STEP 8
DISTRIBUTION
What agreements do students and their parents need to sign prior to the distribution of devices?

It may seem tedious to develop contracts and solicit signatures from all students and their parents, but this is a necessary step to create accountability and avoid legal and financial uncertainties. The distribution of one-to-one devices opens the door for potential misuse of this technology as well as the very likely possibility of damage and loss, so it is imperative that districts make clear from the onset what responsibilities students and their parents are assuming when they receive a one-to-one device.

As we note in Step 5, there are two major policies that a district must set prior to implementing a one-to-one initiative: an acceptable use policy (AUP) that sets general guidelines for using any school technology and a device policy which outlines responsibilities specifically related to receiving a one-to-one device. Districts must ensure that students and their parents have read these policies and agree, in writing, to adhere to them.

In order to disseminate these policies and collect the requisite signatures, districts should develop contracts that state the AUP and device policy with an area for students and their parents to sign their names to a statement indicating that they have read the policies and agree to adhere to them, including the acceptance of whatever penalties (financial or otherwise) that may be imposed in the event that the contract is broken. Particular to the device policy, there should be an “Items Received” section that specifies the individual items being distributed to the student (one-to-one device, charger, case, etc.) and lists any identification or serial numbers related to these items as well as their condition (new/used) upon the time of distribution. (See Appendix A for examples of contracts that Mississippi school districts use to accompany AUPs and device policies).

Districts can be flexible in terms of whether to combine these agreements into a single contract or to break them up into multiple ones. For instance, it may be useful to have students and their parents sign a contract for the AUP and device policy prior to distribution and then have them sign an additional “Device Acceptance Form” with the “Items Received” section upon actually picking up the device. Regardless, disseminating these policies and soliciting signatures is a critical step to promote the responsible use of school technology. It should not be taken lightly.

What should districts do if students or parents refuse to sign these agreements?

Parents may be wary of assuming responsibility for one-to-one devices, particularly if this involves potential financial penalties. It is therefore necessary to educate parents as much as possible on the details of the program, paying special attention to the educational benefits of this technology and the ways in which the district plans to prevent issues by promoting responsible device use. Still, some parents may nonetheless refuse to sign these contracts or even allow their child to bring the device home. To prepare for these instances, it is crucial for districts to develop alternate plans, as many districts overlook this matter entirely, and are sometimes forced to scramble at the last minute to determine a response.

There is not one specific, tried and true response for when parents or students refuse to sign these agreements, but any solution will generally have to involve providing students access to one-to-one technology in school, with students likely having to forgo access when at home. For in-person instruction, this may prove to be an effective strategy, though the situation becomes much more complicated if virtual learning is involved. For this reason, we urge districts to first do their best to assuage any concerns from students or parents in order to avoid these situations. However, regardless of strategy, determining how to address these potential instances before they occur is of vital importance.
How should devices be distributed to students?

While device distribution may seem straightforward, districts should be deliberate about how they plan to address the logistics involved in this final step. This plan should be in writing and distributed to all stakeholders well ahead of time. In developing this plan, districts should consider the following:

**Is school operating on an in-person or virtual schedule?**

This will directly impact how devices can be distributed. If school is operating on an in-person schedule, there is a fair amount of flexibility in terms of when and where devices are distributed. However, a district operating on a virtual schedule—such as due to COVID-19—should utilize a contactless pickup strategy that will necessitate a more comprehensive plan in order to maximize safety.

**Where are devices being distributed?**

Schools operating in person can either schedule students to pick up devices at a central location (a multipurpose room like a gym is often a good option) or can schedule staff members to distribute devices to individual classes. If a school is operating virtually and opting for contactless pickup, distribution should take place outside, if possible, with attention paid towards minimizing crowd size and protecting devices from the elements. Districts should devise a distribution strategy that allows students and families to remain in their cars, so that clustering in lines is avoided. If distribution is taking place in the summer months, protecting devices from the sun should be a priority, as excessive heat and direct sunlight may harm devices before they are even distributed. If there is any chance of rain, staff should plan for an indoor distribution, preferably in as large and open a space as is available.
How many devices are being distributed?
The larger the district, the more thought will have to go into the logistics of distribution. Whether or not a school is operating in-person or virtually, there needs to be an effort to minimize crowds of students. If devices are being distributed in a central location, schools should schedule certain classes or grades at specific times, so that not all students arrive at once.

Are the devices “pre-configured” for immediate use by students?
Depending on the device vendor, districts may have the option for devices to come “pre-configured” with the necessary software, internet filters, etc. so that they are ready for immediate use by students right out of the box. This will allow for a quicker turnaround time from receiving devices from the vendor to distributing them to students. For districts that have not ordered pre-configured devices, technology staff will have to first install the necessary software and device security measures so that devices are prepared for use and compliant with CIPA. In this case, districts should expect a much longer turnaround time from the initial shipment of devices to distribution, and should plan accordingly.

Are all devices prepared for distribution at the same time?
If the number of available devices are limited, districts will need to be deliberate about selecting which students will receive devices first. If it comes down to which grades will receive devices first, most school districts begin one-to-one in middle or high school, as those grades may benefit more from access to devices than elementary students. Between middle and high school, many districts prioritize middle school first as many high school students already have access to devices at home. If devices are limited even within a certain grade level, a needs assessment should be conducted to determine which specific students would benefit the most.

During distribution, are the devices secure?
In the process of distribution, only a set number of devices should be immediately available. The rest should remain in a locked area where staff can easily access and retrieve “refills” of devices to prevent theft and damage.