

## **Technology Counts 2004 Global Links: Lessons From the World**

Source: Education Week, May 6, 2004

Washington, DC, May 6, 2004 -- The United States is among the leaders in the world in providing access to school computers, but it lags behind other countries in frequency of school computer use and Internet availability at school, according to Education Week's seventh annual report on school technology.

Studies show that the United States' student-to-computer ratio of 5:1 is tied for first in the world, along with Australia and Latvia. New Zealand and Norway are a close second at 6:1, and Austria's ratio is 7:1. Denmark, Finland, Singapore, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have 8:1 averages. Across the United States, according to the most recent data, South Dakota leads the nation with 1.4 students for every instructional computer and California ranks last with an average of 5.5.

However, the United States does not stack up well against a number of countries when examining the percentage of school computers that are connected to the Internet. Australia (80 percent), Finland (84 percent) and Iceland (83 percent) have more than twice the percentage of school computers connected to the Internet when compared with the United States, where the average is 39 percent. The nation also falls well below Austria (69 percent), Denmark (65 percent), Sweden (74 percent), and the United Kingdom (51 percent).

Data also show that more than a quarter (25.7 percent) of 15-year-olds in the United States use computers at school several times a week, ranking the nation behind several countries, including Italy (34.4 percent), the United Kingdom (36.3 percent), Australia (38.4 percent), and Korea (42.7 percent).

"These numbers show that our schools need to move beyond the goal of simply putting computers in classrooms," says Virginia B. Edwards, the editor and publisher of Education Week. "And the world outside the United States is rich with lessons about how technology can be used in schools."

Still, among the top 10 national economies in the world, the United States ranks at or near the top on several measures of educational technology.

For instance, the United States ranks first in the percent of 15-year-olds using the Internet at school several times a week, with 22 percent. The United Kingdom had 18.1 percent, and Italy had 5.5 percent.

Surprisingly, Japan, a nation known for its high-tech culture, ranked well below the United States in most categories when comparing nations with the strongest economies. Just 14.4 percent of its 15-year-olds use computers at school several times a week, and only 4.5 percent use the Internet at school several times a week.

Tracking the Nation, Comparing the States The global theme of Technology Counts 2004 is supplemented by the annual features of the report, such as a review of national trends in the use of educational technology, and snapshots of the steps states have taken to use educational technology more effectively.

One of the bigger stories in educational technology recently has been technology spending for schools, which dropped by more than 24 percent from the 2001-02 to the 2002-03 school years, according to the most recent figures on technology spending from the market research firm Market Data Retrieval. MDR also found that Internet use tends to be higher in smaller schools.

This year's report provides important updates on trends in e-learning and computer-based assessment, themes of previous reports. For instance, the annual Education Week survey of state technology contacts found that 15 states have established state-sponsored online schools, and 13 states now have computer-based assessments.

As technology has become more pervasive in education, the gaps among states have grown smaller. Still, there are differences, according to a survey by MDR. The top 10 list this year in the category of the number of students per Internet-connected computer located in classrooms includes South Dakota (3.8 students), Oklahoma (5.8), Arkansas (6.2), Ohio (6.3), District of Columbia (6.5), Kansas (6.6), Idaho (6.6), Wyoming (6.6), Massachusetts (6.7), and Texas (6.9).

The level of technology skills of teachers is also an important annual category. That ranking examined the percentage of schools where at least half the teachers are beginners when it comes to using technology. The states with the lowest percentages of beginners included South Dakota (3 percent), Maine (5 percent), North Dakota (6 percent), Wyoming (6 percent), Iowa (7 percent), Virginia (10 percent), and Kentucky (10 percent). Indiana, Georgia, and Idaho all had 11 percent.

In recent years, the United States has been more closely examining how teachers use computers. This year, Technology Counts reports the percent of schools where at least 90 percent of teachers use a computer daily for planning and/or teaching. The top 10 list in that category this year includes Alaska (79 percent), South Carolina (76 percent), Iowa (74 percent), Georgia (70 percent), Wyoming (70 percent), Idaho (69 percent), Kentucky (67 percent), and South Dakota (67 percent). Washington, Michigan, Indiana, and Nebraska all had 66 percent.

#### A Global Perspective

This year's report presents a groundbreaking overview of technology in schools around the world, examining data, lessons, and trends in North America, Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and the Australia/Pacific region. Much is happening with educational technology around the world. By most standards, for instance, Mexico lags behind the United States and Canada in access to basic technology. But Mexican and international observers predict the nation is likely to see a vast expansion of technological resources in its schools in the years ahead. Mexican officials are investing an estimated \$1 billion to install a computer in every classroom in all of the country's primary schools by 2005.

On the other hand, the emphasis in the United States, where access is no longer a major problem, has evolved beyond the goal of simply putting computers in schools. The American focus now is on judging technology programs' effectiveness, a push that has gained new momentum under the current Bush administration. Schools in the more advanced countries in Europe - such as England - have a similar emphasis.

Meanwhile, countries such as South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan have adopted far-reaching national master plans to install high-speed computers in schools, train teachers to bolster their

lessons by using technology, and encourage students to conduct online research, build Web sites, and tackle Internet-based projects.

But the poorer nations of the world - such as Vietnam, Laos, and many African nations - are literally decades behind the more advanced countries.

This year's report also includes many interesting perspectives. In addition to the overviews of the continents, Education Week sent writers to Canada, Iceland, and Singapore - countries where educational technology is an important part of the landscape - to get classroom-level views of what's happening. Among other findings, those stories revealed that other nations are taking a more conservative approach in letting students take online courses than the United States. Singapore, for instance, has no plans for large-scale programs that would offer Internet-based courses.

Education Week, American education's newspaper of record, is owned and operated by Editorial Projects in Education, a nonprofit corporation based in Bethesda, MD. For more information about Technology Counts 2004, Global Links: Lessons From the World or to arrange interviews, call Matthew Maurer at (202) 955-9450.

Editors: Report includes survey of technology policies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as special analyses of state and national statistics on access, training, and use of technology by students and teachers.

Report also available on the Web at [www.edweek.org/tc04](http://www.edweek.org/tc04).