Policy Brief: The National Educational Technology Plan
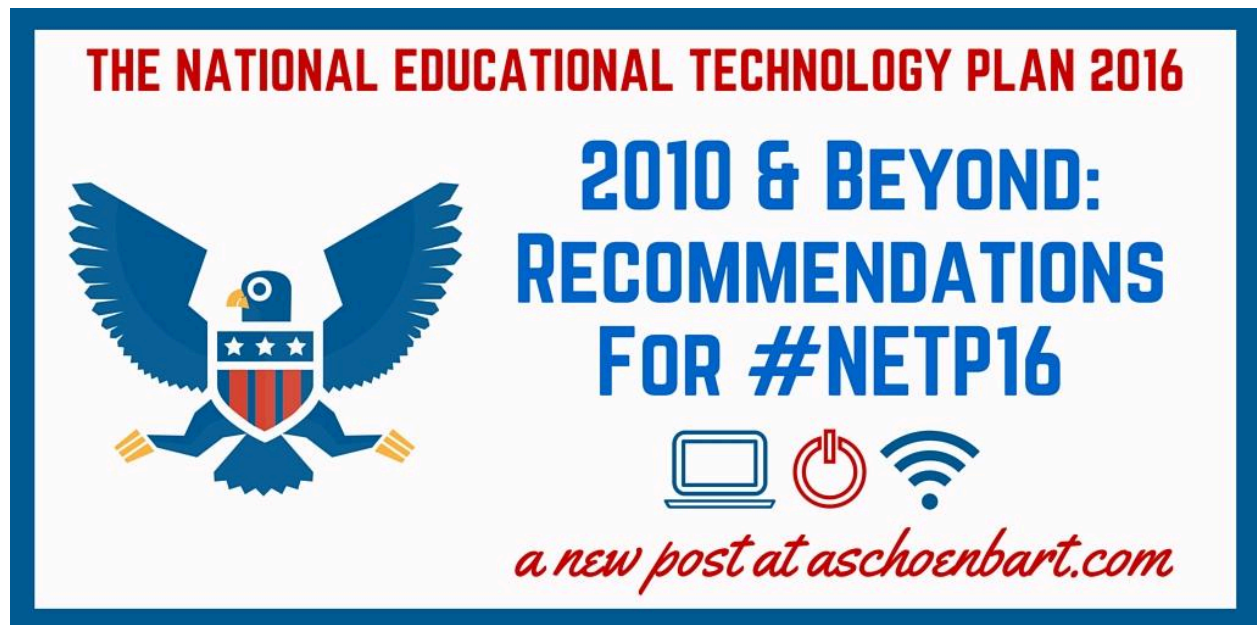## Executive Summary & Recommendations

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Executive Summary & Recommendations

The United States' policy to address education reform in technology planning and integration is the National Educational Technology Plan 2010 [NETP], *Transforming American Education Learning Powered by Technology*. This five-year plan calls for widespread change that is intended impact education at all levels, focusing on reforms in five areas: learning, assessment, teaching, infrastructure, and productivity (OET, 2010a). According to Dede, the NETP "presents an affordable, transformational, vision for 21st century education, infusing technology into every aspect of learning in school and out" (2011, p. 4). The Obama

Administration argues that this plan will help to impact the achievement gap and improve college graduation rates (OET, 2010b, p. 8; OET, 2014a; OET, 2014b). The largest shift in the NETP affects funding, infrastructure, devices, and instruction in the call for all students and teachers to have access to high-speed Internet and devices at school (Waters, 2011; OET 2010a; OET 2010b).

The NETP calls for a number of large transformations in the use of technology in schools, but they lack clear plans for implementation or evaluation. With few concrete inputs and no timeline of expectations at any level, the plan lacks clear efficiency (Sloan, 2011; Shimbukuro, 2010) despite the Department of Education [DOE] and Office of Educational Technology [OET] having published additional complementary policies (OET, 2014a; OET, 2014b). Additionally, the plan does not do enough to address issues of equity and political feasibility, providing few details on how to support schools and populations that cannot afford to fund these expensive reform efforts (Margeau, 2014; Shimbukuro, 2010; Sloan, 2011; Boatright, 2014). This lack of financial guidance, changes in federal and state funding, and consistent budgetary shortfalls all create enormous challenges to how states and districts will plan for and execute these shifts (Nagel, 2010; Potts, Schlichting, Pridgen, & Hatch, 2010; Quillen, 2010; Waters, 2011). The vision that lies within the NETP, cannot be met without instructions or recommendations for the implementation and evaluation of educational technology at the state and district levels. Without a stronger framework for its execution, the effectiveness and overall quality of the NETP are called into question.

The NETP is one piece in the larger puzzle of school reform, and while it has meaningful and worthwhile vision, and may have success in the future, the vision for tomorrow must be

more concretely applied and measured today. Still, the OET is looking forward, awarding

$449,983 to the American Institutes for Research to develop a new NETP, (Future, 2014), still

without a plan for evaluating or assessing current policy. Additionally, while the Common Core

State Standards [CCSS] place value in technology and require its integration and use, they are

being implemented at the same time as the Annual Professional Performance Review [APPR]

process, which limits the impact for some schools (Cavanagh, 2013). Whereas the spirit of NETP

encourages the use of data to drive technology integration, much of the technology is being used

for testing rather than learning (Davis, 2015; Gewertz, 2015). Similarly, technology purchases

are often geared towards standardized testing, leading to a problematic execution of the plan.

Christopher (2014) found that

> "In light of CCSS, states and local school systems are expected to change their curriculum and professional learning programs to meet the changing needs of their teachers and students. Given the connections between policy, accountability, and professional development, advocates for effective technology integration must make the connections between CCSS and technology integration clear to decision makers and professional development planners" (p. 3)

To fully evaluate the quality of the NETP, more research is needed to measure both its qualitative

and quantitative outputs, both for 2010-2015, and beyond. As the current plan expires and the

future plan is released, the following recommendations could lead to future success in the quality

and implementation of national educational technology policy and reform:

1. The OET must establish clear criteria for the success and evaluation of the 2010 NETP.

2. Through ConnectEd and other initiatives, the DOE must do more to address cost, access, and equity issues inherent in educational technology reform.

3. Technology integration must become a valued part of regular and purposeful teaching, learning, and professional development for all schools.

4. The DOE and OET must clarify concrete expectations for states' participation in and timelines for implementation of educational technology policy and reform.

5. The next NETP must include a expand on the transformations described in the 2010 plan, while also including clear plans for funding, budgeting, and evaluation (Byron & Bingham, 2001, p. 2).

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