



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 1, 2012

CONTACT: Francie Israeli
(202) 207-1134
FIsraeli@johnadams.com

On Digital Learning Day, iNACOL Focuses on Top Policy Needs

(VIENNA, Va.) – To mark Digital Learning Day (February 1), the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) today highlights the important education policy reforms needed to ensure K-12 students have access to world-class, transformative educational models that prepare them to become globally competitive for college and careers in the 21st century.

“By embracing the transformative power and promise of online learning, kids everywhere can have access to the best teachers, engaging content and mastery-based learning opportunities. With new learning models, we can overcome achievement gaps, level the playing field and ensure America’s kids rise to meet the demands of a world that is increasingly globally-competitive,” said Susan Patrick, president and CEO of iNACOL.

Patrick noted that K-12 online learning has grown tremendously over the last decade. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that more than half of all U.S. school districts are offering online courses to students.

“Unfortunately, outdated state policies still tie the hands of many school districts, and block the fundamental reforms necessary for truly transformative next-generation learning,” Patrick said. “States need a roadmap for change so they can accelerate the achievement of world-class educational standards for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, geography or other limitations.”

Patrick said any state education policy reforms should prioritize the following needs:

- **Increasing access:** Every child should be given the right to high-quality online or blended learning opportunities that provide access to the highest quality teachers and personalized, self-paced instruction using engaging, digital content. Zip code should no longer limit a student’s educational opportunities.
- **Move away from seat-time toward competency-based approaches:** States must cast aside outdated funding policies like “seat-time” in favor of competency-based approaches that allow students to have personalized learning at their own pace. By relying on competency-based approaches over seat-time, schools and districts are incentivized to make sure each student is successful with academics and the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. Competency-based pathways can accelerate learning and also do more for the students who need it most.
- **Providing equitable funding:** States should provide fair and sustainable funding for online and blended learning to ensure each student has access to these opportunities

and programs can expand with student demand. Funding should follow the student, with additional incentives for doing the most with the most challenged students.

- **Embracing new models of accountability and assessment:** New models of accountability must measure and reward *real* individual student growth and achievement. Students need to be prepared with world-class knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers. Policy should require that students are demonstrating their knowledge through performance-based assessments. By adopting online models and competency-based approaches, classes are no longer one-size fits all and accountability and assessment models must be from the ground up measuring individual student growth and assuring quality.

###

About iNACOL

iNACOL is the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership association based in the Washington, DC area with more than 4,000 members. iNACOL is unique in that its members represent a diverse cross-section of K-12 education from school districts, charter schools, state education agencies, non-profit organizations, colleges, universities and research institutions, online educators, and other content and technology providers (www.inacol.org). iNACOL is host to the annual Virtual School Symposium (VSS). VSS 2012 is scheduled for Oct. 21-24, 2012, in New Orleans, LA (www.virtualschoolsymposium.org)