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EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE
Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On "*The Future of Learning: How Technology is Transforming Public Schools*"

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on "The Future of Learning: How Technology is Transforming Public Schools."*

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We're here today for the first in a series of hearings on the Future of Learning.

In this economy, it is more important than ever to ensure that every student in every classroom has the opportunity to grow, thrive and achieve to their fullest potential. This is becoming increasingly important as our competitiveness abroad has shifted.

Several years ago, Speaker Pelosi asked us to come together around an innovation agenda. We went to Stanford and talked to the best in the high-tech, biotech fields, and the venture capital fields.

We talked about innovation and discovery – believing that discovery and innovation are really the only sustainable sources of economic growth in the world today.
What evolved from these conversations was an interesting definition of the kind of person they would want to bring into their companies. They want workers who can work across companies, countries, and continents.

They want the most diverse workforce in history, to assemble solutions to emerging problems stemming from the most diverse client base in history.

Unfortunately, that does not sound like what we are preparing today's kindergarten students to participate in 16 years from now or even 12 years from now. That is not today's education system in America.

But, to quote Secretary Duncan, we now face the opportunity of a lifetime to work with our schools and other partners to build an education system that benefits students, families, our economy and our country for generations to come.

For quite some time, I have been cataloging all the reports that acknowledge that we are running an industrial-based education system for an agrarian society on an agrarian clock.

You might not believe me – but it's all been very interesting. It acknowledges a fundamental mismatch that we haven't paid much attention to other than as kind of a clever anecdote.

Today's students use technology in everything they do.

From the moment they wake up to the digital alarm clocks, listening to their iPods as they walk to school, communicating with their friends on Twitter and Facebook, or sharing information on YouTube – they are used to customizing their worlds at the click of a computer.

But school today, for far too many kids, does not look like the rest of their world, and does not capitalize on technology's potential to engage students and improve learning. One critical element of learning in the future must be to provide technology-rich classrooms to all students.

Research shows that when technology is systemically integrated into classrooms and used by digitally-savvy staff, it can improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement, and reduce the dropout rate. And, as my grandkids tell me, it makes school a lot more fun.

Take for example, Stephen F. Austin Middle School in Bryan, Texas where the students were given laptops to help integrate technology tools into their daily instruction. This led to improvement in student achievement in both math and reading.

In the 7th grade alone, reading scores increased by 13 percent and math scores by 14 percent.

At the Dionne Warwick Institute in East Orange, New Jersey, fourth- and fifth-grade students wrote and recorded educational raps about civil rights leaders for a Black History Project.

This project also helped them demonstrate their understanding of math strategies and concepts. The students who participated in these projects saw their math grades increase by an average of 9.6 points, and social studies scores increase by 9.4.

It seems to me that if technology can substantially increase student engagement, raise student achievement and graduation rates, and prepare our students for college and the workforce, then we must do everything we can do to support these types of innovations in all our classrooms.

But this is about more than just the future of our workforce. This is about the future of our democracy.

The options, opportunity, and availability that technology can bring to a classroom must be available to everyone. And I am extremely encouraged that as we expand this access, we will make more progress in closing the achievement gap.

I'm encouraged that we're taking steps in the right direction.

This Congress has already endorsed several important pillars of reform included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, particularly in Secretary Duncan's Race to the Top Fund, which has unprecedented potential to shape the future of learning in our nation.

It also included $650 million for educational technology state grants. I believe this is money well spent.

In any industry, it's considered smart business planning to look to the future – and how a company or an industry will change, grow adapt.

If we're serious about creating world-class schools and regaining our competitive edge, then it's time we start thinking about education the same way.

Today's hearing will explore how innovation and technology are changing the way teachers teach and students learn.

We'll see first-hand how the transformational power of technology can unleash the talents of our teachers and students so that they will, in fact, be able to use discovery and innovation to assemble solutions to the problems that future generations will face.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

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