

Digital Infrastructure: A Look at What Districts Are Doing

The purpose of this tool is to learn how selected districts are addressing digital infrastructure in support of deeper learning.

Consider these Sample Scenarios

- **Cajon Valley Union School District, San Diego, California.** Cajon Valley USD is a diverse district with more than 30 percent of the student population consisting of English language learners and more than 60 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. To address annual low performance, the district adopted a comprehensive school improvement effort, which included bolstering its digital infrastructure. Along with the goals of expanding wireless service to support a 1:1 device ratio, the Cajon Valley technology plan highlights the need for educator support and a culture change that emphasizes student-centered learning. The district's technology plan also includes digital literacy as one of its priorities. The plan outlines a program for teachers that provides ongoing, monthly workshops intended to develop specified digital skill standards. Cajon Valley also prioritizes the development of curriculum focused on the creation of student content and integration of student voice to meet the needs of all students. Since the program's beginning, students have experienced more caring relationships with teachers and have felt more personally connected to the school.
- **Elizabeth Forward School District, Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.** Elizabeth Forward is a small, suburban district serving an 86 percent economically disadvantaged student population. During the 2013–14 school year, the district implemented a 1:1 iPad program, with the goal of supporting students in anytime, anywhere individualized learning pathways. Students were provided with quality digital tools, mentorship, and opportunities for collaboration to support those pathways. The high school media center has a video and audio studio, coding stations, televisions, and gaming consoles—all based on industry-standard equipment and programs—as well as open spaces for discussion. Middle school students have access to the Situated Multimedia Arts Learning Lab, or SMALLab, where students use

technology to collaborate. The district also uses digital learning approaches in its STEM courses and the arts-based Entertainment Technology Academy. Elizabeth Forward's use of a variety of digital devices, powered by high-speed broadband and coupled with a strong focus on the creation of student-centered learning pathways and effective instructional practices, has helped produce significant positive effects on student outcomes. Since implementation, the district has seen higher state rankings and a decrease in dropout rates.

- **Iowa City Community School District, Iowa.** The Iowa City CSD is a large district in which 36 percent of students are from minority families and 30 percent receive free and reduced-price lunch. In the fall of 2016, the district created a separate leadership entity, the Technology Council, to promote digital literacy. The council consists of twenty-five stakeholders, ranging from students and parents to teachers, principals, technology managers, and district administrators. The responsibilities of the council are policy development/content filtering, student programs, parent and community outreach, platform selection and standardization, and evaluation.

Conversation Starters

After reading the sample scenarios above, consider the following questions:

- Is professional development offered to support educators in implementing digital infrastructure initiatives?
- What are some approaches your district already is taking to improve digital infrastructure?
- Are any of the strategies mentioned in the scenarios aligned to district need?
- When looking at improving your digital infrastructure, what steps already have been taken to ensure equity of access to technology for traditionally underserved student subgroups?

