

2026-2027 School Year

Technology in the Rutherford Public Schools

At Rutherford Public Schools, we believe technology is a tool. It should enhance instruction, support our educators, and expand learning opportunities. Technology is an important part of preparing students for college, careers, and life. At the same time, we recognize the concerns about excessive screen time, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI), and the importance of maintaining the personal connections and instructional practices that are the foundation of a great education. Technology should never replace exceptional teaching, meaningful student-teacher relationships, creativity, or critical thinking. Every decision we make is guided by finding the right balance between innovation and the proven instructional pedagogy that have always helped our students learn best.

How Technology is Used at Each Grade Level

Kindergarten

Technology at the Kindergarten Center is used sparingly and always paired with hands-on learning.

Students spend most of their day:

- Learning through play, movement, music, and conversation
- Developing handwriting and early literacy skills
- Using manipulatives and sensory materials
- Participating in community experiences and collaborative activities

Technology may be used for teacher modeling, sharing student work, virtual experiences, and reinforcing classroom instruction but it will never replace active learning.

Grades 1–3

Technology at Lincoln School and Washington School becomes an instructional tool among many.

Students continue to build strong foundational skills through:

- Handwriting and cursive instruction
- Reading printed books
- Using workbooks and notebooks
- Pencil-and-paper writing
- Science investigations
- Collaborative projects and classroom discussions

- Weekly computer skills instruction in Grade 3, focusing on keyboarding, digital citizenship, and responsible use of technology.

Educational technology is used to support literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, research, presentations, and differentiated instruction only when they enhance learning.

Grades 4–6

Students at Pierrepont School use Chromebooks and instructional technology more regularly while maintaining a balanced instructional program. Instruction continues to focus on:

- Teacher driven lessons
- Workbooks and handwritten assignments
- Cursive writing
- Inquiry-based science
- STEM activities
- Classroom debates
- Primary source materials
- Literacy and culture projects
- Hands-on learning experiences

Because New Jersey's state assessments are administered online, our students need regular experience with the testing platform and format. This familiarity allows them to build confidence and stamina, navigate the assessment efficiently, and focus on demonstrating their knowledge and skills.

Grades 7–8

Technology is used intentionally and when it adds educational value at Union School.

Students continue to develop strong academic skills through:

- Handwritten notetaking
- Reading novels and printed materials
- Classroom discussions/Socratic questioning
- Laboratory investigations
- Project-based learning
- Writing and critical thinking activities

Teachers are increasingly designing lessons with "no AI" checkpoints, ensuring students generate their own ideas before using technology as a support tool.

Grades 9–12

Rutherford High School students prepare for college and careers where technology and AI are becoming everyday tools. Students learn to:

- Conduct research responsibly
- Evaluate information critically
- Use AI ethically
- Create digital presentations and projects

- Collaborate effectively
- Maintain academic integrity

This year the high school is also expanding paper and pencil writing, traditional notebooks, and opportunities for critical thinking to reduce unnecessary screen time.

Protecting Students While Using Technology

The district has multiple layers of protection in place, including:

- Internet content filtering and monitoring both at school and on district-issued Chromebooks used at home.
- Real-time classroom monitoring tools that allow teachers to supervise student activity.
- SafeSearch protections for Google and YouTube.
- Restricted student accounts with age-appropriate permissions.
- Careful review and approval of all educational apps before classroom use.
- Cybersecurity protections including multi-factor authentication and secure network safeguards.
- Ongoing instruction in digital citizenship, online safety, media literacy, and responsible technology use.

Our students' safety is our top priority. District issued Chromebooks continue to receive the same filtering and safety protections whether students are at school or at home.

How Parents Can Partner With Us

Healthy technology habits are most successful when schools and families work together.

We encourage parents to:

- Establish regular homework routines and distraction free study spaces.
- Put away school issued Chromebooks after homework is completed.
- Create device free times, particularly during meals and before bedtime.
- Keep phones and devices out of your children's bedrooms overnight.
- Encourage reading, outdoor play, hobbies, sports, music, and face-to-face interactions.
- Talk regularly with your children about responsible online behavior and digital citizenship.
- Use available parental controls and screen-time settings that work best for your family.

Every family is different, but consistent expectations and open communication help children develop healthy, balanced technology habits.

Our Commitment to Balanced Technology

For the 2026-2027 school year Rutherford Public Schools is strengthening its commitment to thoughtful technology use by:

- Limiting screen use to educational opportunities where technology meaningfully enhances learning.
- Using technology with purpose rather than by routine.
- Expanding opportunities for handwriting, notebooks, reading, discussion, and hands-on learning.
- Teaching students to use artificial intelligence responsibly rather than outsourcing critical thinking and creativity.
- Continuing professional development so teachers use technology effectively and appropriately.

Technology also supports the competencies found in our *Profile of a Rutherford Graduate*, helping students develop communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, character, and responsible digital citizenship.

Rutherford Public Schools is committed to providing our students with a balanced education that values strong teaching, meaningful relationships, and engaging learning experiences. Technology will continue to transform, and our schools will continue to evolve with it. Together with our families, we will continue to prepare our students with the academic foundation, personal responsibility, and adaptability they need to thrive in an ever changing world.