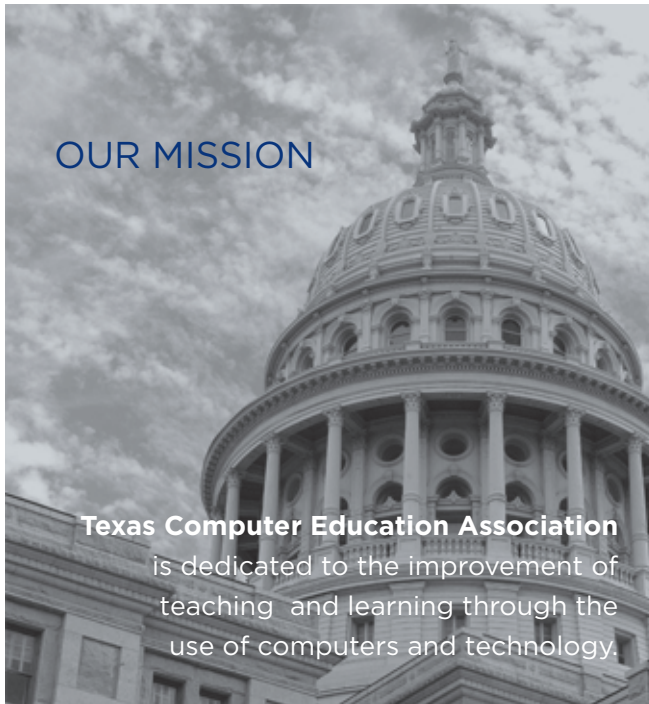


2011

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



TEXAS COMPUTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



OUR MISSION

Texas Computer Education Association is dedicated to the improvement of teaching and learning through the use of computers and technology.

IMPORTANT CROSSROAD

The state of Texas is at an educational crossroads. There is an increased pressure to improve the academic achievement of our students while transitioning the curriculum and the learning process to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. This is to be accomplished in the midst of a national economic crisis that has reduced the state's budget for the 2011 biennial legislative session. This requires state leaders to make difficult decisions that will ensure that our schools are relevant and meet the demands not only of the global marketplace, but also our student's expectations.

In order to assist in this process the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) surveyed 632 teachers and administrators to identify the important issues that need to be addressed to help each school district provide engaging and appropriate experiences for students so they can learn and are able to apply their knowledge in ways that will enrich their lives. In addition, the National Findings of the Speak UP 2009 survey was reviewed. This is a national survey, conducted by Project Tomorrow, of 299,677 K-12 students, 26,312 parents, 38,652 teachers, and 3,974 administrators regarding how technology is currently being used to drive student achievement, teacher effectiveness and overall educational productivity. The results of the two surveys are similar and offer the same recommendations.

FINDINGS

FREE AGENT LEARNERS

Today's students experience learning in a vastly different way at school as compared to outside of school. The Project Tomorrow survey verifies our nation's K-12 students are increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning. The findings of the survey dubbed this generation of students as "**free agent learners**". "For these students, the schoolhouse, teacher and the textbook no longer have an exclusive monopoly on knowledge, content, or even the education process, and therefore, it should not be surprising that students are leveraging a wide range of learning resources, tools, applications, outside experts and each other to create a personalized learning experience that may or may not include what is happening in the classroom."¹

UN-TETHERED LEARNING

Texas students are also less bound by the same restraints from traditional education including geography, time, resources, teacher quality, and community assets. The Project Tomorrow report identifies this as "**un-tethered learning**". Students are now able to leverage the best educational content and learning experiences wherever it may be in the world.² They are no longer restrained by who their teacher is, what school they attend, or what textbook their district has adopted. If given a choice, students would recommend the following to make it easier to use technology for schoolwork:

- Use their own cell phone, smart phone, or MP3 player
- Use their own laptop or netbook
- Provide unlimited Internet access throughout the school
- Provide access to their social networking site
- Provide tools to help them communicate with their classmates³

DIGITAL RICH LEARNING

Students desire a digitally rich learning experience that not only stimulates their creativity, but also increases their efficiency.⁴ We have known that relevant digital tools, content, and resources have engaged today's student but now the students are telling us that these tools are also a key to their productivity. Although students may use technology inside school to write papers, create presentations, take tests, and use online textbooks: outside of school they are doing more creation and

manipulation of digital media. The process of creating new content by mixing and mashing existing content provides a learning experience in and of itself.

This use of digital media as a form of self-expression has made this generation critical consumers of digital content. The students identified three key characteristics that are necessary for an online textbook:

- Must be interactive and relevant
- Must foster collaboration throughout the learning process
- Must personalize the learning process⁵

DIRECTIONS

In order to meet the needs of our students, the state must address the barriers that have prevented schools to implement technology in a relevant and meaningful way. The state survey revealed there is a need for equity among all schools and school districts. There is a disparity in funding, vision, and political will that has prevented the state from having equitable access to digital tools, content, resources, infrastructure, and teacher quality across the state. Texas teachers and administrators report there is a great need for up-to-date equipment, broadband Internet access, increased professional development for the effective use of technology for both teachers and administrators, and engaging relevant digital content as described by the students in the Project Tomorrow survey.

CALL TO ACTION

The Texas Computer Education Association recommends the following:

- **Increase the technology funding to meet the demands of the 21st century learning environment.** The Technology Allotment of \$30 per student was established in 1992. In 2011, technical infrastructure for a school and school district are vastly more complex and expensive to operative.
- **Require a technology credit for high school graduation in all graduation plans.** Texas must ensure all Texas students have the skills necessary to function in a global workplace that is dependent on technology.
- **Require 6 hours for professional development for teachers, librarians, and instructional (campus and district) administrators in the use of 21st century technology tools to improve**

instruction. Less than 9 percent of teachers are incorporating the kinds of technology desired by two-thirds of the parents and a majority of the students into their classroom instruction.⁶

- **Provide digital content for teachers and students.** Although in the 81st legislature, the state made strides to provide more digital content with HB4294 and HB2488, it is important to ensure that the students are provided with digital content that is interactive, collaborative, relevant, and allows them to personalize their learning experience.

Endnotes

- 1 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 2
- 2 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 8
- 3 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 10
- 4 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 18
- 5 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 21
- 6 Speak Up 2009: Creating Our Future: Students Speak Up about their Vision for 21st Learning, page 24

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