



Compass**Learning**[™]

Inspire. Explore. Achieve.

Using Technology to Learn and Learning to Use Technology

Written Statement
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you today to share thoughts about using technology to learn and learning to use technology. My name is Claudia Mansfield Sutton, and I am Senior Vice President of Marketing for *CompassLearning*.

CompassLearning has more than 20 years of experience working with educators across the country to help them successfully implement instructional technology solutions. More than 20,000 schools, serving nearly 14 million students, use *CompassLearning* programs to help teachers personalize learning, measure student performance, and connect communities of learners. WRC Media Company, *CompassLearning's* parent company, is the largest supplemental education provider in the world today. WRC Media has four principal operating subsidiaries: Weekly Reader, The World Almanac and Facts-on-File, American Guidance Service, and *CompassLearning*.

This morning, I am also pleased to represent the Software & Information Industry Association, the principal trade group of software and digital content publishers.

CompassLearning and SIIA thank Chairman Goodling, Ranking Member Clay and the Committee for its strong support of education and educational technology. Federal leadership has been critical to local and state efforts to bring the benefits of instructional technology to all students, especially those in the most disadvantaged communities.

In the next few moments, I plan to highlight three points about using technology to learn and learning to use technology:

In the education arena, we have only begun to harness the power of technology.

Technology is an effective tool for an image-based generation.

Professional development is essential to the success of an instructional technology implementation.

Technology, by definition, means different things to different people and is highly influenced by experience and perspective. How many of us still use microwaves to heat coffee and VCRs to play videocassettes™ when there is so much more potential to be tapped. And, so it is with education.

The reality and the potential of technology are accelerating a revolution around the globe and in our schools. Revolution is often regarded as negative, but this is truly a positive revolution. I share with you a quote about another positive and long-lasting revolution:

"Remarkable new technology is introduced into the school system and experts predict education will be revolutionized. The technology will, as never before, allow the widespread dissemination of new concepts and ideas that stimulate young minds and free the teacher for more creative pursuits. Yet, the magic fails to materialize, and within a few years articles appear in the popular press asserting that the failure, obviously arises from the teachers not being skilled enough in the new technology."

Excerpts from the New York Times in an article by Peter Lewis in the 1840's describing the introduction of the blackboard.

It is all a matter of perspective, and it is incumbent on our generation to harness the potential power of technology in classrooms across America.

The generation of children in our schools today are often referred to as the "Image-based" or "I Generation." They are interactive, impatient, informed, inquisitive, and intelligent. Technology, which is an integral part of this generation's psyche, is a revolutionary tool through which teachers can transform education and improve educational opportunities for all children. By providing access to quality education anytime and anywhere while providing tools that facilitate active and engaged learning, technology can empower students to take control of, and accept responsibility for, their learning. The technology itself is less important than the changes it brings about in substance, content, and the focus of the learner.

Using technology to learn does not guarantee success. Successful technology implementations are tailored to the learner, based upon sound pedagogy, and tied to national, state, and local standards. Also, a student's progress can be more easily measured and monitored through the use of technology-based solutions. As with anything else in life, there is not a silver bullet to address improving student achievement and any claim that technology might be that silver bullet is not correct. But, it is an effective tool for an image-based generation.

Technology is a tool. In the education environment, it is a resource for assisting parents and educators in their quest to teach and motivate children. However, to be efficient, useful, and successful, any tool must be used for the purpose for which it was intended and the individual

using the tool needs to have the appropriate training. As a child, I once tried to use a screwdriver to drive a nail into a piece of wood. Needless to say, I wasn't successful. But, with a hammer and some help from my dad, I launched into a major construction effort.

Teachers need access to high quality professional development programs designed to help them learn how to use technology as an effective curriculum support tool, similar to the blackboard discussed by Peter Lewis in the 1840s.

Our country has made a commitment to wire schools and subsidize the provision of telecommunication services. This has been a great beginning. As part of the deal, states and local districts have committed to purchase computers and other hardware necessary to support the infusion of technology into the curriculum. Over the last two years we have made significant gains in the computer to student ratio and in the connectivity of our schools, libraries, homes, and community centers.

However, I suggest that we, as a nation, need to make the necessary investments in instructional software and professional development programs in order to realize the fruit of our hardware and conductivity investment.

Like the story of the nail and the screwdriver, construction cannot be successfully launched if one doesn't have the tools, and the tools don't work if one doesn't have the skill to use them. The technology revolution is aggressively changing educational perceptions, practices, and structures and has transformed both the process and the business of learning.

One example of the education process change is ***CompassLearning***'s iView, an Internet and CD-ROM-based program for students in grades 6-12, that combines the vast resources of ***CompassLearning*** and its partners *USA Today*, *Teen Newsweek*, *World Almanac* at *FACTS.com*, and *Weekly Reader*. Developed by educators, iView offers "just-in-time" resources that inspire student learning by using digital content, delivered through state-of-the-art technology, all easily integrated into classroom or "at-home" lessons. For this type of product to be available to all students, we must invest in the whole revolution, which includes not only hardware but also software and professional development. Without this complete investment, we risk having technology-based tools sitting in our classrooms, libraries, and homes not being used to their fullest potential and ultimately our children not receiving the education that they need and deserve.

Maximizing the benefits of technology to help students achieve will require a supportive policy environment that:

- Makes the necessary long-term investment in technology. For example, targeted federal funding for educational technology is critical to both ensure all students have access to high-quality educational technology and to maintain the forward momentum during these critical stages of integrating technology into the educational system.
- Does not inappropriately favor technology and web-based education over traditional" education. For example, non-technology federal grant programs should allow educators

to determine which delivery method or medium -- traditional print-based or technology-based -- is most appropriate to meet their education goals.

- Relies to a great extent on market competition to meet educational technology goals. For example, as with the textbook, education is best served by providing schools with resources and market choices to meet their needs. The resulting demand creates competition, spurs innovation, and reduces cost.

A complete discussion of each of these points, as well as other issues, are contained in the attached testimony of the Software & Information Industry Association before the Web-Based Education Commission.

In closing, we all must be committed to providing educators, parents, community leaders, and most importantly, students with the resources and options they need to inspire, explore and achieve success. Working together we can harness the benefits of the technology revolution to deliver compelling content and assessment over the appropriate delivery system however, whenever, and wherever, learning occurs.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. I am available to answer any questions of the Committee.