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Web 2.0 Promise Hits Reality in U.S. Schools

New CoSN Study Underscores Importance of Aligning the Realities of the Classroom with School Leaders Positive Outlook on Web 2.0 for Learning

Washington, DC (May 1, 2009) – The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) today released a new study, which found that school district administrators understand the significance of Web 2.0 for teaching and learning, but the actual use of Web 2.0 to improve the learning environment in U.S. schools is quite limited. The study, *Leadership for Web 2.0 in Education: Promise and Reality*, which was made possible through a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was produced to gain understanding of the beliefs, perspectives, and practices of administrators which are conducive or constraining of effective use of Web 2.0.

"The study's findings help to put a spotlight on the discrepancy that exists between attitudes toward Web 2.0 and actual implementation and use at the classroom level," said James Bosco, EdD, Principal Investigator of the MacArthur Foundation grant and Co-Chair of CoSN's International Advisory Council. "If U.S. students are to be the next inventors, entrepreneurs and leaders in the global economy, we must see to it that our young people have the innovative tools they need to be successful in the 21st century, particularly in the classroom."

The study collected data from nearly 1,200 school administrators on the role of digital media in American schools. CoSN worked with the Metiri Group, which conducted the survey of three key groups of education administrators – school district superintendents, curriculum directors and technology officers.

The key findings of the study include the following:

- The nation's district administrators are overwhelmingly positive about the impact of Web 2.0 on students' lives and their education.
- Keeping students interested and engaged in school is the top priority for Web 2.0 in American schools.
- The majority of district administrators believe that student use of Web 2.0 should be limited to participation on approved educational Web sites.
- The majority of school districts ban social networking and chat rooms while allowing prescribed educational use for most of the other Web 2.0 tools.

- While curriculum directors report low levels of general use of Web 2.0, they describe significant opportunities in curricula and teaching materials.
- Curriculum directors reported that Web 2.0 will be used most effectively in social studies, writing, science, and reading at all grade levels.
- The use of these tools in American classrooms remains the province of individual pioneering classrooms.
- Web 2.0 is outpacing the capacity of K-12 education to innovate.
- District administrators, the persons responsible for the decision-making on Web 2.0 in schools, are more passive than active users in the Web 2.0 space.

"From Facebook and other social networking applications to wikis, blogs and digital media, children in the United States are fully engaged in the use of Web 2.0 tools outside of the classroom. The study is encouraging since it shows that school leaders believe that Web 2.0 collaborative applications expand the resources available for classroom learning, but it also reveals that use of these technologies inside the classroom is often constrained by a number of factors." said Keith R. Krueger, CEO of CoSN. "Our schools must better align the reality of the technology-rich world in which our students live outside of school with the learning experiences they have in the classroom each day."

CoSN received a $450,000 grant last July from MacArthur, part of the Foundation's $50 million digital media and learning initiative. The initiative aims to determine how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize and participate in civic life. Answers are critical to education and other social institutions that must meet the needs of this and future generations. CoSN's *Schools and Participatory Culture: Overcoming Organizational and Policy Barriers* grant aims to identify the organizational and policy barriers that impede the adoption of new media in schools, and to develop and implement an action plan with recommendations on how to overcome the barriers.

For a full copy of the study, please click here. For a copy of the executive summary, click here.

To learn more, visit www.cosn.org or www.macfound.org.

About the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
CoSN is the premier professional association for district technology leaders. The mission of CoSN is to empower K-12 district technology leaders to use technology strategically for the improvement of teaching and learning. CoSN provides leadership, community and advocacy essential for the success of these leaders.

CoSN leadership initiatives include:
Cyber Security for the Digital District (www.securedistrict.org)
Data-Driven Decision-Making (www.3d2know.org)
Empowering the 21st Century Superintendent (www.superintendentempower.org)

Green Computing (www.cosn.org/greencomputing)
IT Crisis Preparedness (www.cosn.org/ITCrisisPrep)
K-12 Open Technologies (www.k12opentech.org)
Small District Technology Leadership
(http://72.3.238.178/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page)
Taking Total Cost of Ownership to the Classroom (www.classroomtco.org)
Value of Investment (www.edtechvoi.org)
Web2.0 Policy and Leadership (http://www.cosn.org/web2_0/).

CoSN's membership is a unique blend of education and technology leaders, and decision makers from the public and private sectors. Visit www.cosn.org or phone 866/267-8747 to find out more about CoSN's programs, events and resources supporting and promoting leadership development, advocacy and connections to ensure that technology is used strategically for the improvement of teaching and learning in elementary and secondary schools.

About the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. More information is at www.macfound.org.

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