



# TRY IT OUT

## COMPANION GUIDE



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION



## TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

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The MDE does not officially endorse any specific technology standards or models of teaching with technology. However, the resources provided within this companion guide are made available to assist educators and school and district leaders with the integration of technology into classrooms, schools, and school districts. Local schools have discretion over which technology partners and products are used in their districts. For legal advice regarding technology services, please contact your local school board attorney.



# ACCESSIBILITY

**1** Allow students to use digital tools to adjust the way they receive information (e.g., digital books, text-to-speech, texts with adjustable reading levels, changeable color contrast, alterable text size, captions, visual dictionaries, translations, etc.).

**2** Ensure students understand which digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools are appropriate to use before beginning the learning activity.

**3** Provide opportunities for students to express learning in a variety of ways (e.g., writing, videos, audio recordings, concept maps, infographics, etc.).

**4** Create a survey to understand students' access to devices, connectivity, and resources outside of the classroom.

# TRY IT OUT



# 1

Allow students to use digital tools to adjust the way they receive information (e.g., digital books, text-to-speech, texts with adjustable reading levels, changeable color contrast, alterable text size, captions, visual dictionaries, translations, etc.).



## GET READY

### DEFINING THE PRACTICE

Digital tools are the software, programs, or applications that students may access to help their learning. Some digital tools have built-in supports that give students the ability to adjust the way information is presented, guiding learners as they access content in ways that best suit their needs and preferences. Learners may choose to receive information through the use of digital books, text-to-speech, color contrasting, alternative text size, translations, and more. In addition to built-in support, there are external extension tools that can be used to adjust the presentation of information across a variety of technology programs and platforms.

## GET SET

### UNDERSTANDING THE WHY

When students have opportunities to adjust the way they receive information, educators demonstrate responsiveness to the needs and preferences of all learners. In doing so, they also promote inclusivity in the classroom, as all students can learn in ways that work best for them. Ensuring that all learners can access and understand content leads to increased confidence and engagement in the learning process. Student understanding improves as learners are better able to retain information and apply it in new contexts.

### 1 BUILD YOUR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Before introducing students to digital tools that allow them to adjust the way they receive information, take some time to build your own understanding of available features and settings. Consider your most commonly used digital platforms and investigate how students can adjust the way they receive information within that tool. Some helpful strategies to learn about these features include:

- ▶ Reference the accessibility section within the manual for the tool or platform.
- ▶ Visit the online help center for the tool or platform. Most help pages have a search bar you can use to find specific information.
- ▶ Contact the vendor support team.
- ▶ Conduct an online search for the name of the tool + “accessibility”.
- ▶ Network and learn from other educators in your school, district, or online communities.

### 2

#### MODEL AND DEMONSTRATE

The end goal is for all students to know what options are available and equip them to make decisions about what works best for them as learners. Prepare them to achieve this by showing students the many ways they can adjust how information is received through frequent modeling and demonstration of the tools and features. Use mini-lessons to provide explicit instruction on how to use the tools.

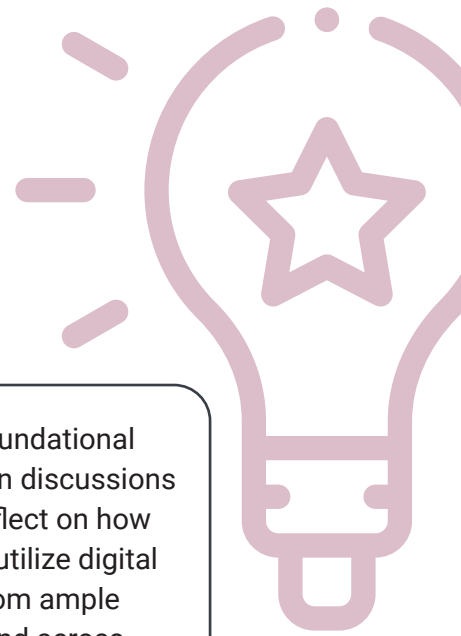
### 3

#### APPLY IN PRACTICE

Once you have modeled how students may adjust the way they receive information, intentionally plan activities that allow students to apply those skills in action. Consider engaging students in a discussion, encouraging them to share what options may be used for the specific activity and why they may choose that option to receive information. You may also hold one-on-one conferences with students (see Active Learning & Engagement: Try it Out Activity 4), using this time to discuss how they might use digital tools based on their specific learning needs.

# GRADE BAND

## CONSIDERATIONS



### PreK - 2nd Grade

In early elementary years, teachers can help students build a strong foundational understanding of the choices we make as learners. Regularly engage in discussions surrounding the different ways that we can receive information and reflect on how these options can impact us as learners. Model for students how you utilize digital tools to support your own learning. Young students will also benefit from ample opportunities to experiment using these tools in a variety of settings and across content areas. Allow students to practice as they work in large groups, small groups, and with partners in order to provide an extra layer of support as students work toward independence.

### 3rd - 5th Grade

Teachers can build the confidence of 3rd-5th grade students by encouraging the use of tools with digital supports in a brief, low-stakes task before using those tools in a significant learning activity. As students practice making adjustments to how they receive information, they learn to use the tools that best suit their needs. When students are working independently, teachers should create and share support resources, such as anchor charts (see Digital Citizenship: Try it Out Activity 2), how-to guides, or video tutorials, to provide options for learners as they use specific features to change how the information is being received.

### Middle School

Middle school students will benefit from opportunities that allow them to make decisions based on their knowledge of their needs as learners. As a class, explore a tool such as **Immersive Reader** or **Read and Write**, modeling how each can be used to support access to information. The teacher may guide the class in a discussion surrounding the supports, including when and why a student may choose to adjust the way information is received. Then, teachers may create visual reminders within the classroom space to support students' decision-making process about which tools and supports to utilize when working independently.

## High School

Equip high school students with the skills needed to make decisions about how and when to adjust the way they receive information by making it a part of the expected workflow, even as they engage in independent classroom tasks. For example, the first step of a project might be to review digital tools that can assist with the given task and determine which they will utilize. By emphasizing the thought process behind these decisions and building in time for students to reflect and make choices, learners can develop these important habits before beginning college or their future career.

## RESOURCES

Microsoft: [Accessibility for Everyone](#)

Google: [Accessibility Products and Features](#)

[Access for All Guide 2.0](#) (Mississippi Department of Education)

Digital Learning Best Practices Deep Dive: [Addressing the Needs of ALL Learners](#) (Mississippi Department of Education)

[Tools for Teachers: Accessibility Strategies](#)

[Empower Students With Accessibility Tools](#)

[Universal Design for Learning](#)



# TRY IT OUT



## 2

Ensure students understand which digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools are appropriate to use before beginning the learning activity.



When educators incorporate digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools into instruction, they create a more inclusive learning environment for all students. Follow these recommendations to ensure that students understand how to use these helpful tools and features during learning activities:

## BUILD

### AN UNDERSTANDING OF AVAILABLE SUPPORTS

First, build your own background knowledge of available digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools within the tools, platforms, and programs you utilize with students. This includes:

- **Digital supports:** Tools or resources that allow students to effectively engage with content, such as tutorials, videos, simulations, digital texts, and other multimedia content.
- **Assistive technologies:** Special tools or devices that help students access information or perform a task, such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and screen readers.
- **Accessibility tools:** Features or settings designed to make digital content more accessible to all users, such as closed captioning, alternative text for images, and screen contrast, and adjusting font size.
- Communicating feedback with a positive and supportive tone

There are many ways to learn about available digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools. Begin by referencing manuals or guides about the platform or tool. Most technologies include a section on accessibility within their support



resources. You might also reach out directly to the vendor support team for guidance on available features and how to access them. Consider networking with other educators who use the tool or platform or conducting an online search to learn from other educator’s experiences.

## **INTRODUCE** TO STUDENTS

Engage in classroom discussions about digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools. Explain the terms and ensure students understand how these supports can help learners succeed. Depending on the age and readiness of students, determine the amount of support and repetition that students will require in order to confidently choose and utilize the tools independently. Possible supports during the introduction phase include:

- ✓ Model and demonstrate use of the tool during whole-group lessons.
- ✓ Provide explicit instruction on how to use the tools.
- ✓ Create and share support resources, such as anchor charts, how-to guides, or video tutorials (see Digital Citizenship: Try it Out Activity 2).
- ✓ Allow students to work in pairs or groups when they are first learning to use the tools.
- ✓ Build confidence with the tool by using it during a brief, low-stakes task before using it within the context of a significant learning activity.

## **UTILIZE** TOOLS & SUPPORTS IN PRACTICE

Encourage students to use digital supports, assistive technologies, and accessibility tools during learning activities. At the beginning of the lesson, review the task with students and identify what supports, technologies, and tools are appropriate for the activity based on their learning needs and preferences. Invite students to share any questions they have to seek clarification about how to use the tools and features and how this can support their learning process. You might create visual reminders within the classroom to support their decision-making process about which tools and supports to utilize when working independently.

# RESOURCES



**Access for All Guide 2.0** (Mississippi Department of Education)

Digital Learning Best Practices Deep Dive: **Addressing the Needs of ALL Learners** (Mississippi Department of Education)

**Tools for Teachers: Accessibility Strategies**

**Empower Students With Accessibility Tools**

**Universal Design for Learning**



# TRY IT OUT



# 3

Provide opportunities for students to express learning in a variety of ways (e.g., writing, videos, audio recordings, concept maps, infographics, etc.).



## GET READY

### DEFINING THE PRACTICE

Expressing learning in a variety of ways helps students develop their learner agency as they make choices that best suit their personal needs and preferences in the classroom. With this strategy, students utilize different technology tools and demonstrate mastery of content through various multimedia options. Common options for expression include writing, video, audio, concept mapping, infographics, or graphic design. A variety of technology tools may be utilized for multimedia creation, based on student age and readiness, such as [Canva](#), [Microsoft Suite](#), [Google Suite](#), or [Adobe Express](#).

## GET SET

### UNDERSTANDING THE WHY

All students can experience success in the classroom when given opportunities to express their learning in the ways that work best for them. When students have the ability to select how they express their learning, they experience more success as learners because they can make choices that align with their learning preferences, interests, and strengths. This helps students develop a deeper understanding of the content. Furthermore, when educators shift away from only using traditional tests to gauge learning and move toward higher-order creation tasks, they gain a more accurate picture of student understanding of standards and content, which helps them identify strengths and learning gaps. By allowing students to choose how they demonstrate their understanding, educators can also promote student agency (see *Standards Aligned Content & Tools: Try it Out Activity 3*). Learners become more motivated and engaged, and benefit academically as they come to understand their own needs and interests as learners.

# GO

## IMPLEMENTING IN THE CLASSROOM

In order for students to make effective choices about how they will express their learning in the classroom, it is important to provide them with strategies to guide their selections. Consider the following process to help students make choices that best support their needs and preferences in the classroom:

### 1 INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Students can use a variety of technology tools to express their learning. To better support students as they use these tools, you must first ensure that students can confidently and effectively use the tools for multimedia creation. Based on the age and readiness of your class, you should provide opportunities for students to explore technology tools in a variety of settings and contexts so they may understand how each tool is used for learning. Students must understand the purpose of the digital tool and how it may be applied to the learning environment in order to make appropriate choices to express their learning. You may consider utilizing the following tools with your class:

- ▶ **Microsoft Suite**
- ▶ **Google Suite**
- ▶ **Canva**
- ▶ **Adobe Creative Cloud**
- ▶ **Seesaw**
- ▶ **Flip**
- ▶ **iMovie**
- ▶ **Spotify for Podcasters**

### 2

### DESIGN OPEN-ENDED TASKS

Now that students have been introduced to technology tools to express their learning, it is time to design open-ended tasks. When designing these activities, clearly define learning objectives and criteria that outline the content connection. Consider using a **mastery rubric**, a **single point rubric**, or a checklist to provide clear correlations between the creative task and how it must express understanding of content. As a class, discuss how the learning criteria can fit into a variety of multimedia representations. Once the task has been designed and the criteria shared, provide students with the opportunity to make choices about how they will express their learning including which tool they may use.

3

### PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

As students make choices about how they will express learning, be sure to offer guidance and support. As needed, provide suggestions, examples and answer student questions. The goal is for students to make an informed decision that aligns with their needs and preferences as a learner. You might find it helpful to implement a system for one-on-one conferences in the classroom (see Active Learning & Engagement: Try it Out Activity 4), as conversations that take place within these conferences provide important opportunities for reflection, feedback, and individualized goal setting.

4

### ENGAGE IN REFLECTION AFTER COMPLETING THE TASK

After students complete the task, encourage them to reflect on how well they were able to communicate their learning using their chosen product or media type. Using reflective questions, guide students to think metacognitively, so they are able to recognize how their choices impacted their own learning experience. Providing this dedicated time for reflection helps students build effective habits and strategies that will support their learning over time.

## GRADE BAND CONSIDERATIONS

### PreK - 2nd Grade

In PreK-2nd grade classrooms, modeling is a great strategy to use with students as they begin expressing their learning. Demonstrate how multiple media types can communicate the same information in different ways. When you are delivering content, work to integrate a variety of media for students to access so they may practice receiving information from multiple means of representation. You may consider introducing students to technology tools that provide several options within one platform, such as [Seesaw](#), to help them practice variety in expression.



### 3rd - 5th Grade

Elementary learners benefit from additional scaffolding and support as they come to understand themselves as learners. It can also feel overwhelming to young learners to have too many choices. Teachers can provide necessary guidance as students make choices about how to demonstrate their learning by offering a curated selection of options for tools and/or media types. Consider creating choice boards with 3-4 different options for completion in order to make the process more manageable for students (see Standards Aligned Content & Tools: Try it Out Activity 2).

### Middle School

Middle schoolers will have a better grasp on the way they prefer to express their learning, as well as additional knowledge of a variety of tools and media that they utilize both inside and outside of the classroom. To best support this age group, engage in ongoing conversations throughout the year about technology tools that students are interested in using to communicate ideas and information. Then, allow students to select the digital tool(s) that best suit their preferred method of expression. This will provide students with the ability to apply their learner agency skills, while also assessing digital tools that can support their learning preferences. You may find that students are utilizing tools that you are not as familiar with! Use this as an opportunity to let students be the expert and truly drive their own learning.

### High School

High school students are equipped for more freedom and flexibility in how they express learning over time. Consider inviting students to create digital portfolios to capture mastery of content in a variety of ways, such as pictures, videos, audio recordings, and visual creations (see Active Learning & Engagement: Try it Out Activity 3). Digital portfolios containing a variety of artifacts that demonstrate student learning can become powerful tools to showcase skills, achievements, and learning experiences as students prepare for future college and careers.

## RESOURCES

**Universal Design for Learning: Provide options for Expression and Communication** (CAST)

**5 Tips for Giving Students Choice That Leads to Student Voice** (Edutopia)

**Does Offering Students a Choice in Assignments Lead to Greater Engagement?** (Digital Promise)



# TRY IT OUT



# 4

Assist students with setting goals and monitoring their own progress based on formative assessments and feedback.



Equitable access to technology means that all students have the opportunity to utilize technology to support their learning, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, ability, age, gender, or other characteristics. Understanding access to devices, connectivity, and resources outside of the classroom to support learning beyond school walls is imperative in creating a learning environment that supports the needs of all students. To do this, a teacher or school may consider creating a survey to better understand the needs of the students, families, and communities in an effort to make digital learning accessible for all learners. When creating an access to technology survey, here are a few things to consider:

## **DEVELOPING** THE QUESTIONS

In order to get a clear picture of the current reality of technology access in students' homes, the following questions may be included:

- Do you have internet access at home? Wi-Fi?
- What types of devices are available in your home to support school work?
- How old are the devices in your home?
- Does your student have their own device?
- Do you or your student know how to access school resources at home?
- How often does your student spend on a device with internet access each day?
- How often does your student use the device for school assignments?
- Likert scale questions to gauge families' viewpoints on the use of technology for learning.

## CREATING THE SURVEY

Once you have determined the questions to include on your survey, consider the following digital tools for creating your survey:

- ✓ **Google Forms**
- ✓ **Microsoft Forms**
- ✓ **Survey Monkey**
- ✓ **Typeform**

## SHARING THE SURVEY

It is important to share the survey in a variety of places to ensure all families have access to complete it, providing an accurate picture of technology access within the class or the entire student body. You may share the survey in the following ways:

- Provide a link to complete the survey in an email sent to all families.
- Paste a link to complete in teachers' email signatures.
- Share the survey within the school LMS or online class page
- Create a survey space in the front office, media center, or family resource room for families to complete at the school.
- Design an advertisement for the survey with a QR code so families may easily access it on a portable device.
- Provide a paper copy of the survey as well, sharing with families that may not have technology access to complete it online.
- Communicate information about locations in the community that offer free Wi-Fi and/or computers, such as public libraries, where the survey can be completed if needed.



# REVIEWING & APPLYING THE DATA

Surveys are only as impactful as you make them. It is important to thoroughly review the data to provide needed support for students in the area. For teachers creating a survey for their individual classrooms, the data may reveal that individual students need additional support on how to use technology in the classroom, a majority of assignments need to be completed in the classroom due to the lack of access at home, or individuals need support on where they may find internet access in the community. For schools seeking to create and share a survey, the data may provide needed information to develop a school-wide technology plan with the help of teachers, administrators, families, and community members. The survey data will paint a picture of students' ability to access technology outside of the classroom, helping to bridge gaps and support digital learning for all students.

## RESOURCES

### What It Means to Have Equitable Access to Technology for Today's Students & Educators

**Equitable Access** (ISTE)

Example technology survey: [Grant County Schools Kentucky](#)

Example technology survey: [School District Technology Survey Questions Related to Home Internet Connectivity](#) (Kajeet)

