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
Special Report:

Consortium for School Networking K-12 School Networking Conference

February 26-28, 2003

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SCHOOL NETWORKING CONFERENCE

The following stories are from the Consortium for School Networking's (CoSN) Feb. 25 pre-conference sessions on grassroots advocacy. Next issue, look for full coverage of the conference, which starts Feb. 26.

Grassroots Activism Can Help Save Ed Tech Funding, Hill Veterans Say

Telling your Congress members how the funds they appropriate are helping your district is a key element to ensuring that federal ed tech funds keep flowing, experts said.

"You don't have to have 500 people weigh in from your state, you have to have five," said Leslie Harris, head of the legislative consulting firm Leslie Harris & Associates. "You would be surprised, 10 calls can make a difference."

With the dire economy, it is imperative that educators let Congress know they need ed tech funding. "We can't pretend — when technology money is subject to transferability — that doing our work and doing it well will be enough," Harris said.

Spin a Nice Yarn

To help members understand, educators should provide specific examples, using stories of how real people were affected. "I keep emphasizing stories because that is what it is about," she said. "If you pull out the *Congressional Record*, look at how much time people [in Congress] spend telling stories."

Carmel Martin, chief counsel for Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), agreed that stories are important. She briefed attendees on how to maximize Congressional meetings.

"I think when people come in and spend a half an hour telling you about problems you are well aware of, without [offering] any solutions, or asking for something but not being able to back it up with the ammunition you need to fight for it, that's where you feel frustrated," Martin said. "If someone from New Mexico can show me some concrete data on how the PT3 [Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology] program made a difference, I think, 'oh, this is great, we can put that in a floor statement'."

Some educators are concerned that talking to members of Congress may violate states laws preventing lobbying by government employees, including public school personnel. But Harris says: "Lobbying is an attempt to influence specific legislation. It is going in and saying, 'I want you to support bill YXX.'"

With that in mind, she said educators can advocate not by asking their representatives to endorse a specific piece of legislation, but simply endorsing a

program and letting the member figure out what action to take. "You can say, here is what we've done. We couldn't have done that without the E-rate."

Harris added that another important factor in grassroots advocacy for ed tech is cultivating a relationship with the member. She suggested educators invite their members of Congress to programs they are having in the district, send them positive articles written about the school's tech programs and be available if the member has questions about issues.

"When he gets a memo for an upcoming vote, it is going to say, the constituency in Norfolk is doing this, this and this. And that will influence his vote," Harris said. *Contact:* CoSN, (202) 861-2676.

CoSN, ISTE Policy Briefing Offers A Look at Key Ed-Tech Issues

With Congress having just finished Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 appropriations, it is now getting ready to move to issues for the future, so CoSN and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) provided attendees the skinny on what they think are the hot issues this session.

Key on the agenda is preserving funding for educational technology programs. "We are fighting tooth and nail to maintain the gains we made over the years," said Jon Bernstein with Leslie Harris & Associates, a legislative consulting firm jointly hired by ISTE and CoSN. "The smaller technology programs were all zeroed out in the [president's proposed] FY'03 budget. PT3 was on life support. We managed to get level funding for all those programs. That qualifies as success in this environment where the budget is tough and the president is not an advocate of these programs."

Also on the agenda is the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). "Special education, that is going to be a hot-button issue," Bernstein said. "The education committee has to get done. What we want is the concept of universal design to be more integrated. Assistive technology is really add-on technology. The concept of universal design is about making sure that when these products are manufactured, they are accessible from the get-go."

CoSN and ISTE said positive E-rate emphasis is important. "Some members [of Congress] are just seeing what's on the news about the fraud (*ETN*, Feb. 12, p. 27)," said Sheryl Abshire, co-chair of the CoSN/ISTE Joint Policy Committee. "Let's not get caught up with that." Fair use and copyright also are issues to watch this year.

Contact: CoSN, (202) 861-2676, www.cosn.org.

K-12 School Networking Conference

The following stories are from the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) K-12 School Networking conference, held Feb. 26-28 in Arlington, Va.

Hawaii Goes Wireless, Plans to Train Non-Certified via Distance Education

When implementing a wireless network, it is important to have a security infrastructure set up to protect the network, educators from Hawaii said.

In the past year, the Hawaii school system has worked on implementing wireless local area networks to serve its island schools.

“We bought the wireless access point, plugged it in, and said, ‘yay, it works,’” said Kerry Koide, with the Hawaii Department of Education (ED). “We found out that it was open access for everyone, people across the street, down the hall.”

Since then, the school system has been trying to figure out the best way to protect its networks. “We should have set up a wireless security policy and wireless management policy, and it should have been done before we went out and deployed all this stuff,” said K. Kim, with the Hawaii ED. “We have to balance security and ease of use. I don’t want to make it so difficult that no one can use the network.”

The school district has used password logins, encryption and firewalls to protect its network. But, Koide notes all have drawbacks. “When you stay with one vendor, encryption works great, but if you go to multiple vendors,” there are problems.

Koide said the state hopes to use its network to help bring its Kapunas up to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards. Kapunas are older, native people who teach the native languages of Hawaii in the schools. Because NCLB requires those in the classroom to have at least a two-year degree, it would leave many Kapunas unable to pass on their knowledge. “Some of them don’t even have a high school degree,” Koide said. “But they are teaching the native language. We need to keep them in our schools.” *Contacts:* Kerry Koide, Hawaii ED, (808) 773-4777; K. Kim, Hawaii ED, (808) 977-7701.

Medical Model of Education Requires Better Diagnostic Tools, Protocols

If educators are going to take a more scientific, or medical approach to integrating technology into the curriculum, more research is needed on what is effective, said Ferdi Serim, a keynote speaker at the conference.

“A medical model of education requires two things,” Serim said. “You can’t go into any hospital without getting your vital signs checked or without a medical history. We don’t have vital signs in education or a complete learning history.”

To continue the metaphor, he said educators are being asked to improve their patients without any idea of what vital signs to take, what tools to use to take them and what to do with them.

“If the only tool you have is a thermometer, the only thing you can tell about them is their temperature,” he said.

Administrators and leaders should help improve the tools available to educators and be sure to remember that other key medical item: “The first key to medical model of education is to do no harm.” *Contact:* Ferdi Serim, ferdi@oii.org.

In Hard Times, Funding Influenced By Relationships, Good Ideas

Creating long-lasting partnerships with funders and coming up with creative, well-thought out plans will be the key to maintaining funding during these economically tough times, said presenters at a session on funding.

“Foundations fund issues they are passionate about,” said Kim Mulkey, director of technology programs at BellSouth Foundation.

“Instead of thinking about funding streams, we have to think about idea streams,” said Sara Fitzgerald, a vice president at Funds for Learning.

It is also helpful to partner with other groups to achieve an educational goal, Fitzgerald noted. “Those who take the time to build partnerships, those are the kinds of initiatives that are continually being rewarded,” she said.

Mulkey agrees. “Go for the relationship. Developing relationships is a great way to sustain yourself. Bad times are going to come and go, [but] it is not going to stop people from doing business. Everyone is cutting; but, in those relationships, we rally together.”

While relationships matter, so do good plans. “Schools are having a hard time finding funding sources if they don’t have a well-defined plan,” Fitzgerald said. “Tight-fisted sources will really want well-developed, well thought-out plans.”

And well thought-out plans require a strong evaluation component.

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Funding (Cont. from p. 45)

“You have to define what success looks like,” Mulkey said. “There are requirements at the federal level, the state level, the boards of education. Foundations and corporations often time have measurements, and they don’t necessarily match that of state and federal.”

Contacts: Kim Mulkey, BellSouth Foundation, (404) 249-2396; Sara Fitzgerald, Funds for Learning, (703) 351-6218.

Classrooms of Today Not Meeting Needs of the Future, Prof Says

If students are truly to receive a 21st Century education, then the classroom has to change with the times, said speakers at a session on technology in the classroom.

“Why have we made such a case out of this idea of what kids need to know,” said Seymour Papert, professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “That [notion] evolved from what was teachable at the time.”

Papert said much of today’s curriculum is still carried over from an agrarian society. “My single greatest enthusiasm is to do away with the word ‘classroom,’ where we segregate knowledge by age and subject,” he said. “Technology makes all of that obsolete.”

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) perpetuates a style of education that is no longer relevant in the knowledge economy, Paper contends.

“The work that could be liberating for some kids is being pushed out of the way in the interest of the kids that are in trouble,” he said. “We say we are going to close the gap, as in to criticize the gap. I want everyone to do as well as they can do. [But] are we to close the gap between Einstein and me?”

Linda Roberts, director of the Office of Educational Technology during the Clinton Administration, was not as harsh on NCLB, saying, with proper implementation, it could be helpful. “The way in which we carry out that policy, if we go one way, it could be incredible,” Roberts said. “But if we too narrowly define the path you take, we could end up with more kids who are not able to read.”

She added that providing flexibility is the new challenge. “The greatest challenge is to be able to see what is happening, be reflective about it and throw out what is not working. Think outside of conventional wisdom.”

Contacts: Seymour Papert, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, (617) 253-7854.

CoSN Starts New Projects to Improve Total Cost of Ownership, Decision

Schools would get help making better spending choices and improving their data-driven decision making under two new initiatives unveiled at the conference.

A new Total Cost of Ownership calculator will help schools better figure out how much technology is going to cost them in the long term. The web-based calculator, which was funded in part by an Education Department (ED) grant, requires a variety of data from a school or district.

“We think this is going to help school districts on several fronts,” said John Bailey, director of ED’s Office of Educational Technology. “It forces school leaders to think through a piece of technology as it is being implemented. We hope this is actually going to help school leaders find areas where they are underinvesting.”

The calculator is free to schools, and is expected to be running in April. However, CoSN recommends schools begin collecting the data needed for input now. The URL is www.classroomco.org. The tool only works with the newer versions of Netscape (>5.5) and Internet Explorer (>6.2).

CoSN also launched its new initiative, *Data-Driven Decision Making (3D): Vision to Know and Do*. With 3D, CoSN plans to provide information for educators on collecting, understanding and using data effectively.

“Educators are increasingly being asked to collect, analyze and report data to demonstrate that their efforts are resulting in increased student learning,” said Irene Spero, 3D project director. “With the passage of No Child Left Behind, data collection, analysis and reporting have become even more imperative.” Information on the initiative can be found online at www.3D2Know.org. *Contact:* CoSN, (202) 861-2676, www.cosn.org.

* * *

Better Assessment — At the post-conference session on research, several presenters noted that more research needs to be done on providing accurate assessments for student knowledge. “We are undertaking a huge experiment and one for which we don’t have an answer,” said Eric Hamilton, with the National Science Foundation. “If you impose a regiment of high-stakes accountability instruments, will you advance student learning? We do not know the answer. We need better assessment.”

K-12 School Networking

For additional conference coverage, visit www.bpi-news.com/Breaking%20News/cosn.htm after March 13.