NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

NEW TECHNOLOGY GRANTS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Chapter 257 of the Acts of 2014, An Act Financing Information Technology Equipment and Related Projects, provides $38M in funding to assist public school districts in improving student instruction and assessment through the use of information technology, including, but not be limited to, enhanced information technology infrastructure and increased broadband access. The first phase will be a $5 million demonstration pilot in a small number of districts. ESE will be looking for districts that are prepared to commit local and federal funds in addition to state funds; have a sustainable plan for the operation and management of technology; and have a demonstrated desire to use technology to rethink the structure and delivery of learning. Smaller districts will be encouraged to work through collaboratives or other cooperative agreements. Detailed eligibility information will be included in the formal request for proposals, which ESE expects to issue in early October.

INCREASED FUNDING AVAILABLE FROM THE FEDERAL E-RATE PROGRAM

To address President Obama’s goal of providing broadband connectivity to schools, the FCC has allocated an addition $2 billion in E-rate funding for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. The agency has also adopted new rules, which focus on increasing access to broadband and Wi-Fi. The Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries (USAC), which administers the E-rate program, has a web page, E-Rate Modernization Order, to help schools understand the new rules and keep abreast of any changes as the rules are finalized.

A key element of the revamped program is increased funding for priority two infrastructure costs, now referred to as category two. All schools will be eligible for a pre-discount budget of $150 per student over five funding years, with a floor of $9,200 for small schools. (The pre-discount budget will be multiplied by the school’s discount rate to determine the reimbursement.) Although all schools will be eligible for category two reimbursements, some experts predict that there may not be enough funding to fulfill the demand. If the funding falls short of demand, applications will be prioritized according to districts’ poverty levels.

Other major changes include gradual phase-out non-broadband services, such as telephone, email, and web hosting services, with districts’ discount reduced by 20 percentage points each year. Also, for category two, the highest discount rate will be 85%, rather than 90%. To simplify the program, the FCC has eliminated the requirement for schools to have approved technology plans. However, a new rule requires schools to retain all relevant documents for 10 years, including worksheets and other records used to complete applications.

CONNECTED DONATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

President Obama’s ConnectED initiative is intended to enrich K-12 education for every student in America by leveraging the power of technology for learning. Over the summer, the White House announced that ten private sector technology companies had pledged a collective $2 billion in support of ConnectED goals. Donations include software, online content, wireless service, and more. ESE’s ConnectED Donations for Schools web page explains how schools can take advantage of these offers.

SAVING MONEY ON TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES
Did you know that you can save time and money on technology, school supplies and so much more when you purchase through the Commonwealth’s Statewide Contracts? They are free for school districts to use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product/Service</th>
<th>Statewide Contract</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT Hardware, including laptops</td>
<td>ITC47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Cable Products and Services</td>
<td>ITC54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art and Instructional School Supplies</td>
<td>OFF35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local and Long Distance Telephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone Equipment</td>
<td>ITC50</td>
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<tr>
<td>School and Library Furniture</td>
<td>OFF20</td>
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To get started with these or any of our Statewide Contracts, access the contract user guides by visiting the website of the state’s Operational Services Division (OSD). Want to learn more? You can request an OSD on-site session to learn about statewide contracts, our new online market center, COMMBUYS, and everything else OSD has to offer to public purchasers. Contact OSD at osdoutreach@state.ma.us for more details.

Additionally, OSD looks forward to welcoming school buyers at upcoming regional events throughout the Commonwealth, the first of which are scheduled for the Holyoke and Barnstable areas in early November. Details will be posted on the OSD Events web page.

**DIGITAL LEARNING NEWS**

**IS YOUR DISTRICT READY FOR THE FUTURE?**

On September 3, 2014 the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Technology released the Future Ready District Pledge, a roadmap to achieve success in the conversion to personalized digital learning. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) calls on superintendents to demonstrate their commitment to leading this transformation by signing the Pledge. Selected Future Ready District Pledge signatories will be invited to join ED at the White House on October 7 while others will participate digitally in a virtual signing ceremony. Signatories will also be invited to attend Future Ready regional summits where they will learn more about the cutting edge of personalized digital learning, how to implement the technical infrastructure to support it, and how to access millions of dollars in funding to help actualize the commitments outlined in the Pledge.

**DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Today’s digital technologies have the ability to dramatically change the lives of students with disabilities, enabling them to access the curriculum, participate in learning activities alongside their peers, personalize their learning, and achieve their full potential. For example, various technologies make it possible to provide area accessible versions of textbooks and other printed materials for students who are blind or otherwise unable to use printed materials. To assist schools in providing accessible materials for students, Massachusetts coordinates with three providers: our state AIM Library (braille, large print, and tangible aids), Learning Ally (downloadable audiobooks), and Bookshare (downloadable digital text for use with text-to-speech software). For more information, see our web page on Providing Accessible Instructional Materials.

**NEW STANDARDS COMING SOON**

One of Governor Patrick’s goals has been to grow and stimulate our high-tech economy by creating collaboration among high-tech companies, education institutions, and the public sector. As a result, ESE is collaborating with the Massachusetts Computing Attainment Network (MassCAN), an alliance of organizations advocating for computer science in schools, on the development of voluntary Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards for Massachusetts schools. A review panel, representing diverse perspectives, has been created to guide this work. The panel will review existing computer science standards and the current Technology Literacy standards. The draft standards are expected to be available for public comment and final approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in the fall of 2015. For more information, see the Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards Panel’s web page.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2013-14 DIGITAL LEARNING SURVEY

Thanks go to the 224 districts that completed the Digital Learning Survey earlier this year. Here are a few highlights from the survey, in which districts rated their readiness to implement digital learning:

- 64% of responding districts rated themselves as ready in terms of internal and external network bandwidth (required to ensure sufficient connectivity speed).
- 41% of responding districts rate themselves as ready in terms of the number of computers or computing devices needed to implement instruction and assessment incorporating digital and/or internet resources.
- 84% of responding districts indicated that they do not have enough devices to provide a one-to-one device ratio for their students.
- 46% of districts report that they have a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) to school policy for students.

The full results of the survey will be posted to the Office of Digital Learning (ODL) website soon.

VIRTUAL AND BLENDED LEARNING

RESOURCES FOR ASSESSING ONLINE COURSE QUALITY

Several new resources are now available on the ODL website. The Online Professional Learning Checklist was developed by the U.S. Department Education’s Office of Educational Technology. This resource offers a research-based set of questions to help educators evaluate the quality of online professional development opportunities, including webinars, Twitter chats, online conferences, MOOCs, e-courses, and online communities of practice.

ODL has developed an Online Course Rubric to assist local school districts and other parties interested in evaluating digital and blended courses used for instruction, credit recovery, or non-credit personal learning. ODL has identified six no-cost online courses districts may use to expand their course offerings and plans to identify more in the future. For more information, visit the Online Courses page. ODL also developed a Learning Management System (LMS) Rubric to identify and/or evaluate quality indicators for the implementation or selection of an online LMS. This is the same instrument ESE uses to evaluate virtual school LMS platforms. In addition, the Virtual Learning Program Rubric, a publication of the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC), is for stakeholders involved in evaluating the quality and rigor of virtual learning programs.

UPDATE ON VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

This fall a second Commonwealth Virtual School, TEC Connections Academy (TECCA) opened its virtual "doors" to students in grades Kindergarten through 12 from all over Massachusetts. As with the Massachusetts Virtual Academy at Greenfield, the Commonwealth's first virtual school, TECCA is a public school district and is considered a school district in all respects. A student may not enroll as full-time Commonwealth Virtual School (CMVS) student while attending another public school, and parents/legal guardians are instructed that they must complete the enrollment process at the CMVS prior to withdrawing the student from his/her school. You may receive inquiries from parents regarding release of student records to these schools. Please treat these students as you would students transferring to any other public school within Massachusetts. If you have questions or wish to speak with someone from our office about CMVS, please contact Jennifer Gwatkin, (781) 338-3251, jgwatkin@doe.mass.edu.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CONNECTED EDUCATOR MONTH

October offers an opportunity to collaborate with your counterparts across the globe! Last year’s celebration involved millions of educators and hundreds of professional learning opportunities. Convened by the connected education community with the full support of the U.S. Department of Education, this third annual celebration will offer free webinars, MOOCs, online communities, and more. Events will focus on themes such as blended learning, global connected education, student voice, the maker movement, and community engagement. For more information, including a searchable list of events, see Connected Educators.

DIGITAL LEARNING MOOCS
This fall, one of the core partners of Connected Educator Month, the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State University's College of Education, is offering free MOOCs related to digital learning:

- **Coaching Digital Learning:** Cultivating a Culture of Change -- a six-week course that will allow you to learn with colleagues from other schools, and districts to enhance digital learning content knowledge and further develop coaching strategies
- **Learning Differences** -- A six-week job-embedded course that will examine the habits of mind and problem-solving tools a teacher should have in order to address all students' learning differences

For more information on these and other MOOCs, see the [Friday Institute’s MOOC website](https://www.memorial.edu/fri/).

### DEVELOPING AND TEACHING AN ONLINE OR BLENDED COURSE

ODL along with The Northeast Comprehensive Center would like to invite you to join us in an informational webinar on October 8, 2014 from 1:00 to 2:00 P.M. We will be sharing information about an exciting new course being offered that will guide participants on a year long journey into online course building. This course titled, 'The Teaching and Developing an Online High School Course - Fundamentals' is being offered free of charge to Massachusetts high school teachers and will begin on October 22, 2014.

Participating educators will earn PDP points and will have an opportunity to network with other educators across the state.

To register for the webinar, please complete this simple registration and we will follow up with the details: [Teaching and Developing an Online High School Course - Fundamentals Informational Webinar Registration](https:).

### CODING FOR TEACHERS

Code.org has developed an elementary school curriculum that allows even the youngest students to explore the limitless world of computing. This fall, there will be free one-day workshops around the state for K-5 educators and content-area teachers (librarians, instructional technology specialists, etc.) interested in teaching this curriculum. Each workshop will cover content for all of Code.org's three elementary school courses, and teachers will receive the supplies they need to teach the course at no cost. These workshops will be led by experienced Code.org K-5 affiliates in over 60 cities across the United States. The list of Massachusetts workshops will be posted at on the [MassCAN website](https://masscan.org/).

### MOBILE DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), in collaboration with the Verizon Foundation, is offering a free, online professional learning program to help school teams prepare for successfully integrating mobile technology into their classrooms. Developed in collaboration with The Johns Hopkins University School of Education Center for Technology in Education (CTE), this facilitated, five-module program will be delivered online four times during the 2014-2015 school year. Details and an application to participate are available on the [ISTE website](https://www.iste.org). If you have questions, you can contact Yolanda Ramos at: [yramos@iste.org](mailto:yramos@iste.org).

### PARCC UPDATES

1. If you have not done so, please continue to check the [Technology Guidelines For PARCC Assessments: Version 4.2](https://www.memorial.edu/fri/parcc/) (Updated May 2014) for minimum and recommended specifications for computer hardware, input devices, and security requirements; and suggests recommended levels of bandwidth that will support schools instructional and assessment needs.
2. Materials are still available online from our [July Conference call for districts](https://www.memorial.edu/fri/parcc/). Listen to advice from ESE specialists as well as from local MA school district personnel on planning for computer based assessments.
3. The Tech Readiness Tool (TRT) has been retired and August 31 was the last day for access to the TRT site. ESE is currently researching alternatives to the TRT and will notify districts when more information is available. [Please see our memo](https://www.memorial.edu/fri/parcc/).
4. The 2014–2015 Statewide Testing Schedule and Administration Deadlines MCAS, ACCESS for ELLs, and PARCC is posted on our [ESE PARCC Website](https://www.memorial.edu/fri/parcc/).
Edwin Teaching and Learning (ET&L) is available to all Massachusetts Public Schools. Join the growing list of 130+ districts using this State customized tool. It is rare in education that we can have curriculum materials, curriculum mapping, unit planning, lesson planning, resources, assessments, and our frameworks all in one place. With district access to the ET&L tool, your faculty can create assessments with MCAS released items, use Model Curriculum Units and Lesson Plans, and also access PBS Learning Media content – all aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks including CVTE. ET&L also has the Competency Tracking system for CVTE, specifically designed by and for Massachusetts educators.

The Thinkgate Instructional Improvement System, Edwin Teaching and Learning, is available to districts, at no cost, during the SY 2014-2015. Thereafter, all districts will pay a per-student price based upon how many districts adopt the Thinkgate Instructional Improvement System. **Important to note: the state is exploring other avenues to subsidized district use of ET&L beyond the grant period.**

Important ET&L updates since our last newsletter:

- 65+ Model Curriculum Units (MCUs) in the tool ready for use
- 30+ more MCUs by the end of September
- Updated CVTE standards
- Competency Based Tracking Worksheets
- More released MCAS items reaching 5,500+ available items
- Edwin Teaching and Learning role in Directory Administration

If your district is ready to get started, please download, fill out, and return the [Commitment Form](mailto:EdwinT&L@doe.mass.edu) to EdwinT&L@doe.mass.edu.
UPCOMING EDWIN PRESENTATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MassCUE</td>
<td>October 22-23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwin Teaching and Learning at the Fall Summit</td>
<td>October 27-28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwin Roadshow – Taunton</td>
<td>November 3 &amp; 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Roadshow-Worcester, DCU</td>
<td>November 4 &amp; 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwin Roadshow- Danvers</td>
<td>November 10 &amp; 20</td>
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SERVICES FROM MASSIT

NEW STATE SERVICE OFFERS BANDWIDTH AT LOWER COSTS

MassIT Connect is a new service offered by the Massachusetts Office of Information Technology (MassIT). It is designed to connect a community anchor institution on the MBI network directly to the Internet using a common connection from the Springfield Data Center. This service will provide higher Internet bandwidth at a reduced cost. One-time costs to receive the service will involve purchasing a router from MassIT and paying for implementation by the state’s vendor, Axia. Monthly recurring costs will involve $8.86 per Mbps/month for Internet service, plus the costs of the circuit. For more information, write to SAM@MassMail.State.MA.US.
Kenneth Klau became the director of ODL in April 2014. He has served ESE in several roles, most notably in accountability and targeted assistance. Ken’s goals for the group are scaling up promising blended learning designs in schools and classrooms, ensuring the viability and effectiveness of virtual schools, and providing blended professional learning experiences for K-12 educators.

Jennifer Gwatkin joined the ODL team in April 2014 and is excited to support the Commonwealth Virtual Schools. An alumna of Bryn Mawr College, Jennifer’s professional background includes seven years’ experience in higher education accreditation and state regulation. Jennifer most recently served as Program Manager for Regulatory Compliance at Northeastern University.

Susan Hargrave has been with ESE for 17 years and has been responsible for a range of initiatives including assistive technology, digital literacy, virtual schools, publications development, and E-rate. Her previous experience includes more than a decade developing online and technology-enhanced curriculum materials for major publishers. Susan holds a C.A.S from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and an M. Ed. from Boston University.

Chris Hieber is the administrator of the Department’s learning management system (LMS), Blackboard Learn. Chris also coordinates the review and posting of online courses and related guidance to the office of digital learning website.

Andréa Kupps has been with ESE for over a year now, coming to ODL after 15 years of service in the Massachusetts public schools. In her role for ODL, she assists in the implementation and rollout out the Edwin Teaching and Learning instructional improvement system as well as assisting districts in their PARCC technology readiness. Ms. Kupps is a Nationally Certified Educational Technology Leader (CETL) through COSN as well as a certified Apple Associate.

Leanne O’Brien is a recent college graduate. She joined ESE in October 2013 and works on professional development projects.

ARCHIVED ISSUES OF THIS NEWSLETTER...

Are available in the Digital Learning Headlines and News Archives on the ODL website.

DIRECTORY ADMINISTRATION

To be sure that you continue to receive this newsletter, be sure to review and update information within Directory Administration. ESE frequently uses Directory Administration to communicate with districts on various topics. Please submit any new email address to your District-Level Directory Administrator, who is the person in charge of submitting and updating contact information to ESE. To view a list of Directory Administrators, go to www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/diradmin/list.aspx

SUBSCRIBE TO THE COMMISSIONER’S UPDATES

The Commissioner’s weekly update provides valuable information on key statewide initiatives, many of which may be of interest to technology directors. Superintendents, principals, and charter school leaders will receive the Commissioner’s Updates automatically. For others wishing to subscribe, send an email to imailsrv@list1.doe.mass.edu with the following information in the body of the email: subscribe ESEUpdate Your Name (Example: subscribe ESEUpdate John Smith). To unsubscribe, send an email to the same address with the following information in the body: unsubscribe ESEUpdate Your Name (Example: unsubscribe ESEUpdate John Smith).