

Elementary Technology Guide

Ridgefield Public Schools | 2026–27 Academic Year

Elementary technology decisions in Ridgefield start with a question: does this serve the child's learning, or does it simply fill time? Technology will be used when it adds something meaningful to learning, not simply because it is available. When a pencil, a book, a conversation, or hands-on materials would do the job better, we use those instead.

This Year's Direction

Last year, elementary families asked real questions about how much time their children spend on school devices. We looked into it, tracking actual Chromebook usage across all six schools over multiple months. What we found: even in Grade 5, our highest-use grade, students averaged roughly 7% of their school day on a device. The minutes were low. The harder question was what those minutes contained.

Login data cannot tell the difference between a student recording herself reading aloud and a student scrolling passively. Both look identical in the numbers. That limitation drove a deliberate shift in how we evaluate technology: not how long, but what for.

The distinction that now guides every technology decision is consumption versus creation. Consumption is receiving: watching a video, completing a pre-built quiz, navigating a worksheet that has been digitized. Creation is producing: writing and illustrating an original book in Wixie, editing a documentary in WeVideo, running a simulation in Gizmos where the outcome depends on the student's own choices, using text-to-speech to access a book that would otherwise be out of reach. Every tool, every lesson, and every technology decision in Ridgefield's six elementary schools will be evaluated against that standard.

The measure is not how much students use technology. It is what they make with it.

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

What This Means in Elementary Classrooms

Ridgefield's elementary classrooms will continue to be places where teachers teach, children build relationships with their teachers and classmates, read print books, write by hand, use hands-on materials, create, play, and move. Technology does not replace these experiences.

Young children need them to develop language, build social skills, learn to persevere, and grow as people. When technology enters the classroom, it should add to that picture, not substitute for it.

Student well-being is a design input, not an afterthought. Before any digital tool is considered for its features, it is evaluated for its impact on students and learning. That sequence is intentional. Tools that entertain without advancing learning are not approved, regardless of how popular they are.

Digital citizenship is part of the curriculum from the beginning. Just as children learn gradually to be responsible members of a classroom and community, they need guidance in using technology safely, responsibly, and thoughtfully. These skills build over time as students move from elementary school through graduation.

Technology should support childhood, not compete with it. That is the organizing principle. The data below shows where we started. The work ahead is building a district that earns that standard, year by year.

Your Questions, Answered

How much time does my child actually spend on a device at school?

Less than most families assume. In October 2025, a typical month with no testing windows, Kindergarteners had no individual device time. Grade 1 averaged about 8 minutes per day. Grade 5, our highest-use grade, averaged about 27 minutes per day, roughly 7% of the school day. The vast majority of elementary learning in Ridgefield happens without a screen. The full data by grade is in the tables below.

Are you reducing screen time this year?

We are not setting a lower screen time target; we are changing what we measure. The data showed device use was already quite low as a share of the school day. More importantly, a session in which a student writes, edits, and narrates an original story is categorically different from the same amount of time spent watching a video passively. Reducing the first would be a mistake. Reducing the second would be the right call. That distinction is what we are focused on.

What do "consumption" and "creation" mean, in practice?

"Consumption" means the device is delivering content to the student. "Creation" means the student is producing something the device could not generate on its own. A useful shorthand for families: creation leaves something behind. A student who spent time writing and illustrating a story in Wixie has a book to show you. A student who spent the same time watching assigned video clips does not.

That line is not absolute. Consumption is sometimes the right choice. A student reading a leveled article in Newsela before a writing assignment, or watching a short clip that launches a science investigation, is using technology well. The concern is when consumption is the whole activity, not a part of it. The tools in our approved catalog were selected because they require students to do something, not just receive something. The table below shows where each one fits.

Will my child still take state assessments on a device?

Yes. Connecticut law requires standardized assessments in grades K–3 and 3–8 to be administered on Chromebooks (Connecticut General Statutes §10-14t(a) and §10-14n). In addition, universal screeners are required to meet K-3 reading mandates as well as K-8 to meet requirements of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. This is a legal mandate, not a district choice. Assessment windows typically fall in September, January, and May, which is why May data shows higher device time than October or March. That spike is testing, not instruction.

How does a teacher decide when to use technology?

The starting question is whether the tool helps a student learn something, create something, or do something they could not do as well without it. A student might record themselves reading aloud to hear their own growth. They might use a drawing tool to illustrate a story they have written. They might collaborate with classmates on a shared project, or use text-to-speech to access a book that would otherwise be out of reach. If a pencil, a book, a conversation, or hands-on materials would do the job better, teachers use those. Technology is a supplement to teacher-led instruction, not a replacement for it.

How are you teaching children to use technology responsibly?

Digital citizenship is embedded in our work at every grade level. Children are not simply handed devices; they are taught, in age-appropriate ways, how to use them safely, responsibly, and thoughtfully. What that looks like in Kindergarten is different from what it looks like in Grade 5, and the skills build deliberately over time. By graduation, students should be capable of directing technology with judgment, not just operating it.

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, COPPA, and the Connecticut Student Data Privacy Act?), and a curricular review (does it genuinely advance learning?). Student well-being is evaluated 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 do I access my child's data or records?

Assessment reports from tools like i-Ready are provided three times per year and are available in PowerSchool. Parents have the right to review all education records maintained by the district. To request a records review or ask about a specific tool, contact the technology office at twrye@ridgefieldps.net or your child's teacher directly. Detailed privacy information for each approved tool is at www.ridgefield.org/student-data-privacy.

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, and AAC devices, is not discretionary screen time. It is an accommodation with civil rights standing and is categorically separate from general device use. One reason we moved away from "screen time" as a primary measure is precisely this: blanket rules cannot distinguish a distracted student from one who requires a tool to access instruction. IEP and 504 accommodations continue unchanged.

Can I opt my child out of device use?

Opting out of all technology use is not possible. State-mandated assessments are administered on Chromebooks, and participation is required by law. Technology is also integrated into standard curriculum in ways that make a parallel screen-free track instructionally and logistically impractical. If you have specific concerns about how technology is used in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher or principal. Those conversations matter, and we take them seriously.

How are you involving families going forward?

We are establishing a Technology Advisory Committee this fall with representation from parents, teachers, administrators, and students. That group will weigh in on teaching and learning decisions, student data privacy practices, and digital citizenship. 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.

The Numbers: What We Measured in 2025

Starting in October 2025, the technology team tracked Chromebook login time across all six elementary schools. We collected three snapshots: October, March, and May.

District Average by Grade

Grade	Oct 2025 (21 days)	Mar 2026 (22 days)	May 2026 (20 days)	May: % of School Hours
Kindergarten	<1 hr	<1 hr	<1 hr	<1%
Grade 1	2.8 hr	3.3 hr	3.9 hr	2.8%
Grade 2	3.1 hr	3.5 hr	5.0 hr	3.6%
Grade 3	7.0 hr	6.2 hr	6.8 hr	4.9%
Grade 4	8.3 hr	8.2 hr	10.2 hr	7.3%
Grade 5	9.5 hr	9.8 hr	14.2 hr	10.2%

Hours reflect average Chromebook login time per student per month across BES, BMES, FES, RES, SES, and VPES. May is elevated by state assessment windows. Kindergarten devices are not

distributed for individual login; any technology use involves the classroom ViewSonic board as a teacher tool.

A Day in Perspective (October 2025 Baseline)

A typical elementary school day is approximately 375 minutes.

Grade	Avg Daily Device Time	% of Day on Device	% of Day Off Device
Kindergarten	0 min	0%	100%
Grade 1	~8 min	~2%	~98%
Grade 2	~9 min	~2.4%	~97.6%
Grade 3	~20 min	~5.3%	~94.7%
Grade 4	~24 min	~6.4%	~93.6%
Grade 5	~27 min	~7.2%	~92.8%

What to Expect by Grade in 2026–27

Grade	Typical Device Time	Primary Uses
Kindergarten	None (no individual Chromebook)	Teacher-delivered instruction only. Whole-class ViewSonic board as a teacher tool.
Grade 1	~8 min/day, 2–3x per week	Math Fact Lab, Wixie. Rare and highly structured.
Grade 2	~9 min/day, 2–3x per week	Individualized practice, universal screeners (3x/year), beginning library research.
Grade 3	~20 min/day, 2–3x per week	Individualized practice, curriculum research, screeners, beginning Google Docs.
Grade 4	~25 min/day, 4x per week	Writing in Google Docs/Slides, WeVideo projects, screeners.
Grade 5	~28 min/day, 4x per week	Writing, WeVideo, Gizmos, Google Docs/Slides, screeners, middle school workflow preparation.

These are targets, not rigid schedules. State assessment windows (February–May) increase device time for grades 2–5.

Approved Elementary Tools

Every tool has completed 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