

Guidance on District Policy Revisions to Support Digital Learning

A Publication of the



Introduction

Teaching and learning with digital tools have become a reality in most Connecticut public schools, and board policies should provide enlightened direction on how districts can make effective use of technology to deepen and scale personalized learning. Districts invest heavily in building and supporting networks and 1:1 computer programs, among other initiatives, to provide the infrastructure necessary to support online testing and take advantage of innovations such as learning management systems, online

collaboration tools, and adaptive testing.

This brief provides guidance to boards of education and other district leaders on designing policies that leverage these technology investments to support student achievement and career readiness. Policies must align with Connecticut academic standards and highlight how technology can transform and scale learning rather than serve as an end in itself or, even worse, a source of risk and liability only.

Language to Consider and Adopt

To encourage the effective use of technology, districts should consider adopting policy language — especially those in the Instruction, Students, and Personnel series — that embraces best practices in digital learning:

Language to Consider	Language to Avoid
Empowerment and Possibility	Restriction and Risk
Flexibility to for New Forms, Applications	Specific Uses and Lists of Applications
Engagement of Students in Appropriate Choice of Technology	Pre-Defined Lists
Student Agency, Voice, and Choice	“Delivery” of Education
Mastery of Standards, Evidence of Learning	Seat Time, Credits
Inquiry-Based Learning	Teacher-Centered Instruction
Flexible, Digital Resources	Text-Only Resources
Educator and Student Curation of Learning Resources	Procurement of Learning Resources
Collaboration and Exploration	Consumption
Global Campus	Limitations of School or District

Suggested Policies

The following policies, common among most Connecticut districts, serve as excellent starting points for consideration as boards look to encourage the effective use of technology:

Series	Policies
District Purposes, Goals, and Objectives (0000 Series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal for Student Performance in the Twenty-First Century (0210)
Personnel (4000 Series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acceptable Use – Faculty (4118)• Professional Development (4131)
Students (5000 Series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of Electronic Devices (5131.81)
Instruction (6000 Series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum Design and Development (6141)• Technology and Instruction (6141.32)• Acceptable Use – Students (6141.321)• Filtering (6141.323)• Electronic Resources (6141.327)• Bring Your Own Device (6141.328)• Graduation Requirements (6146)
Facilities (7000 Series)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-Range Planning (7110)

Resources

To assist boards of education with the process of reviewing and revising their policy manuals, we provide the following guides and exemplars.

Standards and Policy Guides

- [ISTE Standards for Students](#): Connecticut's State Board of Education has adopted the Student Standards of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Spanning seven “personas” of a 21st-century student, the Standards define the competencies that learners should possess upon graduation. Also see the [ISTE implementation guide to the Standards](#) (free with signup; data is not shared).
- [ISTE Standards for Educators](#): As a complement to the Student Standards and robust set of competencies in their own right, the Standards for Educators define the skills teachers must have to support instruction in today's schools.
- [ISTE Standards for Education Leaders](#): These standards for K – 12 administrators target the knowledge and behaviors required for leaders to empower teachers and make student learning possible.
- [ISTE Essential Conditions for Digital Learning](#): As boards consider revisions to their policies, they should also consider the strategic, cultural, and infrastructure conditions necessary to implement and sustain digital learning. See especially the “Supportive Policies” section.
- [CoSN Rethinking Acceptable Use Policies to Enable Digital Learning](#): This guide from the Consortium for School Networking provides direction on how districts can balance their legal obligations to protect students using school networks while taking an enlightened approach to the potential of digital learning.
- [Future Ready Framework](#): District leaders may refer to this integrated framework to support digital learning by using a robust set of interactive planning tools. The Future Ready site serves dozens of Connecticut school districts as the focal point for long-range digital learning and technology planning.
- [Great Schools Partnership: State + Local Policies](#): This page provides an overview and specific examples of proficiency-based education, enabled through the development of digital learning skills and environments. The site also provides references to Connecticut and other [New England Secondary School Consortium \(NESSC\) policies](#).

Sample Connecticut Policies

The following examples from Connecticut districts may help other boards of education as they consider revisions to their own policies. The list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, intended to spur conversations within boards and districts and, perhaps, with the authors of these policies.

- [New Fairfield Public Schools](#): See especially sections 5131.81, Use of Electronic Devices, and 6141.326, Electronic Resources, for descriptions of how students can expand and benefit their learning with technology.
- [New Milford Public Schools](#): See 6141.321 and 4118.4/4218.4, Responsible Use of Technology, Social Media, and District Network Systems for language that emphasizes technology's role in enhancing learning and providing 21st century learning opportunities.
- [Newington Public Schools](#): See section 6141.321, Technology and Instruction, among others, for descriptions of exemplary use and the district's commitment to providing instruction to students on the effective use of technology.

Open Invitation

In addition to the selected resources and examples, we acknowledge that many other boards have already engaged in the important work of updating their policies to encourage digital learning. In this way, they have encouraged a culture of experimentation, innovation, and empowerment through technology.

We warmly welcome district leaders to share the policies they have developed to support digital learning. Tell us why you updated the policies you did, how they evolved over time to address the changing needs of students, educators, and leaders — and how they take advantage of innovations and efficiencies that educational technology offers. We will share these with the broader Connecticut educational community, highlighting your good work and encouraging other districts to adopt policies that promote safe, effective use of technology in teaching and learning. To do so, simply e-mail Doug Casey at Doug.Casey@ct.gov.

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