GUIDANCE

EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANION GUIDE TO THE
TITLE IV PART A: STUDENT SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

New York State Education Department

Office of ESSA-Funded Programs

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Title IV Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Program
Effective Use of Technology

INTRODUCTION

This companion document is intended to provide additional guidance related to the allowable activities that support the intent and purpose of the effective use of technology as defined in Title IV, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).[1]

Activities to Support Effective Use of Technology

A portion of the SSAE program funds, if $30,000 or greater, must be used for increasing effective use of technology to improve the academic achievement, academic growth, and digital literacy of all students.

When carefully designed and thoughtfully applied, technology can accelerate, amplify, and expand the impact of effective practices that support student learning, increase community engagement, foster safe and healthy environments, and enable well-rounded educational opportunities. Technology can expand growth opportunities for all students while affording historically disadvantaged students greater equity of access to high-quality learning materials, field experts, personalized learning, and tools for planning for future education. Such opportunities can also support increased capacity for educators to create blended learning opportunities for their students, rethinking when, where, and how students complete different components of a learning experience. However, for technology to be truly transformative, educators need to have the knowledge and skills to take full advantage of technology-rich learning environments.

A Special Rule in the SSAE program states that no more than 15 percent of funds for activities to support the effective use of technology may be used "for purchasing technology infrastructure as described in subsection (a)(2)(B), which includes technology infrastructure purchased for the activities under subsection (a)(4)(A)." To clarify, LEAs or consortiums of LEAs may not spend more than 15 percent of funding in this content area on devices, equipment, software applications, platforms, digital instructional resources and/or other one-time IT purchases. (ESEA section 4109(b)).

Note that the modernization of the Federal Communications Commission's E-rate program has significantly increased access to funding for building a robust infrastructure to support learning enabled by technology. Additionally, coordination of Federal program support can help maximize the impact of available resources. For example, a school incorporating digital learning in a Title I schoolwide program might use Title I funds to purchase devices and digital learning resources to incorporate blended learning, Title II funds to help teachers improve instruction through effective blended-learning practices, and Title III funds to provide access to technology specifically for English Learners. Supplemental funds awarded to rural communities through the Small, Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA) and the Rural, Low-income School Program (RLIS) may additionally be

[1] This guide is adapted from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance: Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants, Washington, D.C., 2016. Available online at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html.

used to support technology instruction in schools. 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. For more information please see the Office of Educational Technology's privacy web page and ED's Technical Assistance Center (PTAC).

In addition to purchases for technology infrastructure, at least 85 percent of funds used under section 4109 may be used to support a variety of professional development, defined in 8101(42) as activities that are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies, activities and for capacity building and other activities directly related to improving the use of educational technology. Also emphasized in 8102 (42), professional development activities should be sustained, (not stand-alone, one-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. LEAs may use the SSAE program funds to support educators in accessing needed technology, in learning how to use it effectively, and to provide continuous, just-in-time support that includes professional development, mentors, and informal collaborations. This professional development should support and develop educators' identities as fluent users of technology, creative and collaborative problem solvers, and adaptive experts in the effective selection and implementation of educational technology.

Funds may be used to provide ready access to high-quality content and expertise, and provide opportunities for more focused, relevant, and continuous professional development. Specifically, the SSAE program funds may be used to provide educators, school leaders, and administrators with the professional learning tools, devices, content and resources to do the following activities, among other allowable uses.

Provide personalized learning. Personalized learning allows educators to adjust the pace of learning and to optimize instructional approaches for the needs of each learner as they strive to meet rigorous expectations for college and career success. Learning objectives, instructional approaches, and instructional content (and its sequencing) all may vary based on learner needs; and learning activities are meant to be meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated.

Discover, adapt and share high-quality resources. These high-quality resources include openly licensed educational resources. Openly licensed educational resources, also referred to in ESEA as "open education resources" and "openly licensed content" (see ESEA section 4102, for the definition of "digital learning" that includes these terms), are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under a license that permits their free use, reuse, modification, and sharing with others. Open resources may include full online courses, curated digital collections, or more granular resources such as images, videos, and assessment items.

Implement blended learning strategies. These strategies include a formal education program that leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches that include an element of online or digital learning, combined with supervised learning time, and student-led learning, in which the elements are connected to provide an integrated learning experience, and in which students are provided some control over time, path, or pace. (ESEA section 4102(1)). Funds may be used for ongoing professional development on how to implement blended learning projects and to support planning activities. An LEA, for example, may use funds to provide initial professional learning

for educators on effective blended learning model instruction, ongoing collaborative planning time, and ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities to improve educator practice. These ongoing opportunities could include access to digital professional learning resources, a collaborative community of practice, and/or coaching.

Implement school- and district-wide approaches to inform instruction, support teacher collaboration, and personalize learning. Technology offers avenues for teachers to become more collaborative with other educators and community partners to improve their instruction and to extend learning beyond the classroom. Educators can create learning communities composed of students; fellow educators in schools, museums, libraries, and after-school programs; experts in various disciplines around the world; members of community organizations; and families. This enhanced collaboration, enabled by technology, may offer access to instructional materials as well as the resources and tools to create, manage, and assess their quality and usefulness.
The SSAE funds may be used to provide personalized professional development so that educators receive tailored, job-embedded support.

The SSAE program funds can also be used to help educators learn how to use technology to increase the engagement of English learner (EL) students and communication with parents and caregivers of ELs, as well as parents and caregivers who lack English proficiency.

Funds, subject to the 15 percent Special Rule, may be used to build technology capacity and infrastructure, which includes procuring and ensuring quality of content, and purchasing devices, equipment and software to increase readiness. For example, an LEA could choose to purchase and implement a professional learning platform or software that would support virtual coaching and/or provide just-in-time professional development that enabled educators to learn how to use technology more effectively. Educators in rural areas, isolated community schools, and/or who are the sole teachers in their school or district of particular content, such as the arts or STEM, may especially benefit from such implementations. Funds could also be used to purchase or create a system that improves the procurement and evaluation process for identifying solutions and implementations that match the context of the LEA.

The SSAE program funds may also be used to develop or implement specialized or rigorous academic courses using technology, including assistive technology.55 (ESEA section 4109(a)(3)). For example, the SSAE program funds may be used to provide rural, remote, and underserved areas with resources to take advantage of high-quality digital learning experiences, digital resources, and access to online courses taught by effective educators. (ESEA section 4109(a)(6)). Separate from the up to 15 percent of funds that may be used to purchase online courses (technology infrastructure), other technology funds under section 4109 may be used to train educators on how to implement these online courses. Funds could also be used to expand professional learning for educators in rural, remote or underserved areas through the use of virtual coaching models.

Additionally, the SSAE program funds may be used to support professional learning for STEM, including computer science. Educators, for example, could participate in virtual, blended, or face-to-face courses and workshops designed to increase their capacity to offer high-quality STEM courses, such as computer science, engineering, game design and/or other STEM-related courses.

Opportunities to learn how to embed STEM elements, such as engineering design principles, computational thinking, and app design, within other learning experiences could also be included.

Schools must make assistive technology available to students with disabilities when that technology is necessary to provide access to the curriculum for the student to receive a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. When a school provides technology to students without disabilities, the benefits provided by that technology must also be made available to students with disabilities in an equally accessible and equally integrated manner. When possible, creation or procurement strategies should support resources that are "born accessible." For example, an LEA could create professional learning, guidance and support structures necessary to build teacher capacity around accessible resources that are "born accessible" or "born digital," and therefore attend to such features as - text descriptions for non-text items (e.g., animations, images, graphics, and other embedded media), use of color or contrast, and the ways in which information is organized and presented. As schools and districts use open educational resources, digital assessments, and online materials, State and district leaders can support teachers in learning about accessibility and provide trainings, resources and tools that will aid in procuring the appropriate resources for their students.

Additionally, acquisition of content creation tools will allow State and local staff to create digital texts, graphics, learning games, online courses and other resources that include accessibility features, to ensure educational materials, content, software and learning platforms including those that are openly licensed and are accessible to all students. Additional examples of effective use of funds for technology can be found throughout the National Education Technology Plan.