



Idaho Education Technology Association

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Chairs Winder and Horman, Speaker Bedke, Senators, Representatives, Superintendent Ybarra, and President Clark:

The Idaho Education Technology Association is in favor of keeping the technology line item outside of the new funding formula, but adding more flexibility to its uses. The line item is essential to maintaining technology infrastructure, and history in Idaho has shown that without the line item, technology funding for infrastructure is often neglected or forgotten. The line item has been removed at least twice since 2004. Both times it was removed, Idaho schools saw a sharp decline in technology investments and the decay of technology infrastructure. It took the legislature restoring the line item and many years for schools to recover from the loss.

Technology infrastructure is the often overlooked, underlying need across Idaho schools. This infrastructure builds the foundations of what will be and can be used effectively in the classroom and throughout school districts. Without the foundation of technology funding, many of the current and future educational initiatives will flounder without a strong infrastructure in place.

An analogy of the impact technology infrastructure can have is to look at the impact of our roadway infrastructure. When you receive a package in the mail from UPS or Fedex, roadway conditions responsible for the delivery of that package likely is not on the top of your mind. These package delivery services would be much less useful without an established road system. While we regularly look at package delivery speed, we often overlook how vital roads are to the delivery of that package. If the roadway system is poor the ability to deliver a package is impacted; infrastructure matters in the success of that package delivery process.

Technology infrastructure is similar in that the technology builds the foundation for innovation and educational initiatives. The technology infrastructure must be in place before an initiative or the initiative has a high chance of failure.

Technology infrastructure is the roadway for most new educational initiatives in schools. Technology also takes forethought and investment in order to support new initiatives. When you heard about smartphones you likely wondered why you would need one; now that you have one you are better able to understand the value to your everyday life. Education technology is similar; investments in education technology are investments in Idaho's ability to modernize the educational environment for our kids.

History of failed projects shows us that we need to invest in technology infrastructure and schools often lack the technology understanding to adequately budget and allocate funds to prepare for the initiatives they want to embark on. When broadband was under district control in the 1990s many thought the internet was not worth investing in--it took educational initiatives failing to prompt the state to ensure broadband was available to all students. When school districts under budgeted for bandwidth, IDLA

was forced to send CDs with instructional videos to districts because their internet bandwidth would not support downloading a video. Similarly, many school districts initially under budgeted and under prepared their wireless infrastructure for the proliferation of wireless devices. The technology line item now includes funding specifically to help districts meet their students' wireless needs.

Good technology also supports efficiency which can lead to increased classroom time. An example is state standardized testing. Before investment by the state many districts spent weeks to months to complete testing due to the lack of computers and/or bandwidth. Now districts spend days, saving hundreds of hours for classroom instruction. It took a state level investment in the technology line item to provide this support..

Here are just a few initiatives over the past few years that rely on or will rely on the technology infrastructure we have in place through the dedicated technology funding line item:

- Digital curriculum
- Computer Science
- Digital literacy
- STEM initiatives
- Online learning
- State standardized testing (ISAT and IRI)
- Extending the classroom beyond the physical school
- Instructional management systems
- Mastery learning systems
- Video classrooms
- Online tutoring
- Teacher sharing
- Personalized learning
- Digital teacher evaluations
- Access Control
- Security Cameras
- Integrating Lock Downs
- Bell Systems with intercoms
- Translation services

All of these items and initiatives require a technology infrastructure that takes years of investment to make possible. Without sustained, budgeted investment the infrastructure cannot support initiatives. History in Idaho has shown that without a dedicated line item schools often fall behind on their infrastructure investment. It's not enough to ask Districts to make technology infrastructure a priority. Just like roads, there has to be a state policy and statewide approach, and this line item strikes the right balance between legislative directive and local control. Seeing educational initiatives fail and then investing in technology is not an approach the state should take.

Thank you,



William Goodman
Idaho Education Technology Association