

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we are writing to urge you to fund the ConnectEDucators program at \$200 million for FY 2015. As our nation's schools continue to transition to the digital age, it is imperative that educators have the skills and expertise to effectively integrate these new tools and resources into the learning environment. Since FY 2011, there has been no directed federal investment to support educator professional development for digital learning.

According to a 2012 PBS report, three-quarters of teachers believe that educational technology provides numerous benefits, including the ability to reinforce and expand on learning content, motivate students, and more effectively support a variety of learning styles. But a device by itself is not enough to improve student outcomes. Educators must engage in professional learning opportunities so they can effectively facilitate student collaboration, communication and critical thinking skills; design digital age learning experiences and assessments; leverage technology and data for instruction; promote digital citizenship and responsibility; and ensure that students graduate college and career ready.

Without dedicated and sustained professional learning opportunities, schools will not be able to leverage other investments in broadband connectivity, devices and materials to their full advantage.

The ConnectEDucators program would:

- Support educators in creating and using open digital learning resources and content.
- Support educators in using mobile devices and digital tools to personalize everyday learning, increase student engagement and implement new assessments.
- Support educators in analyzing and using real-time data to understand and shape student progress.

- Expand collaboration, engagement and communication with parents, educators and professional networks.
- Increase access to experts, such as master educators, through online professional learning.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request to provide \$200 million for the ConnectEducators program. For additional information please contact Hilary Goldmann of the International Society for Technology in Education at hgoldmann@iste.org or 202-861-7777x119.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Library Association
American School Counselor Association
Hope Street Group
International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
International Society for Technology in Education
Magnet Schools of America
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council of Teachers of English
National Network of State Teachers of the Year
National Writing Project
New Leaders
State Educational Technology Directors Association