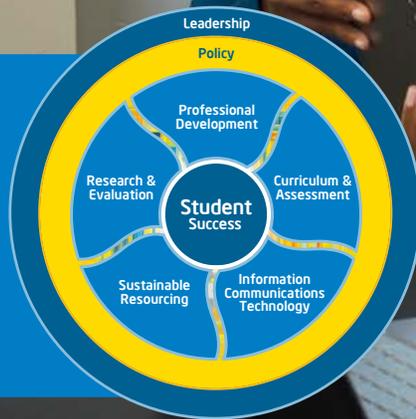




# Chapter 3

## Policy



Policies are principles or rules that drive education decision making and practice. Policies and procedures guide schools in carrying out plans. Technology policies specifically are important drivers of practice, expectations, and stakeholder behavior. Policies at every level—national, state, regional, local, and at the classroom level matter greatly regarding the efficacy of education technology implementation. Sound, consistent policies and practices can make a difference between success and failure of such programs.

The key question for governing bodies is not whether the benefits of technology outweigh the costs (research and best practices prove this), but rather how to implement policies and programs to ensure effectiveness and results.

## Importance of Government Policies

While educators are central to the success of any program, effective national, state, municipality, regional, and local policies provide the broader context that shapes and drives instructional technology in schools. Policy provides the foundation that powers planning. Useful policies are flexible, reviewed regularly, and adjusted to bring about authentic transformation.

Governments, at all levels, determine policies regarding such matters as the mission of education, social and academic goals, instructional strategies, and student assessments.

Policies should encourage the education system to:

- be clear about outcomes
- collaborate to redesign structures and processes for effectiveness, efficiencies and flexibility
- monitor and measure performance
- be accountable for progress and results.

Practical policies should protect students and maintain data privacy while optimizing the use of technology as a platform for learning and teaching.

## Keys to Effective Policy

Education policies should ensure that all students obtain the skills to succeed in a knowledge-based economy and society. An effective policy framework, aligned with desired outcomes, creates the environment for transformation.

Effective policy is critical to establish the conditions for success and enable education transformation. Policy connects ICT-based innovations to other changes in curriculum and assessment, professional learning/development, learning and teaching, and to research and evaluation that can transform the entire educational system. For example, the governing body can redefine textbooks to include digital resources; or expand the definition of a course and seat time so students can take advantage of virtual learning and teachers can benefit from flexible, just-in-time, online courseware for professional learning.

Policymakers and policies must be nimble enough to reflect education transformations. Since the first large-scale educational-technology programs began in the 1990s, technology prices have dropped, low-cost device options have become universal, the Internet has become pervasive, e-operations have emerged as the increasingly standard form of service and communication, and digital resources have enhanced capacities.



**Resource:** Intel has developed a high-quality [ICT Policy Development Guidebook](#) with extensive tools and activities to drive your policy development.

Policy developers should apply a systematic approach to set clear, realistic expectations for sensible time frames, and focus on goals and evaluations that can help determine the effects of policies. The test of successful policies is examining a program's accomplishments to determine whether intended beneficiaries are profiting, whether the results are fair, and what the effects are for all stakeholders.

Communication about policies is also crucial to success. Policymakers must ensure that the people affected by the policy understand the plan, expectations, and benefits. They should stress that the focus is education, not equipment, and incorporate training for administrators, teachers, students, parents/caregivers, and all those touched by the policy and the program. Leaders can create a strong marketing campaign to create awareness, ensure buy-in, and build a wide political consensus behind the program. Likewise, they can create a strong communication plan to quantify results and impact.

## Project RED Keys to Policy Success

The Project RED research shows that well-implemented technology programs enable personalized instruction and the development of 21st century skills. This underscores the need for policies that mandate consistent, uninterrupted access to technology and related professional learning.

Policies that need to be examined include those that require “seat time” for course credit and those that require a teacher and a defined bricks-and-mortar space for learning to occur. The latter stands to obstruct the ability for blended, online and anytime, anywhere learning.

Government funding is needed for the purchase of technologies and software for high-need and high-risk students and their intervention classes. Intervention programs for struggling students have used technology more frequently than traditional subject areas—with successful results. The Project RED data indicates that Internet connectivity is correlated with socio-economic status and that students in less affluent schools are more likely to have less and slower connectivity. Government policies must serve to overcome this social justice matter in practical terms.

Project RED research further indicates that schools should integrate teacher use of technology with their overall performance evaluations to accelerate teacher adoption of technology as an integral part of learning and teaching. It is clear that school leaders must be able to lead reluctant teachers to a path of professional growth to ensure that technology and learning goals become seamless. Including expectations of teachers’ use of technology in school or state/municipality policy is important to establishing and driving technology use by teachers.

## Acceptable Use Policies

At a school or user level, there are policies that are important to how technology will or will not be used by administration, staff, teachers, and students. It’s important to communicate these policies with all stakeholders so that expectations and consequences are clear.

User-level policies include acceptable use policies and computer software polices, such as content filtering, to allow access to good educational content and prevent access to harmful or inappropriate content. It is important to provide safe digital environments for learners and to instill safe digital citizenship among the learning community.

Key questions to guide development of policies and practice:

- What is appropriate for students and teachers to view, read, and write online?
- How does the school set and promote the above expectations through policy and practice?
- Is there a difference if students and teachers bring their own devices or use school-issued devices?
- What will be the parents’/caregivers’ roles in the filtering expectations?
- How does the policy get communicated and enforced?



**Resource:** East Noble School Corporation (Indiana, U.S.) provides valuable models of [Student Responsible Use Policy](#) and [Employee Responsible Use Policy](#).

Much has changed in the educational landscape since districts began writing acceptable use policies (AUPs), and policy revisions reflect these changes. According to David Warlick’s Landmark Project, [School AUP 2.0](#), school technology-use policies should:

- Promote the most effective, productive, and instructionally sound uses of digital, networked, and abundant information in learning environments
- Provide safe digital environments for learners and to instill safe practices and habits among the learning community.

Many U.S. districts have renamed “Acceptable Use Policies” as “Responsible Use Policies.” As personal portable technologies permeate the education landscape, more and more responsibilities for following safe, expected computer-using practices are falling to students, their parents, and caregivers.

In creating the AUPs and other user policies, it is helpful to do the following:

- Define and describe the reasons for providing your school access to digital, networked, and abundant content.
- Describe the instructional and managerial benefits and the reason the information infrastructure is mission critical.
- Describe the benefits-aligned practices and applications that are being provided for and encouraged, and who can use them.
- Describe conditions for experimenting and evaluating practices and applications not identified in the document.
- Define and describe broader information ethics issues within the context of the school's/district's information infrastructure, including but not limited to: copyright, information integration, and respect for the infrastructure.
- Describe the information infrastructure of the school or district, including hardware, software, and support staffing.
- Define and describe practices and applications that are prohibited and the consequences of using the information infrastructure in these ways.
- Define and describe technical and procedural practices that will be applied to the information infrastructure to monitor and restrict use and abuse.
- Provide support materials or access to support materials to assist faculty, staff, and students in learning to make appropriate, productive, and safe use of the information infrastructure.

The significance of policy goes beyond the initial development of the planned systemic change. Particularly at the district and school levels, strong leaders will see the necessity for a policy that addresses do's and don'ts of technology use and creates acceptable use policies as a foundation for all members of the school community involved in using the technology.

Some believe that there should be a safety and security curriculum in addition to AUPs so that students and others understand not just what is important regarding Internet use and safety, but why it is important.

## Digital Citizenship Policies

Digital citizenship is defined as responsible and appropriate behavior with the use of technologies and the Internet. It is critical to incorporate these learning goals with any education technology program and its policies.

A relationship among governing bodies, schools, educators, students, and parents/caregivers will be important to reaching digital citizenship goals. Following are resources to guide this work:

[Mark Ribbel's Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship](#)

[Edudemic's Tips for Building Digital Citizenship](#)

[Common Sense Media's Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum](#)

Practical policies should protect students and maintain data privacy while optimizing the use of technology as a platform for learning and teaching. Sample policy elements may include:

- Definitions of digital citizenship to identify appropriate ethical and legal behavior when using technology
- Assistive technology policies that help people with disabilities perform tasks (or perform those tasks more easily) that they otherwise wouldn't be able to accomplish
- Universal design for learning (UDL) Guidance to curriculum that reduces physical, cognitive, and other obstacles to learning
- Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) for students, educators, and parents, reflecting the norms of the community while addressing the realities of the 21st century



**Intel is the leading advocate for Project RED research.** For more details about the extensive support Intel provides to Project RED, visit [intel.com/projectred](https://intel.com/projectred)



**Resource:** For more information on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), please visit the [National Center on Universal Design for Learning](#).