



SIIA Key Federal Policy Issues Education & Workforce Development 109th Congress

SIIA supports a long-term and comprehensive national education and workforce development strategy that will provide the United States with a citizenry ready for the 21st century. All citizens must have the knowledge and skills to succeed in today's highly competitive and information technology driven global economy. Education and training through and about technology are vital to this effort.

SIIA member companies are partnering with educators at all levels to provide innovative technology-based educational tools, but a successful national strategy requires the federal government to enhance its investment and leadership to address this challenge.

Technology Integration & Investment

Technology is a critical educational tool necessary to both meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act and ensure students are prepared to compete in the 21st Century. A robust and targeted federal investment is needed to address this need and advance technology integration into teaching, learning, assessment and educational administration for all students, educators and learning institutions.

- **Increase funding for the NCLB II-D** Enhancing Education Through Technology program to ensure the targeted federal investment critical to serve NCLB goals and requirements from assessment and accountability to parental involvement and instruction.
- **Continue the E-Rate** to ensure all students, including those in the most disadvantaged communities, gain and retain access to the telecommunications, Internet and related technologies so important to their educational success. This includes: making permanent the exemption of the E-Rate (and universal service) from the federal Anti-Deficiency Act; and continuing a financially stable and predictable operating fund outside the appropriations process.
- **Incorporate technology into all education and training programs** to provide flexibility to achieve program goals, including implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).
- **Increase resources for teacher training** as a critical component to ensure technology is appropriately and effectively integrated into the curriculum. This includes reforming and improving the HEA and teacher training provisions such as the Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) program.

21st Century Policies

Technology and the shift to anytime, anywhere and any pace e-learning holds great promise to improve educational opportunity and achievement, but adoption is often impeded by long-standing education models and rules. Effective policies must adjust to the dynamic environment, and will neither prejudice nor inappropriately favor technology and web-based education over traditional models and mediums.

- **Seat-time vs. e-Time.** The shift from a fixed-time and institution-based model to learner-based e-learning requires that practices and regulations be updated. Modernization of rules for academic credit, school accreditation and student financial aid is necessary to recognize students' need for

flexibility to access curriculum from multiple institutions and a varied pace of enrollment. Reform must include changes to the HEA rules limiting to 50% an institution's share of students and classes employing distance education.

- **Software Adoption.** Promote the market for high-quality digital tools, content and instruction by avoiding prohibitively restrictive regulatory barriers and empowering consumers with the flexible resources to meet their educational needs.

Research & Development

Publishers are devoting considerable resources to develop interactive and engaging software tools and electronic curricular materials. Yet, e-learning stands at a relatively early stage in its development, and much greater investment will be necessary to develop and evaluate the most effective tools and models.

- **Publicly-funded R&D can address gaps in private investment**, provided it is focused on underserved niche markets, pre-competitive basic research, product evaluation and large-scale evaluations.
- **Well-crafted public-private partnerships** will ensure the most relevant research is funded and findings impact the consumer market. Government development efforts should not inappropriately reach beyond the federal role to compete with products and services already (or best) offered by the private sector, as such action would distort market forces, weaken incentive for private investment, and ultimately weaken education options.
- **Ensure appropriate implementation of NCLB scientifically based research provisions** that foster a positive school culture around research by both clarifying guidance and providing school incentives to participate in research studies. Without such steps, insufficient research will exist on many educational interventions, while educators will increasingly comply through short-sighted reliance on national "approved" lists that limit choices, ignore local factors, federalize curriculum and ultimately disempower educators.

Workforce Development

Encourage and provide resources for students and adults to pursue high-tech training and careers. Promote life-long learning as the key to professional opportunity in today's dynamic economy. The nation's ability to succeed will require a federal commitment to ensure all acquire necessary new skills.

- **Target increased resources to improve math and science education** through technology and teacher recruitment and training, thereby providing students with the ability and interest in high-tech related careers.
- **Increase student aid and scholarship opportunities** for students pursuing high-tech related post-secondary education.
- **Look to information technology industry training tax incentives** as one of several solutions necessary to ensure a well-educated and trained high-tech workforce.
- **Invest in public-private partnerships**, including between industry and educational institutions, to provide training and ensure educational programs meet real-world needs.

About SIIA

The Software Information & Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education, and intellectual property protection to more than 600 leading software and information companies. Many SIIA members provide technology products and services to education, while all depend on the nation's schools for a skilled, high-tech workforce. For further information visit <http://www.sii.net> or contact Mark Schneiderman, SIIA's director of education policy, at 202-789-4444 or marks@sii.net.