



ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



DIGITAL LEARNING DAY SET FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 13: Alliance to Partner with the National Board for 2015 Celebration of Effective Use of Technology to Improve Educational Outcomes

On October 1, the Alliance for Excellent Education announced that the fourth annual Digital Learning Day will be held on Friday, March 13, 2015, in conjunction with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards's (the National Board) second annual Teaching and Learning conference. The Alliance also unveiled a brand-new website for Digital Learning Day featuring new tools, resources, lesson plans, and video profiles of leading districts at www.DigitalLearningDay.org.

March 13th, 2015
is Digital Learning Day

Share the news and use the hashtag #DLDay

“Since its debut in 2012, Digital Learning Day has been the premier event for showcasing how technology can improve student outcomes and support teachers,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “This new partnership with the National Board will put an even greater emphasis on the kind of instructional practice needed to make digital learning effective. Together, we can spread examples of what is working and encourage greater adoption of high-quality digital learning to ensure that all youth have access to those opportunities no matter where they live.”

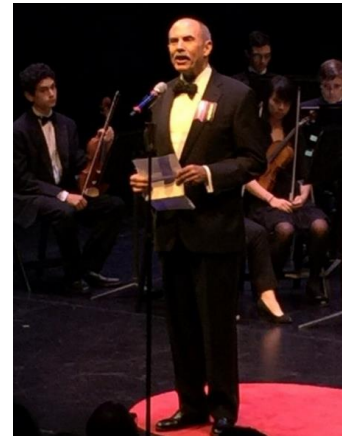
One component of the partnership with the National Board will include a live broadcast of the Digital Learning Day National Town Hall from the Teaching and Learning conference in Washington, DC, to an audience of more than 3,000 National Board Certified Teachers, as well as hundreds of thousands of educators who will be watching online. The National Town Hall will highlight school districts, schools, and educators effectively using technology to make a difference in student learning.

“Like Digital Learning Day, the Teaching and Learning conference is about highlighting effective educators and others involved in pre-K through twelfth-grade education and spreading effective teaching practices to those on the front lines of education reform, making it a natural fit,” said **Ronald Thorpe, president and chief executive officer of the National Board**.

More information on Digital Learning Day is available at www.DigitalLearningDay.org.

BAMMY AWARDS: Alliance's Bob Wise Wins Education Policy/Researcher Award

Bob Wise, president of the Alliance and former governor of West Virginia, won the Education Policy/Researcher award at the third annual Bammy Awards on Saturday, September 27, in Washington, DC. There were twenty-six award categories, including Superintendents, School Librarians, Innovator of the Year, Secondary School Teachers, and Parent Group Leaders that honored the contributions of educators across a variety of fields in education. Wise was also a presenter at the ceremony, along with **Tom Murray, state and district digital learning policy and advocacy director at the Alliance.**



"I'm honored to receive this award as I believe education policy and research to be essential pieces to the puzzle of improving education for today's students," said Wise. "The two in many ways are the catalysts for greater academic outcomes from our schools and districts. Without either, we would have little basis for what is necessary for and how to go about cultivating greater academic and college and career successes for our young people."

The Academy of Education Arts and Sciences, which is comprised of more than 300 education leaders, celebrates the achievements of those in education through the Bammy Awards. This year's awards saw 378 nominations and 11,521 votes were casted for outstanding education leaders, according to the Academy. The award recipients were determined by an online voting process—giving the public the chance to vote for nominees in each category. The Academy then selected the winner from a short list of five finalists based on their collaborations, contributions, or being a model twenty-first-century educator for each category.

"The Academy was honored to award Gov. Wise with the Bammy Award for Education Policy/Researcher," said **Errol St. Clair Smith, executive director for the Academy.** "Gov. Wise has shown exceptional work and leadership at the Alliance for Excellent Education in this area that benefits all of our nation's children and he continues to be a difference maker in education policy."

To learn more about the Bammy Awards, visit <http://www.bammyawards.org/>.



LINKED LEARNING: California's Approach to High School Reform Attracts U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Additional Federal Policymakers

On September 25, **Deborah S. Delisle, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education,** and representatives from the U.S. Congress experienced a firsthand look at Linked Learning during a site visit to Porterville Unified School District in California that was organized by the Alliance for Excellent Education. Linked Learning transforms the traditional high school experience by integrating rigorous academics with career-based learning, real-world workplace experiences, and wraparound student support.

"Preparing young adults for success in college and careers requires a different educational experience than it did a generation ago," said Delisle. "The president has laid out plans to redesign high schools and career and technical education, to ensure that young people graduate with the skills and abilities that are needed in a global economy. Approaches like Linked Learning are good examples of how we can prepare students for the future with rigorous curriculum and work-based learning."



California has invested heavily in Linked Learning, including \$250 million in Career Pathways Trust grants earlier this year to expand the Linked Learning approach in districts and across regions throughout the state. Another \$250 million in grants will be awarded in 2015. California has also selected sixty-three school districts and county offices of education to participate in a state Linked Learning pilot program. PUSD is a mentor district in the state's pilot program, which, when fully implemented, will make Linked Learning available to more than one-third of the state's high school students.

“Through leading districts such as Porterville that focus on transforming entire educational systems, Linked Learning is making a difference in the lives of California's young people,” said **Anne Stanton, youth program director at the James Irvine Foundation**. “Of greater importance, Linked Learning is California's most promising strategy for achieving equity and opportunity for all of students by preparing them simultaneously for both college and career.”

The site visit included a panel discussion with business and postsecondary education leaders about the role and importance of community partnerships. These valuable partners expose students to dual-enrollment programs and provide access to internships and other professional skill-building opportunities. By meeting students, visiting classrooms, and observing project-based demonstrations, federal policymakers saw firsthand how Linked Learning engages students in their own learning, motivates them to succeed, and equips them for any postsecondary endeavor that they choose.

“Rigorous and relevant education plus engagement equals economic success,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “By integrating strong academics centered on college preparation, demanding career-based learning, and real-world experiences, the Linked Learning approach ensures that high school graduates are better prepared to succeed in college and a career, and employers are more satisfied with their workers.”



STICK WITH IT: Kentucky's Dramatic Gains in College Readiness Validates State's Commitment to Common Core

In 2011, when Kentucky became the first state to release test score results that were aligned with the Common Core State Standards, the percentage of students scoring “proficient” or better in reading and math dropped considerably—an expected development given that the new tests are more rigorous than the old tests. Ever since, however, Kentucky has reaped the benefits from its commitment to higher standards; the percentage of Kentucky high school graduates ready for college and a career jumped from 34 percent in 2010 to 62.3 percent in 2014.

“The statewide data clearly show we are making progress, though slower than we would like,” said **Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday**. “In just three years we've gone from only a third of our students being ready for college and career to more than half. That's around 8,000 students who now have a much better shot at getting a good job, paying taxes and becoming self-sufficient Kentuckians.”

In addition to gains in college readiness, Kentucky has seen its overall student performance improve as the percentages of students reaching proficient and distinguished levels have

increased in nearly every subject at every grade level. The state has also seen its high school graduation rate increase from 77.8 percent in 2012 to 87.4 percent in 2014 while the composite scores on the ACT posted by Kentucky's high school juniors increased from 18.3 percent in 2008 to 19.4 percent in 2014.

“As we are seeing in Kentucky, a concerted effort over time to align instruction, curriculum, and assessment around the Common Core State Standards will improve student achievement and college and career readiness,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “We’re overdue for a national moment of patience, while we allow schools to continue the hard work of Common Core implementation, because no major change happens overnight. We owe it to our educators and to our students to take the time to do this right, and look to Kentucky as they continue to demonstrate how it’s done—and even more significantly, show the real benefits for students.”

More on Kentucky's student performance data is available at <http://1.usa.gov/Zkmv6m>.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR E-RATE?: FCC Chairman Talks Rural Access and E-Rate Funding Needs During Ed Tech Summit

In a [September 29 speech at the 2014 Ed Tech Summit in Washington, DC](#), **Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler** outlined “next steps” in the evolution of the E-rate program: delivering high-speed internet connections to rural schools and libraries and ensuring that sufficient funding exists to meet E-rate funding needs. Wheeler’s speech follows the FCC’s July 11 decision to modernize the federal E-rate program with the goal of providing greater Wi-Fi access to millions of students.

“Although the most recent step in E-rate modernization necessarily placed an emphasis on Wi-Fi and broadband within schools and libraries, we know that we must still address the challenge of improving the broadband infrastructure to the building for many schools and libraries, particularly in rural America,” Wheeler said at the Ed Tech Summit. “The E-rate program needs to emphasize an equality of opportunity for both urban and rural schools and libraries. ... Indeed, the reason for exploring whether more funding is necessary is precisely to answer the question of how to meet the urban and rural needs equally and simultaneously.”

Wheeler noted that 75 percent of rural schools are currently unable to achieve the high-speed connectivity goals set by the FCC, both because they lack the infrastructure to deliver high-speed broadband, but also because of high costs. He offered several solutions, including better incentives in areas with high upfront costs to improve infrastructure and policies that would encourage states to invest in these areas.

Wheeler also stressed that funding is a key part of the solution. “Making changes to the current rules to rethink how the program supports connecting rural schools and libraries in unserved areas is going to be necessary,” he said. “But it is also a matter of having sufficient funding and ensuring that schools can afford the ongoing costs of accessing high-capacity broadband networks.”

Regarding funding, the FCC has been receiving comments from a number of organizations, including the Alliance, on how to meet the future funding needs of the E-rate program, among

other topics. In its [comments to the FCC](#), the Alliance calls for an increased funding cap for the E-rate program to ensure that all students, especially those most disadvantaged, have access to high-speed internet connections and anytime, anywhere learning.

During his speech, Wheeler said that a key component of sufficient funding is affordability and how much schools pay for connectivity. Wheeler explained how E-rate applicants pay “widely varying prices” for their high-speed internet connections. For example, he noted that some statewide networks pay as little as \$1 per megabit per second per month while others pay more than \$15 for the same service.

To combat these differences, Wheeler said that the FCC’s E-rate Modernization Order from July directs the Universal Service Administrative Company to make pricing data publicly available beginning in 2015. It also encourages schools and libraries to submit joint applications in an effort to negotiate lower prices.

“Marginal costs, of course, vary around the country for entirely legitimate reasons, and so should pricing,” Wheeler said. “For example, the lack of fiber or other high-capacity infrastructure can limit a provider’s ability to offer high-speed service at low prices. Or initial deployment and ongoing middle mile costs can be very high for providers that serve schools in rural areas. However, the data we have collected suggests that in many cases broadband service providers can do a lot better for our nation’s schools and libraries.”

The FCC may take action to expand funding for E-rate by the end of the calendar year. For regular updates, visit www.99in5.org.



LEADING WITH A VISION: More Effective and Innovative Uses of Time Support Increased and Better Learning Opportunities for K–12 Students, New Alliance Report Finds

As schools across the country rethink how they use time within and beyond the school day, a new Alliance report urges them to focus on how different uses of time can provide new and innovative models of education to increase student engagement and improve college and career readiness. The report, *Leading with a Vision: How Different, Creative, and Effective Uses of Time Support Initiatives to Provide New and Better Student Learning Experiences*, highlights how several U.S. secondary schools serving mostly students of color and low-income students increased and restructured their existing school days to go beyond the time-bound schedules of the past to more effectively manage students’ overall learning experiences both in and outside the classroom.

“The traditional school day and year both inhibit learning for too many students, and must change,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “This is particularly true for students in concentrated poverty who have been significantly underserved by the education system. The expanded learning opportunities that schools and districts can provide—for example, by simply re-evaluating the current ‘seat-time’ model—are vitally important to providing students with adequate opportunities to learn the content and skills necessary for success.”

The report notes that high schools have a particularly unique opportunity in how they use time. For example, Eminence Independent Schools in Kentucky is restructuring its school day to allow students to dual-enroll at local colleges and earn up to 25 credits within two years for a population that had previously seen only 40 percent of its students graduate ready for college and a career. Porterville Unified School District in California uses “Linked Learning” and offers additional time for its rural student population’s real-world workplace experiences, giving students the chance to gain skills that can be used after graduation.

The report also encourages schools to consider various barriers to learning, such as a lack of technology, and offers examples on how to overcome them. At Harmony Magnet Academy in Porterville, California, students can take core courses online, which allows extra time in the classroom for more in-depth learning. At T.C. Williams Satellite Campus in Alexandria, Virginia, students work in a college-like environment learning at their own pace through online course work.

Leading with a Vision offers several policy recommendations to ensure all districts can be more effective with the use of time. At the federal level, the report suggests expanding access to high-speed broadband for schools and libraries to expand the use of technology and increasing funding for the planning and implementation of digital learning strategies. At the state and district levels, leaders and policymakers should work to provide schools with greater flexibility and autonomy in scheduling that would support strategies for increasing personalized learning opportunities for students.

In conjunction with the report’s release, the Alliance held a webinar featuring **Robert Rothman, senior fellow with the Alliance for Excellent Education and coauthor of the report; Buddy Berry, superintendent at Eminence Independent Schools (KY); Apolinar Marroquin, principal at Granite Hills High School (CA); and Jonathan Spear, cofounder of Generation Schools Network.** Archived video is available at <http://all4ed.org/webinar-event/sep-23-2014/>.

Leading with a Vision: How Different, Creative, and Effective Uses of Time Support Initiatives to Provide New and Better Student Learning Experiences is available at <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/LeadingWithVision/>.



STUDY OF DEEPER LEARNING: Students Attending Deeper Learning Schools Have Better Educational Outcomes than Their Peers, New AIR Report Finds

Students who attend high schools that explicitly focus on “deeper learning” experience improved educational outcomes, including higher test scores and better graduation rates, than their peers, according to a new report from the American Institutes for Research. The report, *Study of Deeper Learning: Opportunities and Outcomes*, also finds that students who attend these schools were more likely to enroll in four-year and selective institutions after graduating from high school.

“[These findings] demonstrate that it is possible for schools to implement approaches that foster positive student outcomes across a variety of measures,” the report notes. “We observed that attending a network school had positive effects on cognitive competencies as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, high school graduation rates, and rates of enrollment in four-year institutions and selective institutions. Furthermore, our results indicate that network

schools are able to achieve these outcomes both for students who enter with lower achievement and for students who enter with higher achievement.”

As defined in the report, deeper learning is both a set of competencies (mastery of core academic content; critical thinking and complex problem-solving skills; communication skills; collaboration skills; an understanding of how to learn; and academic mindsets) for students and a way of learning that promotes these competencies. The report, which was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, focuses on students attending high schools with a “mature and at least moderately well implemented approach to promoting deeper learning.” Specifically, it focuses on a set of high schools associated with ten established networks from across the country that embrace the goals of deeper learning.¹

According to the report, the graduation rate of students attending these schools was likely to be about 9 percentage points higher than that of similar students who attended other schools. Students in the network schools also posted higher scores on the PISA-Based Test for Schools² as well as on state English language arts and mathematics tests.

The report is the final in a series of three AIR reports on deeper learning. The first, *The Shape of Deeper Learning: Strategies, Structures, and Cultures in Deeper Learning Network High Schools*, describes how adults in the various deeper learning network schools help students develop deeper learning skills. The second, *Providing Opportunities for Deeper Learning*, finds that students in deeper learning network schools, including traditionally underserved subgroups of students, have more opportunities to engage in deeper learning than they would have otherwise.

All three reports in the series are available at <http://www.air.org/resource/deeper-learning>.

Additional information on deeper learning and the network of schools featured in the report are available at <http://deeperlearning4all.org>.

Straight A's: Public Education Policy and Progress is a free biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events in Washington, DC, and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. Contributors include Jason Amos, editor; Ariana Witt; and Kate Bradley.

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, DC–based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. For more information, visit www.all4ed.org. Follow the Alliance on Twitter (www.twitter.com/all4ed), Facebook (www.facebook.com/all4ed), and the Alliance’s “High School Soup” blog (www.all4ed.org/blog).

¹ The ten networks of schools in the study are Asia Society, Big Picture Learning, ConnectEd, EdVisions Schools, Envision Schools, Expeditionary Learning, High Tech High, Internationals Network for Public Schools, New Tech Network, and New Visions for Public Schools.

² The PISA-Based Test for Schools is a test given by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development that assesses core content knowledge and complex problem-solving skills.