PA UNPLUGGED

POSITION STATEMENT

# Our Point of View on EdTech & AI

*Putting Learning, Health, and Human Connection First*

PA Unplugged stands for an educational environment where children can develop fully — physically, socially, and intellectually — before they are handed a screen. The framework below reflects our position on K–12 education. Distinctions by grade level are made where developmental readiness impacts our recommendation.

## 1 PARTNERSHIP OVER PROTEST

PA Unplugged is committed to working collaboratively with districts and teachers to build better systems, and to modeling constructive civic engagement for our children. We strive to improve the system rather than opt out. That said, we remain supportive of individual families who choose to opt out for their own children if they feel they have no other options.

## 2 SKILLS BEFORE SCREENS

**K–3** Device-free learning environment.

**4–5** Limited introduction in computer class — explicit technology skill instruction, not just doing assignments online.

**6–12** Cart model where devices are available for use, not the default option.

> **Note:** *We recognize 9–12 has become digital-forward in many schools, making an immediate transition away from 1:1 programs difficult. Where that's not immediately feasible, districts should work toward intentional use through interim steps: piloting tech-free days, storing devices during instruction, and having students draft on paper before moving to offline typing — keeping distraction and AI use out of the writing process.*

## 3 LIMIT/REDUCE DEVICES AT HOME

**K–5** No technology, apps, or screen-based homework follows children home. All homework is pencil and paper. Children deserve device-free time to rest and connect with family.

**6–12** Parents may opt in to devices coming home, but no assignment should require a device. There should always be an analog option — students who prefer to work off a screen should be able to complete their homework without one. Prioritize paper, physical textbooks, and off-screen assignments — digital-by-default should not be the norm.

## 4 BLOCK NON-EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS

Prohibit student access to YouTube, social media, and non-instructional gaming on school devices. Teachers may share video through controlled methods (embedding specific videos in Canvas or Schoology) without granting open YouTube access.

## 5 DEVELOP THE WHOLE BODY

Schools must continue building fine and gross motor skills — holding a pencil, using scissors, making art by hand, throwing a ball, running and climbing. These aren't optional enrichments; they're foundational to healthy child development.

## 6 PARENTAL AWARENESS & TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is the baseline of trust. Parents deserve to know what technology, apps, platforms, or games are being used in their child's classroom or during free time, and why. Districts should proactively share this information so families can stay informed and engaged.

## 7 DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Students need structured, sequential instruction in how technology works, including technical skills and concepts like persuasive/deceptive design, taught by a qualified technology teacher with dedicated class time. Families need workshops and resources on healthy technology habits at home and how technology is used in school.

## 8 PROTECT MOVEMENT, IMAGINATION & CONNECTION

Recess, transitions, free periods, before/after school programs, events, and bus rides are moments for movement, imagination, and human connection, not screen time.

## 9 COLLABORATIVE TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE

Every district should convene a multi-stakeholder Tech Advisory Council, which includes parents, that meets regularly to set a clear, data-driven framework for evaluating all EdTech:

→ Evaluate for educational value, data privacy, and design

→ Vet for persuasive design and gamification

→ Require independent evidence (e.g., ESSA Tier 1), not vendor research

→ Eliminate products that sell student data

## 10 NO GENERATIVE AI FOR STUDENTS

Generative AI has no place in K–12 school assignments or on student-facing devices. Children must develop their own voice, reasoning, and creativity before interacting with tools designed to replicate them. We remain open to a more nuanced position when peer-reviewed, independent research demonstrates that a specific tool is safe, effective, and presents no risk to students' cognitive abilities.

**We are not anti-technology.**
**We are pro-childhood, pro-learning, and pro-partnership with the educators who shape our children's futures.**

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