

TEACHERS WILL BE BETTER TRAINED IN TECHNOLOGY TO FIT NEW PLAN

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How teachers are trained and retrained will change in the near future to better align Utah's educators with Gov. Mike Leavitt's call for a technology-based education system.

Legislators and education leaders began a process of analyzing current training procedures and proposed changes during a meeting Thursday in Cedar City. The annual summer summit of the State Board of Education, State Board of Regents and Legislative Education Committee revolved around issues related to Leavitt's announcement that Utah will pursue a high-tech system. The nitty-gritty work of putting together new programs that will move the state in that direction included a discussion of how teacher roles may change as technology floods the classroom.

Several legislators expressed concern that many in the current teaching force lack the ability to make effective use of the technology that was purchased through the Education Technology Initiative, a four-year state effort that began a shift to electronics-rich classrooms.

In many instances, the technology is underused because teachers have not been trained to use it effectively, said Sen. Howard A. Stephenson, R-Salt Lake.

"We have a cart-before-the-horse situation," he said, referring to the fact that teaching training was not included as a component of the ETI program until last year.

But teachers shouldn't have to accept the responsibility for becoming skilled in classroom technology without being compensated, said Rep. Marda Dillree, R-Davis. She suggested incentives be offered for teachers to upgrade their skills.

"Teachers shouldn't have to work a full day and then go to inservice sessions on their own time and money," agreed Don Christensen, state school board member and a school principal.

After a lengthy discussion, the committee suggested several teacher-training recommendations, both at the preservice level and as part of ongoing career development. They included:

- That more of the ETI money be directed to higher-education institutions that prepare teachers, so they will come to the classroom prepared to use technology.
- That the Legislature fund a mentoring program that will assure every beginning teacher a support system. Follow-up by the training institution also would be included.
- That every school be required to have a technology specialist. Such specialists would receive pay for their extra effort.
- That the state's teacher scholarship program be reviewed to encourage more minority educators. A percentage of the money should be reserved for minority high school students who are interested in careers in education and for minority individuals who have worked as teacher aides and are interested in being trained as teachers, the committee said.