MEMORANDUM: ACTL COUNCIL INPUT on TECHNOLOGY & DEVICES

To: Cristina Diaz-Torres, School Board Chair and Board liaison for ACTL
David Priddy, Interim School Board Chair
Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Dr. Gerald Mann, Chief Academic Officer

CC:[1]   Mary Kadera; Bethany Zecher Sutton; Miranda Turner
Sarah Putnam; Kerri Hirsch
Educational Technology Advisory Committee

From: Advisory Council on Teaching & Learning; Jenny Roahen Rizzo (Chair),
Katie Cochran (Vice Chair), Anne Paris (Co-Secretary), Mike Cieslak (Co-Secretary)

Date: June 6, 2024

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to share initial feedback from ACTL reps about technology and devices in schools and in relation to student learning.

ACTL will delve more deeply into some of these topics during the 2024-25 school year.

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[1] Mary Kadera, Bethany Zecher Sutton, Miranda Turner, School Board members
Sarah Putnam, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Office of Academics
Kerri Hirsch, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Office of Academics

METHOD

During Spring of the 2023-24 school year, the ACTL Council conducted learning sessions and conversations on technology and devices.

April ACTL meeting	The following committees presented their draft recommendations to the ACTL Council followed by Q&A and discussion: ● Educational Technology Advisory Committee ● School Health Advisory Board Staff from Information Services shared a presentation on Lightspeed with ACTL followed by Q&A and discussion. ACTL reps held a discussion about technology and devices.
May ACTL meeting	Reps further discussed technology and devices. Reps also had the opportunity to provide feedback in writing.

COMMON THEMES

The overarching theme that emerged in these discussions is that **tech brings many opportunities, and it has opportunity costs**. Additional themes were as follows:

Benefits

- Using devices can be fun for students.

- Some apps adapt to a student's level, making it possible for the student to engage in work that is tailored to them.

The need to use technology capably and well

- Tech is here to stay: students need to be conversant in using technology well.

- Some downsides of using screens include: impersonal, distracting, leads to inefficient multitasking.

- Students need to be taught keyboarding.
  - This is important in elementary school now that students must perform SOLs on devices.
  - When students get to high school, they face a strong uptick in writing, all on the computer.

- Inconsistency in how Canvas is used creates challenges for students and families.

Determining appropriate usage in learning

- It's not clear what the guiding principles are for technology in learning. Devices should add value, eg, enhance classroom lessons, enhance transparency.

- Attention is needed to attain the right balance between screen time vs other learning tools and methods (ie, group work, paper & pencil, hardcopy books, etc).

- There needs to be a well-thought-out and -articulated method for determining when an app is the best way to learn something and when a different tool/method is the best way: ie, decision tree for determining The Right Tool, at the Right Time, for the Right Purpose.

- There are concerns about younger students not getting as much language acquisition from talking and handwriting.

- There are concerns about how APS will make effective decisions about tech usage without an Office of Educational Technology.

Family engagement and awareness

- Many parents are very in the dark on a variety of aspects, such as how much time kids are on school devices, what they are doing on devices, what parents should know, how to support their kids, etc.

- Parents need more guidance on expectations for students using APS-issued devices outside of the classroom.

Equity

- Devices and technology further equity in some ways and counteract it in others.

- An advanced level of executive functioning is needed to appropriately self-manage device usage.

Health concerns

- Device usage has health risks (eg, vision, repetitive motion injury, mental health).

- Some MS families would prefer laptops over iPads -- more creating, less consuming.

Academic integrity challenges

- Adults (many parents and many teachers) lag behind students in understanding the ways tech can be used to enable academic dishonesty.
  - Sometimes students are allowed to have their phones during tests.
  - The software to prohibit switching tabs or taking screen shots through the laptop is often not employed by teachers.
  - Photos of test answers circulate.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Elementary schools represented in one or both meetings: Barrett, Cardinal, Discovery, Escuela Key, Innovation, Oakridge, Randolph, Taylor, Tuckahoe

Secondary schools represented in one or both meetings: Gunston, Hamm, H-B Woodlawn, Jefferson, Kenmore, Swanson, Shriver, Wakefield, Yorktown

Community groups represented in one or both meetings: The League of Women Voters

Written input provided by: Washington-Liberty

STAFF COMMENTS

We appreciate ACTL's review and the feedback regarding the use of technology and devices in APS. Your insights have highlighted both the opportunities and challenges that come with integrating technology into students' learning experiences. Your feedback underscores the importance of balancing technology use as a tool that enhances learning with our students' educational and developmental needs. We are committed to reviewing the themes and concerns you have identified and look forward to the ongoing review of this topic in the 2024-25 school year.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACTL is grateful to the many people who have provided information, experiences, and perspectives that have informed our discussions on technology and devices.

Staff: Dr. Gerald Mann, Sarah Putnam, Kerri Hirsch, Dr. Sarah Johnson, Jackie Firster

Community: parents/guardians who gave input to their ACTL representatives