ISTE: Where Are We Heading?


ISTE is approaching its first birthday. It was just last June, at the National Educational Computing Conference in Boston, that the International Association for Computing in Education and the International Council for Computers in Education held their merger celebration. This past year has been an exciting one of consolidation, shaking out the wrinkles, and rapid growth. It has also been a year of planning for the future and beginning a number of new projects.

The ISTE Board and a large number of volunteers have been working on a long-range plan to guide us in the coming years. Now we need your feedback. Is ISTE headed where you would like it to head? Does it serve your needs as a professional in computer related technology in education? What would make ISTE better? Please write to me or contact a Board member and share your insights on the emerging plan.

The key to a long-range plan is a Mission Statement and a good understanding of what business we are in. We are in the educational information business. We collect, package, and disseminate information for computer using educators, and we focus on information that will help improve education. Here is a summary of ISTE’s Mission Statement: To help educators and students make appropriate use of computer related technology to improve education.

One major aspect of long-range planning is the identification of the people to be served—the stakeholders. We can roughly divide the ISTE stakeholders into two major groups—those who receive the services and those who provide the services.

**Group 1: Receivers of services**

A. The people and organizations who directly receive and pay for the products and services. This includes teachers, teacher educators, computer coordinators, educational researchers, and educational decision makers. It also includes the companies and people who buy ad space or mailing label lists from ISTE.

B. The "audience" of ISTE’s primary mission—that is, students. Remember, "students" includes people in public and private schools, people studying on their own, people in college, people on the job, and so on.

**Group 2: Providers of services**

A. The staff and volunteers who work for ISTE; they develop the products and provide the services.

B. Corporate sponsors, contributors, and granting agencies who only indirectly benefit through the giving or providing of resources.

This categorization points out several key roles being played by the private sector stakeholders. It emphasizes the need for volunteers. It indicates some of the complexities of attempting to adequately serve all stakeholders.
The next step in long-range planning is to develop a set of goals that support the mission. Goals tend to be rather general and to have a long life span. They provide a sense of direction and a basis for making long-term decisions. Here are the goals that have been developed so far.

1. Professional Development of Educators: Help foster the computer oriented professional growth of all educators.

2. Information for People: Provide and be recognized as a prominent information center and leadership source. Communicate and collaborate with educational professionals, policy makers, and other people throughout the world.

3. Professional Organizations: Maintain a strong organizational affiliate membership in order to support and be responsive to grassroots efforts to improve the educational use of computer related technology. Build and maintain a strong working relationship with other professional educational organizations.

4. Private Sector: Foster an active partnership between the private sector and educators involved in the field of computer related technology in education.

5. Staff and Volunteers: Build and maintain a very highly qualified staff and organization of volunteers who are dedicated to accomplishing the mission.

6. Facilitate the worldwide dissemination of the best research and practical innovations in computing related educational technology. Promote the translation of computer related educational research into practical materials that can help teachers to improve education. Become an International Clearinghouse for Information on Technology in Education.

7. Actively sponsor and participate in major conferences and other forums for discussion of issues in computer related educational technology.

8. Support legislative action and national initiatives to promote the improvement of education through the appropriate use of computer related technology.

9. Promote high ethical standards for people working in the field of computer related technology in education.

10. Actively pursue international initiatives designed to help foster appropriate use of computer related technology in education throughout the world.

11. Develop and implement an appropriate support system and mechanisms that foster volunteerism and continued grassroots efforts in ISTE.

12. Develop and implement a fund-raising plan.

These objectives are broad in scope, but they capture the flavor of what ISTE is currently doing or planning to do. They serve as a basis for more detailed planning. This is where you come in. We need your input. Please communicate with us!