



November 30, 2009

Barbara Means, Ph.D.  
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Dear Dr. Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the development of the U.S. Department of Education's National Educational Technology Plan (NETP). A comprehensive, well-researched and forward-leaning NETP is essential to renewing the state-federal educational technology partnership and ensuring it aligns our collective efforts to foster innovative approaches to meeting the needs of all students for life, work, and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) was founded in 2001 to provide national leadership on behalf of state and territorial department of education leaders charged with driving innovation in education through technology. We represent all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

We believe that the use of technology in education is foundational to increasing operational efficiencies and building new and more effective learning environments in our schools. These integrated learning environments better support educators, engage and empower students to succeed, and provide more and better information to drive continuous improvement in schools. Elements of such learning environments include:

- Innovative teaching approaches that better meet student needs and circumstances, such as online and blended learning, collaborative learning projects, and access to authentic audiences and experts;
- Large-scale online formative and summative assessments and real-time data to individualize instruction and inform policymaking;
- Access to digital and open content, including high-quality, standards-aligned video, audio, text, and interactive simulations;
- Increased and meaningful exposure to the full-range of STEM fields;
- Peer coaching and educator professional development through video conferencing, courseware, and collaboration tools; and
- Robust online courses and virtual access to high-quality teachers for students in rural or other settings otherwise unable to access advanced math, science and foreign language opportunities.

We believe any approach to bringing these programs to scale must recognize the need for sustained and effective state leadership, alignment – of both policies and practices – across the full range of programs and services offered by our nation’s schools, and a commitment to continuous innovation and improvement based on lessons learned from data and evidence. Below, we offer four specific recommendations as input for the NETP:

**1. The NETP should be aligned to the Administration’s school improvement and reform agenda and include implementation strategies.**

SETDA believes that the NETP provides a bridge between states and the federal government to help guide technology implementation in all schools. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act’s (ARRA) guiding principle to “improve student achievement through school improvement and reform” along with the four ARRA Assurances tied to this goal provide a critical framework for the NETP.

- The NETP should be action oriented and include recommendations about how to reach our shared goals of improved student achievement through innovation and at scale.
- The NETP should include clear and direct language about how technology can and must drive innovation across all federal programs. This plan should encourage true collaboration, encouraging cross-program approaches to innovatively serving the students most in need.
- The NETP should include suggested implementation strategies at the federal, state and district levels – and for other key stakeholders, including the private sector – to help guide schools and districts in accomplishing our shared goals.

**2. The NETP should recognize the role of state educational technology leadership in scaling future reform efforts and provide dedicated leadership funding to ensure reform success.**

State and federal leadership is critical to successful NETP implementation. State educational technology directors will be the individuals who implement the plan’s action steps and provide technical assistance and support to LEAs. Federal leadership is enabled by effective state leadership, and on-going formal communication is necessary to building the education sector’s capacity for continuous improvement. To provide the leadership necessary within and across states and programs, states require dedicated leadership funding to help drive programs to scale and drive integration across programs.

**3. The NETP should include clear goals that can be incorporated into a federal accountability and reporting regime designed to drive and support continuous improvement in the states.**

Historically, federal reporting requirements related to education technology have been burdensome and/or do not necessarily reflect the richness and impact of technology integration and use for learning. The NETP should include clear goals and metrics that federal reporting requirements can align to so that any national data collected truly reflects the impact of these programs on teaching and learning and can be used both for continuous improvement and for accountability.

**4. The NETP should recognize that access to affordable high-speed broadband to all of the nation's public elementary and secondary schools is an essential condition for success and remains a profound issue of equity and fairness.**

High-speed broadband access is an essential condition to technology integration. SETDA believes that the NETP and the FCC's National Broadband Plan should and must complement each other. In far too many places across the country, insufficient access to robust broadband in and out of school is hampering real innovation, especially for at-risk students, and serves to exacerbate existing inequities.

For additional information on these and related issues, SETDA has submitted the following resources via the NETP website:

**[SETDA's Class of 2020 Action Plan for Education](#)**

- **[Broadband Access for All Kids: Breaking through the Barriers](#)**
- **[Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics](#)**
- **[Technology-Based Assessments Improve Teaching and Learning](#)**
- **[Empowering Teachers: A Professional and Collaborative Approach](#)**
- **[Learning Virtually: Expanding Opportunities](#)**

**[Technology's Critical Role in addressing ARRA Assurances](#)**

**[Leveraging Title I & Title IID: Maximizing the Impact of Technology in Education  
A Resource Guide Identifying Technology Tools for Schools](#)**

**[SETDA's Technical Assistance Partnership Program \(TAPP\) Virtual Handbook](#)**

These resources provide numerous and clear examples of how high-quality educational technology programs, supported with state leadership, can and do positively impact teaching and learning for all students.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments, and we look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Levin  
Executive Director

CC: Linda Roberts, Senior Advisor, National Educational Technology Plan  
Marianne Bakia, Senior Social Science Researcher, SRI International