

June 4, 2004  
By Facsimile

The Honorable Florence Shaprio  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Kent Grusendorf  
Texas House of Representatives  
Room CAP 1W.05  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

**RE: FUNDING FOR TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS INSTRUCTIONAL  
MATERIALS & THE TEXAS eLEARNING INITIATIVE**

Dear Senator Shapiro and Representative Grusendorf:

On behalf of teachers, school leaders, high-tech employers and educational publishers in Texas and around the nation, we write to urge your support for full funding of the Technology Applications (TA) adoption under the Texas Education Agency's pending budget. As your education reform working group considers improvement strategies, we also encourage funding the Texas eLearning Initiative (TeLI) recommendations.

The Technology Applications (TA) adoption of the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Proclamation 2001 provides Texas students with the curricular resources necessary to meet the information and communications technology literacy standards of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which are so critical to their, and the state's, future success. TEA has now approved a variety of TA curricular resources, including mostly online digital resources. However, without the necessary state funding, most students will be left without the opportunity to access these resources and learn these important skills.

The Texas State Legislature, Board of Education and Education Agency demonstrated support for technology and technology literacy as critical to the state's education goals by pledging for state TA adoption and funding. In doing so, state leaders also signaled their interest in transforming educational practice by focusing on digital learning resources, including especially online instructional resources. By making TA instructional materials available online, Texas education leaders would:

- establish Texas as a national leader in providing the more customized, engaging and anytime, anywhere learning environment that today's students require to achieve in all subject areas;
- leverage existing technology investment in computer and Internet infrastructure to impact overall student academic performance; and
- ensure students meet the TA TEKS standards as well as the federal No Child Left Behind goal for student technology literacy by Grade 8; and
- continue towards the bold vision of educational reform through integration of technology and online instructional materials.

Texas school districts have already selected Technology Applications instructional materials in good faith over the past few months, based on the assumption they would be funded for the 2004-2005 school year. However, without state funding, the majority of Texas School Districts will be unable to purchase these materials on their own, and the larger technology-based instructional materials reform effort will be stalled. To date, the absence of state funding has resulted in very little compliance with these TEKS standards. While great strides have been made in bringing technology and the Internet to the classroom, this state investment in Technology Applications is a necessary next step to ensure all communities have the sustained and stable source of funding to leverage technology investments and meet the TEKS.

We also encourage funding for the Texas eLearning Initiative (TeLI) recommendations as the education reform working group considers improvement strategies. As you know, TeLI is an independent initiative to make recommendations aimed at advancing the availability, integration and effective use of educational technologies to enhance learning and improve student achievement. The TeLI recommendations, which include TA funding, were presented to the Joint Select Committee on Public School Finance on February 18, 2004. Other important TeLI recommendations are:

- Expansion of the Technology Immersion Pilot (TIP) project
- Support for online learning resources aligned with the TEKS in core subjects
- Implementation of online and technology-driven formative assessment tools
- Funding of the Technology Allotment at increased levels to support TeLI statewide

We urge the Texas State legislature to not cede the state's leadership role in transforming educational practice through integration of technology and digital instructional resources that allow for the more customized, engaging and anytime, anywhere learning environment that today's students require to meet the TEKS and our 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning goals. Implementation of Technology Applications instructional materials and the other TeLI recommendations will provide an important step toward modernizing Texas schools, improving learning resources and ensuring student achievement and preparation. We understand the difficult budget constraints faced by the state and appreciate your efforts to date in securing additional funding for K-12 instructional materials, but these goals and requirements can only be achieved if the state's vision is matched by the investment. It is critical now that the Texas State Legislature adequately fund Technology Applications instructional materials as requested by the TEA Proclamation 2001, as well as move forward to implement the TeLI recommendations.

With instructional materials so instrumental to education but traditionally representing only about one penny out of every dollar spent in Texas for public education, proposed cuts are not an effective place to find savings. Similarly, with technology increasingly necessary for students and educators to meet their educational mission, failure to modernize school resources and practices through technology tools is short-sighted and will prevent the state from achieving necessary educational effectiveness and efficiencies. At a time when we have greatly raised accountability standards on our students, teachers and schools, we cannot afford to weaken the very programs so successful in helping them meet those challenges.

Our organizations and educational stakeholders look forward to working with you to achieve the support for TA adoption funding and the other TeLI recommendations as you consider the Texas Education Agency's budget. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact any of the organizations or individuals listed below.

Sincerely,

Consortium for School Networking  
International Society for Technology in Education  
Software & Information Industry Association

cc: The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor  
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor  
The Honorable Tom Craddick, Speaker of the House  
Members of the Education Reform Working Group, Texas State Legislature  
(Senators Robert Duncan, Todd Staples, Royce West, Jane Nelson and Frank Madla; and  
Representatives Dianne White Delisi, Helen Giddings, Bob Griggs, Carl Isett and Rene Oliveira)  
Texas Legislative Budget Board

### **About the Signatory Organizations**

**Consortium for School Networking** (CoSN). CoSN is a national nonprofit organization, promotes the use of information technologies and the Internet in K-12 education to improve learning. Our members represent school districts, state and local education agencies, nonprofits, companies and individuals across the nation and in Texas who share our vision. For more information related to CoSN policy positions, please contact Jee Hang Lee at [jhlee@lharris.com](mailto:jhlee@lharris.com) or (202) 478-6131.

**International Society for Technology in Education** (ISTE). ISTE is a nonprofit professional organization with a worldwide membership of leaders and potential leaders in educational technology. We are dedicated to providing leadership and service to improve teaching and learning by advancing the effective use of technology in K–12 education and teacher education. We provide our members with information, networking opportunities, and guidance as they face the challenge of incorporating computers, the Internet, and other new technologies into their schools. For more information related to ISTE policy positions, please contact David Tortorelli at [dtortorelli@iste.org](mailto:dtortorelli@iste.org) or (202) 861-7777.

**Software & Information Industry Association** (SIIA). SIIA is the principal trade association of the software code and digital content industries, representing more than 650 leading high-tech companies that publish for business, education, entertainment, consumers and the Internet. SIIA's members include both industry leaders and smaller, innovative companies from across the country, including 22 Texas companies and many others with Texas facilities. All SIIA member companies depend on the nation's schools to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become productive citizens and help fill the nation's need for skilled high-tech workers. For more information, please contact Mark Schneiderman, Director of Education Policy at [marks@siia.net](mailto:marks@siia.net) or (202) 789-4444.