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**SUPERINTENDENT COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT**

This toolkit describes the role of the superintendent in supporting revolutionizing learning in the digital age to help ensure that students are college and career ready. Specifically, superintendents can work with state, district and school level educators to support learning through collaborative leadership. This resource includes a communications packet with sample documents that are customizable for you to use as you support superintendents.

**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 empower 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. 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, superintendents play a key role in developing a vision for student learning. Looking across district agencies, there are many leaders who are or should be involved in discussions and planning around digital learning, including the chief academic officer, chief technology officer, chief financial officer, instructional materials leader and special education leader. Initiating the planning process with a shared vision serves as a firm compass point for how technology will support teaching and learning goals. Unlike a consensus in which everyone agrees, developing a shared vision represents buy-in from all stakeholders and superintendents play a key role in making this happen--involving the right people at the right time.

**KEY AREAS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS**

This section highlights some of the key areas of interest that superintendents might encounter during the transition to learning in the digital age. They include collaborative leadership, budgeting, data privacy and security and the homework gap.

**Collaborative Leadership**

**As a superintendent, how can I work with my local school board and collaborate with my peers to implement digital learning?**

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board is an essential component for success, especially when implementing new initiatives. The National School Boards Association guide, [On the Same Page 2.0](https://cdn-files.nsba.org/s3fs-public/On-the-Same-Page-Effective-Implementation-of-College-and-Career-ready-Standards-Through-Labor-Mana.pdf) is intended to spark conversation and suggestions among stakeholders and emphasizes the importance of information flow for continuous improvement and ownership by all stakeholders. As seen in the graphic, there is a feedback loop between stakeholders—from the board of education to students and parents. In addition, AASA, the Association for School Superintendents hosts the [Digital Learning Consortium](http://www.aasa.org/DigitalConsortium.aspx), to help school district leaders gain insight into emerging and successful models of best practices using digital media in support of engaging and effective learning experiences. The [NETP 2017](https://tech.ed.gov/files/2017/01/NETP17.pdf) identifies the key components of collaborative leadership:

* Develop a shared vision for how technology can support learning
* Seek input from a diverse team of stakeholders to adopt and communicate clear goals for teaching, leading, and learning that are facilitated by technology
* Communicate with all stakeholders by using appropriate media and technology tools and establish effective feedback loops
* Ensure that practitioners at the school and district level use and understand research

**Learn more about collaborative leadership**

[2017 National Education Technology Plan Update (NETP)](https://tech.ed.gov/files/2017/01/NETP17.pdf)

[#NETP16: Setting a vision of equity, active use, and collaborative leadership](https://medium.com/%40OfficeofEdTech/netp16-setting-a-vision-of-equity-active-use-and-collaborative-leadership-5c116ca276fc)

[National School Boards Association Leadership Services](http://www.nsba.org/services/school-board-leadership-services/key-work/board-and-superintendent-relationships)

[Communication Strategies to Create Personalized Learning Buy-In in Baltimore](https://www.edsurge.com/news/2017-03-02-how-baltimore-cps-used-communications-strategies-to-create-personalized-learning-buy-in)

**Budget**

**How are we going to pay for high-speed broadband, wireless access and devices?**

Many states and districts are utilizing Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), a financial estimate that includes metrics and processes to determine the total cost of acquiring and maintaining devices and instructional materials. Shifting to digital learning requires critical consideration regarding both access to the instructional materials and maintaining the technology tools and services to support the devices and content. For districts that engage in transformative budgeting, a model that accomplishes innovation within existing budgets, leaders across agencies, such as the chief academic officer, the chief innovation officer, the chief information officer and the chief financial officer need to be part of the conversation. The following three essential strategies characterize transformative budgeting when applied to technology readiness for digital learning:

* Alignment of technology expenditures with the goals in the district’s strategic plans.
* A cross-functional budget leadership team that brings together finance, technology, curriculum and instruction.
* Transformative zero-based budgeting – a process through which education leaders begin each budget cycle at zero in each category, and then add costs to the budget only when there is evidence that such costs are required to meet goals.

**Learn more about budgeting**

[CoSN’s SmartIT Initiative](http://www.cosn.org/SmartIT)

[North Carolina Digital Learning Plan](https://ncdli.fi.ncsu.edu/dlplan/)

[New Jersey, Transformative Budget for Digital Learning](http://njdigitallearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Transformative-Budgeting-final.pdf)

**Homework Gap**

**As superintendent, what are some options for addressing the “homework gap”?**

The “homework gap” – the gap between students whose internet connections at home are slow or non-existent—and those who have consistent home connections with adequate speed for learning activities in a safe environment is an increasingly important issue for districts, schools, students and parents. The digital divide persists and not all students have access to reliable internet at home. The Pew Research Center reports that 5 million households with school-age children do not have broadband access at home. Low-income households—especially black and Hispanic ones—make up a disproportionate share of those households. As more schools implement digital learning, including digital instructional materials, connectivity outside of school for students is an essential component of a 21st century education—not something merely nice to have to make anytime, anywhere access for ALL a priority. Some districts have actively partnered with internet providers in their communities to offer discounted service fees, others issue hot spots that students can take home, while others have adjusted school library hours to offer more access. Public libraries are another option for helping to address the “homework gap”. Many libraries offer access to free wireless internet, computers and devices, and digital resources. The [FCC’s Lifeline program](https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers) is another option for low-income families to acquire discounted broadband service at home. The following chart shows some of the strategies districts are using to address the homework gap.

*2/3 of students say that it is important for them to have safe and consistent access to the internet when they are outside of school for them to be successful in school*

*- Project Tomorrow, Speak Up Survey 2015*

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| **How Districts Address the Homework Gap** |
| **Strategies** | **All**  | **Urban** | **Suburban** | **Rural** |
| Allowing students on campus early or to stay late to use school connectivity | 67% | 69% | 71% | 63% |
| Encouraging libraries to provide priority access to students | 54% | 55% | 47% | 61% |
| Discouraging teachers from assigning HW that is internet dependent  | 40% | 38% | 36% | 48% |
| Equipping buses with wifi | 8% | 6% | 9% | 7% |
| Telling students to download assignments to USB sticks  | 44% | 48% | 37% | 52% |
| Giving parents info about low cost data and internet plans  | 36% | 49% | 38% | 28% |
| Enlarging wifi areas to include school parking lots | 34% | 28% | 22% | 47% |

**Learn more about ways your districts can address the homework gap**

[CoSN’s 2016 Annual Infrastructure Survey](http://www.cosn.org/infrastructure2016)

[FCC Lifeline Program](https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers)

[Protecting Equity through Family-School Partnerships](https://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement/bulletin-board/promoting-equity-through-family-school-partnerships)

[State K-12 Broadband Leadership: Driving Connectivity and Access](http://www.setda.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Broadband_2016.4.11.16_updated.pdf)

**TRANSFORMING DIGITAL LEARNING**



**Vista Unified, California: Strategic Partnerships and a Model of Innovation**

Vista’s superintendent and principals share how digital learning has impacted learning opportunities for their students. <https://youtu.be/yTUNdeZIbzg>



**Preparing Globally Competitive Graduates- CUE 2015 Super Symposium**

S. Dallas Dance Ph.D, superintendent of Baltimore County Public School District, presents Preparing Globally Competitive Graduates, a part of BCPS’s Blueprint 2.0 plan of deliberate excellence. He also discusses how access to technology promotes equity and student engagement.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkVsto7uI2E&feature=youtu.be>

**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 superintendents 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