

EDUC -  
Technology

TO Educational Technology Working Group

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## I. The Nature of the Challenge

In the past, a national mission was almost always defined as the mustering of centralized resources by political leaders, inevitably led by the President, who hold national responsibilities.

In the future, a new form of national mission may take its place along side that form; re-defined in a time of scarce fiscal resources and disbursed responsibilities.

What will be the same is the unique role to be played by the President and Vice President: To assess pressing challenges that are national in scope and nature, to lead the dialogue about why and how these challenges must be met, and to catalyze critical pathways that will help lead the country to a solution.

What will be different is the nature of resources and the form of national decision-making that coalesce to meet such challenges. Fiscal resources will not flow freely from the federal government and fiscal resources will not be all that is needed -- or contributed. No single solution has to be created; so long as core imperatives are met, local creativity will shape their own answer to the national challenge. And the initiative will be led and implemented in every community in the nation. The mechanism will not, in other words, be Kennedy's method of putting men on the moon and the call to arms will not be, as Kennedy put it, that we must accomplish a goal "not because it is easy, but because it is hard." Today, national missions must be accomplished not just because they are hard, but because they are necessary to the future of a strong, optimistic and prosperous nation.

The President's challenge to the nation -- that every student be technologically literate by the dawn of the 21st Century -- provides the opportunity for the Administration to demonstrate the new form of national mission and, by so doing, to lead a national effort that fulfills the President's goals. That is because the greatest obstacle to the implementation of the President's four pillars for educational technology (computers, connections, teacher development and educational content) is neither technological nor

pedagogical. It comes from the need to answer one question that will be posed by taxpayers, parents, teachers and students in every community: Why in a time of limited resources and numerous demands, should we make the special effort to ensure that our children are technologically literate?"

In every communication that responds to this question, we should envision the President sitting at a table in a local school-board meeting room with a dozen parents, or in a teachers' lounge with overburdened teachers or in a classroom with students.

The President's answer (itself the core of our communications efforts) can be communicated in multiple ways:

- Directly by judicious use of the bully pulpit of the Presidency,
- By example, through the development of critical pathways that demonstrate to these parents the concrete benefits that will flow to their children (Such critical pathways can take the form, for example, of increased flow of information; national recognition of educators, teachers and students who are outstanding in their effort to bring technology into their schools, and federal funds that fight against informational apartheid and stimulate new, creative activities in local communities
- Through the stimulation and facilitation of non-federal actions in a national movement that will validate the President's direct message and demonstrate to communities that the President's goals are achievable.

In these ways the federal government will act as leader, catalyst and guide.

This formulation thus requires that communication and leadership is, itself, a substantive element of the President's national vision (as opposed, for example, to being the mechanism by which the importance of other, substantive elements are explained). It means that activities in each of the four pillars should be measured against two criteria: (i) How will they advance the particular goals of the relevant pillar (say, getting more schools connected), and (ii) How will they explain to the group in the school-board meeting room why the effort is important. It also means that some actions that might be thought to be peripheral to the educational goal (like getting computers into libraries or community centers, where adults will have ready access to them) might take on a more important role.

## II. The Nature of the Communications Challenge

Three immediate challenges face us: (i) Presidential and Vice Presidential scheduling, (ii) Working with outside communicators who are eager to talk to the public through a variety of means and (iii) Mustering the internal, Administration resources necessary to implement a comprehensive communications plan.

Scheduling: I propose that we seek to implement the following schedule:

- January 8-10(?) The President and/or Vice President appear by teleconference to kick off Hawaii's "NetDay" which, like the earlier California effort, will use volunteer efforts to help deploy and use technology in local schools,
- January 24/25(?): State of the Union -- reiteration of the President's challenge, explained as a new form of national mission,
- January 30: President and Vice President release their National Vision Statement, which challenges the nation to meet defined goals and deadlines, while explaining why the effort is fundamentally important to every citizen, at a meeting with the National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council, as they complete their two-year charter, in order to receive their concrete suggestions for a set of private-led initiatives that will "kickstart" educational technology in communities across the nation. This can be combined with other federal and private initiatives that are ready for announcement, including the release of an endorsed statement of principles by national leaders (and a dinner at either the White House or Vice President's residence for the Advisory Council),
- February 17(?) At the Empowerment Zone conference, the Vice President announces the voluntary, private effort that will connect every K-12 school in an empowerment zone, thus demonstrating the importance of preventing informational apartheid,
- March 9, 1996 The President, Vice President and senior Administration officials work with volunteers in schools in California on "NetDay 96" -- the fulfillment of the President's pledge of September 21, 1995, to connect 20% of California schools -- and engage in related activities to demonstrate

the full scope of the President's vision,

Mid-March: The President gives the keynote address at the conference of Nation's Governors organized by IBM and announces how the model of NetDay, along with the other private and public efforts he has announced, can transform the nation's schools, possible with the announcement of other state NetDays,

May: The President and Vice President appear at a White House "stakeholders" conference at which educators, teachers, parents, businesses -- and students -- assess the progress made by the end of the 1995-96 school year and announce further efforts at meeting the President's goals.

(ii) Outside Communicators: A number of potential efforts of different kinds have already been identified. These include:

- National Outreach Campaigns (NCTET, Bell Atlantic/Microsoft)
- Distribution of video materials through multiple media (AT&T/Disney, Lucas Foundation)
- Television programming (Cable operators)
- Creation of a CD-ROM (Jay Samit)
- Distribution through grassroots organizations (parents' and teachers' groups)
- National distribution of source materials for communities (National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council "Kickstart" initiatives)
- Creation of pro bono advertising and psa's
- Endorsement of statement of principles by national leaders (Curry draft),

(iii) Mustering Internal Resources: I am planning on meeting with Chris Dorval, David Shipley and Heidi Kuckis next week with the goal of completing a formal communications plan by December 22d that will be circulated ASAP to the working group.

POLITICS  
CLASS

COMPARED TO WHAT?  
INEVITABLE