

Resolutions on Edtech

2019 Annual Meeting

Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)

The Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and other associations have begun to speak out and educate their members about some of the negative impacts of educational technology.

The MTA passed the following resolutions in relation to edtech at its Annual Meeting in May 2019. (Additions to existing resolutions are underlined.)

Revised B-30

B-30 TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The Massachusetts Teachers Association recognizes that access to new technology is essential to the expansion of knowledge and the development of new skills. Therefore, the MTA supports the appropriate use of technology in education and urges school committees and governing boards of higher education to bargain with local associations and chapters to develop policies regarding the use of such technology. The MTA believes that educators and students should be given the opportunity to explore and use the potential of emerging technologies under conditions that ensure their health and safety. Filtering of Internet websites must maintain a balance between the protection of students and the open flow of information.

The MTA also believes that every student should have the opportunity to experience technology education and that all educational professionals should have the opportunity for training in their schools in utilizing educational technology in their classrooms. Furthermore, the MTA believes that instructional technology should be used to support, but not to supplant, the classroom teacher educator.

The MTA believes that the use of digital technology in classrooms cannot be addressed in isolation from students' home use. The MTA encourages a holistic approach in which educators and administrators work with parents or guardians wishing to protect children from the dangers of excessive screen use, including health effects, gaming addiction and screen-related anxiety and depression.

The MTA encourages districts to enact policies that result in limiting the distractions caused by smartphones and other digital devices, including school-issued devices, in schools.

The MTA also encourages schools to moderate the use of online homework and online textbooks in order to help students avoid excessive screen exposure.

Revised C-12

C-12 DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY COMPUTER SAFETY

The Massachusetts Teachers Association strongly urges that school committee, boards of trustees and the governing boards of higher education governing bodies throughout Massachusetts take appropriate steps to ensure the health and safety of students and school personnel in using computers in classrooms and offices.

The MTA believes that measures should be taken to avoid the potential of harmful effects of computer usage such as using digital technology, including radiation, eye strain, muscular and neurological disorders, as well as social, emotional and psychological impacts.

Whenever public school or higher education systems require substantial use of electronic screen devices, such requirements should be widely publicized and debated by educators, school health officials, parents or guardians, and education governing bodies.

Rationale provided by Education Policy Committee:

Growing children are not just small adults; they are developing in specific stages and at different rates, without a full set of adult physical or psychological capabilities. As such, children are more vulnerable to the hazards posed by digital devices. Students will suffer more serious damage due to those vulnerabilities, because the related health risks are cumulative and the schools are demanding use of devices at ever-earlier ages.

Because the schools are requiring daily device use from students, starting at a very young age, and continuing throughout these developmentally critical stages, extreme caution should be applied when demanding the use of school equipment – equipment that has been regulated for adults by OSHA since the 1990s.

New technologies poised for classroom use – including virtual reality tools and computer-based learning applications – will bring even higher levels of risk to Massachusetts students. It is within this context of increased digital exposures that policy makers must make responsible, well-informed, regulatory and purchase decisions to protect students from known – and future – classroom hazards.

Revised C-15

C-15 ADVERTISING IN THE SCHOOL

The Massachusetts Teachers Association believes that schools provide an educational setting that should not be influenced by outside commercial interests. Therefore, the MTA is strongly opposed to providing access to public school facilities for commercial gain.

The MTA believes that any introduction of technology must be undertaken in ways that limit commercial access to students and their data wherever and whenever possible.