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**PRINCIPAL COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT**

This toolkit describes the role of the principal in supporting learning in the digital age to help ensure that students are college and career ready. Principals are at the center of communication between teachers, students, and parents—and the superintendent and school board. Specifically, principals can share with stakeholders the benefits of learning in a digital environment, while also addressing some of the concerns around digital citizenship, the homework gap, and equity. We encourage districts to share this toolkit with their principals. National member organizations for principals may also want to share this toolkit with members to explain the importance of moving towards digital learning, as well as how to address some of the concerns in the transition. This toolkit includes a communications packet with sample documents that are customizable for principals and member organizations for principals.

**LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Technology is an essential component of learning today. With digital applications, tools and resources, students can create content, interact with experts, collaborate with peers and participate in simulation activities. Personalized experiences put students at the center of learning and empowers students to take control of their own learning through flexibility and choice. The [Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)](https://www.ed.gov/essa) acknowledges technology’s role in revolutionizing learning and includes definitions for digital learning and blended learning, and references technology throughout the legislation. In the [Non-Regulatory Guidance Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essassaegrantguid10212016.pdf) publication provides an overview of activities LEAs may consider as they prepare for implementation of the effective use of technology (ESEA Section 4109). Specific activities include: supporting high-quality professional development for educators, school leaders, and administrators to personalize learning and improve academic achievement; building technological capacity and infrastructure; carrying out innovative blended learning projects; providing students in rural, remote, and underserved areas with the resources to benefit from high-quality digital learning opportunities; and delivering specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula using technology, including digital learning technologies. Similarly, the [National Education Technology Plan (NETP)](https://tech.ed.gov/files/2017/01/NETP17.pdf) calls for a “revolutionary transformation rather than evolutionary tinkering” in education and recognizes that we must leverage technology to provide engaging and powerful learning experiences for all students. Technology offers all students – urban, rural, low-income, ESL, special needs, high achieving – the opportunity to engage in dynamic learning activities. Education leaders at the federal, state, and local level have the opportunity to provide leadership to ensure that all students have personalized, engaging learning experiences.

**ROLE TO SUPPORT LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

As schools move towards digital learning environments, it is necessary to foster leadership at the school level to support the transition. Principals play an important leadership role not just in modernizing educational settings, but in re-imagining the use of space and school time to provide students a consistently personalized, technology-rich learning experience. Principals are uniquely positioned at the intersection of education practice and policy to advance that transformation. Working with local and regional school boards, superintendents, teachers, students and community members is essential to the effective implementation of digital learning in schools. Specifically, principals interact with the superintendent and school board to understand policies and practices, as well as new initiatives within the district. Principals are often the face of the school in the community – working with local businesses and libraries and other community organizations on a variety of issues. And, most important for promoting a vision of student empowerment, principals lead and provide professional learning opportunities to teachers to support their instruction, development their leadership and—ultimately--advance student learning.

**KEY AREAS FOR PRINCIPALS**

This section highlights some of the key areas of concern that principals might encounter as they implement digital learning in their school. They include professional learning and community partnerships.

**Professional Learning**

**How can digital tools support my teachers in acquiring professional learning opportunities?**

The [Professional Standards for Education Leaders 2015](http://www.npbea.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ProfessionalStandardsforEducationalLeaders2015forNPBEAFINAL-2.pdf), which govern the principal’s practice, prominently assert that “effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.” Technology plays a crucial role in building that professional capacity. To build capacity, principals need to support teachers in accessing digital tools and resources, in learning how to leverage them effectively, and in modeling their appropriate use. Current tools offer the opportunity for teachers to become more collaborative and extend learning beyond the classroom. Educators can create learning communities composed of students; fellow educators in schools, museums, libraries, and after-school programs; experts in various disciplines around the world; members of community organizations; and families. With these digital professional learning options where teachers are not necessarily taking a class, principals should consider adjusting how they provide credit for professional learning. Traditional seat time requirements do not take into account informal collaborations, such as Twitter chats. As the new Every Student Succeeds Act acknowledges, professional learning programs should have a solid research foundation. Yet, the most effective professional learning is not an event, but an ongoing experience of ideating, experimenting, reflecting, and sharing.

**Learn more about professional learning**

[From Print to Digital Toolkit](http://qualitycontent.setda.org/implementation/#professional-learning-strategies)

[Professional Learning Toolkit](https://tech.ed.gov/futureready/professional-learning/)

[Professional Standards for Education Leaders](http://npbea.org/)

*“Unlocking the boundless potential of students to lead their future requires both current technology tools and a schoolwide culture that empowers students to optimize their use for meaningful tasks. Creating that culture is a principal’s paramount role.”*

--JoAnn Bartoletti, NASSP Executive Director

**Community Partnerships**

**How can principals educate the community on learning in the digital age? How can principals create partnerships with the community to support academic and extracurricular activities?**

Principals are community leaders, working to develop strong relationships with community members to ensure that all stakeholders are vested in successful schools. In a 2014 Poll by the Center for American Progress, in fact, 82 percent of respondents identified principals as someone they trust in the community when speaking on educational matters. Through advocacy and strategic community engagement, principals can generate community support for digital learning. As districts and schools incorporate more digital learning options, principals can be effective allies to increase community awareness about the successful impact digital learning can have on student achievement and college and career readiness. Hosting a technology fair where students can showcase projects and/or Transforming Digital Learning is one way that principals can share with the community. Engaging with the local library to promote awareness around the need for digital tools and resources and internet access for students outside of school is another outreach option. [Richland District Two, South Carolina](http://www.kajeet.net/engage-parents-richland-two) partnered with a local internet provider to offer internet hot spot devices to families with filtered internet broadband. When providing the devices to the family, the district explained that it was not only for students to complete homework, but also for the entire household to use to access community resources. In Utah, the industry demand for robotics technicians locally is high. Local businesses approached the district to establish a robotics class where students learned to repair and program robots on a day-to-day basis. This [initiative](http://www.batc.edu/stem) expanded to neighboring districts and the districts worked together to develop a robotics program and create degree opportunities for students.

**Learn more about community partnerships**

[Digital Learning Day](http://www.digitallearningday.org/)

[Richland District Two, South Carolina](http://www.kajeet.net/engage-parents-richland-two)

[The Power of Partnerships](http://knowledgeworks.org/worldoflearning/2016/11/school-partnerships/)

**TRANSFORMING DIGITAL LEARNING**

**[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwZeJYe2WrA)**

**Impact of the Principal on School Culture and Climate**

This video presents interviews of teachers from Caldwell Early College High School about the impact of the principal on the climate and culture of a school

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwZeJYe2WrA>



**Bringing Learning and Standards Together (BLAST)**

This short [video](https://youtu.be/5uxWgaCzOfI) describes Clark County School District’s Bringing Learning and Standards Together (BLAST) professional development initiative.

**COMMUNICATION PACKET**

The [communication packet](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1besaASQcRf-bdgmlvHLy5ZMBySAwnvn_5O20nCuUSGw/edit) includes customizable templates. Partners can add logos,

examples or other resources to help engage stakeholders and support this topic. Users are encouraged to leverage these resources to support your work in engaging principals and member organizations for principals by providing them with the resources needed to create an ecosystem of support and learning inside and outside of school walls.

* Newsletter/website snapshot
* Presentation slides to support conversations with stakeholders
* Social media promotion examples
* Press outreach
* Outreach email