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Media Literacy and Internet Safety Education: Key to Students' Success in the 21st Century

New Survey of States Reveals Challenges, Opportunities Facing Educators

Atlanta, Ga. – State educational technology leaders are increasing their focus on ensuring students' online safety, protecting personal data and information, and promoting ethical online behaviors (including fighting plagiarism, cyberbullying and copyright infringement), according to a new survey of states released today at the National Educational Computing Conference, the world's largest educational technology conference for teachers, administrators, and technology coordinators.

The survey, *The Changing Media Landscape: Ensuring Students' Safety and Success in School & the Future Workplace*, was conducted by the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) of their members in cooperation with Cable in the Classroom, the national education foundation of the cable industry, to better understand the evolving challenges and opportunities offered by technology and to help develop best practices and standardized tools to address these issues nationwide.

“We wanted to use this survey to get a snapshot of how states are assisting schools to prepare today's students to be ready for life, work, and citizenship in our increasingly digital world,” said Dr. Mary Ann Wolf, executive director of SETDA. “And we wanted to identify best practices in this rapidly evolving field to see where we could help states to work together to update their standards, instructional resources, and professional development practices.”

Media literacy is a key 21st Century skill because it provides a framework and method to think critically about the media and technologies students and adults use for information and entertainment. Media literacy means knowing how to access, understand, analyze, evaluate and create media messages on television, the Internet and other outlets. It also means knowing how to use these and other technologies safely, productively and ethically.

The survey asked states to rank their needs and areas of interest regarding media literacy issues. The strongest need was in the area of safety. Sixty-nine percent of states report that protecting children from predators and other online dangers is one of their strongest needs, followed by security (protecting personal information) and online ethics (preventing cyberbullying, plagiarism and hacking).

“A comprehensive approach that addresses internet safety, digital ethics and media literacy is what is needed to prepare students for the 21st Century,” said Dr. Helen Soulé, executive director of Cable in the Classroom. “Students need high-quality instruction to help them use today's powerful tools and technologies in safe and effective ways that minimize risks and maximize their learning potential. And students especially need media literacy instruction to know how to apply critical thinking skills in the Web 2.0 environment. The comprehensive approach being advocated by SETDA is the best way to help ensure kids are not only technologically savvy, but also safe and smart online.”

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When it comes to state media literacy policies and/or guidelines, the survey found that:

- 29 states have safety policies and/or guidelines to protect children online.
- 28 states report that they have policies to prevent cyber bullying, plagiarism, or hacking, and 28 states have legal policies to address copyright violations.
- Less than 55 percent of states report having policies for media access, analysis, evaluation, or creation – all key aspects of comprehensive media literacy.
- With more and more students creating their own content online, 17 states report that they already have policies addressing student-created content.

The Changing Media Landscape Toolkit, also released today, was developed by SETDA in response to the evolving technology resources, the needs at the state level and the findings of this survey. The toolkit can be found online at www.setda.org/web/guest/toolkit2007/medialiteracy.

States and schools are making progress, but still need support to develop state definitions, standards and assessments of media literacy. The survey found:

- Only 59 percent of states report that they define media literacy or information literacy *and* that they have standards for media literacy.
- Twenty-one states report that the media literacy standards are embedded within various content areas, whereas, nine states report that the standards are stand alone.
- Thirteen states report that creating media literacy standards will be addressed in the future, while only six states report that they are not planning to create media literacy standards.
- For states planning to create media literacy standards, most states report that they are in the early stages of review and do not have specific timeframes for completing these standards.
- Just seven states report that they assess media literacy standards, New Hampshire, South Dakota, West Virginia, Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Hawaii.

The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) is the principal association for state directors of technology and their staff members providing professional development and leadership around the effective use to technology in education to enhance competitiveness in the global workforce. For more information, visit www.setda.org.

Cable in the Classroom (CIC), the cable industry's education foundation, works to expand and enhance learning for children and youth. Created in 1989 to help schools take advantage of educational cable programming and technology, CIC has become a leading national advocate for media literacy education and for the use of technology and media for learning, as well as a valuable resource of educational cable content and services for policymakers, educators and industry leaders. For more information, visit www.ciconline.org.