As the 110th Congress comes to a close, it is time to reflect on the effect ISTE has had on the legislative agenda and how well we achieved our objectives. At the start, ISTE was clear in defining our advocacy goals:

- Stanch the bleeding in funding for the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program
- Leverage our expertise in the NCLB reauthorization to develop an updated education technology program
- Focus on developing an overhaul of the pre-service Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology program
- Ensure continued service of the E-Rate program
- Change the congressional debate about Internet safety from one of locking up the Internet to one of educating students

Coupled with these legislative advocacy goals was the need to expand ISTE’s reach with the broader education community and grow and mobilize our grassroots.

ISTE has achieved this ambitious agenda, and all ISTE members are benefiting from this achievement. Specific legislative successes include the Achievement Through Technology and Innovation Act. This legislative initiative was developed through a collaborative effort led by ISTE, the Consortium for School Networking, the State Educational Technology Directors Association, and the Software and Information Industry Association, and was supported by most members of the education community including the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, and the National PTA.

The education technology community was successful in maintaining funding for the EETT program. In fact, for FY09 the House education funding bill includes a $5 million increase for EETT.

ISTE led the effort in developing a new pre-service teacher education program called Preparing Teachers for Digital Age Learners. This program was included as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and signed into law this fall.

When Congress convened two years ago, the major legislative initiative focused on keeping kids safe online was the Deleting Online Predators (DOPA) Act. This legislation would have “locked up” the Internet by requiring schools to bar access by minors to commercial social networking Web sites or chat rooms unless used for an educational purpose with adult supervision. In the waning days of the 110th Congress, legislation was passed that requires schools participating in the E-Rate program to educate students regarding appropriate behavior on social networking and chat room sites and about cyberbullying. This is a huge turnaround in congressional thinking in just a couple of years.

None of these successes could have been possible without the dedicated support and partnership of the ISTE membership through the Education Technology Action Network (ETAN). If you are not already an ETAN subscriber, please go to www.edtechactionnetwork.org and join.

Legislative Victories!

By Hilary Goldmann

Hilary Goldmann, ISTE’s director of government affairs, has 20 years of experience in public policy and advocacy, and serves as a volunteer columnist for L&L.