

LEAVITT'S PLAN WILL PUT TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS, BUT ARE TEACHERS READY? IS LEAVITT PUTTING THE CART BEFORE EDUCATION HORSE? PLAN WILL PUT TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS, BUT TEACHERS MIGHT NOT BE PREPARED

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The Salt Lake Tribune. Salt Lake City, Utah: July 26, 1993. pg .B.1

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If Gov. Mike Leavitt succeeds in his grand scheme to flood Utah's public schools with technology, will state teachers be ready?

Utah already has spent more than \$100 million in three years to create a technological advantage in classrooms. Today there are more computers than teachers in Utah schools.

Much of the technology is not used effectively, however, because teachers often are not trained to use it.

"We have a long way to go before we can say technology makes a significant difference in classrooms," says University of Utah education instructor Dale Niederhauser, who has tried to track the effectiveness of Utah's technology. "There are varying degrees of success."

Mr. Niederhauser, in conjunction with the California Beryl Buck Institute for Education, issued a report last year showing that nearly half of Utah's teachers using the new equipment received no training.

This year's study will show 93% of teachers obtaining some training. But much of that was at the lower end, such as keyboarding and drill/practice-type programs. The primary use of computers in Utah's elementary schools is still primarily drill/practice, in which students are quizzed on math facts and language skills. That, says Utah Education Association President Lily Eskelsen, is not the best use of tax money.

"The machine is little more than an expensive flash card," says Ms. Eskelsen. "Teachers need time and training. A computer is only a piece of equipment, and it is only good if you know how to use it."

Using the machines mainly as electronic ditto sheets is a narrow use of flexible technology, says University of Utah Professor Trish Stoddart. "Technology can create a new vision of education that puts students in control."

For instance, students at Salt Lake City's Newman Elementary use a word processor with a twist. Stories are written with software that allows students to intertwine sound, pictures and words.

Implementing these programs takes trained teachers, and up to now Utah has not shown the commitment to provide that training.

No money was allocated for training during the first several years of the state's Education Technology Initiative. Now districts can use up to 25% of funding for training.

That is well below the amount spent by businesses retooling for the information age. More than 50% of company funds often goes into training when upgrading technology, says Ms. Stoddart.

Innovative business leaders suggest that as the information age transforms society, 1.5% of a company's payroll should be used continually to retrain workers. That percentage, applied to Utah's roughly \$775 million teacher payroll, would mean more than \$11.5 million annually.

Most additional training in Utah is now left to teachers who are lucky enough to land a grant for additional education or who are willing to spend their own time and money to learn.

Mr. Leavitt recognizes the massive need for training, says policy deputy LaVarr Webb. "It's a major effort, and the governor has laid out the vision. He may be a little ahead of the curve here, but he has laid out the challenge."

Mr. Webb says details for the proposal still must be worked out, but training will be included.