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TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE WRAPS UP JULY MEETING

BOISE – The *Students Come First* Technology Task Force meeting wrapped up its July monthly meeting today, after making progress on several areas including discussions on how mobile computing devices will work in the classroom.

Under Senate Bill 1184, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna is chairing the 39-member task force as it works to successfully implement the technology components of Idaho's education reform laws, known as *Students Come First*. Specifically, the legislation calls on the task force to study and develop plans for the one-to-one ratio of mobile computing devices in high schools. Once the State Board of Education determines the number of online courses for a graduation requirement, the task force also will develop implementation plans for the requirement, in addition to the necessary professional development for teachers and other topics determined by the task force chairman.

The Task Force, which met July 11-12, kicked off its meeting with a presentation from Maine, which has implemented a one-to-one ratio of students to mobile computing devices in middle schools and partially in high schools statewide for 10 years.

Steven Garton of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative highlighted not only the benefits of technology in the classroom, but the benefits of allowing students to fully embrace and take ownership of that technology. Key to the success of any program, said Garton, is a very thorough and well-considered plan. A clear idea of technology goals for the classroom, proper negotiation of laptop plans, and even consideration of how students will store and transport their devices all contribute to a more successful tech implementation. Professional development and teacher participation were central features of Garton's presentation; he repeatedly emphasized the need for teachers to have the skills and training they need to meaningfully integrate laptop use in the classroom.

Two subcommittees of the Technology Task Force are currently working to identify the best mobile computing device to meet the needs of Idaho students and to plan for professional development for Idaho teachers next year and in future years.

The Task Force also heard a presentation from Denver Public Schools. Thanks to a generous donation by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, the state will roll out the Schoolnet software application for classroom teachers and school administrators beginning this fall. Schoolnet provides immediate access to the data they need to guide instruction and raise student achievement.

Wuanita Vann, a high school teacher from Denver who described herself as data-averse, spoke enthusiastically to the Task Force about how the Schoolnet data system won her over. Because she can access student data more quickly, she is much better able to serve her student population, especially at-risk students.

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Through Schoolnet, Vann said she can now get information before or shortly after students arrive in her classroom—not months or sometimes a semester later, as it worked in the past. “I get the whole picture of a student,” said Vann. “It’s like Gatorade for teachers...It really has revolutionized the way we work.”

A Technology Task Force subcommittee focused on the implementation of Schoolnet statewide will help ensure this same success in Idaho.

These presentations gave Technology Task Force members a starting point for further discussions in their subcommittees throughout the two days.

The Technology Task Force will be meeting through at least December 2011. Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna, who chairs the task force, will provide a report to the Idaho Legislature in January 2012.

The next meeting will be held August 8-9, 2011 at the Idaho Statehouse in Boise. All meetings are open to the public and streamed live online. Presentations are archived on the *Students Come First* website at <http://www.studentscomefirst.org/technologytaskforce.htm>.

In addition, the State Department of Education has created a new website for the members of the *Students Come First* Technology Task Force to utilize in between meetings as they continue discussions, set meeting agendas, answer questions and share documents. Task Force members will begin using this site as early as next week. It is open to the public for viewing at taskforce.sde.idaho.gov.

For more information on the Technology Task Force, visit <http://www.studentscomefirst.org/technologytaskforce.htm>.

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