RECOMMENDATION 4:
Define Your Technology Budget

Overall summary

School operating budgets provide stable financing for ongoing purchases and support. However, school budgets are tight and programs—including technology programs and technology support staff—may be cut in some schools. It is important to consider alternatives to funding and to plan not only for initial costs but also for long-term maintenance and replacement costs to facilitate sustainability.

Recommendations from the literature and practice

Budgeting for technology implementation requires planning for costs ranging from new device allocation and upgrading the school infrastructure's connectivity and access points to professional learning and funds to support repairs and/or the replacement of devices. Districts and schools are finding funds not only in their existing budgets but also through technology bonds, grants, and partnerships with companies and organizations. Schools are also using assistive technology labs in local education agencies (which make technology available for schools throughout the district), and they are accepting donated technology from parents, organizations, and companies.

Find grants and other funding options to support your technology purchases and implementation costs in Appendix F.

Developing multiyear budgets is critical to gaining teacher, parent, and student buy-in. If stakeholders view technology implementation as an experiment—with only short-term goals and short-term budget allocations—they are less likely to invest in the professional learning and expend the extra effort initially required to yield success. Multiyear budgets allow for the development of long-term plans and increase the sustainability of the initiative.

As a team, you will need to develop a plan to support the costs associated with implementing and maintaining technology in your district and school buildings. Many districts and schools today initially fund the purchase of new technology devices and/ or upgrading of the network infrastructure with a grant and then build maintenance and repair/ service costs and professional

learning costs into the district's or school's operating expenses. Some districts have secured funding through a bond voted on by the community or have raised money through fundraisers sponsored by the PTO/PTA, and others have worked with companies to finance the costs of new technology devices. Districts and schools are finding creative solutions to the funding question, including leasing equipment, phasing in computing devices over time to spread out the cost of purchasing devices, selecting devices with lower initial costs (such as netbooks), and making use of BYOD and equipping the school with robust wireless access. Any requested funding should clearly link technology to the bigger picture of teaching and learning. Technology is not an end in itself but instead is a set of tools to foster engaged learning environments and increase student outcomes; successful funding clearly supports a higher purpose than simply the acquisition of hardware and equipment. Ultimately, when exploring budgeting options, it is important

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Explore the following ways to fund your technology implementation goals:

▸ Build community support and develop funding out of local resources

▸ Seek school budget line items for technology or include technology in other existing budget lines

▸ Define ongoing budget costs for professional learning, training, repair, and maintenance

▸ Match the value of grants by local contributions

▸ Evaluate equipment donations to examine the value of such donations

▸ Incorporate discussion of how the results of the funding will be evaluated

to be creative, engage numerous stakeholders, and develop a multiyear plan for financing technology needs.

Review your existing operating budget and consider how your current budget can be altered to support ongoing implementation efforts. By aligning your technology implementation goals with the goals of other school-wide initiatives, you will be able to integrate the costs of technology to support other program goals. For example, in Marengo County Schools in Alabama, the district used funds earmarked to support the needs of students "at risk" to purchase an online software program that teachers could use to create, administer, and track student progress and outcomes. Similarly, professional learning

workshops that focus on integrating technology into instruction, and integrating evidence-based teaching strategies into content areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics, can be funded through professional development dollars linked with curriculum and content area development. Explore the different ways in which technology integration supports programs for students receiving special education services, English language learners, and students in Title I programs, and then refine your existing budgets to include technology use to achieve program goals and outcomes.

Appendix F: Policy Documents to Facilitate the Processes for Working With Teachers, Parents, and Students

Pascack Valley Regional High School District Policies and Forms. Form templates and user guides for the 1:1 eLearning initiative program developed by the district.

http://www.pascack.k12.nj.us//site/Default.aspx?PageID=184

Kent City Schools Tablet Take Home Policy. Parent and student tablet handbook (care, maintenance, accessories, cost, damaged/lost, distribution, and usage).

http://www.kentcityschools.org/highschool/tablet-information/tablet-handbook/

Tablet Computer Policy Manual Procedures and Information, Riggs High School, Pierre, South Dakota. Procedures and information for users of the HP EliteBook Tablet PC (usage, maintenance, and care).

http://pierre.k12.sd.us/media/pierreschoolsfactor360com/uploads/FormsPolicies/tabletcomputerpolicymanual.pdf

Hamlin School District Student Tablet Handbook. Handbook includes student pledge, general guidelines, maintenance, repair, user terms and conditions, and acceptable use policy.

http://www.hamlin.k12.sd.us/PDF%20documents/tablet%20handbook%2009-10.pdf