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DCP Today

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Welcome to DCP Today, CENIC's monthly electronic newsletter detailing the latest news about the Digital California Project.

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DCP Continues to Move Forward in the Face of Mid-Year Budget Reductions

DCP Today readers know that California is facing an unprecedented budget shortfall of nearly \$35 billion. As a result, many education programs are being reduced or eliminated through mid-year budget reductions. SBX1 18 (Chesbro) is the legislative measure that enacts the 2002-03 mid-year budget reductions for education. The bill is an urgency measure and takes effect immediately upon the signature of the Governor. Under SBX1 18, the Digital California Project faces a further \$1.1 million reduction.

This funding reduction is the latest in a round of budget cuts that have reduced the project's initial budget from \$32 million to approximately \$21 million. The affect of these reductions has been reduced by the ability of CENIC to acquire E-rate and California Teleconnect Funding. With these alternative sources of funding and realignment of the project's activities, the primary DCP mission of connecting the state's 58 counties to the CalREN/DC Network continues. Connectivity to all 58 counties and additional node site installations are expected to be completed by the end of 2003.

Last Mile Funding Program

At its March meeting, the DCP Program Steering Committee (PSC) approved five guiding principles for the operating a "last mile" grant program. This program, made possible by savings realized by E-rate and California Teleconnect Fund discounts, will allow a number of unconnected and under-connected schools and district offices to apply for the fiscal resources to connect to the CalREN/DC Network via a T-1 connection.

The five guiding principles adopted by the PSC are: (1) Applicants can apply for connectivity to their central office and/or to their school site(s). (2) The awards will pay for the cost of establishing or upgrading connections to T-1. Awardees wishing to have connections beyond T-1 must pay for all additional costs. (3) The applicant is expected to be using the California Teleconnect Fund (CTF) discount program on some of its eligible telecommunications services by the application deadline. (4) By the time the 2nd and 3rd year awards are made, the award recipient is expected to have applied for E-rate discounts in addition to using CTF discounts. (5) Each site applied for (central office or school) is considered one "entity".

In early April, invitational letters will be sent to the 527 school district superintendents of those districts that are members of the CENIC-DCP E-rate application for 2003-2004. The deadline to turn in the one page application will be in early May. To select among applicants, CENIC will devise a random selection process that draws from all "entities", thereby treating all entities as equal, regardless of district variables. Finalists for funding awards will be identified in June.

E-Rate Application Status

The CENIC-DCP E-rate discount application for 2003-2004 has been received by E-rate administrators. Notification of the outcome is expected summer, 2003.

Congress Considers Terminating E-Rate Funding

H.R. 1252, currently under consideration by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce proposes to terminate the E-rate Program (see <http://www.theorator.com/bills108/hr1252.html>), a program of vital importance to California schools.

In total, California public K-12 schools receive approximately \$250 million per year in E-rate discounts to help connect schools to the Internet and reduce telecommunications costs. Since the program's inception, California's K-12 public schools have received over a billion dollars in E-rate commitments to discount telecommunications costs.

All concerned stakeholders are encouraged to contact committee members to voice opposition to this proposed funding cut. Committee leadership includes:

- W.J. "Billy" Tauzin, Louisiana, Chairman; and,
- Richard Burr, North Carolina, Vice Chairman.

California Representatives on the committee are as follows:

- Christopher Cox (R - Newport Beach);
- George Radanovich (R - Fresno);
- Mary Bono (R - Palm Springs);
- Darrell Issa (R - Vista);
- Henry A. Waxman (D - Los Angeles);
- Anna G. Eshoo (D - Palo Alto);
- Lois Capps (D - Santa Barbara); and,
- Hilda L. Solis (D - El Monte).

Assembly Bill 448: Intensive Reading Programs

As introduced in February, AB 448 (Matthews) would provide school districts with additional flexibility when deciding how to spend the Intensive Reading funds they receive from the state each year. The bill gives elementary schools the ability to use the funds in new ways or continue using the funds as they have in the past. AB 448 is designed to give schools more choice when picking cost effective, researched based programs to help children learn to read during the critical early years between Kindergarten and 4th grade. This is specifically important to users of the CalREN/DC Network because the bill expands the narrow authority in current law to also allow funds to be used to purchase and implement research-based technology programs of demonstrated effectiveness, provide pre-Kindergarten reading intervention (the current program can only start in Kindergarten), and/or seek a waiver from the State Board of Education in order to fund other innovative reading programs.

AB 448 provides flexibility by allowing schools use Intensive Reading funds for the following:

- Purchase and implement technology-based programs in order to provide supplemental reading instruction in grades K through 4;
- Provide funds for intensive reading intervention services to students six months prior to enrollment in Kindergarten; and,
- Seek a waiver from the State Board of Education to use the funds to implement other innovative approaches to intensive reading intervention.

There are no increased costs associated with this bill, an important fact in difficult budgetary times. AB 448 provides schools with greater flexibility to use the funds they already receive. The bill operates within the existing appropriations.

Libraries Discussed at Program Steering Committee Meeting

The DCP Program Steering Committee (PSC) met March 13th in Sacramento. Recognizing the valuable connection between K-12 education and libraries, the focus of the meeting was on the evolution of the virtual library.

Dan Greenstein, University of California Librarian and Executive Director of the California Digital Library (CDL), summarized the recent changes at the CDL. He emphasized the role of technology in maintaining world class collections for teaching and research and demonstrated ways in which the CDL might be able to assist larger K-20 efforts to enhance digital libraries. At present, the CDL shared digital collection includes everything written in English published before 1700, 8,000 serial subscriptions, 4,500 statistical databases, 250 reference databases, and 150,000 digital images, as well as historic runs of major newspapers. Print and digital object repositories and technology applications are part of the infrastructure that enables resource sharing, allowing end users to navigate through a variety of databases.

Although the CDL has many ongoing projects, Greenstein expressed an interest in exploring ways that the CDL infrastructure can be of benefit to K-12 libraries.

John Jewell, Chief of State Library Services at the California State Library (CSL), provided a brief history of libraries and their evolution, reminding attendees that in ten short years digital resources for libraries have gone from terminals to CD-ROMs and now to the Internet. Noting that CSL has specialized digital resources available on science, geography, history, government, art, literature, and politics, Jewell stressed the importance of a continued cooperative access effort that allows equal and quality access for students and teachers.

Linda Jewett, President of the California School Library Association declared that students suffer from "Information Fatigue Syndrome," due to an overload of information that is available to them. She stressed the need for students to develop information literacy, to develop the ability to access, evaluate, and use information and ideas efficiently and effectively.

Dan Fuller and David Loertscher (who participated via conference call), from San Jose State University gave a presentation about what needs to be known before building a student workspace, suggesting that the best way to begin was to develop a digital school library intranet and followed by development of a portal than can be personalized. Also emphasized was the importance of having good content material based on student needs, a strong curriculum, and technology that works within the students' information needs to provide a 24 hour, 7 day a week school library.

One very significant outcome of the presentations and associated discussion was agreement that a group should be formed to explore leveraging the work of libraries across the State. Participants will be drawn from K12, the California State Libraries, the California Library Association, the California State University System, the University of California, and others.

These highly informative presentations were followed by some strong words of support from the Davis Administration that helped to make this PSC meeting particularly informative and insightful.

Network Update

As the first round of DCP node site installations approaches completion, with 66 of the 70 planned sites installed and operational, only three of California's 58 counties await connectivity.

The four remaining node sites are Alpine County Office of Education, Del Norte County Office of Education, Humboldt County Office of Education and Tulelake Joint Unified School District, serving part of Modoc County, which already has connectivity to the CalREN/DC Network. The networking equipment has been installed and tested at these remaining sites and each is awaits service providers to install the necessary circuits.

Alpine County Office of Education: The local exchange carrier will test the circuit serving Alpine County in early April, and CENIC expects the DCP circuit to be ready for acceptance testing by the end of April.

Tulelake Joint Unified School District: The Tulelake node site is scheduled for circuit installation by April and is expected to be operational by the end of April.

Humboldt and Del Norte County Offices of Education: The node sites in these two remaining counties are already connected to each other. Therefore, both counties will achieve CalREN/DC Network connectivity once connectivity to either site occurs. CENIC is aggressively exploring all feasible solution to deliver high bandwidth connectivity to these last two counties. High speed connection to either county from the DC network is awaiting service from a telecommunication carrier.

The DCP Round 2 enhancements are continuing to progress as scheduled. Site inspection visits are underway and circuit orders have been placed. With minor adjustments to the number of Round 2 node sites, it now appears that DCP will add 5 additional Round 2 node sites to the network. Many of the counties have already ordered and installed Round 2 circuits to enhance existing networks, further extending their reach to local districts and schools.

About CENIC

CENIC is a not-for-profit corporation formed by the California Institute of Technology, the California State University, Stanford University, the University of California, and the University of Southern California to facilitate and coordinate the deployment, development, and operation of a set of seamless and robust advanced network services. The CENIC Associates program offers qualified companies the opportunity to collaborate with CENIC in pursuit of the goal of providing the most advanced network services for research and education. Cisco Systems, SBC, and the University and Community College System of Nevada are CENIC's Partner Associates.

More information about CENIC is available at: <http://www.cenic.org>.

About DCP

The Digital California Project is a project of CENIC. Funded by the State of California, the DCP was designed to build the necessary network infrastructure needed to prepare California's schools to take advantage of tomorrow's advances in network technology. In essence, CENIC is developing an advanced-services network to serve the entire California K-20 education and research community.

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