

September 7, 2004

House of Representatives
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Representative:

The undersigned companies and associations strongly urge you to reverse the committee approved \$91 million cut to the “Enhancing Education Through Technology” (EETT) program in the FY05 Labor, Health & Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

We believe technology is critical to meeting the nation’s education goals, and that federal leadership and resources are essential to these efforts. In fact, many *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requirements cannot be efficiently or effectively achieved without technology tools. This includes technology for student testing to inform instruction, managing accountability data, providing Title I supplemental services and ensuring students are technology literate, for example. With today's students born in the digital age and masters of technology, classroom technologies are necessary to engage them in learning. In view of this central role of technology in education improvement, we are particularly dismayed by the House Appropriations Committee’s action to make unprecedented reductions to the only NCLB program solely dedicated to classroom-based technology access. We strongly urge the House to reconsider these cuts and support full funding of this vital program.

EETT, Title II-Part D of NCLB, was authorized at \$1 billion and has received appropriations of approximately \$700 million consistently for the past three years. The proposed cut, which represents a 13 percent reduction, would have a serious impact for districts and schools as they work to comply with NCLB.

The consequences of these cuts would be three-fold. They would:

- **Undermine efforts to elevate student achievement**
- **Restrict technology access for “at risk” students**
- **Inhibit growth in the education marketplace**

Negative Impact on Student Achievement

EETT funds are used by states and school districts to increase access to standards-based curricular materials and improve professional development in accordance with NCLB – particularly for low-income districts facing the highest educational risks.

Districts rely on EETT funds as a core means for providing a competitive, 21st Century learning environment that provides students, educators and communities with:

- Access to instruction and courses through web-based distance learning not otherwise available, especially in rural and high-poverty schools.

- One-on-one remediation made possible through engaging, interactive instructional software that adapts to support the learning needs and pace of each individual student.
- Real-time, on-demand assessment tools that accurately gauge students' learning strengths and weaknesses and help teachers target their instruction.
- Expanded opportunities to build teacher skills and professional community through web-based training and collaboration so that all teachers can meet NCLB's definition of highly qualified.

One of the key requirements of NCLB is that all students be technologically literate by the end of the eighth grade. Congress included this requirement because it understood the stakes of maintaining global competitiveness and economic vitality. EETT funds sit at the heart of meeting Congress' intent. They assure our students know how to apply the tools of modern society to elevate achievement and their own personal growth.

Cutting EETT funds just as NCLB's implementation is advancing nationwide, would send precisely the wrong message to our schools and communities. These goals and requirements can only be achieved if federal leadership is matched by federal investment. Yet, the pending budget cut would signal that instructional technology deployment doesn't matter to student achievement. And given the tough economic conditions districts now face, we know EETT losses would not soon be replaced, causing additional pressure on local budgets. According to the State Educational Technology Directors Association, EETT is the only technology funding available to a quarter of all states and districts.

Negative Impact on "At-Risk" Student Populations

Without question these cuts will redound most painfully on low-income, minority, children with disabilities and rural students. Studies continue to show that our nation's most historically disadvantaged groups remain well below average in their technology access. In fact, a 2002 National Telecommunications & Information Administration study found that many of the most disadvantaged students rely solely on their schools and libraries for access to the Internet. **Cutting EETT would disproportionately impact those individuals with the fewest options by reducing funding for classroom-based technology access.**

Negative Impact on the Education Marketplace

Proposed cuts to EETT could also cripple the struggling school market for standards-based digital curricula and instructional delivery tools.

EETT funds serve to provide incentives to the marketplace for evidenced-based, digital instructional content and classroom technology tools. They act as an essential catalyst for millions of dollars of private sector R&D into products and services aimed at modernizing our school practices. When schools are provided a stable and continuous stream of funding to access technology-based instructional tools, the marketplace is stimulated to respond. But when states and local districts face cutbacks, as is presently the case, the private sector looks to consistency in federal ed tech funding as the impetus to continue investing.

If EETT funds are cut, the impact will be an immediate chilling effect on the education marketplace because districts will be forced to stretch their instructional technology spending over multiple school years. This could drive countless numbers of digital content providers out of the K-12 market precisely at a time when the nation is calling on them to build the needed technology-driven content that will significantly elevate performance and achievement. We cannot underscore the importance of these funds to leveraging critical investment in effective, classroom-based instructional technologies.

For these reasons, the undersigned companies and organizations strongly urge you to reject the pending EETT cuts in favor of the program's full funding. We look forward to working with you to enhance federal leadership and support for education and education technology.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact any of the entities below, or contact either Irene Spero of CoSN (202-861-2676 or irene@cosn.org) or Mark Schneiderman at SIIA (202-789-4444 or marks@siia.net).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
International Society for Technology in
Education (ISTE)
Software & Information Industry Association
(SIIA)
ADC Telecommunication and ADC
Foundation
AlphaSmart, Inc.
America Online - AOL@School
Apple
Atomic Learning
BellSouth
Campus K12
Carnegie Learning
C. Blohm & Associates
Cox Communications, Inc.
Dell
Discovery Communication, Inc.
Edusoft
Encyclopedia Britannica
ETS
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Harcourt Education
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HP
Inspiration Software
Intel Corporation
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KCH Strategies
Larson Learning, Inc.
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Reed Elsevier Inc.
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Company