

# Survey Finds Most Students With Little Access to Internet

By Carla Schutte

Almost two-thirds of the nation's public schools report that they do not have access to the Internet and for those that do the information superhighway is rarely available for daily learning in the classroom. About half of the 35 percent of schools with Internet access have at least one classroom, lab or media center where administrators, teachers or students can log on. Nationally, that translates to just 3 percent of rooms where teaching actually takes place that are linked up to the Internet.

"Only a small fraction of our classrooms have real access to new technologies that are becoming so central to the rest of our lives," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. "As a result, the abundant learning resources available on the information superhighway are still out of reach for most of our teachers, students and parents."

In a challenge to the telecommunications industry, Vice President Al Gore urged telephone and cable companies to work with states and local communities to connect classrooms to the information superhighway by the year 2000. To measure progress thus far, Riley called for a nationwide survey to determine the current availability, use, obstacles and future plans for advanced telecommunications in public schools.

The findings are contained in a new report, Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Schools, K 12, commissioned in 1994 by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics in co-operation with the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Commerce. The survey was sent to 1,500 school principals, who were asked to have the school's technology coordinator respond.

Of the 35 percent of public schools with Internet access:

- 1) E-mail is the most widely available service, followed by use of news groups and resource location services (Gopher, Archie, Veronica, etc.);
- 2) While more than two-thirds of schools with the Internet offer access to teachers and administrators, only about half of schools offer it to students;
- 3) Of the schools with Internet access, 30 percent are elementary schools and 49 percent are secondary schools.

Among the survey's other findings:

Schools cite limited funding, lack of or poor equipment, and too few access points in the school building as the main reasons why they don't have or use advanced telecommunications;

Some 75 percent of schools have computers with some type of telecommunications capabilities, 74 percent have cable TV, 70 percent have broadcast TV;

Some 67 percent of schools plan to implement or upgrade a wide area computer network. Of these, 81 percent report their telecommunications plans are part of a district-level plan, 48 percent are part of a school-based plan, 27 percent are part of a state plan, and 19 percent are part of a regional plan;

Only 30 percent of smaller schools (fewer than 300 students) report Internet access, while 58 percent of larger schools (1,000 students or more) report Internet access;

Of the schools that are connected to a wide-area network, 48 percent report that district and regional administrators play a large role in developing the school's telecommunications program and 33 percent report that it is teachers and other staff that take the lead. According to 89 percent of schools, decisions about spending are made by the school district.

Copies of the report are available via INTERNET in the U.S. Department of Education's "Online Library" at [gopher.ed.gov](http://gopher.ed.gov), Port: 10,000. Follow this path to access it: > 4. NCES Publications and Reports/ > 2. Elementary/Secondary Education Publications and Reports/ > 4. Fast Response Survey System (FRSS)/ > 1. Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Schools, K 12.

Carla Schutte is the Global Schoolhouse Telementor Technology Specialist, Long Branch Elementary School, 3 N. Fillmore Street, Arlington, VA 22201.

Tel: (703) 358-4220

Fax: (703) 461-5521.

E-Mail: [cschutte@k12.cnidr.org](mailto:cschutte@k12.cnidr.org) or [cschutte@nsf.gov](mailto:cschutte@nsf.gov)