State task force offers blueprint for education technology

April 18th, 2014 | **4 Comments** |

By **Susan Frey**

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Embracing the mantra "no child left off-line," a state task force is offering a vision of how California classrooms can embrace education technology to enhance learning.

Convened by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson in 2012, the **Education Technology Task Force's** report, *Empowering Learning: California's Education Technology Blueprint, 2014-17,* notes that a report from the **California Emerging Technology Fund** found that "more than 9 million Californians who live in remote rural communities, on tribal lands, in low-income neighborhoods, or who have a disability do not have the benefit of high-speed connections to the Internet."

The report, released today, says that "to ensure a technology skills gap will not become the next achievement gap," California needs to provide every student, teacher and administrator with access to at least one Internet-connected device. It also recommends providing grade-appropriate instruction in the use of technology, including computer science and programming.

The 48 volunteers that comprise the task force include teachers, administrators, technology directors, local and county superintendents, school board members, parents, researchers, policy advocates and foundation and community members from around the state. They made 19 recommendations in the areas of learning, teaching, assessment and infrastructure.

Among those recommendations is a call for professional and curriculum development and teacher certification programs in education technology instruction. In addition, the report says, all schools must have the technology they need to implement the new computer-based Smarter Balanced assessments that are replacing the pencil-and-paper Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests.

Under the topic of infrastructure, California should "explore the deployment of statewide cloud computing data centers" and create a senior-level position for education technology at the California Department of Education, the task force recommends.

Some of the recommendations "intersect with work already underway in California," Torlakson said, such as the $1.25 billion allocated for Common Core state standards implementation, which can be used for equipment, training and materials.

"As California continues to move toward college and career readiness for every child, education technology has to be part of what we do," Torlakson said in a **press release.** "I've visited classrooms up and down the state and seen everything from virtual science experiments to online group projects. From Common Core to the new Smarter Balanced assessments, our state – which has always led the way in innovation – is focused on preparing students with the real-world skills they need. This new blueprint charts a smart course for getting us there."

Filed under: **Quick Hits**, **Technology** · Tags: **Education Technology Task Force**, **State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson**

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Michael Metcalf says:
April 22, 2014 at 1:09 pm

It's amazing to me that mere figureheads, ordinary people with some designated title can make these endorsements which are believed to be credible and meaningful. Conventional wisdom is nothing more than popular belief with little or no substance Whose vetting these broad based pronouncements for truth and relevance? Where's the substantive evidence? Is no one willing to challenge the credibility of these type of political media proclamations?

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Michael Metcalf says:
April 22, 2014 at 12:47 pm

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Paul says:
April 19, 2014 at 8:50 am

The report is thin, with some parts reading more like advertising copy than well-reasoned and feasible proposals.

The teacher certification recommendation craves further development. Are the technology requirements embedded in CTC credential program standards over the past decade or so adequate? Are teacher education programs honoring these technology requirements in practice? What of the CSET – Preliminary Educational Technology, for candidates who use that avenue? Do new teachers in fact arrive with adequate computer skills? Is it time to modernize the Supplementary Authorization in Computer Concepts and Applications? Why can the Designated Subjects Credential, a practical avenue for bringing technology professionals into the classroom, not be used in purely academic settings? Why does the Single Subject Math credential authorize — and why is it the *only* document to authorize — the teaching of computer science, when there is no requirement that a math major study computer science?

The recommendation to support *instruction* with statewide cloud computing resources should be expanded to include *business computing*. We have too many school districts and county

offices of education, and most lack the volume to procure business computing resources efficiently. Hiring practices make it nearly impossible for these entities to hire first-rate computer professionals. Certificated managers are former school principals, and the classified employment regime is geared to standardized, graded vocational and trade positions. Hundreds of millions of dollars would be freed for instructional use if districts could abandon their costly, outdated and clumsy business computing activities and subscribe to statewide "software as a service" financial, payroll, scheduling, attendance and grade reporting systems. (Charters could benefit, too.)

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Michael Metcalf says:
April 22, 2014 at 1:17 pm

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