

Digital Education

Overview

Objective:

To promote the effective and efficient integration of technology into the instructional, learning, and administrative processes and to utilize technology to deliver enhanced digital educational opportunities to students at all levels throughout Nebraska on an equitable and affordable basis.

Description:

The Digital Education initiative will involve the coordination and promotion of several major systems and applications that heretofore have either been developed mostly at the local level or have not been replicated statewide.

Initiative progress will be dependent upon adequate Internet connectivity and transport bandwidth for learners, instructors, administrators, and for educational attendance sites. A minimum acceptable level of classroom technology will have to be established for the initiative to be successful.

Collaborators:

- Educational Service Unit (ESU) Coordinating Council and advisory groups
- Public and private K-12 schools
- Nebraska Department of Education
- University of Nebraska
- Nebraska State College System
- Nebraska Community College System
- Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska

Strengths/Assets:

- The enhancement of Digital Education is the combined focus of public and private K-12 entities and public and private higher education entities working together through Network Nebraska.
- The recent developments in learning management software, content management software, and longitudinal data tracking and depiction make it a particularly important time to improve on the statewide deployment of these systems.
- The high bandwidth transport and Internet capacity of Network Nebraska makes it possible to implement private cloud and public cloud applications to every education entity on Network Nebraska.

Challenges/Issues:

While collaboration among entities is strong, the initiative lacks a “champion” and any additional implementation funding is a scarce commodity.

Recent Accomplishments:

- ESU collaborators have developed BlendEd briefing materials and the TLT Learning Group.
- The Nebraska Department of Education has made progress on the Adviser project involving all but four Nebraska school districts.
- The Nebraska Department of Education's Future Ready Nebraska Digital Learning Plan is being developed by a statewide committee for review and approval by the State Board of Education.
- NITC Education Council and Community Council have collaborated on the design of several technology solutions that may reduce the Homework Gap and improve digital equity among economically challenged students.
- The Nebraska Library Commission, in partnership with the State Office of the CIO, has applied for a Sparks Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to incentivize school districts and public libraries to work together to improve Internet speeds at rural public libraries.

Recommendations:

- Continue and refocus this initiative.
- Encourage and/or incentivize collaborators and stakeholders to be more results-oriented using project management techniques.
- Build on the excellent foundation and success of Network Nebraska to deliver high quality digital educational opportunities that provide a framework for student success.

Action Items

1. Action: Address technical challenges for students in the transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

Lead: Education Council

Participating Entities: K-12 and Higher Education professional and advisory groups

Timeframe: 2018-20

Funding: Additional funding may be required for this action item

Targets/Deliverables:

1.1 Conduct a collaborative research project to identify existing infrastructure and pedagogical efforts in both secondary and post-secondary institutions.

1.1.1 Measurables: A) Create collaborative research study engaging the colleges of education at NE higher education institutions with a focus on opportunities for graduate student involvement. B) Secure funding support for research study. C) Develop and conduct national collaborative research study with entities i.e., Educause, MHEC.

Targets/Deliverables:

1.2 Based on the results of the research project and other available resources, identify opportunities for collaboration to ease transition for students.

1.2.1 Measurables: Pending study outcomes.

1.3 Identify key challenges for transitioning students and conduct an environmental scan to identify successful approaches to mitigate those challenges.

1.3.1 Measurable: These challenges will be identified in the study.

1.4 Create a guide for effective practices in the use of flexible learning technologies.

1.4.1 Measurable: Pending study outcomes.

1.5 Develop a strategy to encourage vendors to implement data exchange standards in their products and services.

1.5.1 Measurable: Pending study outcomes.

2. Action: Expand awareness and address the need for equity of access as it relates to digital education.

Lead: Education Council

Participating Entities: NITC Community Council, K-12 and Higher Education professional and advisory groups

Timeframe: 2018-20

Funding: Additional funding may be required for this action item

Targets/Deliverables:

2.1 Form a joint study group comprised of stakeholders from across the state to identify opportunities and actions to ensure equitable access for students.

2.1.1 Measurables: A) Members of the NITC Ed Council will participate in the study proposed in LB 994. B) Alternative should LB 994 not be approved, NITC will secure resources to form its own study group with key stakeholders across Nebraska.

2.2 Education Council will work in collaboration with other Nebraska stakeholders, such as the Community Council Broadband Initiative, to find solutions for available, accessible, reliable, secure and affordable Internet access as related to academic success.

2.2.1 Measurables: A) NITC Ed Council members meet regularly with Community Council Broadband Initiative members. B) Propose grant to provide resources for affordable access through NE libraries.

2.3 Identify and promote the use of accessible products and services in achieving equity of access.

2.3.1 Measurables: A) Implement statewide bid for internet hot spot access. B) Explore TV White Space for student home access for educational purposes.

Other Recommended Measurables:

- Published research regarding infrastructure, pedagogy, equity of access, and impact on learning
- Number of K-12 students who have gained home Internet access through Digital Inclusion initiatives
- Number of public libraries that have gained faster Internet access by reaching Network Nebraska, either directly or indirectly