



# CTAP and Supporting Technology Use



By Bonnie Marks

Several reports have been published recently that focus on the importance of educational technology as a force in improving this nation's schools. In this article I'll provide information about key aspects of three reports that CETPA members should be aware of as they work toward supporting technology use in 21st-century learning environments.

## First Report: SETDA Class of 2020 Action Plan

The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) has released a series of reports focused on the use of technology, with the final report being its Class of 2020 Action Plan for Education. The action plan describes technology's transformative role in education, helping to create changes in classrooms so that today's first graders will graduate in 2020 with the ability to compete globally.

The SETDA series includes five publications, all available on the SETDA Web site at [www.setda.org/web/guest/2020](http://www.setda.org/web/guest/2020), which offer models, research and specific recommendations for policies addressing the following topics:

- High-speed Broadband Access for all Kids: Breaking through the Barriers
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Technology-Based Assessments Improve Teaching and Learning
- Empowering Teachers: A Professional and Collaborative Approach
- Learning Virtually: Expanding Opportunities

In the upcoming year, SETDA plans to work with legislators and the Obama Administration to have these recommendations broadly understood. Their action plan will also inform state technology planning and programs in local school districts across the nation. Cliff Rudnick, head of the education technology unit at the California Department of Education,

serves as our state's SETDA representative.

SETDA's action plan is clearly designed for policy makers and leaders. In six short pages, it conveys the needs of today's students, the importance of the STEM initiative, the role of technology based-assessments, the opportunities virtual learning can provide, and the need to empower teachers and provide them with the training, resources and support they need to successfully integrate the use of technology. The document establishes a sense of urgency, with statistics about workforce preparation, global competition, teacher turnover, and inequities in the access to home broadband.

The 10 action steps SETDA called for in the plan are to:

1. Ensure that technology tools and resources are used continuously and seamlessly for instruction, collaboration and assessment.
2. Expose all students (Pre-K through 12) to STEM fields and careers.
3. Make ongoing, sustainable professional development available to all teachers.
4. Utilize virtual learning opportunities for teachers to further their professional development, such as online communities and education portals.
5. Incorporate innovative, consistent and timely assessments into daily instruction.
6. Strengthen the home and school connection by using technology to communicate with parents on student progress.
7. Provide the necessary resources so that every community has the infrastructure to support learning with technology, including assessments and virtual learning.
8. Obtain societal support for education that utilizes technology from all stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, state and district administrators, business leaders, legislators, and local communities.

9. Provide federal leadership to support states and districts regarding technology's role in school reform by passing the ATTAIN Act.
10. Increase available funding for E-rate so that school districts and schools can acquire telecommunication services, Internet access, internal connections and maintenance of those connections.

### Second Report: USDE Harnessing Innovation to Support Student Success

A second report that came out this fall was developed by the U.S. Department of Education under former U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings. The report, titled "Harnessing Innovation to Support Student Success: Using Technology to Personalize Education" recommends five key areas for federal, state and local governments to collaborate to accelerate the transformation of the education system.

Based on a series of roundtable discussions held by Secretary Spellings, the five key areas are:

1. Online Learning and Virtual Schools
2. Transforming Data into Knowledge and Action
3. Broadband Connectivity
4. Research Efficacy and Impact
5. School Leadership and Professional Preparation

It's no coincidence that these recommendations complement SETDA's action plan, as both are driven by knowledge about how technology has transformed communications and access to information in our society. The USDE report shares the same sense of urgency about the need to use technology in ways that can increase changes in schools, and emphasizes that the nation's prosperity depends on harnessing the power of innovation for the good of our schools.

In announcing the report, Margaret Spellings posted her first ever blog entry, as the guest blogger at EduWolk ([www.eduwolk.com](http://www.eduwolk.com)). The "Harnessing Innovation" report provides a rationale for each of the five key areas, listing the reasons for the importance of the area, and outlining the next steps for collaboration across entities. The report recommends changes to the E-rate program to help it keep pace with the instructional and technology needs of schools, with a funding structure that is more responsive to education goals and a reduction of the onerous paperwork requirements of the program. It also recommends that the FCC and the Department of Education coordinate efforts and commission a study that look at data on connectivity and bandwidth capacity in schools and districts. The report also has strong recommendations for professional preparation, especially at the leadership level. It acknowledges the demands and expectations being placed on education in the current global information economy, and stresses the importance of responding to current challenges by using technology tools to help students meet the expectations of NCLB.

### Third report: MacArthur Foundation Report on Digital Youth

Lastly, a report titled "Living and Learning with New Media" released in November 2008 focuses on today's "Digital Youth." With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, researchers from the University of Southern California and the University of California, Berkeley, studied how today's youth use digital media. Based on interviews and online observations during a three-year period, the researchers found that social networks, video-sharing sites, online games and mobile devices are now key fixtures of youth culture.

The study concluded that young people's experiences in socializing and playing online are developing their technical skills and media literacy in ways that rival the educational role of formal schooling. Mizuko Ito, one of the lead researchers on the project, asks: "What is different is that so much of what kids are learning about how to use media, manipulating information, and finding things online are taking place in an informal social context, rather than things they are learning in school?" Ito goes on to state, "I think it has been challenging for teachers and educational institutions in the formal school space to incorporate [these online environments]." She observes what she refers to as a "generational gap" between parents and teachers in their perception of online social networks. The researchers indicated that young people are using the online world for both social activities and for interest-driven learning.

The study raises clear concerns about the need for schools to rethink policies about providing students access to various digital media and social networking sites. In future research, the study will look at the potential for making better use of the learning opportunities through online resources and networks, and for the role the networked world can play in education.

### Implications of the reports

Taken together these three reports provide a compelling argument about the need to support technology use in K-12 education. The MacArthur Foundation study provides key data about today's "digital natives," that supports SETDA's call for powerful broadband access for students. The USDE report ties the need for technology in schools to both NCLB requirements and to the importance of fueling innovation and learning for the nation's future prosperity. As CTAP staff in the 11 regions move ahead in providing California school districts with technology planning support and professional development, we will be working to make school leaders aware of the research behind these reports, and the steps they can take to build 21st-century classrooms.

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*Bonnie Marks is the Executive Director of CTAP Region 4, a project funded by the California Department of Education. Region 4 is one of 11 CTAP regions in the state, and serves seven San Francisco Bay Area counties through the Alameda County Office of Education. She can be reached at [bmarks@telis.org](mailto:bmarks@telis.org).*