Technology in Amherst Public Schools (TAPS)

Amherst School Committee Policy Subcommittee

Purpose

The Technology in Amherst Public Schools (TAPS) is established as a Subcommittee to advise the Amherst School Committee in the development of a new district technology policy addressing student screen use, digital learning tools, and artificial intelligence (AI) in schools. The district's current technology policy was adopted in 2014 and has not been updated to reflect significant changes in technology, classroom practice, student learning needs, and the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. The School Committee is committed to creating a modern, relevant, evidence-informed policy that supports teaching and learning, includes educators in the planning discussion, and promotes student well-being, equity, ethical digital citizenship, and responsible technology use.

Responsibilities

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the district's existing technology policies, practices, and curricula that rely on technology
- Prioritize the experience, needs, and input of students and educators
- Develop a survey to gather baseline data on technology use in schools
- Gather input from educators, interventionists, support staff, students, parents and guardians, administrators, and other stakeholders to help guide policy
- Examine current research and best practices related to educational technology, student screen time, and AI
- Develop a set of evaluation criteria, based on our ethos and values around technology use, that the district can apply as guidance when determining curriculum, ongoing programs, and new technologies, to screen use and AI
- Develop recommendations for a revised district technology policy for consideration by the Amherst School Committee
- Ensure that proposed policy is responsive to classroom realities
- Ensure that proposed policy support educators, paras, interventionists, and specialists in meeting student needs

Membership of TAPS

TAPS can include up to 15 representatives from:

- School staff
- District IT/ instructional leadership
- Caregivers and families
- Students, as appropriate
- School Committee members (two maximum to prevent quorum)

Members will work collaboratively to ensure that multiple perspectives are reflected in policy recommendations.

Stakeholder Engagement

A central responsibility of TAPS is to engage the broader school community throughout the policy development process. The Committee will begin by gathering feedback from school staff and other stakeholders regarding current technology and screen use practices in district schools. Additional opportunities for input from families, educators, students, and community members will be provided throughout the process.

Survey responses and other feedback will be collected and reported in aggregate. Individual responses will remain anonymous. A summary of findings will be shared with educators and stakeholders and will inform the Committee's recommendations to the School Committee.

Deliverables

- Regular meetings and at minimum, annual reviews to reflect the ever-changing landscape of technology
- Create a guiding principles document
- Policy recommendation to the ASC, updated annually as appropriate or as needed