



August 2012

# Policy Brief

## A New Approach to Technology Policies

The benefits of a technology-rich educational program are widely accepted. Computers and other technologies provide access to a vast array of curriculum and research materials and other resources, can help explain complex concepts and promote collaboration and problem-solving skills, and may boost students' motivation, interest and engagement in educational programs. Technological literacy itself is an important skill that students will need to be successful in college and career. Technology also can provide professional development resources for staff and facilitate district communications, administration and governance.

However, technologies are advancing at such a rapid pace that many districts are struggling to balance the desire to encourage and integrate technology in the schools with the challenge of ensuring effective and appropriate use. Governance teams are naturally concerned about student safety, proper use of technology by students and staff, liability issues, equity issues and a myriad of other issues that come with the use of technology in schools. Districts often attempt to deal with these issues by adopting policies to address each technological device or resource used in the schools. This approach results in a scattering of technology-related policies throughout the policy manual and may inhibit rather than embrace technology as a vital component of district operations.

### A new outcome-based approach

A new approach to technology-related policies is envisioned by ON[the]LINE, a statewide initiative led by the Santa Clara County Office of Education and co-sponsored by CSBA, Association of California School Administrators, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, California Educational Technology Professionals Association, Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership, Computer-Using Educators Inc. and the law firm of Fagen, Friedman and Fulfrost.

This new approach shifts the focus of policies away from individual technologies. Rather than adopting new policy each time a new technology is used in the district, this approach recommends that districts focus on *desired outcomes*, such as desired student and staff behavior, not the *means* through which students and staff engage in the behavior.

For example, districts likely already have policies prohibiting bullying, academic dishonesty, disruption of classroom instruction, inappropriate socialization between staff and students, copyright infringement, release of confidential information and other inappropriate conduct. If a student or employee engages in any such conduct, he or she would be subject to discipline or other consequences as provided in those policies. Adopting other policy prohibiting the use of technology to engage in any such behaviors is probably unnecessary.

In addition, policies and protocols used for district-sponsored websites, social media and any future technologies may contain duplicative language regarding communication goals and objectives, desired content, privacy issues and/or staff responsibilities. Except in circumstances where legal issues may demand unique and separate treatment of a specific technology, it may be unnecessary to adopt separate policies for each type of technology used by the district to communicate with the public.

As CSBA's policy services staff continually develops and reviews sample policies and administrative regulations related to technology, student conduct and staff conduct, an effort will be made to streamline those sample policies as much as possible. Several sample policies issued in March and July 2012 which address student and employee conduct (BP 5131 - Conduct, BP 5131.2 - Bullying and BP 4119.21/4219.21/4319.21 - Professional Standards) already reflect this new approach.

## Clearinghouse of sample policies, guidelines and tools

ON[the]LINE is a statewide initiative designed to provide districts, county offices of education and other stakeholders with sample policies, guidelines and tools to promote responsible use of technology. Scheduled to be launched in August 2012, the ON[the]LINE website ([www.onthelineCA.org](http://www.onthelineCA.org)) will offer a comprehensive clearinghouse of resources to support governing boards and district and school staff throughout California in preparing students and staff to be responsible, technology-empowered citizens. New resources will be continually identified and added to the clearinghouse.

## Policy development

To implement this new approach, it is recommended that districts review their policy manuals for technology-related policies and administrative regulations, and others with references related to technology, to ensure alignment and non-redundancy of concepts. Among the policies that districts might review are:

- BP/AR 0440 - District Technology Plan
- BP 1100 - Communication with the Public
- BP/AR 1113 - District and School Web Sites
- BP/AR 1114 - District-Sponsored Social Media
- BP/AR 4040 - Employee Use of Technology
- BP 4119.21/4219.21/4319.21 - Professional Standards
- BP 5131 - Conduct
- BP 5131.2 - Bullying
- BP 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression
- BP/AR 6162.6 - Use of Copyrighted Materials
- BP/AR 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology

While the ultimate goal is to streamline policies, districts must nevertheless be careful to retain any policy requirements mandated by law. For example, in order to receive technology funds under Title II, Part D of the No Child Left Behind Act (20 USC 6751-6777) or qualify for federal universal service discounts (E-rate discounts) for Internet access, Internet services or internal connections (47 USC 254), districts are mandated to adopt an Internet safety policy with specified components. CSBA currently addresses this mandate in BP 4040 - Employee Use of Technology and BP 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology.

Pages 4-8 of this policy brief contain a worksheet that may be helpful in reviewing and updating technology-related policies. The worksheet identifies the steps in a comprehensive policy development process and includes key questions for governance teams to consider.

## Other board actions

In addition to its policy adoption role, the board can support the responsible and effective use of technology in district programs and operations through each of its other major areas of responsibility:

1. **Setting direction.** By requiring a needs assessment and/or establishing the district vision and goals, the board can set priorities related to the acquisition, equitable distribution and use of technology. Goals, projected costs, potential funding sources and guidelines for appropriate use should be included in a comprehensive district technology plan.
2. **Establishing an effective and efficient structure for the district.** Adoption of policies is one of the primary ways that the board establishes structure in the district. The board should also ensure that its budget and facilities decisions are aligned with its goals for technology.
3. **Providing support to the superintendent and staff.** As the superintendent and staff work to carry out the board's direction, the board can support their efforts by providing professional development as needed and consistently enforcing its policies on responsible use. The board also can model its commitment to a technology-rich district by using technology to enhance governance operations.
4. **Ensuring accountability.** The board should regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and programs. Toward this end, the board may require periodic progress reports on the implementation of the district's technology plan and establish indicators to measure the effectiveness of its policies on responsible use.

5. **Engaging in community leadership.** In their role as community leaders, board members can help initiate partnerships with businesses, local agencies and community organizations to promote the acquisition of technology and related resources. Board members can also advocate at the state and federal levels for funding programs that support technology in schools.

The board's community leadership role also involves informing and educating the community about the district's programs and policies. In this role, the board can explain its expectations for responsible use of technology and seek the support of parents/guardians in reinforcing appropriate behavior off campus.

### Technological resources to support governance

Using technology in governance operations can improve efficiency, reduce paperwork and costs, and increase public access to governance documents, thereby increasing public awareness and transparency. Resources available through CSBA include:

- **GAMUT Online**, an online policy information service incorporating the complete CSBA Policy Reference Update Manual with links to the Education Code, Title 5 of the Code of Regulations and other relevant legal resources
- **Policy Online**, providing online access to the district's policy manual and CSBA policy resources, plus consulting and word-processing services by CSBA staff
- **AgendaOnline**, a web-based application that allows development of and access to board meeting information including agendas, supporting documentation and minutes

For further information, go to the Governance Technology link at [www.csba.org/Services.aspx](http://www.csba.org/Services.aspx).

## Resources

**CSBA:** [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org)

**Association of California School Administrators, Technology Leadership Group:** [www.acsa.org](http://www.acsa.org)

**California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, Technology and Telecommunications Steering Committee:** [www.ccsesa.org](http://www.ccsesa.org)

**California Department of Education, Education Technology:** [www.cde.ca.gov/lis/et](http://www.cde.ca.gov/lis/et)

**California Educational Technology Professionals Association (CETPA):** [www.cetpa.net](http://www.cetpa.net)

**Computer-Using Educators, Inc. (CUE):** [www.cue.org](http://www.cue.org)

**ON[the]LINE:** [www.onthelineCA.org](http://www.onthelineCA.org)

# Technology Policy Development Worksheet

The following Technology Policy Development Worksheet provides a guide for school boards, superintendents and district staff to develop and review related board policies and administrative regulations.

Part I of the worksheet introduces the policy topic and provides a series of questions designed to facilitate the board's discussion and to develop an understanding of this issue and its relationship with student learning and other desired outcomes.

Part II uses a series of questions for assessing existing board policies and administrative regulations related to technology in order to determine the need for the development or revision of current policies or regulations.

Part III suggests a policy development process to help school boards, administrators and staff determine the necessary actions and responsibilities for collecting data and for making recommendations on the relevant board policies and administrative regulations.

Part IV provides a format for completing policy revisions and/or developing new board policies and regulations.

A Workplan and Timeline form is also provided to assist in the planning of the policy work and to establish deadlines.

The policy review and development process described in this worksheet is resource intensive. As such, it provides the greatest opportunity for a full understanding of the issue. However, it is recognized that it is very unlikely that any two districts will follow the same policy development process. What is important is for districts to find what works for them and then to proceed accordingly.

## Part I: Initial Discussion of Topic

**Relationship to student learning:** The following questions are intended to focus your district's discussion on the relationship between technology and student learning.

1. Why is technology important to student learning?
2. What does your governance team see as the relationship between technology and student learning in your district?
3. How will policies on technology contribute to improved student learning?

**Policy topic components:** Below are the basic components that a board should understand and/or address in policy related to technology. Some components are directly related to student learning, and others reflect legal compliance issues that are also important to include in policy or administrative regulations. Component statements are not intended to be policy language. Each component statement is a key concept related to the topic, but not the policy language itself. Each component is intended to frame an issue or identify concerns and interests that your board would want to address in a policy on this topic. Under each component statement are questions that may help guide the board's discussion of the component.

1. The board recognizes that technology is a valuable tool that can be used to enhance student learning, instruction, communications, noninstructional district operations and governance.
  - How can the effective use of technology support the district's vision and goals?
2. The district shall maintain and regularly update a comprehensive technology plan which identifies needs and goals for the use of technology within the district.
  - How often does the district conduct a needs assessment of the district's technological resources?
  - What technology is currently used throughout the district, and for what purposes?
  - Is technology equitably distributed among district schools? Do all students have appropriate access?

- Does the district currently have a technology plan? When was it last reviewed and updated?
  - In addition to district staff, who should be involved in reviewing or developing the district's technology plan?
  - What are the district's goals for the expansion, improvement, replacement or use of technology?
  - What infrastructure (e.g., equipment, electronic learning resources, facility modifications) is needed to accomplish the technology goals? What level of funding and other resources will be needed?
  - What cost savings might be realized by expanding the use of technology?
  - What criteria will the district use to prioritize technology-related projects?
3. Students shall be taught technological literacy skills at appropriate grade levels and have opportunities to use technology to enhance learning in a variety of subjects.
- What does research show about the link between technology use and student learning?
  - In what manner, courses and grade levels are technological literacy skills taught?
  - In all subjects, how can technology be used to increase access to information and to provide instruction tailored to student needs?
4. The district's communications plan shall include strategies for the use of technology to provide information to students, parents/guardians and the public.
- Does the district and each school site currently have a website? A social media site?
  - Are staff assigned to regularly update these sites?
  - How are the content guidelines for such sites aligned with district communications goals and criteria?
  - Will existing communications policies and protocols be applicable to new technologies that may be used in the future?
5. Technology shall be incorporated into the district's noninstructional and governance operations in order to increase efficiency and promote cost savings.
- In what ways can technology be useful in making noninstructional district operations more efficient?
  - In what ways can technology be useful in improving board meeting preparation, policy development and other governance operations?
6. Professional development opportunities shall be provided to assist staff in implementing existing and new technologies.
- Does the district's staff development plan currently include opportunities to educate staff about the use of technology?
  - How can the board ensure that staff is provided training whenever a new technology is introduced in the district?
7. The district shall implement rules, procedures and protection measures to restrict access to harmful or inappropriate matter on the Internet.
- If the district receives federal technology funds or E-rate discounts, what are the legal requirements for ensuring Internet safety, including mandates for topics that must be addressed in policy?
  - Has the district installed a "technology protection measure" that blocks or filters Internet access to visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography or harmful to minors? Is the operation of this measure being enforced?
  - Do students receive education about appropriate online behavior, including but not limited to information about interaction with others on social networking websites, cyberbullying awareness and response, and the dangers of disseminating personal identification information?
  - Do students receive appropriate staff supervision when using district equipment to access the Internet?
8. Students and staff shall be expected to demonstrate responsible and appropriate use of technology.
- How do expectations regarding appropriate use of technology align or overlap with expectations regarding student and staff conduct in general?
  - What policies in the district currently address student and staff conduct? Do these policies provide sufficient guidance regarding prohibited conduct and disciplinary consequences that would be applicable to instances of misconduct committed through technological resources?

- Through what means (e.g., student handbook, parental notifications, employee handbook, policy manual, staff development) does the district inform students and staff about the district’s expectations regarding appropriate conduct?
  - Are students and their parents/guardians expected to sign an Acceptable Use Agreement addressing obligations and responsibilities for users of district equipment? Is staff expected to sign a similar agreement?
9. The board shall monitor the implementation of the district’s technology plan and periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the district’s policies related to the use of technology.
- How often should the superintendent or designee report to the board on the implementation of the district’s technology plan?
  - How will the district measure the impact of technology on student learning?
7. Has your board’s policy discussion and/or policy assessment raised any policy issues for future review or action?
8. Based on your discussion and assessment, do other district documents require future review or revisions, such as the following:
- District budget
  - District technology plan
  - Collective bargaining agreements
  - Strategic plan
  - School improvement plans
  - Employee handbooks
  - Staff development plan
  - Parental notifications
  - Student handbooks
  - Other

## Part II: Assessment of Existing Policy

Review your current board policies and administrative regulations related to technology based on the following questions. The assessment should determine whether your policies include all of the policy components identified in Part I.

1. List your board policies related to technology.
2. Does each policy include a focus on student learning? How?
3. Are the administrative regulations consistent with the board policy?
4. Does district practice comply with the policy and administrative regulations?
5. Do the policy and administrative regulations reflect current legal requirements?
6. As a result of the board discussion in Part I and assessment of policy just completed in Part II, in what areas does your board need to develop new policy or delete or revise current policy?

Note: Items 7 and 8 below are intended to identify issues related to, but not directly part of, the policy topic under consideration. In addition, items 7 and 8 may identify issues that require further attention to ensure the alignment of policy, other key work of boards and other district documents.

## Part III: Policy Development Process

As part of the policy development process, your governance team should determine the data needed to effectively address this policy topic. This includes determining where the data may be available, the appropriate allocation of resources for data collection and analysis, and the assignment of responsibility for data collection, analysis and recommendations. The process also should include opportunities for input from affected parties in the district and the community.

1. What data do you need in order to develop technology-related policies?
  - List the internal and external data sources
2. Who beyond the governance team should be involved in the policy development process (e.g., district administrators, district technology staff, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, community members)?
3. What are the recommendations from the individuals listed above?
4. What are the recommendations of staff based on an analysis of the data?

## Part IV: Board Policy Content Directions

**Content directions:** Your board should identify the content components of new or revised policy based on the discussion, assessment, analysis and input in Parts I through III and a review of the following questions:

1. Which of the policy components listed in Part I and those recommended by key stakeholders (identified in Part III) does the board want included in new or revised policy?
2. Does the assessment of existing policy completed in Part II identify any additional content components the board wants in new or revised policy?
3. Has the board identified any content in existing policy that should not be included in new or revised policy?
4. Do the data and input developed in Part III reveal any additional (or new) content components the board wants in new or revised policy?

**Review of draft policy:** After the board has completed the process described above, the superintendent, policy committee and/or other appropriate designees should prepare a draft policy, arrange for legal review of the policy, and bring it to the board for consideration at a public board meeting. The following questions should be used to guide the board's review of draft policy. If any significant revisions are required, some or all of the questions in Parts I through IV may need to be revisited before the policy is formally adopted.

5. Does the draft policy accurately reflect the board's intent? In what ways, if any, should the policy be revised to better communicate the board's direction?
6. Does public or staff input at the board meeting add any new issues that need to be addressed?
7. What criteria will the governance team use to determine whether this policy achieves the desired results?
8. What provisions does the draft policy include for periodic review and evaluation?

Note: Following adoption of the policy by the board, the superintendent should develop a plan for communicating the policy to interested parties, as well as a plan to implement the policy. The plan could include agreement on the goals, community outreach, key messages to be communicated, the individuals, groups and media organizations to receive the communication, and, when appropriate, strategies that tailor the messages for each of these groups so they receive the information of most use to them. Once a policy has been adopted, it is the board's responsibility to support it by providing the necessary funding when a budget is adopted, considering the policy implications of collective bargaining decisions, and modeling the behavior called for in policy.

# Technology Policy Workplan and Timeline

## PART I:

ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Introduction of topic and initial board discussion of broad issues		

## PART II:

Assessment of existing policy		
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## PART III:

Data collection and analysis		
Professional staff analysis and recommendation		
District and community input		

## PART IV:

Board content directions		
Drafting of recommended policy		
Legal review		
First reading: board initial opportunity for public input		
Drafting of revised policy, if necessary		
Legal review of revised policy		
Second reading and adoption		
Communication of new policy Specifically: (list)		
Implementation by superintendent and staff		
Review and evaluation of policy		
Modification of policy based on review and evaluation, if necessary		