

California Community Technology Policy Group

February 20, 2002

Pat Rainey
Healthy Start and After-School Partnerships Office
California Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Rainey:

The California Community Technology Policy Group (CCTPG) thanks the Department for soliciting broad community input on the formulation for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program regulations. CCTPG is comprised of over 20 community-based organizations providing technology access, more commonly known as community technology centers, to diverse populations located throughout California. CTCs serve as after-school programs providing students with a safe haven to learn technology skills, seek help with their school assignments, and engage in other educational activities.

Through years of building positive and trusting relationships with the communities we serve, many CTCs cater to youth who either have slipped through the cracks of California's educational system or have had a negative relationship with their school. CCTPG has had tremendous success in attracting previously unreached populations in California, serving over 24,000 low-income Californians—80% of them people of color, and the majority under 24 years old.

Our experience with technology programs aimed at low-income youth across California suggests the potential to help boost student achievement. An independent evaluation conducted by the Claremont Graduate University on the initial 11 CTCs that formed CCTPG found that our technology activities clearly enhanced educational outcomes:

- 82% of center participants surveyed said that their educational opportunities improved;
- 43% reported they used the centers to improve their school performance; and
- 27% learned new skills that helped them in school.

Moreover, teaching technology skills will prepare youth for economic opportunities in the future. The Department of Labor has reported that more than 50% of all workers now use computers on the job (double the rate from a decade ago), with those using computers earning 43% more than other workers.

CCTPG
c/o Community Partners®
606 South Olive Street, Suite 2400
Los Angeles, CA 90014

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Based upon our on-the-ground experience and learning what works and does not work in serving some of the hardest to reach students, we respectfully offer CDE the following recommendations:

- Make CTCs that meet full program requirements eligible grantees. Many CTCs have a positive impact on their communities and share the goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program—improving academic achievement and keeping students safe;
- Extend eligible organizations to include qualified after-school programs in non-school-based settings. Many hard-to-reach youth feel more comfortable at CTCs that are off school grounds. By extending the eligible programs to include off campus programs, a greater number of hard-to-reach students can be targeted and served; and
- Simplify funding mechanisms into the form of a direct grant. Many of our participants face difficult circumstances at home and in their environment that prevent them from attending after-school programs on a consistent basis, as required by an ADA-based system. In addition, because some students live in remote areas or in at-risk communities, requiring programs to adhere to a 3 PM to 6 PM schedule would preclude these hard-to-reach students. For those who are the hardest to reach, even some exposure to CTCs can have a positive effect. Also, it takes time for trust to develop and confidence to build. Eventually, those students who attended sporadically become the ones who attend regularly.

We thank you for this opportunity to provide our input. If we can be of further assistance, please give us a call at (909) 268-5975.

Sincerely,

Richard Chabran
Chair
California Community Technology Policy Group

Enclosure: List of CCTPG Members

California Community Technology Policy Group

The following organizations participate in CCTPG:

Alliance for Technology Access
Break Away Technologies
Bresee Foundation
Casa Familiar
Central Valley Digital Network, Great Valley Center
Community Digital Initiative, University of California, Riverside
Community Partners
CompuMentor
C.T. Learning, Inc.
Desert Oasis Community Computer Center
Eastmont Computer Center
Happy Camp Community Computer Center, Karuk Tribe of California
Latino Issues Forum
Plugged In
Plumas County Public Health Agency
San Diego Community Technology Group
Santa Barbara City College, Continuing Education Division
Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center
The Children's Partnership
Women's Economic Agenda Project