Guide for Strengthening the District Technology Plan

Background

The goal of the Center on Inclusive Technology & Education Systems (CITES) is to build the capacity of school districts to develop comprehensive and sustainable technology systems that serve all learners, including students with disabilities. The CITES Framework guides this work. The CITES Framework, using the **National Education Technology Plan** (NETP) as a foundation, uses promising and evidence-based practices to create inclusive technology across leadership, infrastructure, teaching, learning, and assessment. The Framework practices informed the development of this guide.

Purpose

Planning for teaching and learning, leveraged by the effective use of technology requires consideration of the whole system. A comprehensive technology plan will align with the learner variability that exists within that system, as well as varied learning environments. This guide was designed to support a district's technology planning team in the process of ensuring that the plan accounts for the varied ways that teaching and learning happen across the school system. Roles for educational technology (EdTech), assistive technology (AT), and information technology (InfoTech) are essential to the process of developing an inclusive technology ecosystem.

Use

This guide is a resource to assist with reviewing and revising an existing plan or can be used when developing a new technology plan.

The first step to using this guide is to convene a cross-functional team of district personnel. Representation of differing roles and responsibilities across all areas of technology, administration, general and special education, and families of students from varied backgrounds will optimize the effectiveness of the plan.

Sections

- **Vision in the Technology Plan**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Technology for Teaching & Learning**
- **Technology for Assessment**

The second step is to collect all documentation related to the district's use of technology. Include the state's technology plan, if available, and the NETP. Organize these documents in a way that facilitates a team review, considering who on the team has the necessary background knowledge and expertise to analyze each for current relevance and accuracy. It's highly recommended that each member of the team read the NETP and, if available, the current district and state plans.

As the road map for the new or revised district technology plan is drafted, use this guide to consider essential components of inclusive technology ecosystems.

Vision in the Technology Plan

Setting the vision for a technology plan informs the reader of the context in which the plan was developed, such as the history of the evolution of technology planning in the district, intended uses of the plan, and how it aligns to the district's mission, principles, and beliefs. Strategic priorities and the district's instructional goals are common to a vision for technology use. The role of relevant national and state policy and guidance in the planning process, as related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, also has a place in the vision.

Considerations for the vision of an inclusive technology plan:

- The technology planning committee membership represents the diversity of students served by the district (special education, multicultural education, social work, families, etc.).

- Discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) about the use of technology includes accessibility for students with disabilities. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework for DEI could be included here.

- Goals and priorities that implicitly or explicitly reference creating and sustaining an inclusive technology ecosystem.

Suggested resources and citations for considering the vision of your plan:

- CITES Framework
  Create a Community-Wide Vision and Aligned Goals

- AEM Center recorded webinar
  Coming to Terms: The Meaning of "Accessible"

- CAST
  About Universal Design for Learning

Digital accessibility in policy and guidance:

- The state education technology plan (if available) and any state technology accessibility statutes

- The state's **Assistive Technology Program**

- 3Play Media
  Accessibility laws that affect K-12 schools

UDL in policy and guidance:

- **UDL in the Every Student Succeeds Act**

- **UDL in the National Education Technology Plan**

Team notes on the vision of an inclusive technology plan
Existing sources of information, draft language, etc.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of the district's technology system is the foundation on which technology is successfully used for teaching and learning, whether in a classroom or remotely. In addition to the availability of connectivity, devices, and software at school and home, considerations related to accessibility and AT are essential to developing and maintaining a technology infrastructure that ensures equity for all learners.

Considerations for an inclusive technology infrastructure:

- Infrastructure planning includes input and decision-making from district personnel in AT, EdTech, and InfoTech.

- Policies on procurement of devices, software, peripherals, and website applications include accessibility standards, specifically Section 508 of the Rehab Act and the **current version of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG).

- Guidance for testing resources and materials with AT is provided.

- Guidelines for high-quality digital learning content include evaluation for accessibility. Universal Design for Learning is an optional framework for technology infrastructure decision making.

- Guidelines for library media services and database selection include evaluation for accessibility.

- Policies for website and digital communications with families and community members include accessibility, specifically Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the **current version of WCAG.**

Suggested resources and citations for considering infrastructure:

- See resources and citations under "**Vision**"

- CITES Framework **Take Ownership of Infrastructure Development**

- National AEM Center **Vetting for Accessibility**

- National AEM Center **Communicating Digital Accessibility Requirements**

Team notes on an inclusive technology infrastructure
Existing sources of information, draft language, etc.

Technology for Teaching and Learning

The district's technology plan communicates the alignment between technology use and the district's vision, goals, adopted frameworks, and professional development for teaching and learning. Procedures and guidelines for using technology for out-of-classroom instruction, such as online, blended, or hybrid models, are included. Also included are requirements for accessible digital materials and technologies to ensure interoperability with assistive technologies used by students with disabilities to access curriculum across the various environments.

Considerations for technology for teaching and learning:

- Goals for teaching and learning with technology include access for all learners, including students with disabilities with clarification that the term "accessible" or "accessibility" is distinguished from the use of the term "available" or "availability."

- Strategies selected for teaching and learning with technology clearly align to district commitments to DEI.

- Technology competencies for educators, including competencies for using and providing assistive technology and accessible materials, are clearly outlined and described.

- Descriptions of the district's priorities and preferences for instructional materials and technologies include accessibility.

- Training and coaching priorities include cross-functional audiences (EdTech, InfoTech, AT, administration, general education, special education, library & media services, parents, etc.) for topics related to selecting and using accessible digital materials and technologies, as well as the creation of accessible materials.

- Student use of assistive technology is included in both general education and special education contexts.

Suggested resources and citations for considering technology for teaching and learning:

- See resources and citations under "**Vision**" and "**Infrastructure**"

- CITES Framework
  Teaching & **Learning**

- ISTE
  Standards for Educators

- Office of Educational Technology (OET)
  Designing Online Communities of Practice for Educators to Create Value

Team notes on technology for teaching and learning
Existing sources of information, draft language, etc.

Technology for Assessment

The implementation of technology for assessment includes assurances for equity, fairness, and accessibility. Tools for both formative and summative assessment are free of technical and material bias, and free of barriers for students who require accommodations or use assistive technology.

Considerations for technology for assessment:

- Goals for the use of technology for assessment include supporting positive outcomes for all learners, including students with disabilities.

- Tools selected for assessment are aligned with progress monitoring and data-informed decision making practices used in the district, including those applied for specially designed instruction.

- List key assessment stakeholders and resources, such as the state testing officials and state-level requirements or supports.

- Educators design and administer formative assessments that are accessible.

Suggested resources and citations for considering technology for teaching and learning:

- See resources and citations under "**Vision**" and "**Infrastructure**"

- CITES Framework **Assessment**

- Georgia Department of Education **Accessibility & Accommodations Manual** (most relevant information on pp. 8-10)

- National AEM Center **Designing with P.O.U.R**

- National AEM Center **Need for Accessible Formats**

Team notes on technology for assessment
Existing sources of information, draft language, etc.

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