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address 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148
telephone 781-338-3000 **internet** www.doe.mass.edu

This report was prepared by the Instructional Technology Group:

Connie Louie, Director of Instructional Technology

Susan Hargrave, Instructional Technology Writer

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Commitment to a Clear Vision

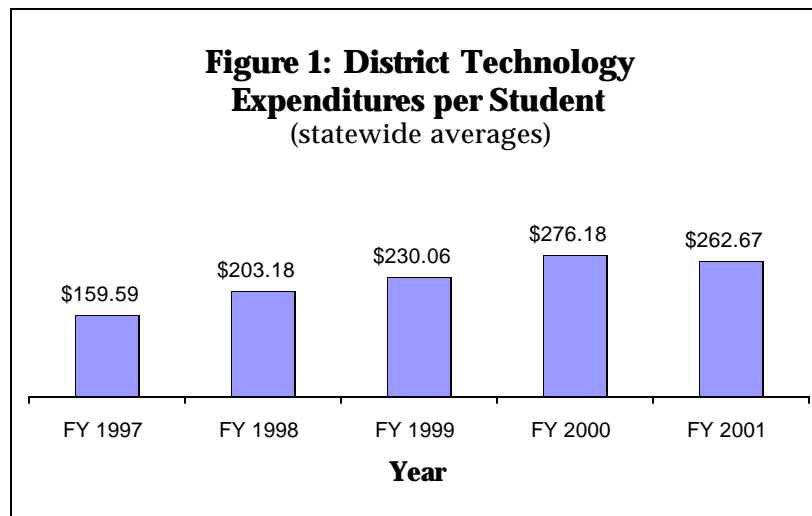
To approve school districts' technology plans, the Massachusetts Department of Education asks districts to update these plans electronically every year. Updating the technology plan provides an opportunity for districts to review the progress they have made, set new goals, and identify the resources and strategies that will help them promote the most effective use of technology in their schools. A state-approved technology plan is also required in order for school districts to be eligible for technology grants and federal E-rate discounts. In 2001, 91% of school districts submitted updates to their technology plans, using the Department's online forms.

Goals

A district's technology plan should focus on how technology will be used to help raise the academic achievement of all students, reflecting the goals stated in the district's school improvement plan. The Department also urges districts to include the state's new *Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards for Students*² in their technology planning to ensure that students will have the technology skills they will need for the twenty-first century.

Funding

An important part of the technology plan is the district's commitment to funding for technology. Between 1997 and 2000, statewide technology spending per student rose steadily. In 2001, spending per student decreased slightly to \$262.67. Figure 1 shows the average expenditures for technology across the state for technology, including monies from the district's operational budget, municipal bonds, and grants from federal, state, local, and private sources. Figure 2 shows the percentages of districts that fall into various spending ranges.



² *Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards for Students*. The complete document can be downloaded in PDF format at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/01docs/itstand01.pdf>

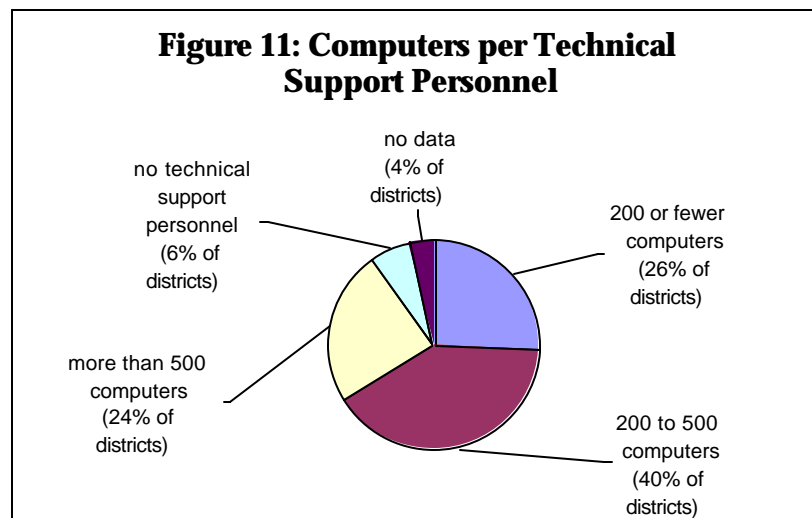
Schools will find additional recommendations for teaching about Internet safety, as well as other social and ethical issues relating to Internet use, in the state's recently published *Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards*.¹⁴ For example, the standards recommend that students learn to evaluate the information presented on Web sites. Additionally, for middle and high school students, the standards recommend that students learn how media and technology can distort or exaggerate information.

Technical Support

Keeping the computers and networks up and running is critical to successful technology implementation. When students and teachers cannot rely on computers to be in good working order, they are less likely to use them. If the computers are not used, the district's investment will have been compromised.

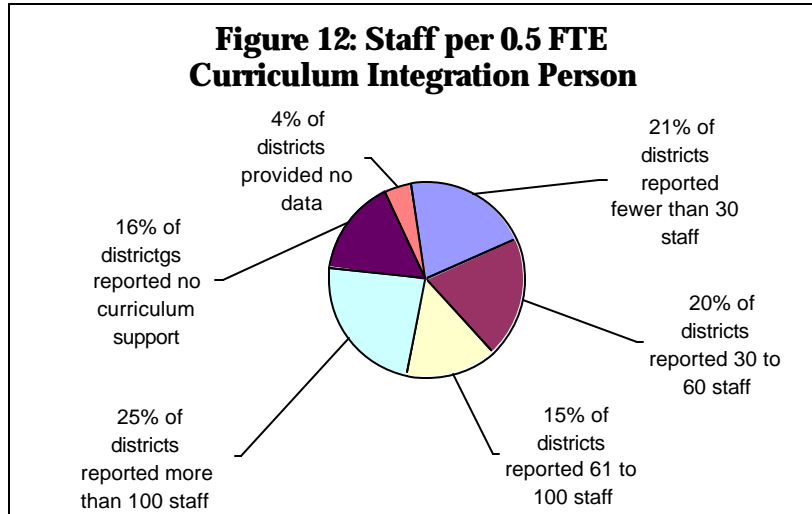
Technical Support Personnel

To provide a support system that keeps downtime to a minimum, the benchmark standards recommend that districts have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff person to support 100 to 200 computers. Over the past year there has been an increase in the number of districts providing this level of technical support. In 2001, 26% of districts reported that they had one full-time person to support 200 computers or fewer, while in 2000, only 18% did.



Even though more districts are meeting the benchmark standard, the statewide average for technical support has changed from 358 computers per technical support person in

¹⁴ *Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards for Students*. The complete document can be downloaded in PDF format at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/01docs/itstand01.pdf>

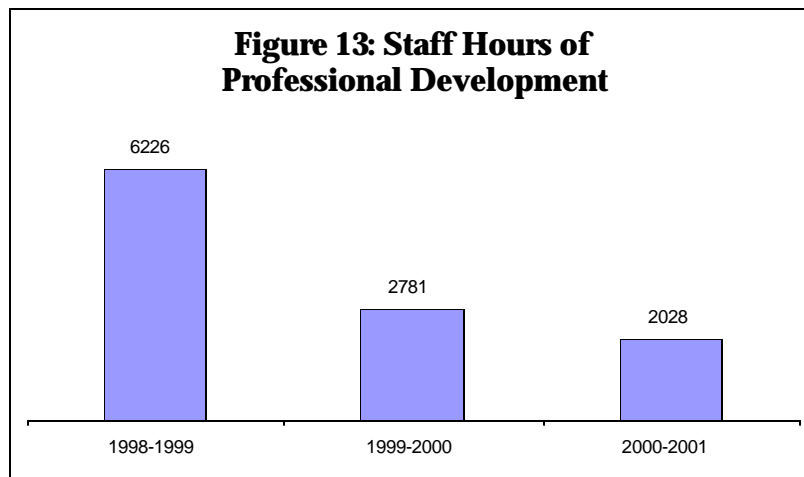


Technology Professional Development

The benchmark standards recommend that by 2003 at least 85% of district staff will have participated in technology professional development sponsored by the district.

Formal Professional Development

In 2001, the percentage of district staff who participated in formal technology professional development such as workshops, courses, and study groups decreased slightly, to a level of 51%. The estimated number of staff hours of formal professional development also decreased, as shown in Figure 13.



The total time spent on formal technology professional development may have decreased because many districts had provided basic technology skills training in past years and are

