



SUGGESTED SAFEGUARDS FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FEDERALLY-ASSISTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

[Note: The following ideas and suggestions do not constitute an “official” document or policy of the U.S. Department of Education. They are provided to give the reader ideas on how to responsibly use technology as part of a federally-assisted program. Also included in this document is technology guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education which the reader may find helpful when dealing with technology issues and federal education programs. This document is an official guidance document from the U.S. Department of Education and is provided for the convenience of the reader.]

Technology and Title IIA

iPads or similar technology can be purchased with Title IIA funds as part of the professional development program, but not a stand-alone purchase. However, safeguards should be in place to ensure that their primary use remains as part of the federally-assisted professional development program.

- iPads should only be purchased if the use of the iPads is necessary during the course of the school year and they continue to be used for the professional development purposes—the iPads are not just for use during a one-time instructional PD session. The following are some examples that would make the purchase of iPads:
 - The PD program is web-based and teachers complete the modules at their own pace. Expectations for teacher participation and accomplishments should be clearly spelled out so that the goals of the program will be met.
 - The iPads are purchased so that teachers can appropriately use data to monitor student progress and adapt classroom practices to best meet student needs. This use follows a PD training session on using data effectively to impact student achievement and apps for accomplishing this goal are loaded onto the iPad.

- There should be a use policy in place that instructs teachers that the iPads are for professional development and not for personal use and as such they are the property of the LEA; no personal information should be stored on them and they should remain at the school unless the teacher is, for example, viewing a webinar in the evening or on the weekend. Personal apps, games, etc. should not be loaded onto the iPads. During the summer they should remain at the private school unless being actively used for professional development or returned to the school district if they will no longer be needed during the following school year for the federally-assisted program. Developing a use policy that the teachers sign is recommended.
- The purchase of the iPads must be justified as “reasonable and necessary”—in other words, the PD could not be provided without them. For example, if the web-based PD is provided to the group of teachers on a large screen in a single setting, purchasing iPads for their use is not a reasonable or necessary expense for the program. If the data monitoring can already be done on a computer or other technology already in place in each teacher’s classroom, then the purchase would not be reasonable or necessary.

Technology and Titles IA and III

iPads can be purchased for student use in Title IA provided, as with any other materials, they are used only by Title I participating students at the direction of the Title I teacher. They cannot be used by other students in the classroom and should not be used at the direction of the classroom teacher. Their use should be reasonable and necessary for the program to effectively assist the student in learning to high standards. Students should be informed of a limited use policy—loading personal apps and using the iPad for activities other than those directed by the Title I teacher are not allowed. Title I iPads can be taken home by the students for additional work and practice as assigned by the Title I teacher, provided that there is a reasonable expectation that they will be well-cared for and there is no great risk that the federally purchased property will be lost or stolen.

The use of iPads and other materials purchased with Title III funds is somewhat less restrictive. They can be used at the direction of the classroom teacher and are not completely limited in use to Title III participating students, although those students must remain the primary beneficiaries. As with anything purchased with federal funds, their purchase must be both reasonable and necessary for the program.

U.S. Department of Education Guidance

The U.S. Department of Education encourages the use of technology in federally-assisted programs. Following is their recent guidance on this topic.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
February 5, 2014

Dear Colleague,

Technology can help transform learning when used with innovative instructional approaches such as those outlined in the [National Education Technology Plan](#). Yet many schools, particularly high-need schools, lack the connectivity, resources, and support for teachers and leaders needed to implement digital learning strategies. The President's [ConnectED Initiative](#), unveiled in June 2013, sets a clear goal to have high-speed internet to the classroom, affordable mobile learning devices, high-quality learning content, and support for teachers to move to digital learning within five years. To reach this goal, federal agencies, State and local educational agencies, and private-sector partners must work together to bring the right resources to the table. The purpose of this letter is to help State, district, and eligible partnership grantees better understand how they may be able to use their federal grant programs to support innovative technology-based strategies to personalize learning.

Educational technology advances quickly. Many of the terms we use today to describe technology-enhanced learning did not exist when laws such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were written. However, that does not mean that federal programs can't be used to support thoughtful implementation of educational technology to support schools and teachers in improving educational outcomes, consistent with program requirements. Many federal formula and competitive grant programs allow funds to be used to support digital learning, even if the program statutes do not reference educational technology specifically.

The enclosed document provides some examples of how funds from ESEA (Titles I, II, III) and IDEA may support the use of technology to improve instruction and student outcomes. Examples are limited to ESEA and IDEA due to the scale of these programs, but funds from many other formula and competitive grant programs that are administered by the Department of Education ([ED](#)) may also be used for this purpose. These examples do not depart from previous ED guidance, but clarify opportunities to use federal grant funds to support digital learning, including: (1) improving and personalizing professional learning and other supports for educators; (2) increasing access to high-quality digital content and resources for students; (3) facilitating educator collaboration and communication; and (4) providing devices for students to access digital learning resources. Funding these four areas is important because technology itself is not a panacea. Technology can help improve learning and educational outcomes for students only when teachers are well-supported with appropriate resources and have an opportunity to integrate technology with high quality instruction.

Coordination of Federal program support can help maximize the impact of available resources. For example, a school incorporating digital learning in a Title I school-wide program might use Title I funds to purchase devices and digital learning resources, Title II funds to help teachers improve their teaching through effective blended-learning practices, and Title III funds to provide access

to technology specifically for English Learners. As grantees incorporate technology into instructional practice, any use of technology for these purposes must comply with applicable privacy laws and the specific program requirements of each funding source.

We hope the examples and other information provided below will be helpful in your efforts to leverage advances in technology to improve student learning and achievement.

Sincerely,
Richard Culatta
Director, Office of Educational Technology

*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness
by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

Examples of Leveraging ESEA and IDEA Funds for Digital Teaching and Learning

The examples below identify some of the ways in which grantees may use funds made available under ESEA and IDEA to support teaching and learning with technology through professional development, the development and acquisition of digital materials and resources for students, and educator communication and collaboration online. Each federal grant program has requirements that govern the use of funds, including allowable costs, eligible participants, and supplement not supplant. The examples below highlight how a grantee *can* use federal funds for technology consistent with these provisions.

1. Professional Development – Program funds may be used by grantees to support teachers as they implement digital learning tools effectively, use technology to personalize professional development, use data systems to support and improve teaching, and implement personalized (competency-based) professional learning for teachers.

Support Teachers Using Digital Learning Tools

Districts may use Title II-A funds to hire coaches or help grantees tailor professional learning to the needs of individual educators. For example, coaches might help educators learn to use selected devices, platforms, online assessments, or digital materials or to implement technology supported content-specific instructional practice, based on areas identified for improvement. *ESEA, sec. [2123\(a\)\(5\)\(A\)](#).*

Provide Online Professional Development

States and districts may use Title II-A funds to help district staff create or participate in personalized digital learning opportunities for teachers that help move districts away from one-size-fits-all professional development. This may take the form of “blended” professional learning, webinars, simulations, online conferences, massive open online courses (MOOCs), or online communities of practice. These strategies may help teachers better understand the subjects they teach, improve their instruction, and demonstrate proficiency in using technology to support learning. *ESEA, sec. [2113\(c\)\(10\)](#) and [2123\(a\)\(5\)](#).* School districts may also use Title I-A funds for similar purposes to benefit educators in school wide or targeted assistance Title I programs. *ESEA, secs. [1114\(a\)\(1\)](#), [\(b\)\(1\)\(D\)](#); [1115\(a\)](#), [\(c\)\(1\)\(F\)](#).*

Implement Systems to Collect, Manage, and Analyze Data

States may use Title II-A funds to support district programs that implement systems and supports for teachers and district leaders in the effective use of data to improve instruction and decision-making for school improvement efforts and accountability. *ESEA, sec. [2113\(c\)\(11\)](#).* Similarly, districts may use Title I-A funds to help educators in Title I schools manage and analyze student data in order to improve instruction and decision-making for school improvement efforts. *ESEA, sec. [1114](#), [1115](#).*

Adopt Digital Competency-Based Professional Development

States may use Title II-A funds to develop, or help school districts develop performance systems that reward and acknowledge professional learning outcomes that are competency-based rather than time- or input-based. This may include creation or coaching in the use of online portfolios or digital badges in place of seat-time-based certificates. *ESEA, sec. [2113\(c\)\(12\)](#)*.

2. Student Materials, Resources, and Support – Federal funds may also be used by grantees to provide access to digital materials to better support students.

Provide Access to College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Digital Resources

States and districts may use Title II-A funds to help educators better discover, use, and share content that is aligned with CCR standards. This might include training for educators to find and adapt relevant [Open Educational Resources](#) (OER). *ESEA, secs. [2113\(c\)\(6\)](#) and [2123\(a\)\(3\)](#)*

Enhance Instruction for English Learners with Digital Resources

Districts may use Title III-A funds to improve instruction for English Learners by acquiring digital learning resources and software, including materials in languages other than English. *ESEA, secs. [3115\(d\)\(2\)](#), [3115\(d\)\(7\)](#)*.

Expand the Use of Technology in the Individualized Education Program Process

States may use IDEA Part B set-aside funds to support the use of technology to help reduce paperwork and digitize the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for families and teachers. *IDEA, sec. [611\(e\)\(2\)\(C\)\(ii\)](#)*.

3. Educator Communication and Collaboration – Federal funds may be used by grantees for technology to enhance collaboration among educators, experts, and parents.

Use Technology to Communicate with Parents

States may use IDEA Part D State Professional Development Grants (SPDG) to enhance both special education and general education teachers' ability to effectively integrate technology to communicate with parents of students with disabilities. *IDEA, sec. [654\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#)*.

Use Technology to Connect Educators with STEM Professionals

States may use Title II-B Math Science Partnership funds to purchase software and devices that are an essential component of a grantee's plan to create and provide digital professional learning communities (PLCs) with practicing scientists or engineers. *ESEA, sec. [2202\(c\)\(8\)](#)*.

Participate in English Learner Focused Communities of Practice

Districts may use Title III-A funds for online professional development activities, virtual communities of practice, and sharing of digital materials to support efforts to improve instruction for English Learners. *ESEA, sec. [3115\(d\)\(2\)](#)*.

4. Devices - Federal funds may be used by grantees to purchase devices for students to access digital learning materials and collaborate with peers and educators.

Provide Students with Mobile Learning Devices

Districts may use Title I-A funds to acquire devices (tablets, laptops, etc.) in addition to curriculum and professional development as part of a comprehensive plan in a Title I school-wide program school. This may include transitioning to school-wide blended learning or personalized learning models. *ESEA, sec. [1114](#)*.

Provide Students with Assistive Technology Devices

States may use IDEA Part B funds set aside for State-level activities to support the use of assistive technology devices that maximize accessibility to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. *IDEA, sec. [611\(e\)\(2\)\(C\)\(v\)](#)*. Districts may use IDEA Part B funds to provide the specific assistive technology devices and services that are identified by the IEP team as needed by an individual student to receive free appropriate public education. *IDEA, sec. [613\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)\(i\)](#)*.

These are just a few examples of allowable uses of grant program funds that may support the development, implementation, and expansion of technology-based approaches to help improve student achievement and educator effectiveness. To identify further opportunities, please review the statutes, regulations, and guidance for each federal program or contact the U.S. Department of Education. Additional resources for planning and implementing technology to support learning are available at <http://www.ED.gov/technology>.