

Loebsack Introduces Legislation to Connect Rural Schools to the Digital World

Written by Joe Hand
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Washington, D.C. – Congressman Dave Loebsack recently introduced legislation that will target rural schools to ensure they have access to the latest digital learning technologies. The Schools of the Future Act will provide grants to transform the typical classroom experience into one that is more student-centered and provides teachers with more accurate information and feedback on student progress so that they can better address the needs of struggling students. Loebsack is co-chair of the bipartisan Rural Education Caucus.

“Technology has the power to vastly expand the educational options available to students in rural areas, providing students with a cutting-edge 21st Century education regardless of geography,” said Loebsack. “Digital technology holds great potential for rural schools, which often have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers and offering a variety of electives or advanced coursework.”

This legislation builds off of the work already being done in Iowa. For example, the Iowa Department of Education is working with the University of Iowa to develop the Iowa Online Advance Placement Academy to deliver Advanced Placement courses to high school students across the state, particularly rural and small schools that may not have the capacity to provide these courses themselves, using online technology. The Iowa Department of Education also runs Iowa Learning Online (ILO), which allows students from across the state to enroll in any number of distance education courses, including high school credit classes and post-secondary courses available through Iowa community colleges and universities.

Specifically, the legislation Loebsack introduced will provide funding for schools to implement digital learning strategies such as:

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- providing expanded curriculum opportunities,
- providing accelerated or advanced coursework, or
- personalizing the learning experience by providing content that is tailored to an individual student's learning style, ability, and needs.

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