with FERPA and the Connecticut Student Data Privacy Act?), and a **curricular review** (does it genuinely advance learning?). The district evaluates student well-being before a tool's features. Under Connecticut law and

RPS policy, student data cannot be sold, used for advertising, or used to train AI systems without the district's written consent. Vendors must delete all student data when a contract ends.

The full approved tool catalog is at **ridgefield.app.learnplatform.com**

How are you teaching responsible technology use at the high school level?

Digital citizenship and AI instruction in Ridgefield is being built as a developmentally sequenced K-12 framework aligned to the ISTE Digital Citizen standards. It grows with students from foundational online safety in the elementary grades to applied ethical reasoning about AI, media, and digital identity in grades 6 through 12. At the high school level, this year's work establishes AI-specific instruction for grades 9 through 12 and deepens instruction in digital footprint and identity, media balance and well-being, and news and media literacy. District computer science standards, research and writing across content areas, and the digital writing portfolio students build over time provide the practice. These skills connect directly to what students will encounter in college, the workplace, and civic life.

How do you prepare students for a college and career world where AI and digital tools are standard?

Students need to leave Ridgefield able to use modern workplace tools well, and to know when not to. Our approach builds the foundation first: strong writing, quantitative reasoning, and the habit of checking a claim against evidence. A student who can do the work without the tool can direct the tool and catch its errors. On that foundation, students gain practical fluency with collaborative digital environments, research and data tools, and, in managed contexts, generative AI. The aim is graduates who are capable of directing technology with judgment, not simply operating it.

My child has an IEP or 504 with assistive technology. Does any of this change that?

No. Assistive technology, including text-to-speech, speech-to-text, screen magnification, word prediction, and AAC devices, is an accommodation with civil rights standing and is categorically separate from general device use. Device use related to a documented accommodation is not subject to the same norms applied to discretionary technology time. At the high school level, assistive technology is also part of transition planning, and students are supported in learning to use and advocate for the tools they will rely on after graduation. IEP and 504 accommodations continue unchanged.

Can my child opt out of device use?

Opting out of all technology use is not possible. State-mandated assessments are administered on devices, and technology is integrated into the standard high school curriculum in ways that make a parallel screen-free track instructionally impractical. If you have concerns about how technology is used in a specific class or context, contact your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal directly. Those conversations are taken seriously and inform the work we do.

How do I access my child's data or records?

Assessment reports from diagnostic and state testing tools are available in PowerSchool. Parents have the right to review all education records the district maintains under FERPA. Those rights transfer to the student at age 18 or upon enrollment in a postsecondary institution, at which point the student controls access to the record. To request a records review or ask about a specific tool, contact your child's school administration, or you can contact the Technology Office at twrye@ridgefieldps.net. Detailed privacy information for each approved tool is available at www.ridgefield.org/student-data-privacy.

How are you involving families going forward?

We are establishing a Technology Advisory Committee this fall with representation from parents, teachers, administrators, the Board of Education, and students at all grade levels, including the high school. High school students bring a perspective on how tools perform in practice that adults cannot replicate. That group will weigh in on teaching and learning decisions, student data privacy practices, and digital citizenship curriculum. An internal working group will review research and develop recommendations. The process is intentional: listen, study, align, act, communicate. This document reflects that commitment. Learning walks and parent focus groups will follow in the months ahead.

Approved High School Tools

Every tool will follow RPS's three-step review covering data, privacy, and curriculum. The full catalog is at ridgefield.app.learnplatform.com

Resources

Resource	Where to Find It
Approved Tool Catalog	ridgefield.app.learnplatform.com
RPS Technology Department	www.ridgefield.org/technology
Student Data Privacy	www.ridgefield.org/student-data-privacy
PowerSchool (assessment reports)	Your school's parent portal
IT Helpdesk	helpdesk@ridgefieldps.net M–F, 7 a.m.–4 p.m.
Director of Educational Technology	twrye@ridgefieldps.net (203) 894-5550 ext. 1100