

Policy

DIGITAL SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The board of education is committed to providing an educational program that progressively integrates core academic content standards with the relevant and evolving teaching and learning strategies of a digital learning environment. The teaching and learning process across all school programs, grades and levels shall be enhanced with the technology necessary to access information, personalize learning and support collaboration with the global digital community. The board believes that by providing diverse and relevant educational choices supported by research-based practices in the use of technology, students will be prepared for successful participation in higher education programs and/or the careers of the 21st century.

The skill sets for college and career readiness in the 21st century higher education and employment environments will require our district students to:

- A. Become digital citizens with ethical and responsible habits, actions, and consumption patterns¹;
- B. Develop literacy in use of technology, along with the skills necessary to learn and adapt quickly as the technological landscape advances;
- C. Improve self-direction and self-sufficiency in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, and synthesizing information;
- D. Access, organize and discern credible information from global Internet sources;
- E. Develop communication skills and fluency in writing composition and public speaking for multiple media creation, including social media and other electronic means, as well as for traditional purposes such as paper-based and face to face interactions.
- F. Possess a definitive understanding of the importance of privacy rights, property rights, safety and security in all digital interactions including research, commerce and communication.

The board directs the chief school administrator and the business administrator to cultivate the district's digital learning environment according to the guidelines listed below.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The chief school administrator in consultation with the supervisor of the curriculum shall research, implement and oversee curriculum and teaching strategies that provide students with digital learning choices and experiences in every class, as well as anywhere-anytime learning support through the school network. The district shall review the curriculum every year (see board policy 6141 Curriculum Development) and, in updating the district curriculum, should prioritize the selection of materials and courses of study that leverage technology and digital learning in the teaching and learning process.

- A. The traditional classroom curriculum may include but not be limited to the following augmentations to support digital learning in the classroom:
 - 1. Library of curated digital instructional materials and tools such as e-textbooks, Internet resources, digital presentation tools and document and project management software;
 - 2. Programs that credential students as experienced and trained in various computer skills (i.e. Microsoft certification);

¹ <http://www.teachthought.com>

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3. Collaborative workspace (physical and digital) within the classroom utilizing structured group projects and activities;
 4. Collaborative workspace outside the classroom allowing students to work with other classes and groups in remote locations through the Internet;
 5. Electronic communication sites for teaching staff discussion, student discussion and teacher-student discussion;
 6. Multimedia production tools that provide students with a choice of technology options to apply to the completion of projects and assignments;
 7. Social media.
- B. The school curriculum may provide students with the following learning options in addition to traditional classroom instruction including but not limited to:
1. Blended learning – courses that offer both online and in-person learning experiences;
 2. Anywhere-anytime learning options including:
 - a. Synchronous tools that offer real-time and in-person digital connection to classes and subject-related information;
 - b. Asynchronous tools that offer digital and online learning that is not real-time or in-person and in which students learn from instruction methods such as prerecorded video lessons or game-based learning tasks that they complete on their own;
- C. Curriculum options will include achievement measures and assessments using digital and online assessment systems that provide students and teachers with real-time feedback in ways that increase the rate and depth of learning, and that enable data-informed instructional decision making.

Use of Time

The principal and instructional supervisors shall work with teaching staff members to plan flexible instructional time and school schedules that provide students with extended time for projects and collaboration. Classroom instruction shall be supported by digital learning options that may be accessed by students any time of day, from home, school and/or the community. In general, staff will be encouraged to develop strategies that are competency-based and measured by performance and mastery and which deemphasize “seat time” approaches to teaching based upon the amount of time spent on the topic.

Flexible classroom structures that create personalized, student-centered learning may include but are not limited to:

- A. Competency based education enhanced with online curriculum resources that individualize education by allowing each student to “move-when-ready” based on mastery benchmarks;
- B. Creating a physical environment in the classroom that supports group collaboration (shared work spaces, project stations, interactive media and technology);
- C. Teacher-structured small groups;
- D. Independent and group learning activities in and/or out of class, which are facilitated by online synchronous and asynchronous educational tools;
- E. Structured and outcome-oriented student led groups;
- F. Performance-based groups consisting of students with similar education needs and interests;
- G. Whole class instruction to introduce new materials and concepts.

A range of tools and technology options shall be available giving students and groups of students the opportunity to apply reasoning and critical thinking in the selection of the best tools to accomplish project

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outcomes. Whenever possible, educational topics and projects shall be relevant to real-world contexts through the use of digital and in-person community participation.

The board shall consider and approve scheduling adjustments and changes recommended by the chief school administrator that affect a class, grade or school (e.g., block scheduling, alternating day schedules, rotating schedules, and dropped schedules).

Technology, Networks, and Hardware

Under the chief school administrator's oversight, a team shall be assembled to ensure the availability of appropriate Internet-ready technology devices and infrastructure to support teaching and learning in every classroom and school. The technology team shall develop and oversee the long-range technology plan and the implementation of short-term technology goals and objectives. The technology team may include the business administrator, school principal(s), information technology (IT) director, supervisor of curriculum, special education and other teaching staff members, library media specialist, board members, parents, members of the community and local organizations.

A. The team shall meet periodically to:

1. Assess and ensure that a robust, responsive and safe network infrastructure with adequate bandwidth for consistent access to online resources is maintained in each of the school facilities;
2. Create a plan for a comprehensive, environmentally sound cycle for the review and replacement of technology software, hardware and infrastructure;
3. Research and evaluate software, hardware and infrastructure purchases, upgrades and renovations that support the individual classes and curricula, as well as the overall school and district educational programs;
4. Review and recommend revisions to district policies and acceptable use agreements related to technology;
5. Review and evaluate network security systems and protocols;
6. Plan and design a positive, effective, service-oriented technology support system that provides resources, coaching and just-in-time instruction to prepare teachers and students for the use of new technologies;

B. The technology team shall prepare a yearly report to be submitted to the chief school administrator for board review that details recommendations for:

1. Purchases, augmentations and/or upgrades in equipment, software, hardware and infrastructure that support the schools and the classrooms;
2. Equipment replacement and disposal needs;
3. Policy development or revisions;
4. Security issues including status reporting and recommendations for new security system implementation;
5. The purchase, design or development of staff and student training programs.

All recommendations shall be substantiated by and include necessary background or research. Each recommendation shall be listed in order of priority and include estimated costs and benefits.

Data and Privacy

The chief school administrator in consultation with the IT director and members of the technology team shall ensure that the data systems, security measures, and support systems that protect the district network are in place, maintained and updated so that a range of accurate, reliable data sets and associated reports are available, on demand, to authorized users only. The chief school administrator or his or her designee may oversee the data and privacy of the district network by:

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- A. Obtaining feedback from staff and students regarding the implementation of digital learning in the classrooms including challenges and opportunities in transitioning to a culture of evidence-based reasoning (a data culture) using accurate, reliable, and accessible data;
- B. Reviewing and evaluating policies, procedures, and practices that address the privacy and security of data, and the use of data, technologies, and the Internet that meet or exceed legal requirements and federal guidelines;
- C. Performing regular network systems penetration checks that verify that the district's digital data systems provide for secure data collection, analysis, reporting, storage, exchanges, and archiving for authorized users;
- D. Using evidence-based reasoning and data-driven decision making in the purchase and application of network security systems including hiring qualified staff or consulting companies to set up and oversee district security measures;
- E. Educating all staff and students in the procedures and skills needed for accessing and using the district network according to the school policies and procedures for acceptable use;
- F. Training staff on data analysis to inform instruction, curriculum, assessment, and professional practices;
- G. Implementing educational programs for students and staff that teach Internet safety and ethical and responsible digital citizenship.

Community Partnerships

The 21st century classroom includes expanding the educational program beyond the physical classroom and the school day and connecting staff, student, parents/guardians, members of the local community and the global digital community in an active partnership that supports student achievement. The board believes that student achievement is enhanced by a positive and widely recognizable district brand that communicates to all stakeholders that the district schools and educational programs are a vigorous 21st century force connecting the lives of students with local and digital global communities. Community partnerships build global and cultural awareness in students and strengthens the connections with local residents by increasing accessibility to the schools as vital centers for community life.

The district and school information management systems and websites shall support the home-school-community connections that are essential to academic success. The district schools shall make the school communications technologies accessible through the district websites and other media in order to provide pathways for safe online peer-to-peer, student-teacher, student-expert and parent/guardian-to-teacher interactions.

Professional Learning

The chief school administrator or his or her designees shall oversee the development and implementation of plans to address the district's professional development needs. The principal shall oversee the development and implementation of a plan for school-level professional development (see board policy 4131/4131.1 Professional Development). Professional development plans for the district and schools shall encourage shared ownership and shared responsibility for professional growth. Professional development plans shall include options for training and development related to the use of technology and 21st century teaching strategies that incorporate technology and digital learning in and out of the classroom. Professional development and staff training options may include the following:

- A. Providing opportunities for staff involvement in professional learning communities that enable educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 21st century skills into classroom practice;

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- B. Incorporating options in the district professional development plan for alternative, personalized models of professional development enabled through technology and social media (i.e., EdCamps, Twitter Chats, etc.);
- C. Soliciting teacher involvement in the evaluation and selection of teaching staff member evaluation tools that include self-assessment, goal-setting, and professional collaboration. Evaluation tools shall be participatory and focused on metrics directly related to teaching strategies for 21st century skill sets (i.e., critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information) and digital learning;
- D. Utilize cross-generational staffing programs that pair experienced and novice educators for the benefit of both staff members' professional development. Newly educated teachers may be positioned to train seasoned staff members in strategies and techniques related to the use of modern technologies in the teaching process, while seasoned staff maintain the more traditional role as mentors.

Budget and Resources

The district budget shall provide for equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies, and resources for students and among the facilities of the district, and be informed by curricular goals

The business administrator in consultation with the IT director and members of the technology team shall direct the planning and decision-making process for the selection and/or replacement of equipment, software, hardware, infrastructure and Internet service providers, and the regular review and maintenance of the district's or school's technology. The business administrator shall plan the funding for digital learning programs in the district's annual maintenance and operation budgets. District and school budgets shall include plans for digital learning that are justified and linked with consistent annual funding streams.

The board authorizes the business administrator to consider:

- A. Funding for short-term and long-term digital learning initiatives by leveraging business partnering, shared services, cooperative purchasing agreements, e-Rate, national and state-wide procurement models, community donations and special grants;
- B. Efficient and cost-saving strategies to support systemic digital learning such as online courses or blended learning, cloud computing solutions, digital resources to replace textbooks, "going green", etc.
- C. One-to-one planning including allowing students to use privately owned equipment ("Bring Your Own Device," or BYOD) and school- issued electronic devices.
- D. Implementing transformative (zero-based) budgeting, as described in the NJDOE document "Transformative Budgeting for Digital Learning" (<http://njdigitalllearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Transformative-Budgeting-final.pdf>).

Contracts, purchases and payments shall be board approved according to board policy (see policies 3320 Purchasing Procedures, 3326 Payment for Goods and Services, and 3327 Relations with Vendors).

Adopted: January 26, 2021

Key Words

Digital, Technology, Technological, 21st Century, Global Community

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60 et al.

N.J.S.A. 2A:38A-1 et seq.

N.J.S.A. 2C:20-25

N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-10

Disclosure of juvenile information; penalties for disclosure

Computer System

Computer Related Theft

NJQSAC

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<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-19	Pupil records; creation, maintenance and retention, security and access; regulations; nonliability
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-35	School Internet websites; disclosure of certain student information prohibited
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-39	Notification by school to certain persons using certain electronic devices; fine
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:1A-1 <u>et seq.</u>	Examination and copies of public records (<u>Open Public Records Act</u>)
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 47:3-15 <u>et seq.</u>	Destruction of Public Records Law
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:30-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-2.1	Definitions
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-7.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Student records

Possible

<u>Cross References:</u>	*1000/1010	Concepts and Roles in Community Relations
	*1100	Communication with the Public; and
	*1111	District Publications
	*3000	Concepts and Roles in Business
	*3100	Budget Planning Preparation and Adoption
	*3300	Purchasing
	*3510	Operation and Maintenance of Plant
	*3600	Evaluation of Business and Noninstructional Operations
	*3570	District records and reports
	*5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
	*4131/4131.1	Professional Development
	*6141	Curriculum design and development
	*9322	Public and executive sessions

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.