

On behalf of the State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA) Board of Directors, we are happy to submit this set of recommendations for consideration by the Biden-Harris Administration. As a vibrant organization comprised of passionate state leaders, we look forward to partnering with the Administration's Department of Education and other agencies to realize these goals.

Strengthen the Office of Educational Technology

Ensuring high-quality, personalized learning for all students remains our shared, common goal, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology (OET) remains poised to address this need through digital learning resources and best practices. With long-term adoption of such practices — accelerated by the shift to remote learning brought about through COVID-related school closures — the OET remains vital to teaching and learning in the United States.

The new Administration should solidly equip the OET with the influence, leadership, staffing, and funding it needs to play the role demanded of the Office. Consider elevating the OET to an Education Cabinet position, and choose a leader with the vision and passion for moving its work forward. SETDA strongly affirms the choice of Kristina Ishmael as a member of the Administration's Education Transition team, an explicit acknowledgement of the experience and skills she has demonstrated to serve as OET Director. Her experience, first and foremost as an educator and an OET fellow, past state leader, and current expert in the field of digital learning materials and pedagogies equip her well — if not uniquely — for the role. She has the backing of SETDA's deep network of state leaders and districts to bring about change nationwide.

Ensure Digital Equity for All Students

Every student in our country deserves an opportunity to succeed in their formal education and afterward. An essential component of that promise, now and certainly in the future, is ensuring that all students have access to high-capacity broadband and devices. Closing the nation's persistent and expansive "digital divide" will require a multipart strategy that recognizes the problem's complex nature.

Provide Secure Broadband Connectivity and Devices

The new Administration should work with Congress to quickly provide emergency funding through E-rate to help states and school districts equip students with the secure broadband connectivity and devices required for learning. Without it, rural and low-income learners will fall even further behind.

Provide Support to Build-out Infrastructure

Federal leaders must prioritize policy and spending decisions needed to support broadband infrastructure improvements in 2021 and beyond. Schools and other community anchor institutions should be empowered and funded to fill these gaps independently. For years, and especially now, this means ensuring the following:

- Fund and resource efforts to identify broadband availability and access (e.g., DATA Act)
- Provide universal access to broadband for students
- Treat broadband as a utility
- Update federally funded programs (e.g., E-rate) to follow the student for connectivity 24/7
- Partner with national carriers, schools, community partners, and parents to accelerate broadband adoption

Equip All Students for Effective, Personalized Learning

Universal access to broadband and devices is a necessary departure point for learning today and into the future. Students also need to develop and exercise the lifelong, higher-order competencies that leadership, work, and the citizenry will demand. To ensure that their “classrooms” have no time or physical constraints, students must have the following:

- Opportunities through technology-enabled personalized learning experiences that provide multiple pathways to mastering and demonstrating learning
- Access to learning materials wherever and whenever they need them

Empower Educators to Provide Meaningful Student Learning Outcomes

Every teacher in our country needs the skills and freedom to support their students' diverse educational needs. Effectively using technology can provide a crucial lever to achieving that goal. Substantially increasing funding for existing ESSA Title II and Title IV programs would provide critical resources to accomplish the following:

- Develop educators' mastery of digital tools and learning environments to personalize learning and improve student outcomes
- Create, share, and leverage open education resources to drop all barriers to high-quality instructional materials across classrooms, schools, and states
- Explore community-based partnerships with ed-tech innovators to streamline the assessment and implementation of high-quality learning tools and approaches

- Access educational technology solutions that safely handle student information, made possible through a national student data privacy standard

Strengthen Federal Communications Commission Leadership

We strongly encourage the President-elect to designate FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel as the agency's Chair. Through the E-rate and the other Universal Service Fund programs, the FCC has had an unmatched impact on broadband access at schools and in communities. Nonetheless, many rural and high-cost areas still lack the broadband speeds required to power teaching and learning in and out of school. Through the FCC's Universal Service program and other initiatives, continued federal support will be essential to overcoming these hurdles. Addressing these needs will require leaders at the FCC who understand students' and schools' dynamic broadband needs.

Commissioner Rosenworcel profoundly understands the country's broadband service gaps and network shortcomings and the difficult work underway to address them for students and their families. Her in-depth knowledge and experience, especially about the specific digital learning challenges posed by the pandemic, would help the FCC ensure that all students have access to the high-capacity broadband and devices they need to succeed academically.

Engage with SETDA

We look forward to working with the new Administration, enthusiastically offering SETDA's prolific [body of work around each of the above priorities](#), our network of innovative state and district leaders, and our demonstrated experience in advancing educational opportunities for all students, teachers, and leaders.

For more information, contact Christine Fox, SETDA Interim Executive Director, cfox@setda.org.

SETDA is the principal membership association representing U.S. state and territorial digital learning leaders that serves and supports the emerging interests of our members with respect to the use of technology for teaching, learning, and school operations. SETDA's members work daily to ensure that their states have the technology infrastructure and high capacity broadband connections required to support world-class teaching, learning, and school operations.

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