

Policy Recommendations Concerning Responsible Edtech Use, K-12

Regarding Student Health:

At the STATE LEVEL:

- State Boards of Education should seek input from a committee of medical experts from a variety of areas within the state Departments of Public Health and/or other State health entities in formulating recommendations for safe use of digital technology in schools. The committee should both seek expert testimony and monitor research on the various effects of screen use, such as brain development, eye health, musculoskeletal health, sleep deprivation, depression, anxiety, self-harm, etc. Recommendations should be shared with all district school boards and superintendents; they should be updated as new scientific evidence becomes available.

At the DISTRICT Level:

- Parents and students should be afforded low-tech and no-tech options whenever requested, including paper copies of all textbooks, reading materials, worksheets, and testing materials.
- Teachers should be instructed to minimize the amount of homework assigned that must be done online. Requiring students to spend time on digital devices interferes with families' abilities to maintain healthy limits on screen time.
- Cell phone use should be prohibited in all classrooms during class time, with phones out of reach.
- Districts should develop, institute, and enforce policies to ensure that schools and teachers follow manufacturers' guidelines regarding safe use of digital devices. Parents should be made aware of all manufacturers' ergonomic and safe use guidelines, and should sign off on their understanding and acceptance of these guidelines prior to devices being issued to students.
- In planning for safe use of digital devices for school and homework, administrators should gather data regarding: (a) in-school screen usage by grade level; and (b) the amount of time children, by grade level, spend on digital devices at home doing school-related work. Aggregated school-related usage data should be made available to the public.
- Districts should create teacher, student, and parent education programs about the known and potential health consequences of the overuse of screens, including physical and mental health consequences; and such programs should be delivered to all

constituents on a yearly basis. Annual attendance at such programs should be mandatory for teachers and students in 4th grade and beyond, and records maintained to that end.

- While scientific research regarding the health effects of exposure to radio frequency from digital devices and Wi-Fi has been inconclusive, school health officials should monitor ongoing research efforts and respond to any new screen safety standards that are established.
- School guidance counselors should be trained to recognize and treat potential negative psychosocial effects of overuse of social media and online gaming, including screen dependence, anxiety and depression.

Regarding Edtech and Computer-based Learning:

At the STATE LEVEL:

- Each State Board of Education should establish a committee that includes experts in education, experts in technology, and teachers. No computer-based, gamified, or personalized learning product should be used in a school unless this committee has reviewed its underlying algorithms, pedagogical soundness, potential health risks, and implications for child and teacher privacy, and has approved the product.

At the DISTRICT Level:

- In general, digital devices should be avoided in elementary school classrooms given the proven benefits of offline learning and lack of evidence supporting the efficacy of screen-based instruction during these years. The introduction of online testing or online instruction in the elementary grades should be prohibited, as it requires the introduction of digital technology in the early grades (in order to prepare students for the tests).
- Beginning in middle school, limited use of technology is acceptable to introduce word processing, spreadsheets, and computer-based research. Otherwise, technology should only be used when there is no equally good way to teach a particular skill or concept.
- Technology-related skills needed by graduation – including word processing, the use of spreadsheets, and the ability to conduct internet- and computer-based research – should continue to be taught in high school, subject to established safe use guidelines.

Regarding Use of Student Data:

- *Transparency:* Schools must publicly post and notify parents of the personal student data that they and their edtech vendors collect, the purpose of the collections, with whom the data is shared, if and when it will be destroyed, and the person(s) responsible for answering questions and providing public access to vendor contracts and privacy policies.
- *Notification and Consent:* Parents must be notified any time their student's data is shared with edtech companies, and given the ability to consent, particularly for highly sensitive information such as their child's disabilities, health, and disciplinary information.
- Such consent cannot be obtained in blanket form, but should be obtained each time a new edtech software program or app is introduced.
- *Limitations on Use:* Student data should be used only to benefit individual students and their schools. Edtech companies must be prohibited from using or sharing student data for any commercial purposes, including the development and marketing of products and services.
- *Security and Breach Notification:* Personal data of students and teachers must be protected using rigorous and currently accepted industry standards and in conformance with state and federal law. Any student or teacher affected by a data breach must be notified directly and given assistance to remedy any harm.
- *Accountability:* Schools, districts, and edtech companies with access to student and teacher data must comply with all state and federal privacy laws and be held accountable for all violations of student privacy.