



Artificial Intelligence Policy Guidance

This document is developed and maintained by Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA, or the Association) for ASBA member School Boards (members). It is intended to provide guiding information, considerations and best practices to aid members in setting policy related to Artificial Intelligence and may hold relevance for other education-related organizations.

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The document may be updated based on developments in legislation or regulation. For the latest updates, always refer to the most recent communications received from ASBA.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is impacting and reshaping virtually every domain. In the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education system, School Boards are being challenged to adapt to the current realities while governing and providing guidance to school systems through policy-setting on AI. These policies play an important role in shaping the learning in classrooms, as well as preparing future generations with necessary skills to harness AI potential, all while navigating and mitigating risks. There are concrete questions being raised about practical issues such as data privacy, student safety and ensuring equitable, inclusive access to technology. In addition, there are bigger picture, more ambiguous questions about how AI will impact the nature of teaching and learning, how to uphold academic integrity, and what it means to take a human-centric approach towards education in a world increasingly facilitated by machines.

This document provides school boards with practical guidance to enable the development of appropriate policies addressing a range of AI-related issues. The premise in developing this approach is based on:

- **Upholding the autonomy of school boards.** In Alberta, school boards are responsible for setting their own policies. By providing guidance, including suggestions for reviewing existing policies, ASBA can offer the necessary resources to effectively support the policy work of members.
- **Remaining flexible given the pace of technological development.** There is much uncertainty in the regulatory environment around AI. Being overly prescriptive is out of step with the need to be agile and to stay current with new technologies and legislation still being shaped.
- **A desire to inform school boards and their stakeholders on AI opportunities and risks.** This work seeks to upskill school boards about core issues in AI and education. AI literacy is crucial to supporting boards in setting policies that will include ways to safely and appropriately leverage AI technologies while addressing risks.
- **Affirming ASBA values and the role of a human-centric approach in education.** This guidance aligns with ASBA’s shared organizational values of Integrity, Collaboration, Diversity, Accountability and Transparency. ASBA is committed to helping its members uphold a human-centric approach to deliver excellence in education.

This guidance draws upon the work of many world-class organizations, such as [TeachAI](#) and the [Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development](#) (OECD), that have focused on AI and K-12 education policy. At the same time, it is fully informed by an Alberta perspective, recognizing provincial authorities and local viewpoints to ensure alignment with the Alberta educational system.

“Equip schools with guidance on the safe and responsible use of AI with clear and practical guidelines.”

TeachAI recommended foundational policy. ASBA agrees with this statement and aims to meet this objective for its member school boards.

Section One: Core Principles for AI in K-12

This guidance is informed by a set of principles for AI in K-12 education identified by a team of University of Alberta researchers¹. Their work builds on a comprehensive review of principles in the AI ethics space including guidelines from The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Institute for Ethical AI in Education (IEAIA), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

ASBA further built on this work with additional information about each principle to provide clarification and recommends using them as a starting point. The principles listed are not exhaustive and may be supplemented by local context.

Core Principles for AI in K-12

Adapted by Alberta School Boards Association



Beneficence

Use AI in a way that promotes human well-being and flourishing



Justice and Fairness

Ensure AI systems have been tested for algorithmic bias and that outcomes are non-discriminatory



Privacy

Comply with relevant privacy laws and ensure that data is securely protected



Responsibility

Be accountable for the deployment and use of AI systems including clear mechanisms for redress



Freedom and Autonomy

Foster uses of AI that uphold agency, individual choice and the autonomy of learners



Transparency

Clearly disclose AI use and provide easy-to-understand explanations of AI outputs and their role in decision-making

Children’s Rights

Protect and uphold the rights and freedoms afforded to all children



Teacher’s Well-Being

Deploy and use AI in ways that empower teachers



AI Literacy

Educate and train on responsible use of AI; prepare children for current and future AI developments



Pedagogical Appropriateness

Apply AI in ways that are evidence based and aligned with curriculum objectives



Non-Maleficence

Do no harm by ensuring AI is safe to use and is used safely



These principles are adapted from the work of Adams et al., 2023, Ethical principles for artificial intelligence in K-12 education, Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence, 4 (2023), Article 100131

¹ Adams et al., 2023, Ethical principles for artificial intelligence in K-12 education, Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence, 4 (2023), Article 100131

Section Two: Understanding AI

What is AI?

AI is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of technologies that can achieve goals by using inputs to infer how to generate outputs to meet explicit or implicit objectives. AI covers a broad range of technologies— from facial recognition systems to autonomous vehicles to automated decision systems to chatbots— it’s challenging to take a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to providing substantive guidance on the responsible use of these technologies. Recently, Generative AI has become a core focus for educators based on both the opportunities and challenges it raises in K-12 education.

Generative AI

Generative AI is a specific kind of AI system that can generate novel content based on instructions provided by a user in the form of a prompt. Generated content can include text, images, code, audio or audio-visual content. Lately, there has been a focus on Generative AI because of its ability to generate content and because it has been deployed in ways that are freely accessible to a wide range of users.

While ChatGPT is arguably the most popular Generative AI tool, it is just one example of a freely accessible tool that grew to over 100 million users in a matter of months after being released. GPT stands for “Generative Pre-trained Transformer” as these models are pre-trained on vast amounts of data. Generative AI can also be “fine-tuned” with additional training or be mapped to a predefined knowledge base. Fine tuning or mapping can help control or customize the underlying model for more specific application to a domain (e.g. legal, medical). They are also used as a means of placing guardrails on a model to address concerns around safety and veracity.

Another core reason why Generative AI has garnered so much attention, relative to other kinds of AI which have been around for many years, is that there is an element of direct user engagement with the AI system. The user is aware that they are engaging with AI when they use a Generative AI system because the user must supply a prompt. This makes it different from less transparent AI models that are woven into social media platforms, used in recommendation systems or embedded in infrastructural decision-making tools.

Ways the term “AI” is used

Since AI is not a regulated term, it is largely used as a marketing term. This means that it is not necessarily confined to the definitions set forth by official bodies like the OECD. The lack of conformity

AI systems are “...machine-based system[s] that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments. Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment.”

Definition proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) as of July 10, 2024.

around the use of the term AI often makes it unclear what specific underlying technology is being used, what it does and what the implications are for using it.

The following chart aims to break down the abstract term of AI in relation to the idea of automation. By ensuring a more precise and nuanced understanding of AI and how and where it shows up in a range of digital technologies, members can be better equipped to address it with appropriate policies.

Types of AI technology	General Examples	Examples in Education
Translation of information between formats, such as between audio speech to text and vice versa, image of handwriting to text, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription tools (eg. Otter AI, Meeting recap in Microsoft Teams, Gemini in Google Meet, AI Companion in Zoom) • License plate reader (eg. to monitor cars entering and exiting parkades) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stylus pens on tablets or laptops that convert handwriting to text (eg. OneNote, Notability, Apple Pencil)
Categorization of information (texts, images, sounds), such as categorizing objects and/or people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facial recognition or detection software (eg. Clearview AI) • Image recognition (eg. Google Lens, Photo organizing apps) • Text-based sentiment analysis (eg. large-scale survey analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proctorio
Recommendation systems, such as predicting and refining choices for consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media feeds (eg. Facebook, X, Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.) • Content platforms (eg. Netflix, YouTube, Spotify, etc.) • Online shopping (eg. Amazon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABCMouse, Mastering Math, ReadingIQ
Automated decision-making systems, such as filtering applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filtering applications (eg. resumes, loan applications, etc.) • Automatic evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Assessment Systems
Generative AI, producing a range of novel synthetic, machine-generated content that includes text, code, images, audio and video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chatbots and assistants (eg. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Co-Pilot) • Image generators (eg. Midjourney, Dall-E) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MagicSchool, Twee, Khanmigo

Source: Adapted from Emily M. Bender, [AI in the Workplace: New Crisis or Longstanding Challenge](#).

It is also important to note that increasingly, AI systems draw on a number of different tasks and combine them into one system. For example, an AI system used to take notes and provide a summary of a meeting might record the session by turning speech (audio) into text and then apply a large language model (Generative AI) to summarize the results. To fully assess safety, risks and responsible use, the

person undertaking the assessment of the AI system would need to understand what processes are actually taking place within an AI system so the appropriate questions can be asked.

AI as a socio-technical system

AI systems are socio-technical in nature. A socio-technical approach is a systems approach that considers the intersection of a particular technology with a range of social relations and structures that

“With any new technology, there is a tendency to focus on the machine itself, divorced from any particular social configuration.”

Data & Society, A socio-technical approach to AI policy

operate in the real world. Focusing just on the technology of AI as it relates to data and machine learning models is a little like focusing just on the internal combustion engine as it relates to a car. It does not address bigger issues related to cars, such as seatbelts or fuel-efficiency, nor does it capture the societal issues related to driving, such as the opportunity to cover more distance, the need for roads and speed limits, or the ways in which cars have impacted how communities are designed. AI systems

need to be addressed as socio-technical systems in order to fully appreciate how they intersect with people and the environment. This is consistent with the evolution of safety in engineering practices, moving beyond a focus solely on components to a more comprehensive evaluation of system use context, interactions and emergent properties.

Data & Society’s [Answering three socio-technical questions](#) centers these core questions for ethical deliberation:

- What are the systems around the technology?
- What is the problem this technology can actually solve?
- What power inequalities are at play?

Each situation will be unique and requires its own deliberative process. AI literacy involves not only understanding AI as a technology, but how it intersects with other systems. A socio-technical approach provides a useful frame for those discussions.

Section Three: AI in K-12 Education

Public education has a responsibility to prepare students for a world that is increasingly digital and AI-enabled. School boards are tasked with both governing the use of AI in ways that support and advance the delivery of education, while also ensuring that AI literacy is part of education in order to prepare students for the future.

There are a wide range of applications for AI within the school system, spanning administrative and classroom applications. Generally, the uses for AI stem from the current set of AI uses and capabilities, as outlined in the types of AI technology table found in Section Two.

This includes opportunities² for AI systems to:

- Provide analysis of data to help administrators make more informed decisions in school management and operations.
- Generate content to help teachers more efficiently plan lessons and create learning materials.
- Help inform early interventions for better teaching or learning outcomes.
- Create personalized, learner-centric materials which aid creativity and skill development.
- Collaborate in the learning and teaching process by providing tutoring or delivering assessments in a timely and personally tailored manner.

All tools - from wheels to pens to the printing press to calculators - extend human capabilities and enable new outcomes. For example, writing in a notebook offers the experience of being able to anchor our ideas on paper in order to further reflect, examine and iterate on our thoughts. AI could be conceived of as a new tool which might extend, aid or augment cognition, unlocking new ways of thinking.

The process of thinking could be enabled through AI collaboration. For example, a chatbot might be used as a learning or teaching partner. It could respond in real-time with personalized suggestions and ask key follow-up questions to help facilitate the learning process. Other types of AI systems could offer simulated experiences. For example, AI in the context of virtual reality could offer a space to learn within a simulated environment. Imagine being able to “experience” a history lesson as opposed to merely reading about a historical event. AI systems might also facilitate inter-cultural exchanges with greater ease, acting as a translation interface.

There are numerous benefits and uses for AI, but there are also risks that need to be addressed. Common AI risks include issues related to privacy, algorithmic bias and discrimination, a lack of transparency and explainability as well as accountability. Other considerations for K-12 education include the concepts of academic integrity and honesty, as well as implications for social and cognitive development. In section four, several practical guidelines are included that seek to uphold the beneficial uses of AI while taking steps to mitigate these and other risks and harms.

Finally, there is a need to acknowledge that AI is just one amongst a set of digital technologies and developments that continue to evolve. This guidance provides a starting point for school boards to help set appropriate policies today, however, the work to stay current with the evolution of AI and related digital technologies is an ongoing and iterative process that will need to advance in step with technical, social, legal and ethical considerations.

² Adapted from TeachAI: Benefits and Risks

Section Four: Practical AI Guidelines

In order to build a responsible AI culture, school boards will need to move from high level principles to actual policies, procedures and practices. The following are practical, proactive suggestions to help school boards move towards responsible AI adoption. These suggestions can be used to help inform updates to existing policies or to create new policies. In the included **Sample Review of Existing School Board Policies**, we've provided a sample scan to illustrate which types of existing policies are most likely to require updating or review.

Learning

Build capacity for AI literacy

AI literacy encapsulates an understanding of how AI works, including its limitations and how to use AI responsibly. Funding and programs to support staff professional development on AI is a core element in supporting their AI literacy. AI literacy also needs to inform the use of AI tools in the classroom to support student learning. Students will need to learn about AI literacy in order to use AI, in safe and responsible ways.

Educate stakeholders about inappropriate uses of AI

There is a necessity to educate students, teachers and other stakeholders about the responsible use of AI. This can include all of the prohibited uses for the technology outlined in school board policies as well as more broad-based principles such as not using AI in ways that would be harmful or deceptive. For example, it is advisable for schools to be aware of the issue of deep fake intimate images and to proactively take steps to educate students about the severity of the consequences in choosing to use these tools in this manner.

Engage and communicate with stakeholders to identify and discuss AI

Stakeholder engagement and communication is a recommended approach to help talk about the opportunities for AI use as well as to identify a range of issues related to ensuring AI use upholds principles of diversity, equity and

inclusion. Stakeholders may include students, teachers, administrators, parents and the broader community. There are numerous stakeholder methodologies and approaches to this work (e.g. IAP2, focus groups, surveys) that may also represent an opportunity for education and providing digital and AI literacy to your community.

Address academic integrity in light of AI use

The capacity to use Generative AI in education necessitates conversations about academic integrity. There needs to be clear policies to define the appropriate use of AI for classroom assignments and assessments. Teachers will need sufficient latitude to make decisions about the use of different types of AI tools or systems in a range of contexts.

Many post-secondary institutions have produced flexible guidelines that allow educators to select from a spectrum which spans from 'no use of AI' to 'use of AI for purpose X' to 'using AI only with attribution' to 'use of AI' without any stipulations. Most of the policies also include requirements around transparency, disclosing the use of AI, and for responsibility, the student being responsible for the outcomes of the AI system. For a K-12 setting, the issue of responsibility needs to be considered with respect to age-appropriateness.

Ensure there is equitable access to AI tools

The digital divide refers to the unequal access of technology. As we consider the role of AI tools in education, it is important to ensure that all students have equitable access to AI tools used in education. Equitable access also means ensuring accessibility and providing accommodations to ensure everyone can participate.

Structure

Establish a structure that fosters

Responsible AI

Create an AI ethics or Responsible AI committee – a cross-functional team of experts who are tasked with ‘vetting’ AI systems for potential ethical, legal and technical risks prior to the purchase or deployment of the AI system. This is a working committee who can report into management (superintendent or designate) and align with the current governance structures of elected trustees.

Have informed humans in the loop

Calling for humans in the loop has become commonplace in AI ethics best practices to ensure there is oversight for the outputs of these systems. Humans in the loop refers to a process requiring some level of human engagement or interaction with the system outputs, as opposed to a fully autonomous system. When it comes to safeguarding against AI risks, it is important these humans have an appropriate level of AI literacy and have expertise, or have consulted with relevant experts, in relation to the specific context of how the system outputs are being used. It is advisable for school boards to provide appropriate training for the humans in the loop.

Create an inventory of AI tools to manage AI risks

It is advisable to create an inventory that documents all of the AI tools used within the school board to the fullest extent possible. AI can enter organizations through the procurement of specific AI-powered solutions, through existing enterprise tools (e.g. Microsoft Co-pilot, Google AI powered features) and through unofficial channels, such as use of free AI-enabled tools (e.g. ChatGPT or other apps).

The objective of creating an inventory is to enable management of AI risk. The risks of AI cannot be managed without a clear documentation of AI that is being used. This step also requires adopting a working definition of AI. This could be the OECD definition noted earlier in this document under ‘What is AI?’ or another globally accepted definition. The school division’s IT department should have a list of formally approved (procured) systems and that can be a good starting point. This list should be ‘vetted’ or assessed for ethical, legal and technical risks. Any risks deemed unacceptable should be addressed to satisfy the organization’s risk appetite.

Develop criteria for assessing AI tools

AI tools should be periodically assessed or ‘vetted’ for a range of ethical, technical and legal risks using criteria that have been established by the school board. This could include assessing data privacy, testing for algorithmic bias, cybersecurity and other relevant concerns (e.g. cost, environmental impacts, age-appropriate, accessibility, general safety). To provide transparency to stakeholders, it is recommended that the results of the assessment be made available to stakeholders upon request and/or published in a public forum.

Determine a process for vetting AI and develop a 'safe' list

It is important to have an assessment process that balances both the risks and benefits of using AI tools. A pre-approved and centralized 'safe' list of trusted tools might empower teachers to quickly access technology while being assured the tool has been reviewed and deemed safe.

This could include a formal process for teachers to request that a particular tool be vetted prior to its adoption and use. Student requests to use a particular AI tool could also be vetted through this process, with the teacher as the first point of contact.

Teachers are best equipped to understand what tools might be most suitable to enable student learning. However, most are not adequately trained or equipped to fully vet the risks of using an AI tool.

School boards might consider sharing their lists of 'approved' tools with each other as well as the actual results of the assessment process.

Choose age-appropriate AI tools

Most of the free Generative AI systems were not designed for children. For example, per its terms of use, ChatGPT does not allow users under the age of 13 and users under the age of 18 require parental permission. In addition, since the content on this system is not always appropriate for minors, having an adult supervise the use of the tool alongside the minor is a suggested best practice.

There is also discussion amongst experts as to the appropriate age to introduce digital technologies, including AI, into the classroom for direct engagement with students.

Security

Ensure that cybersecurity protocols address AI

AI tools expand the potential cyberattack surface. More people using AI tools and more types of AI tools both serve to increase points of vulnerability. Not only are there more points of attack, there are also more possibilities for error (e.g. data leakage).

There is a growing body of research that speaks to some of the novel threats for AI (e.g. prompt injection attacks, model inversion attacks) and understanding that should be part of AI literacy for cybersecurity professionals. It is advisable to review and update all policies involving the protection of digital infrastructure to adequately address new AI risks.

Additionally, determine if cybersecurity insurance covers issues arising from the use of AI technologies.

Protecting data privacy is essential for responsible AI

As using AI systems involves sharing data, it is important to ensure data is shared in appropriate and legally compliant ways. Protecting data privacy and ensuring compliance with legislation (e.g. *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP)) is a key responsibility for school boards as part of the safe adoption of AI tools. This might require a review of existing policies related to data privacy as well as creating mechanisms for assessments to evaluate new tools. It is advisable to review and update all policies involving data privacy to ensure they adequately address the ways in which AI systems collect, store, use and process data.

Governance

Update or establish policies to include prohibited uses of AI

All uses for AI that are prohibited should be clearly documented. For example, using an AI tool to willfully cause harm towards another person or to deceive a person might be a general example of a prohibited use. Current policies that speak to these kinds of issues may require updating in order to address the specifics of AI use within the context of that particular policy.

Consider whether AI-related issues could inform a new policy or be covered under an update to an existing policy.

Understand your legal obligations with respect to AI

Conduct a legal scan for appropriate AI and data related legislation relevant for the jurisdiction of Alberta. This includes privacy regulations (e.g. FOIP) but might also include regulations governing private sector tools that are deployed in the public sector context. There may be further regulations, such as Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), if the AI system is also embodied (e.g. robots). Since the regulatory environment is evolving, it is suggested to do this on a regular basis (e.g. annually) to ensure no new regulations are missed. It is important for school boards to align AI use with any applicable regulations.

Ensure there is no copyright infringement when prompting AI

One of the main legal issues involving Generative AI is copyright. There are many questions with respect to the training data used to train Generative AI systems that currently have no clear legal answers. This guidance will instead focus on the data used to prompt a

Generative AI system as well as the outputs generated by those prompts. This prompt data might come from teachers, students or administrative staff.

AI literacy and training for educators and students can help them to understand how to ensure they are not infringing on copyright as it relates to prompting Generative AI

The following headings deal with an evolving area of law. It is advisable for school boards to exercise caution when using Generative AI, and to seek a legal opinion on all matters involving copyright.

Educational fair dealing provisions may not apply to Generative AI prompts

Educators have long benefited from using copyrighted material in the classroom under provisions of fair dealing, as long as there is proper attribution. However, any copyrighted material that is shared with an AI system, such as a prompt that involves the use of copyrighted material, may [violate copyright laws](#). Fair dealing provisions for education, in this context, may not apply.

For example, using Generative AI to summarize a document is often given as an example for how this tool might prove useful. However, unless there is proper copyright authorization for that document, using Generative AI to summarize it by uploading the document may be a violation of the AI's terms of use (e.g. ChatGPT). Users must understand the terms of use for each tool. This might be included as part of the 'vetting' process and included in clear language as part of the 'safe' list of AI tools.

Prompting that involves direct copyright infringement

Educators also need to be aware of direct copyright infringement based on a prompt. For

example, if an assignment encouraged the use of a copyrighted character, such as telling an AI system to “create a picture of Charlie Brown” or having students use a similar kind of prompt, there may be legal implications. AI prompts should not be used to engage in willful copyright violations.

Infringing material generated by AI

It is possible that an AI system might generate material that infringes copyright even when there is no direct attempt to prompt it to do so. There are examples of artwork that resembles recognizable animated characters that have been generated from prompts that did not reference those characters. Educators and students should be aware that using that

output might put them at risk of copyright infringement.

Be aware of creative commons licence types

Creative Commons (CC) work does not necessarily give users a free pass when it comes to copyright. Some CC licensed works do not allow for derivative work to be created from them, which would be the case if the work is used in a prompt for a Generative AI chatbot, such as ChatGPT, to derive further works from the original. Some require attribution on any derivative works. Others require that any use be of a non-commercial nature, which may not be the case if it is used in a prompt that is retained and used to train a commercial AI system.

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Sample review of existing school board policies

This scan of possible policies impacted by AI references board policies and administrative procedures. It suggests an approach to the types of existing policies which might need to be updated with respect to AI.

Since specific policies and administrative procedures vary by school board, a general guideline is that anything directly technology or data related should receive review. Any process where a digital tool that might contain AI could be involved in the process described by the policy is also recommended for review.

BOARD POLICY	NO CHANGES	RECOMMENDED REVIEW
Foundational Statements	No changes	
Role of the Board	No changes	
Role of the Trustee	No changes	
Trustee Code of Conduct		May consider impact regarding confidential information i.e. If Trustees use AI tools in processing confidential information (data privacy, FOIP in Alberta)
Role of the Board Chair		May consider impact regarding presiding over Board meetings, such as using transcription or expenditure approval AI tools (data privacy, automated-decision systems)
Board Operations		May consider impact regarding how Board meetings are conducted, such as using AI-based transcription tools, meeting virtually with AI-assisted summaries, distributing agenda and communications, etc. (data privacy, social media, communications, public engagement). May also consider impact regarding elections, if AI is used in campaigning and public awareness (communications, copyright)

ADMIN PROCEDURE	NO CHANGES	RECOMMENDED REVIEW
Responsible use of Technology		Review to see if responsible use of technology addresses the recommended core principles—if not consider generalizing this policy to be able to include AI-tools
Responsible use of electronic social media		May consider updated social media administrative procedure to include general use of AI tools
Copyright Fair Dealing		Review to ensure the administrative procedure sufficiently addresses obligations under the <i>Copyright Act</i> as it pertains to any AI technologies used.
Student Code of Conduct		Review to see if student code of conduct sufficiently addresses academic integrity, bullying and harassment, and responsible use of technology, devices, or social media