

LEAVITT DELIGHTED AT PROGRESS SHOWN IN 2ND YEAR OF CENTENNIAL SCHOOLS

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If you brought someone back from the dead from 100 years ago, he'd marvel at society's changes and no doubt feel adrift in this brave new world. But the one place where he might feel comfortable is in public schools, according to Gov. Mike Leavitt.

"I believe the educational system will be one of the last institutions to go through radical transformations," he said. But there's hope in the cleverness shown by Utah's Centennial Schools, which have taken seed money to finance new and better ways of educating young people, he said.

Leavitt addressed more than 1,000 teachers, parents and students Monday at the daylong Centennial Schools Celebration at the Marriott Hotel in Salt Lake City.

There currently are 28 districts and 190 schools taking part in the second year of the three-year program. First-time Centennial Schools participants get \$5,000 plus \$20 per student to implement creative new approaches to schooling.

"The information technology will not replace great teachers or parents who are involved in their children's educations," Leavitt said. But it will entirely change the way society thinks about the process of learning and how to deliver education.

"We're moving into a world where innovation will be an absolute necessity - a better world," Leavitt said. "We're making the transition from the old factory economy to the new information economy."

During visits to schools he likes to ask youngsters what "innovation" means and he teaches children it means to be "new, better and bold."

"I don't have to do that today. I'm (standing) among the best innovators in our state," Leavitt said, praising Centennial Schools participants for their creativity and energy.

He offered educators three challenges - to take part in monthly interactive television meetings to "cross pollinate" various school ideas, to embrace shared governance even more by giving up a little power and expecting parents to assume a little more responsibility, and to realize that the Centennial Schools money is just a beginning.

"Centennial Schools status is a three-year process. We are developing innovations that will have a lifelong impact. We are funding with temporary funds change we intend to be permanent," Leavitt said.

Seated in the audience, English teacher Dyan Stewart from Bountiful Junior High School was enthusiastic about the school's first-time funding. Among other things, that school's Centennial money will be used to automate the library, provide a computer for each discipline, and offer computers to help the counselor and students plan their future.

The school also plans to institute a 15-minute daily "advisory period" for students to plan their days, catch up on homework, get announcements out of the way and learn about study skills. This will be done in groups of 20 with the same teacher-supervisor throughout the year.

Stewart said students currently have free day planners included in their student handbooks. They can work with these during their new "advisory period."

Some students might not like this because it will mean no excuses for missed homework, but "from a teacher's and parent's point of view, it's wonderful," Stewart said.

Not all students would mind. Breanne Beattie, 14, the student body president at Bountiful Junior High, thinks daily planning is a great idea. "I'm looking forward to it," she said. "It will work out for students and teachers."

Another teacher, Shauna Raby, who coordinates special education at Canyon Crest Elementary School in Provo, said last year's Centennial Schools effort focused on inclusion of disabled youngsters. This year, the focus is on technology with a continued emphasis on inclusion.

"We're trying to get a computer for every teacher in every classroom," Raby said. Special education youngsters find computers helpful because a teacher can teach a concept and the children use the computer to practice it. "For a lot of disabled children, it's a way of writing and accessing information they couldn't any other way," she said.