



VAESP Position Statement: Intentional Technology Use in Virginia's Elementary Schools

The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP), representing school leaders serving students in PreK–8, supports a **balanced, intentional, and research-informed approach to technology use in Virginia schools.**

Technology should enhance—not replace—high-quality instruction, relationships, hands-on learning, movement, and meaningful student engagement. VAESP supports reasonable boundaries on non-instructional screen use while recognizing that a rigid, one-size-fits-all statewide approach could unintentionally limit instructional opportunities, accessibility, intervention, equity, and student readiness.

PreK: Developmentally Appropriate and Purposeful Use

VAESP supports a largely device-free preschool environment for typical instruction. Young children benefit most from play, exploration, movement, hands-on learning, language-rich interactions, and relationship-building.

However, technology should remain available when it increases access, communication, or participation, including:

- Assistive and augmentative communication technology
- Translation tools
- Visual supports
- Specialized interventions
- Accessibility tools for students with disabilities
- Supports for multilingual learners

Technology in PreK should **supplement developmentally appropriate instruction and interaction—not replace it.**

Kindergarten–Grade 1: Shared Technology Access

VAESP supports a **shared-device model in kindergarten and first grade**, rather than routine 1:1 device use.

Shared computers or carts can provide students with appropriate opportunities to develop foundational digital literacy while allowing schools to prioritize developmentally appropriate, hands-on instruction, movement, collaboration, and face-to-face interaction.

Technology should be used purposefully to support instruction, intervention, accessibility, and individual student needs—not as a replacement for developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Importantly, students who require technology for accessibility, communication, assistive technology, or specialized instructional needs should continue to have access to those supports.

Grades 2–5: Maintain 1:1 Device Access

VAESP supports **1:1 device access in grades 2–5**.

By the early elementary grades, technology is increasingly embedded in instructional programs, intervention systems, accessibility tools, and digital learning resources. Maintaining 1:1 access allows educators to use these tools purposefully while building students' digital literacy and readiness for later grades.

Examples include:

- Literacy and mathematics intervention programs
- Adaptive and personalized learning platforms
- Digital instructional materials
- Assistive and accessibility technologies
- Research and project-based learning
- Instructional management and learning platforms

Removing 1:1 access in grades 2–5 could:

- Limit opportunities to develop digital literacy
- Reduce access to intervention and personalized instruction
- Create challenges with computer-based statewide assessments
- Create barriers for students who rely on assistive or accessibility technology
- Increase inequities between students with and without technology access at home

State policy should specifically consider the needs of **students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students receiving interventions, and students who require accessibility or adaptive technology.**

Computer Science and Digital Literacy

Any statewide technology policy should align with Virginia's **2024 Computer Science Standards** and ensure students develop age-appropriate digital skills.

Students need opportunities to develop the technology competencies necessary for continued learning, postsecondary education, and future careers. A statewide approach should balance appropriate limits on screen use with the responsibility to prepare students for an increasingly digital world.

State Testing and Accountability

VAESP has significant concerns about eliminating 1:1 device access in grades 2–5 or requiring schools to rely extensively on shared devices.

Potential consequences include:

- Longer testing windows
- Reduced instructional time
- Increased scheduling challenges
- Complications administering SOL retakes within required timelines
- Reduced familiarity with technology-enhanced assessment items
- Student performance being affected by technology navigation rather than content knowledge

While testing requirements should not drive instructional policy, computer-based statewide assessments are an operational reality that must be considered when developing statewide technology recommendations.

Homework: Encourage Balance and Family Choice

VAESP supports encouraging print-based and non-screen homework when appropriate. Reading, conversation, physical activity, and family engagement can provide valuable alternatives to additional screen time.

However, statewide policy should preserve professional and family discretion. Technology may be appropriate when it:

- Provides accessibility
- Supports language development
- Promotes student independence
- Addresses individual learning needs
- Extends or enhances instruction

Families should remain important partners in determining the educational tools that best support their children at home.

Social Media and Non-Instructional Content

VAESP supports strong restrictions on student access to social media and non-instructional online content during the school day. Many school divisions already block these platforms.

At the same time, educators should retain the professional discretion to use carefully selected digital resources, including instructional video, when they directly support learning by building background knowledge, demonstrating concepts, or providing meaningful examples.

Instructional technology should be **purposeful, age-appropriate, and used in moderation.**

Educational Technology Review and Procurement

VAESP supports rigorous statewide expectations for evaluating educational technology before adoption.

Review processes should consider:

- Student data privacy and cybersecurity
- Accessibility
- Evidence of educational effectiveness
- Alignment with instructional goals and standards
- Impact on student learning
- Cost and instructional return on investment

VAESP also recommends greater clarity regarding any proposed independent body responsible for reviewing educational technology, including its selection process, membership, expertise, and authority.

Family Education and Healthy Technology Habits

State efforts should extend beyond school technology policies to help families establish healthy technology habits at home.

VAESP supports providing families with accessible, research-informed guidance regarding child development, appropriate screen use, and the potential effects of excessive passive screen time. Resources should promote alternatives such as:

- Reading
- Conversation
- Outdoor activity
- Creative play
- Problem-solving
- Family interaction

VAESP's Guiding Principle

Virginia should pursue intentional technology use—not technology elimination.

VAESP supports a developmentally appropriate progression of technology access:

PreK: Primarily device-free, with technology available for accessibility, communication, and specialized needs.

Grades K–1: Shared computers and devices used purposefully to support instruction while prioritizing hands-on, social, and developmentally appropriate learning.

Grades 2–5: 1:1 device access with intentional, teacher-directed use that supports instruction, intervention, accessibility, digital literacy, and student learning.

State policy should establish clear expectations for age-appropriate, purposeful, and safe technology use while allowing educators and school leaders the flexibility to respond to student needs.

VAESP encourages policymakers to develop technology policy that is **developmentally appropriate, research-informed, equitable, and flexible enough to reflect the diverse needs of Virginia's students and schools.**

The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, serving school leaders Prek-8. For more information www.vaesp.net or email Karnold@vaesp.org

