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States Expand Access to Classroom Technology, But Most Schools Lag in Embracing the Digital Age

*Research Center Grades the States on School Technology;
Georgia Leads With an A, District of Columbia Trails With a D*

State Technology Reports Include Detailed Findings on Each State

WASHINGTON – March 29, 2007 – While education policymakers have made major strides over the past decade in equipping classrooms with Internet-connected computers and in narrowing the digital divide between rich and poor schools, few states have put in place policies to ensure that teachers and students can make constructive use of that technology. For example, 48 states have technology standards for students, but just four states test students on those standards.

Those are among the findings of *Technology Counts 2007: A Digital Decade*, Education Week's 10th annual report on educational technology. The report, a joint effort of Education Week and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center, features the center's annual state survey on educational technology and grades the 50 states and the District of Columbia on their technology leadership.

The new report takes stock of how the landscape has shifted since the first *Technology Counts* in 1997, a period that saw a surge of technology access in schools and the explosion of the World Wide Web. The first report noted, for example, that only about two-thirds of U.S. public schools had Internet connections of any kind, and just 14 percent of those schools had such access on classroom computers. Today, nearly all schools can get online, and most instructional computers have high-speed Internet connections.

Yet amid fears that U.S. prospects on the global stage may be dimming, the report suggests that schools could pay closer attention to providing opportunities for students to acquire proficiency in the kinds of skills valued in the increasingly digital economy.

"In the 21st century, students need more than superficial fluency with the latest high-tech gadgets; they need genuine digital literacy," said Virginia B. Edwards, the editor and publisher of *Education Week* and *Technology Counts 2007*. "Our report shows that whether schools are on the right track in equipping students with those sophisticated skills remains an open question."

Technology Leadership Report Card

For the second year, *Technology Counts 2007* grades the states on their leadership in three areas that have long been at the core of the report: access, use, and capacity. Leading the nation this year is Georgia, which receives a score of 96 and earns the only A. South Dakota and Virginia also receive high marks, with A-minus grades. The District of Columbia is at the other end of the spectrum, with a score of 63 and a grade of D. Nevada, Rhode Island, and Oregon also receive D's.

Also for the second consecutive year, the 2007 report includes state-by-state profiles with details about each state that are available exclusively online at www.edweek.org/go/tc07/str. The entire report is online at www.edweek.org/go/tc07.

This year's EPE Research Center survey found that state policies and practices on educational technology vary widely from one state to the next. According to the state survey:

- **Technology standards for students** climbed from 35 states in 2001 to 48 today, but just four states test students on those standards.
- **Technology standards for teachers** rose from 34 states in 2003 to 45 this year, but only 19 states require a technology test or coursework for an initial teaching license.
- **Incentives for teachers** to use technology, including course credit, stipends, grants, salary increases, and hardware, are not offered by most states.
- **State Web sites** or portals offering an array of online academic content are available in about half the states.
- **E-learning options**, in the form of state virtual schools or "cyber" charter schools, are not offered in 15 states and the District of Columbia.

"Today, facility with information technology is as basic as penmanship used to be," said Carole Vinograd Bausell, the assistant director of the EPE Research Center. "And just as the ability to put pen to paper didn't assure students could compose an essay in the 20th century, the mastery of word processing, Web research, or high-tech digital devices doesn't guarantee they will thrive in the 21st. But without those skills, students aren't even on the playing field."

Digital Divides at Home and School

At the time of the first *Technology Counts*, concerns ran high about a digital divide between haves and have-nots. This year's report finds that student access to computers has become the norm at school, regardless of students' race, ethnicity, or economic background. But in the use of computers at home, a gap of more than 50 percentage points exists between students from families with incomes below \$20,000 and those with family incomes of \$75,000 or more. Significant gaps also exist between students of various racial and ethnic groups.

"Students from disadvantaged demographic groups are far less likely to use computers at home, putting them at further disadvantage," said Caroline Hendrie, the executive project editor for *Technology Counts*. "While schools can't close the digital divide at home, they can mitigate its effects by paying closer attention to how digital tools are used in the classroom."

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The EPE Research Center is the research division of the Bethesda, Md.-based nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education. The Research Center conducts annual policy surveys and collects data for the *Quality Counts*, *Technology Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports and the Education Counts online database. It also contributes research and data to special reports in *Education Week*, *Teacher Magazine*, and edweek.org. The EPE Research Center is on the Web at www.edweek.org/rc.