

March 26, 2010

The Honorable George Miller, Chairman
Education and Labor Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline, Ranking Member
Education and Labor Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Representative Kline:

The undersigned organizations – representing educators, state and local education leaders, and the high-tech industry – write with recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and specifically for the role of technology and e-learning.

We know that providing every child with a high-quality education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy predicated on knowledge and innovation is both a moral imperative and critical to America's economic future. Technology is critical to such an education, and to improving student achievement. Today's digital-native students are surrounded by technology outside of school, and are best engaged in their learning through technology. Many of today's educational goals and requirements – including both the central tenets of ESEA as well as those set forth in the Obama Administration ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint for Reform – can be most effectively achieved by modernizing our educational practices and system through technology. In a statement accompanying the release of his FY11 Budget proposal, President Obama asserted that he "...strongly believes that technology, when used creatively and effectively, can transform education and training in the same way that it has transformed the private sector."

Our organizations, and more importantly the educators and other stakeholders we represent, embrace this vision and urge Congress and the Administration to make it a reality by including within ESEA reauthorization legislation:

1. a separate, directed funding program focused on improving education through technology – the Achievement Through Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Act – to ensure that teachers receive appropriate professional development on technology integration, educational agencies have leadership capacity around technology, there is equity in the distribution of resources, and to coordinate and scale up disparate program technology uses; and
2. the meaningful and measureable infusion of technology and related professional development throughout all major ESEA programs, based on the recognition that technology will become the platform and infrastructure of choice for school reform and improvement efforts in the 21st century.

Technology plays a critical if not indispensable role in accomplishing the nation's educational goals and, more specifically, meeting the "four assurances" including through:

- **Achieving equity in teacher distribution and quality:** Online learning can deliver highly effective teachers and high quality instruction to students isolated by geography or who are being underserved. Online professional development and connected learning communities enable educators to continuously improve their knowledge, skills and effectiveness.
- **Establishing longitudinal data systems:** Data systems are comprised of technologies such as software applications and data storage servers. Local and state data systems enable the use of real-time student data (including formative assessment) to improve instruction, decision making and accountability.
- **Enhancing student learning and assessment of challenging State academic standards:** Technology tools and digital content offer teachers unprecedented resources in meeting the needs of all students and in providing access to rich educational experiences beyond the four walls of the classroom. Computer-based and online assessment provide real-time data, adapt to individual student responses, enable alternative test-items for special populations, and are necessary for robust assessment of the knowledge/skills required for success in the changing global economy.

- **Supporting struggling schools:** Technology is the engine for a continuous improvement model, enabling personalized learning through real-time assessment, adaptive software, virtual learning opportunities, online professional development, and benchmarking of performance data.

Most importantly, technology, properly implemented, can help improve achievement. For example, in several states – Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Texas and Utah – schools have been using the Enhancing Missouri’s Instructional Networked Teaching Strategies (eMINTS) program, which blends state-of-the-art technology with up to 200 hours of professional development for teachers. An eMINTS classroom at an East Newton County Missouri school repeatedly showed student achievement that was 10% higher than control classrooms at the same school. Additionally, after six years of eMINTS, students in special education at a low income, Title I school reduced the achievement gap by 50% in 4th grade mathematics scores. Another eMINTS benefit is increased teacher retention, with the North Harrison Missouri rural district reporting teacher retention rates going from 76% percent to 98% after the first year of eMINTS. (see <http://www.emints.org/evaluation/reports/>)

1. Targeted Program – Achievement Through Technology and Innovation Act (ATTAIN)

We recommend that the reauthorized ESEA include a separate, directed funding program focused on improving education through technology, and this program be based upon the Achievement Through Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Act, HR558. The ATTAIN Act would revamp the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT; NCLB Title II-D) program, leveraging its strengths and successes and building upon what has been learned in the effective use of technology since NCLB. The ATTAIN Act was introduced with bipartisan support by Representatives Roybal-Allard, Hinojosa, Biggert and Kind and was included in the Committee’s 2007 draft reauthorization proposal.

The ATTAIN Act would revamp and build upon the EETT program. Congress included the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT, Title II-D) program as a core provision of the No Child Left Behind Act to ensure a sustained, systematic, and coordinated investment toward improving education through technology, including the leadership and capacity needed to drive education innovation and continuous improvement. EETT has proven effective in helping schools improve and innovate their curricula, instruction, educator skills, assessment, use of data and other core education components through use of technology and online learning, as well as ensuring every student is technologically literate by the end of eighth grade.

The ATTAIN Act would target funding towards educational improvement through technology, including by: further focusing funds on professional development and leadership capacity; driving innovation and systemic reform that leverage 21st century technologies, further targeting schools in need of improvement and low-performing students, and reinvigorating efforts to ensure all students have attained technological literacy by the eighth grade. Absent this targeted support, development and support of local and state technology leadership – the very agents of education innovation – will be in jeopardy, limiting their ability to leverage today’s technology investments to transform learning.

Specifically, the ATTAIN Act would update the existing EETT program by:

- Increasing the share of state-to-local funding distributed by formula from 50% to 60% and adding a minimum grant size to assure district allocations are of sufficient size to have impact.
- Strengthening teacher skills and effectiveness by raising the professional development set-aside from 25% to 40% and emphasizing the importance of timely and ongoing training.
- Channeling competitive grants to schools and districts for systemic school reform built around the use of technology for innovative redesign of the curriculum, instruction, assessment and use of data.
- Giving competitive grant priority to schools identified as in need of improvement, including those with a large share of limited English proficient students and students with disabilities.
- Focusing formula grants on students and subjects where proficiency is most lacking.
- Further ensuring that students are technologically literate by the eighth grade through state assessment, including through embedding items in other state tests.

Targeting investment in technology-based innovation through ATTAIN is foundational to achieving the nation's education reform goals. It is a critical vehicle for enhancing state and local leadership capacity toward next generation education reform, coordinating a myriad of programs infused with technology, and building out the research and evaluation framework needed to help transform education into an evidence-based system of continuous improvement. This directed investment is especially important where capacity and resources are otherwise lacking.

2. Meaningful infusion of technology and technology professional development throughout ESEA

We recognize that a single program is not sufficient to move our nation's educational system forward into the digital age. Flexibility to use an array of federal program funds to meet educational needs through technology is an important principle, and we recommend that the ESEA reauthorization further infuse educational innovation and improvement through technology throughout all programs.

This technology infusion strategy must go beyond simply allowing federal education funding recipients to use their funding for technology – such language exists already in many programs. Rather, technology infusion should mean making technology a priority throughout the new ESEA, with new language reflecting mandatory technology spending and competitive preference priorities. Enterprises in other sectors of our economy dedicate an average of 5% of their budgets for technology and related staff training and support, and ESEA should help lead our educational agencies toward this best practice.

To meet these goals, we would support the following provisions in ESEA to provide for the meaningful and measurable infusion of technology within all ESEA programs:

- Use of Funds. Ensure all ESEA programs allow a use of funds for technology-based means and methods for addressing program goals and requirements.
- Data Collection. Provide for federal, state and local tracking of how technology is used within other federal programs and how it has helped meet program objectives.
- Competitive Priority. Make education innovation and improvement through technology a competitive preference priority for all competitive grant programs, including Investing in Innovation and Race to the Top.
- Application Component. Ask grantees for all major formula and competitive programs to detail how technology will be used to meet program goals and requirements.
- Program Set-Aside. Provide for state and local grantees to leverage at least 5% of each program's funds to meet education goals through technology and related training and support, including in professional development programs to ensure educators can effectively integrate technology into their curriculum.
- Transformation and Innovation. Encourage technology-enabled modern practices around real-time online assessment, online access to courses otherwise not available, data-driven decision making, digital content and engaging curriculum, and ongoing professional learning communities.

The flexibility to use program funds to address education needs through technology is most often taken advantage of by those educators and agencies with the vision, capacity and existing success. Targeted funding through the ATTAIN Act is therefore needed to ensure equity and complement the above detailed infusion of technology, targeting high-need schools especially in building local capacity and providing needed professional development.

Finally, we believe that teacher pre-service professional development remains a critical and overlooked priority that is necessary to ensure that teachers are prepared to engage 21st Century learners upon commencing their careers. We support inclusion and enhancement of the Preparing Teachers for Digital Age Learners (PTDAL) program authorized in the Higher Education Act. PTDAL provides grants to higher education institution-led consortia for the purpose of graduating “teacher candidates who are prepared to use modern information, communication and learning tools.”

We look forward to working with you to ensure the ESEA reauthorization helps propel our schools into the 21st Century by supporting learning environments that meet the needs of digital age students and a digital world.

For additional information, our coalition co-chairs are Hilary Goldmann of the International Society for Technology in Education (202-861-7777; hgoldmann@iste.org) and Mark Schneiderman of the Software & Information Industry Association (202-789-4444; marks@siia.net).

Sincerely,

Adobe Systems, Inc
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Apple
ASCD
Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Blackboard Inc.
Cisco
Consortium for School Networking
Dell
Education Development Center
Federation of American Scientists
IBM Corporation
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International Society for Technology in Education
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National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Commission on Teaching & America's Future
National Council of Teachers of English
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National School Boards Association
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SAS
Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education
Software & Information Industry Association
State Educational Technology Directors Association

Association for Computing Professionals in Education (Oregon and Washington)
Capital Region Society for Technology in Education
Computer-Using Educators, Inc. (California)
Maryland Society for Educational Technology
Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning
New Jersey Association for Educational Technology
New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education
North Carolina Technology in Education Society
Pennsylvania Association for Educational Communications and Technology
Technology in Education Colorado
Texas Computer Education Association
Texas CTO Council
Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association

cc: The Honorable Dale Kildee
The Honorable Michael Castle
Members of the House Education & Labor Committee