STEP 6
COMMUNICATION
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DEVELOP, ADOPT, AND COMMUNICATE DISTRICT POLICIES RELATED TO YOUR ONE-TO-ONE INITIATIVE.

What types of policies does a school district need to adopt when implementing a one-to-one technology initiative?

The two primary policies a district should consider are an **acceptable use policy (AUP)** and a **device policy**.

We will explain each of these sometimes-overlapping policies below, but we have also included examples of AUPs and device policies from Mississippi school districts in Appendix A.

What is an acceptable use policy (AUP)?

An AUP outlines the guidelines and behaviors that students will be expected to follow when using technology provided by the school. Even if a district is new to one-to-one, it may already have an AUP that governs other district-owned technologies, such as the wifi network. Either way, an AUP will need to be in place to cover any additional technology introduced in the implementation of a one-to-one initiative.

The AUP must clearly define both acceptable and unacceptable uses of technology, as well as specify the consequences for violations and how these will be handled. It may also be helpful for districts to include an introduction to the AUP that explains its purpose and goals, as well as the definitions of key terms.

The AUP should function as a manual of best practices for students to follow, but it is also intended to shield districts from legal liability. As such, it should be written to clearly communicate adherence to relevant laws and regulations, such as CIPA. It is recommended that districts explicitly state that their policies are in compliance with CIPA and other regulations.

For the purpose of shielding the district from legal liability—as well as ensuring that students and parents read the AUP—districts should disseminate their AUP to students and parents as a written agreement, with signatures required, before students are allowed access to school technology.

The content of an AUP may vary slightly by district, but they should generally be written to specifically address the following matters:

- **Technologies covered by the AUP**, as well as in what situations the AUP applies (e.g., does the AUP apply to one-to-one devices when students use private internet connections at home? What about when students use their own private devices on the district wifi?).
• **Student email accounts**, including whether and for what purpose students are provided with email accounts, and guidance for how to safely and appropriately use this privilege. Districts should make clear whether students’ emails will be monitored, and to what extent students can expect privacy.

• **Security and personal safety**, including what measures the district is taking to protect the personal information of users, and what safeguards individual users are expected to take in order to better protect themselves and the network as a whole. Districts should be mindful of the ages of students using these devices, and to what extent these students are familiar with the dangers that come along with internet access. Districts should also specify the procedures for students to notify the school in case of a security breach.

• **Plagiarism**, including an explicit definition of the term as well as best practices for the appropriate citation of sources.

• **Online etiquette**, including the expectations set by the administration. These expectations should include how students should utilize and be respectful of network resources, internet use, and online websites. Along with this, it should remind students of the longevity of their internet activity and posting.

• **Social media** and whether there are any instances in which accessing social media using school technology is acceptable. Whether or not districts permit students to access social media via school technology, some districts may choose to address the issue at greater length with a specific social media policy aside from what is covered in the AUP.

• **Cyberbullying**, including an explicit definition of the term and how the district will handle instances of this behavior.

• **Expectations of privacy**, specifying to what extent activity on one-to-one devices or the district internet network will be monitored, documented, and retained. It may be helpful to outline how the district will handle attempts to circumvent this monitoring as well.

• **Internet filters**, specifying how and what online content will be restricted, as well as how these policies align with state and federal regulations, such as CIPA. Districts should also specify how attempts to circumvent these filters will be handled.

• **Limitation of liability**, specifying whether the district will be responsible for damage or harm to individuals, files, data, or hardware (districts will almost always specify that they are not responsible for any damage or harm). Here, districts should reiterate measures taken to ensure safety and security online, but they should also note that the effectiveness of these measures is not guaranteed. It may also be helpful to reiterate consequences for users not following the policies enumerated in the AUP.

• **Personal devices**, namely whether students are allowed to utilize personal devices in lieu of receiving a one-to-one device from the district (this is known as a “Bring Your Own Device,” or BYOD, model). If so, districts will need to specify that the AUP applies to personal devices. Districts will also need to describe how the AUP will be enforced for devices not owned by the district, including aspects of the AUP such as privacy expectations and internet filters.
What is a device policy?

Alongside an AUP, districts should also adopt a **device policy** that outlines how devices should be distributed, cared for, and eventually collected. As with an AUP, students and parents must be required to read the device policy and indicate their willingness to adhere to it with their signatures.

A device policy should, at a minimum, address the following:

- **Terms of use** that specify what students are agreeing to in order to use a district-owned device. These terms can include adherence to the AUP and other policies, any usage fees charged by the district, and any financial responsibilities assumed by the student and parent/guardian in the case of loss, theft, or damage to the device.

- **Handling and care** of one-to-one devices, including requirements and best practices for maintaining physical condition of the device.

- **Legal title** of district-owned one-to-one devices, reiterating district ownership of devices as well as the right of the district to repossess devices at any point.

- **Fees for devices** that denote any annual fees to be paid by parents or guardians as well as further specify costs of damages that might be incurred.

- **Terms of agreement** that denote when the device is no longer the student’s possession and must be returned to the school or district office.

- **Loss, theft, or damage** to one-to-one devices, specifying procedures to be followed in these instances, as well as any potential fees for repairing or replacing devices.

- **Deductibles** that specify the base deductible cost and increasing percentage of repair costs that parents or guardians will be responsible for after the first, second, third, etc., damage occurrences.

- **Unlawful appropriation**, which makes clear that if devices are not returned in the time allowed, the district might consider the continuing use of the device to be an unlawful appropriation of the district’s property.

Who should be responsible for setting policies related to a district’s one-to-one technology initiative?

District and school leadership are ultimately responsible for setting district- and school-level policies; however, other stakeholders, particularly teachers and technology staff, should be closely involved in this process. Because the technology department will often be responsible for day-to-day management of the one-to-one initiative, their input and buy-in is crucial. Teacher comfort with and participation in one-to-one is also essential to the ongoing success of the program. Without adequate teacher involvement, districts set themselves up for potential future difficulties when teachers do not feel as prepared as they should or do not support the program. Including teachers from the onset allows for open communication and improved likelihood of continued success.

To illustrate the importance of teacher involvement, consider the case of Booneville School District, where the implementation of one-to-one inadvertently led to a loss of teachers. According to Director of Technology Dustin Pounders, some of the district’s older teachers chose to retire early rather than learn an entirely new mode of delivering instruction. Mr. Pounders believes that a lack of communication and proper preparation directly contributed to the loss, a lesson that other districts transitioning to one-to-one should pay close attention to.
There are numerous ways in which a district can adequately and usefully involve teachers in the implementation process. Schools with a preexisting culture of teacher involvement may be more prepared for this process, but administrative leadership at each school needs to consider how to make staff members feel heard, particularly if the relationship between teachers and leadership has been strained in the past. Even if teachers are not primary decision-makers, inclusion in the process and consistent communication regarding what is currently happening and what is coming next will set a district up for success. Without teacher buy-in, successful use of one-to-one is difficult to forge.

How should a district communicate its one-to-one policies?

At a minimum, districts should develop a technology handbook that clearly lists all policies related to technology use, including the specifics of its one-to-one initiative. This handbook should be student-facing and should include any forms that students and their parents/guardians will have to sign in order to access technology. Handbooks should be readily available online as well as physically distributed among students. It will also be useful to post certain policies, especially those pertaining to in-school technology use, within classrooms as a reminder to students and teachers.

In addition to creating a handbook of policies, districts must proactively communicate their policies’ implications to the broader community: **a comprehensive one-to-one technology communications strategy is a must.** A communications strategy will be the roadmap to explaining to ALL district stakeholders how the one-to-one technology plan will impact them directly. The key to a successful rollout of a one-to-one technology plan is transparency in communicating to specific audiences. For assistance in drafting a one-to-one communications strategy, we have included recommendations in Appendix B. We strongly recommend sharing Appendix B with the employee or team responsible for communications for the school district.

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Focus Groups

Highline Schools in Washington hosts focus groups for staff to voice concerns and participate in discussions related to one-to-one. In addition to this, they utilize technology review groups where teachers and staff participate in conversations surrounding hardware selection for the coming years or for new buildings.

Faculty Representation

Twice a year, Decatur City Schools in Alabama hosts a forum on technology which includes faculty representation from each school in the district. In this forum, school representatives are able to raise concerns and represent their schools’ collective interests as well as their own.

Committees

Many schools have formed committees to allow a wide array of stakeholders—teachers and other staff, but also students and parents—to voice opinions and discuss specific policies as well as to provide feedback on the general direction of a one-to-one initiative. Often, these committees meet at multiple points throughout the year. Key to this strategy is avoiding exclusivity in terms of who can participate: if a staff member expresses interest, school leadership should welcome their participation.

There are a variety of ways that teachers and other school staff can be included in this process. Here are some examples from schools with established one-to-one technology initiatives: