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THE ASPEN INSTITUTE TASK FORCE RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP IMPROVE AND MAXIMIZE SAFE ONLINE LEARNING FOR CHILDREN

Cross-sector report calls for broad change and provides practical action steps for transforming US approaches to learning

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Washington DC, June 17, 2014 – The Aspen Institute [Task Force on Learning and the Internet](#) today releases [Learner at the Center of a Networked World](#), a report and recommendations for ensuring today’s students are at the center of, and have access to, safe learning inside and outside of the classroom – that prepare them for future success.

The cross-sector, cross-partisan report addresses the serious issues of trust, safety, privacy, digital literacy and accessibility, especially for underserved students. In their recommendations, the Task Force recommends actions to help all students connect safely and maximize learning experiences online. (Watch live video webcast at 3:30 pm EDT [here](#))

The Task Force, comprised of [20 thought leaders](#) with diverse perspectives on learning, innovation and safety, and supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, finalized the report after a year of study, outreach to stakeholders, public input and internal deliberations. Former Governor of Florida and Chairman of the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) Jeb Bush and Co-Founder of Voto Latino Rosario Dawson served as Honorary Co-Chairs.

“Education in America should be organized around the principle that what students know is more important than where they go. We need to ensure students have access to new education models that combine the best of classroom and online learning,” said **Governor Jeb Bush**. “It is incumbent on us to provide them with the skills necessary to thrive while empowering them to learn at their own pace and in their own way. Learning should be the constant and time the variable. This report can serve as a catalyst to deliver on the promise of a high-quality and customized education for all students.”

“Technology is enhancing our lives in so many ways, but across our country so many young learners are missing out on vital opportunities and online resources that should be available to them. It will impact the choices they make for the rest of their lives,” said **Rosario Dawson**. “This report brings to light how we can create a new era of safe, individualized, and connected learning for students of all ages, in any neighborhood, rich or poor.”

The Aspen Task Force report calls for a shift from the traditional focus on one learning institution, the school, to a focus on the learner and all the places where there are opportunities to learn, like museums, libraries, after-school programs and the home. To be successful, students must have access to learning networks that are interoperable – or have the ability to share information – and that allow them to earn credit for what they have learned regardless of where they learned it. These credits should also be recognized by schools and institutions of higher education. Most importantly, schools, technology leaders, and policymakers need to ensure sensitive student information is secure and protected and there are trusted environments in which that data can be shared and used to improve instruction.

The Task Force provides a framework and examples to help communities come together to be creative and collaborate about building environments where safety, learning and innovation become synonymous. One approach cited in the report is the reallocation of funding in school districts to pay for laptops, connectivity and digital textbooks that, since implementation, have led to marked improvements in test scores and graduation rates in some school districts.

Recommendations

Written to be implementable, practical and accessible, this report includes six recommendations along with specific action steps that the government, parents, educators, district leaders, students, foundations, non-profits and businesses can take to ensure that the learners of today are equipped to thrive in the 21st century. They include the following:

- 1) **Redesign learning environments to empower students to learn any time, any place, both in school and beyond**
- 2) **Provide educators with skill-building to support and guide learners in a networked learning environment**
- 3) **Build an infrastructure that will connect all students in all of the places they learn**
- 4) **Make sure all learning networks are interoperable – or have the ability to share information and data**
- 5) **Adopt policies to ensure children are taught basic skills - or digital literacies - for living and learning in the digital age**
- 6) **Create trusted learning environments for children to keep them safe**

For more details on the recommendations and 26 specific action steps, go to the full report online: www.aspentaskforce.org.

The Task Force recommends that federal, state, and local governments all take steps to fund pilots, experimentation and eventually full implementation of the steps called for in the report. Many of these recommendations can be embedded in the existing funding streams that already support schools, libraries and nonprofits. Philanthropies and businesses can also mobilize support and funding. Already, Task Force members have turned to their communities to brainstorm creative ways to implement these action steps and keep the momentum of their vision growing.

"This pivotal report is what's needed to help create a new understanding of 21st century learning, and it has inspired us to take action," said Connie Yowell, Director of Education at the MacArthur Foundation. "Today we're announcing the 5th Digital Media and Learning Competition — The Trust Challenge — which will award \$1.2 million in grants to build innovative digital tools and programs necessary to connect learning to young people's interests while maintaining their privacy and safety."

The 20-Member Task Force is comprised of education advocates, activists, technologists, public policy experts, business leaders and online safety experts.

Task Force Members

- **Jeb Bush**, Former Governor of Florida and Chairman of ExcelinEd, Task Force Honorary Co-Chair
- **Rosario Dawson**, Actress and Co-Founder, Voto Latino, Honorary Co-Chair
- **John Bailey**, Executive Director, Digital Learning Now, Task Force Co-Chair
- **Maria Teresa Kumar**, President and CEO, Voto Latino, Task Force Co-Chair
- **Meredith Baker**, President and CEO, CTIA Wireless Association, former Senior Vice President of Governmental Affairs, Comcast-NBC Universal; former FCC Commissioner
- **John Seely Brown**, Independent Co-Chairman, Deloitte Center for the Edge
- **Cathy Casserly**, former CEO, Creative Commons
- **Anne Collier**, Founder and Executive Director, Net Family News, Inc. and Co-Director, ConnectSafely.org
- **Wanda Cook-Robinson**, Member of the Executive Cabinet Superintendent Oakland Intermediate School District; former Superintendent, Southfield Public Schools, Michigan
- **Anil Dash**, Co-Founder, Activate and ThinkUP
- **Julius Genachowski**, The Carlyle Group, Aspen Institute Senior Fellow, former FCC Chairman
- **Marne Levine**, Vice President, Global Public Policy, Facebook
- **Brendon Lynch**, Chief Privacy Officer, Microsoft
- **Alice Marwick**, Co-Director of McGannon Center for Communication Research and Assistant Professor, Communications and Media Studies, Fordham University
- **Betsy Masiello**, Senior Manager, Global Public Policy, Google
- **Bruce Mehlman**, Partner, Mehlman Vogel Castagnetti, Inc.
- **Delia Pompa**, Senior Vice President of Programs, National Council of LaRaza
- **Mark Surman**, Executive Director, Mozilla
- **Deborah Taylor Tate**, ITU Special Envoy and Laureate for Child Online Protection (United Nations); former FCC Commissioner
- **Felton Thomas, Jr.**, Executive Director and CEO, Cleveland Public Library

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