



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

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PRESENTS POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

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Can Board Policy Keep Up with Technology?

CSDE Update on the CT Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support Plans 2024

CT Lawmakers Urged to Delay Kindergarten Entrance Change in CT Mirror, 2/22/24

It's been about a year since the AI-powered language model, ChatGPT, became a part of the general public's consciousness, and discussions regarding AI's impact have become commonplace in our schools. Just when you may have thought you were getting a handle on text, image, and speech platforms, *Sora* looks to make an appearance shortly. *Sora*, OpenAI's new tool, can create photorealistic videos based on user prompts and will likely have many implications for teachers.

According to *Tech & Learning's* Erik Ofgang, "While AI video generators already exist and are in use, the samples of *Sora*-created video released so far show a level of photorealism not previously seen." (February 26, 2024) He adds, "Generative video could have big implications for society as well as those tasked with guiding our students through this brave new world of computer-generated text, imagery, and now, movies."

Similar to other AI technologies, *Sora* is prone to "hallucinations" and can amplify the bias of those who created it in "unintentional and unpredictable ways." Consistent with CABE's model AI policy ["Generative AI" #6141.3273](#), the article suggests, "As with other AI tools, rather than ignore these challenges and concerns, I'd advise instructors to embrace them and discuss it all with their students."

As with other technologies, we can expect *Sora* and other similar platforms to share the spotlight with the rapidly-paced onslaught of new AI products. Don't ask about the [Humane Ai Pin](#), the first hardware device to go all-in on the [AI assistant](#) craze recently rolled out at Barcelona's [Mobile World Congress](#).

All of this raises the question: Can Board policies keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancement? In a recent article in *Education Week*, Caitlyn Peetz reports, that when school districts craft or update their policies on the use of artificial intelligence, they should set clear expectations but leave room for students and teachers to make mistakes, according to superintendents who have been leading their schools through establishing guidelines around the use of the powerful technology." (*AI Policies Should Leave Room for Teachers and Students to Mess Up, Superintendents Say*, February 22, 2022)

It remains clear that Board policies related to technology will need to establish appropriate guard rails designed to keep students and staff safe, protect their privacy, and provide guidance for responsible use. However, when it comes to specific policies, such as cellphone use, AI applications, and others, Boards need to consider a wide range of competing interests in service of the student's overall education and preparation for life beyond school.

At the same time, Boards consider updating "responsible use policies," they will also need to ensure district technology policies continue to open doors for learning, creating, and engagement. Peetz notes that as districts develop their guidelines for ethical use, "it's important to be clear about expectations, particularly for staff members, so they have some license to experiment within reasonable boundaries." (Peetz et al. 22, 2024) Districts would be wise to establish guidelines for vetting products to ensure staff doesn't input any student or colleague's personal information or any specific identifiable information about the school district into an AI tool.

Cited in the article, Patrick Gittisriboongul, Assistant Superintendent in Lynwood, California, suggests, "It's important for every teacher, every area, every grade level to look at AI and start anticipating what kinds of questions are going to come up from students. It's a matter of time when student and staff are going to be using the tools on a daily basis, if they're not already." (Peetz, 2024)

Consistent with CABE's model administrative regulations guiding its model AI policy, one district identified in the article encouraged hesitant teachers to test new technology tools in "*AI playgrounds*, which allow educators to receive some instruction about AI and test it out in a low-stake environment intended to be fun and encourage exploration." (Peetz, 2024)

Recently CSDE released two important updates to superintendents:

CT Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support Plans 2024

On February 14, 2024, the State Board of Education adopted the [CT Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support Plans 2024](#). The new CT Model Plan will go into effect July 1, 2024, and includes a renewed focus on the importance of support, feedback, and professional learning to improve student learning, growth, and achievement. The CT Model Plan requires multiple indicators of student learning, growth, and achievement for educators, and multiple indicators of organizational health, educator growth, and student learning, growth, and achievement for leaders. The CSDE will send a communication to districts in March 2024 regarding submission requirements for new District Plans aligned with the CT Guidelines 2023. These requirements will focus on the 'non-negotiables' as described in the CT Guidelines 2023. CABE's model policy can be found through this link. ["Policy for Educator and Leader Evaluation and Support" #4115](#)

New Kindergarten Age Guidance for Families

In October, the CSDE developed guidance for districts regarding the statutory change for kindergarten entry beginning in school year 2024-25. That publication can be found here: [New Entry Age for Kindergarten: Considerations for Connecticut Schools](#). The CSDE and the State Office of Early Childhood (OEC) have developed family-friendly guidance documents to help families understand the change and provide resources to find answers to questions and concerns. The publications are provided in five languages: [Arabic](#), [English](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Portuguese](#), and [Spanish](#). CSDE asks that districts share this information with families, youth, and family-serving partners and agencies.

In the meantime, CT Mirror reports that a group of education stakeholders gathered to argue for a delay in the law's implementation. (Harkay, Jessika, *CT Lawmakers Urged to Delay Kindergarten Age Change*, CT Mirror, February 22, 2024). In her article, she quotes Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer, the Director of the Yale Child Study Center Medical-Legal Partnership Project at the Center for Children's Advocacy, who at this news conference commented, "If the legislature had given stakeholders involved the time to really navigate this transition, we wouldn't be here today. Instead, this law went forward without enough public input and without consideration of the consequences on the capacity of providers and families."

While it remains unclear whether or not the General Assembly will act based on public reaction to the law it passed in the 2023 session, this experience can serve as a lesson easily transferable to policy development. Whether creating or updating laws or policies, fully deliberating their full impact, issues related to operationalization and enforceability are critical. Determining the unintended consequences and issues involving equity can often be time-consuming and messy, as one will need to contend with opposing viewpoints and considerations. However, it's better to know those issues upfront, as it will assist in ensuring the policy addresses those problematic areas or leaves enough room for administrative regulations to provide a pathway for reasonable policy adherence.

As it relates specifically to the new September 1 five-year-old cut-off, the waiver and child evaluation process passed in the 2023 session, we'll see whether the 2024 session provides districts and families any relief.