

W. Va. leads nation, A in school tech

May 5 2006

West Virginia leads the nation with an "A" in school technology, according to a recent study from Education Week. But as a whole, the nation received a "C-."

The report "Technology Counts 2006: The Information Edge: Using Data to Accelerate Achievement" from the publication Education Week and the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center surveyed and ranked all 50 states based on state policy and practice, access to and use of school technology, and the ability of educators to use technology more effectively.

Following West Virginia were Virginia, North Dakota, Wyoming and Georgia to round off the top five.

At the bottom of the list was Nevada with a "D-" preceded by Minnesota, Rhode Island, Oregon and Massachusetts.

"Fields from health care to finance have revolutionized how data is used to improve performance," said Virginia B. Edwards, the editor and publisher of Education Week and Technology Counts 2006. "While progress has been made in bolstering computerized data systems in K-12 education, states are not consistently making the critical connection between information and learning."

Despite efforts to make data central to instructional decisions by the federal government, states were still slow to put electronic information into a form easily understood by educators on all levels, it said.

It found that only 28 states and the District of Columbia provided current state assessment results to educators through a centralized information system, while nearly half of the states did not provide a Web portal or other data tool to access students' test performances.

Moreover, whereas two-thirds of states provided access to interactive databases so that educators could analyze school-level information, only 20 allowed for a comparison with other schools.

Other highlights from the report include:

-- Only 26 states and the District of Columbia provided teachers with training in using data to shape classroom instruction.

-- Less than half of the states, 22 states and the district, have centralized access to key information about students' demographic background and participation in school.

-- While 21 states require teachers to take one or more technology courses or pass a technology test before receiving a teaching license, only nine states have similar requirements for school administrators.

-- 47 states and the district have academic standards for students' knowledge about technology, but only four of those test that knowledge.

-- The number of states in the 2005-2006 year that offered computer-based tests went up from 16 to 21 and the district, while 22 states had statewide virtual schools, and those with cyber charter schools increased to 16.

"Data alone cannot make a difference in learning unless it is collected, shared, and used effectively," said Christopher B. Swanson, the director of the EPE Research Center. "Right now, educators in 15 states have no

more information or analysis than is available to parents and the general public. States have made significant progress on technology, but need to find ways to get more of the most useful information into the hands of educators."

The report can be found at www.edweek.org.

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