



August 26, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

Thank you for making reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) a top congressional priority and for recognizing technology's role in supporting teaching and learning. State and local efforts to prepare all students for postsecondary academic and workplace success will benefit greatly from a renewed federal commitment to promoting educational equity, including promoting digital equity in high poverty, rural, and other underserved communities.

When you begin House-Senate ESEA conferences negotiations, we urge you and the other conferees to ensure that the Every Child Achieves Act's (S.1177) and the Student Success Act's (H.R.5) technology and student data privacy provisions are well integrated and ultimately embedded in the conference report submitted to the House and Senate for final action. As state and school district leaders tasked with maximizing technology's impact on the nation's public schools, we encourage you to maintain the Senate's Innovative Technology Expands Children's Horizon's (I-TECH) program and the House's Schools of the Future Act (SFA), which together provide baseline formula support for all states, and targeted competitive grants, to promote effective technology use, including special support for rural communities.

S.1177 and H.R. 5 independently propose important strategies for helping states and districts better use technology to support teaching and learning. At a minimum, the conference report should reflect both bills' best elements, and we respectfully encourage you to consider the following recommendations for integrating the House and Senate approaches:

1. Promote Equity by Adopting a National, Formula-Driven Technology Grant Model and use Competitive Grants Selectively to Promote Innovation and Provide Supplemental Support in Rural and other Underserved Communities

Congress established the ESEA 50 years ago to promote educational equity. Today, ensuring educational equity inherently means providing digital equity. Far too often high poverty, rural, and other high-need communities lack access to the training, tools, and digital resources that students and educators need to succeed. In recent years, federal grant programs heavily relied on competitive models that sometimes disadvantaged the communities that need the greatest assistance because they lacked the resources required to develop applications. The Senate bill's I-TECH program appropriately utilizes a formula approach, except during fiscal years when Congress appropriates less than \$300 million, which will help achieve the ESEA's equity goals. The Senate bill appropriately provides support for professional development, tools, and open

educational resources that will promote educator collaboration, sharing, and student engagement. We urge you to adopt the Senate program's focus and funding model to help maximize the program's reach, while also ensuring that grants are large enough to meaningfully help students and their schools. We also encourage you to maintain the House's Schools of the Future competitive program to provide targeted planning and implementation support for rural communities.

2. Align the ESEA's Technology Investments with States' College and Career Ready Standards

During the 14 years since Congress last updated the ESEA, states have adopted college and career ready standards calling on students to acquire both deep content knowledge and the skills required for postsecondary success. All federal education investments, including technology-focused programs, should strive to help students meet the full depth and breadth of their state's standards. Consistent with many state's college and career ready standards, the House bill's SFA program calls on grantees to focus not just on content knowledge, but also developing tools, courses, and strategies for helping students acquire critical thinking, communications, and collaboration skills. We encourage you to align the next ESEA's technology programs with the SFA's knowledge and skills vision, so that state and federal initiatives are working seamlessly toward shared student postsecondary readiness standards.

3. Focus on Building Educators' Technology Literacy, including Supporting Effective Data Use

States, districts and schools expect teachers and school leaders to be expert across many disciplines, including effectively using technology to analyze data and tailor instruction, deliver interactive online assessments, offer rich blended learning opportunities, and effectively use digital resources. Unfortunately, professional development investments often have not kept pace with these many demands, especially with regard to promoting educators' digital literacy. Therefore, we urge you to ensure that the conference report provides dedicated support for technology and data focused professional development aligned with the ESEA's focus on improving instruction, delivering next generation assessments, and effective data use. The Senate I-TECH program recognizes this need, by dedicating more than half of formula program funds to well designed technology focused professional development.

The Senate and House bills also recognize the importance of permitting other professional development funds to be used for training focused on effectively integrating technology into curricula and instruction, which may include blended learning projects that include an element of online learning, combined with supervised learning time and student-led learning, in which the elements are connected to provide an integrated learning experience. This focus should also be maintained in the conference report.

4. Study Strategies for Improving Access Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom

Home Internet access is growing increasingly important to teaching and learning. Enabling all students to meet states' rigorous college and career ready standards will require new learning tools and support structures outside the classroom. Students often require Internet access to complete homework assignments, as well as to take advantage of blended learning, course choice, and other digital learning opportunities. We urge the conferees to maintain the Senate bill's direction to the Institute of Education Sciences to complete a national study on the educational trends and behaviors associated with access to digital learning resources outside of the classroom. This study will help support and inform later state and district strategies to address students' home based connectivity needs.

5. Examine the best Federal Role in Protecting Student's Personally Identifiable Data

Protecting student's personally identifiable information must be a high priority for public education. Our members are committed to implementing strong privacy policies and to ensuring that effective administrative, physical and technical safeguards are in place to protect data from unwanted breach. As you know, nearly 200 student data privacy bills were introduced in state legislatures across the United States in 2015 and half a dozen measures are pending in Congress. Given the still evolving state privacy policy landscape, and the critical importance of ensuring that new privacy protections are balanced with educationally sound data use, we strongly urge the conferees to adopt the Senate bill language establishing a privacy committee to examine the most appropriate federal role in better protecting student's personally identifiable data.

Federal policy plays a unique role in ensuring that all students have access to the digital learning opportunities that are driving improvements in public education nationally. Last year, the Federal Communications Commission wisely acted through the E-rate program to improve schools' high capacity broadband access, including expanding wireless broadband connections to learning spaces throughout schools. The next ESEA should complement this infrastructure investment by re-affirming the overarching federal commitment to educational equity and by taking specific steps to ensure all students, teachers, and other stakeholders benefit from technology's capacity to enhance teaching and learning.

Sincerely,



Keith Krueger
Chief Executive Officer
CoSN



Lan Neugent
Interim Executive Director
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