Arlington Public Schools

Statement on the Importance of Intentional and Limited Use of Technology and Safeguarding Mental Well-Being

The Arlington School Board and Superintendent of Arlington Public Schools hereby affirm their commitment to promoting digital skills and student mental health and well-being by:

- Defining and determining uses based on educational goals and evidence-based practices;
- Practicing balanced and age-appropriate technology habits, including in the use of school-issued devices and instructional technology;
- Acknowledging that supporting all students includes ensuring equitable access to resources, including assistive technologies for disability related needs, by distinguishing non-essential use from use of technology as an accommodation or support and fostering inclusion of students who rely on such tools;
- Urging families to establish and maintain healthy boundaries around screen time and social media engagement, including by recommending that families delay providing their children with smartphones for non-essential use until at least 8th grade;
- Teaching and modeling respectful digital citizenship and positive online interactions; and
- Partnering with families and the community to help every student thrive in both the digital and physical environments.

We make this Statement in recognition of the following:

- Research from leading public health organizations consistently has identified growing concerns regarding the impact that excessive or unhealthy social media and smartphone use can have on mental health and well-being, particularly among children and adolescents, including increased risks of anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, loneliness, sleep disruption, and diminished self-esteem.
- Healthy digital habits include establishing age-appropriate boundaries around screen time, prioritizing restorative sleep, encouraging physical activity, fostering meaningful in-person relationships, and creating opportunities for device-free family time and other healthy offline experiences.
- Schools play an important role in partnering with families by teaching digital citizenship, media literacy, online safety, and critical thinking skills that help students navigate today's digital environment responsibly and respectfully.

Arlington Public Schools remains committed to cultivating inclusive learning environments where every student feels safe, connected, valued, and supported while developing the skills necessary to become responsible digital citizens. The Arlington School Board and Superintendent encourage all members of the APS community to work together to promote healthy technology habits, strengthen student well-being, and foster environments where every child can learn, connect, and thrive.

Approved by action of the Arlington School Board this 27th day of August, 2026.

Miranda Turner, Chair

Francisco Durán, Superintendent

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To ground this statement in a robust research model, it is best cited using major consensus reports, policy statements, and health advisories from leading public health and psychological organizations. Below are the key research citations mapped to a public health framework that validates each part of the statement.

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) & Office of the Surgeon General**
  - *Advisory Summary:* In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a comprehensive advisory warning that there is not enough evidence to prove social media is safe for children and adolescents. It detailed how excessive use disrupts sleep, alters brain development, and introduces major risks to mental well-being.
  - *Citation:* Office of the Surgeon General. (2023). *Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- **American Psychological Association (APA)**
  - *Advisory Summary:* The APA issued an official health advisory for adolescents, concluding that social media use is not inherently good or bad, but excessive use and exposure to harmful content are psychologically maladaptive. It recommended immediate adult monitoring and strict boundaries.
  - *Citation:* American Psychological Association. (2023). *Health advisory on social media use in adolescence*. APA Health Advisory.
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)**
  - *Advisory Summary:* The AACAP released a formal policy statement highlighting risks to youth development and recommending strict boundary-setting (such as screen-free zones and banning devices from bedrooms) to mitigate depression and self-esteem issues.
  - *Citation:* American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2023). *Policy Statement on the Impact of Social Media on Youth Mental Health*. AACAP Policy Statements.