



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005

Executive Summary

As American schools strive to provide equitable, valuable, and individualized learning opportunities for all students, eLearning has emerged as a viable option for delivering quality instruction and content that can be provided anytime or anywhere. State educational technology leaders are working to support achievement in lifelong learning and build partnerships to advance learning opportunities, and therefore identified eLearning as the focus of this year's SETDA National Leadership Institute (NLI).

As planning began in the summer of 2004 for the NLI, it became evident that a framework for the discussions and a definition of eLearning needed to be developed and agreed upon. After surveying the full SETDA membership, it was determined that for purposes of the NLI, eLearning would be defined as follows:

eLearning is the blended system of content, resources, and strategies that enables results-oriented, synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning.

The NLI eLearning Framework provides a picture of how the many components of eLearning fit together to improve student achievement and is based upon the scope delineated in the NLI definition of eLearning. The components identified include: **Curriculum Development, eLearning Leadership & Policies, Evaluation of Student Achievement, Infrastructure & Technology, Professional Development and Program Evaluation** and all of these components work together to improve teaching and learning. Because the work of the states in this area varies widely in breadth and depth, the Framework was purposefully designed to allow a collective vision of the states but also maintain an opportunity for flexibility of use within each individual state.

In November 2004, SETDA hosted the third annual NLI where state participants worked hand-in-hand with resource specialists, corporate partners, R*TEC partners and U.S. Department of Education staff to produce the *SETDA Toolkit 2005 on Virtual Learning*. The NLI work groups were built to address each of the eLearning components identified above. The tools and outcomes that resulted will strengthen states' abilities to effectively implement eLearning and also address how the components work together and affect one another.

NLI participants were assigned to a Work Group, which studied one of the six eLearning components comprising the Framework. Based on the discussions and research, each Work Group developed guidance documents, tools and resources addressing key questions for their designated topic. The Toolkit is the result of these discussions and work by state leaders. In it you will find practical checklists, matrices, surveys and other tangible tools that can help educational technology leaders at all levels in the policy and practice decision-making needed to build or support robust eLearning programs.

Each chapter of the NLI Toolkit is a foundation – a starting point to guide the effective use and implementation of eLearning. All of the tools are built to help ensure success and all speak to the importance of an effective leader in making sure that success is achieved. Whether it be a set of talking points to use when meeting with stakeholder groups or a Making the Case Fact Sheet for Funding, state and community leaders have come together to develop this Toolkit because they believe in implementing eLearning effectively and they could draw on their shared knowledge and collective expertise to help each Toolkit user to benefit from this experience.

Chapter 1: Curriculum Development

Curriculum development and instructional practices are fundamental to the successful implementation of an eLearning program at the state or local level. This Work Group focused on the process by which technology directors and educators develop, choose and share digital content and courses. To aid education leaders in choosing or designing digital content, this Work Group developed a set of technical specifications for both development and delivery. They also created a selection tool that would help to ensure that these specifications had been incorporated. Finally, they developed a set of dissemination models to enable distribution of these principles and guidelines to creators and consumers.

Chapter 2: eLearning: Leadership & Policies

In beginning its work, the Leadership & Policies Work Group acknowledged that eLearning can take on many different forms and that states are all at very different stages of implementation. Effective leadership and understanding of the policy choices and their implications is critical to the success of an eLearning program. This Work Group developed a matrix of key attributes of different eLearning models, as well as the policy implications that accompany these attributes. They also created a guide to assist state leaders in identifying key issues and decision points. They made a list of different kinds of policies and legislation in place in states and they created a step-by-step action plan to help leaders overcome unforeseen challenges.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Student Achievement

Data and technology are effective tools in improving student learning. The Evaluation of Student Achievement Work Group examined the importance of formative and summative assessments in an online environment, as well as how technology can be used to assess technology literacy and student achievement in core content areas. The Work Group created a “Buyer’s Guide” for evaluating the effectiveness of online programs and courses. They also produced two policy statements. The first recognizes the importance of having students and their learning at the center of any evaluation program and the second addresses the absence of a technology literacy requirement in the federal Consolidated State Performance Report. The Work Group developed a chart to aid decision makers in whether to use embedded or separate assessments and a “State of the States” matrix clearly identifying how each state is addressing these evaluation issues.

Chapter 4: Infrastructure & Technology

This Work Group focused on the strategies, policies and procedures related to building a statewide network. The Work Group created a collaborative vision statement for a statewide network that any state can use in focusing on the purpose of a network and its relationship to learning. The group also developed a survey that can be used to collect information from states about their network infrastructure. A matrix of technology components was developed that identifies key considerations and benefits by service and function as well as a matrix of policy questions with links to resources. Finally, the group developed a list of talking points to use with stakeholder groups.

Chapter 5: Professional Development

The NLI Professional Development Work Group looked at how online professional development could help in building learning communities for teachers and other educational leaders. To this end, the Work Group developed a document for Building and Sustaining Professional Communities that includes models, components of effective eLearning communities and a resource guide. The Work Group also developed a Fact Sheet for making the case for funding of professional development. They examined how to coordinate professional development and they developed a guide to effectively communicating needs and visions for professional development with all entities within education.

Chapter 6: Program Evaluation

The Program Evaluation Work Group focused their work on helping education leaders to evaluate how a program is working and to make decisions about improvement and continuation. To that end, the work groups developed an eLearning Evaluation Lens. The lens is a progressive way to consider critical issues and questions that frame successful eLearning program evaluations. Some of the components included in this lens are categories, goals, indicators, measures, lessons learned and models.

In addition to these guidance materials, SETDA's purpose for organizing the NLI and reporting the outcomes is to:

1. Inform public policy at national, state and local levels;
2. Provide useable and relevant information for all stakeholders and constituents;
3. Demonstrate leadership, collaboration and capacity building to maximize the potential of eLearning for all students.