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OPINION

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CREATING 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOMS FOR IDAHO'S STUDENTS, IDAHO'S FUTURE

By Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter

On October 23rd I had the pleasure of joining Dr. Linda Clark, Superintendent of Joint School District No. 2 in Meridian, at a press conference announcing the selection of a HP-led group of companies as the providers of "one-to-one" computing devices for Idaho's high school students and teachers.

It was a great occasion with a great Idaho company and the leader of Idaho's largest school district. It also was enlightening: If all I knew about the importance of technology in the classroom was what I saw on some TV ads, I would have thought every Idaho educator was dead set against Propositions 3. But I realized that wasn't the case when Dr. Clark explained how schools in Joint School District No. 2 are integrating new ways of teaching and learning in the classroom, and how *Students Come First* would help address our schools' limited access to technology – not just in Meridian, but throughout Idaho.

"A new day is dawning. Twenty-first-century high school students will no longer be asked to power down when they enter the doors of our high schools. Teachers will no longer be asked to wait in line for the devices. The technology will be at their fingertips to use as necessary throughout the day. This is critical to make sure that we reach every child and engage every student in his or her learning," Dr. Clark said at the news conference.

"In our school district we know from experience that mobile computing devices foster a highly engaging learning environment and transform teaching and learning during the day and outside the day. High school students will use the devices for research, content creation, communication, collaboration, problem solving, data analysis and many other learning activities that will enable them to be highly successful in their lives," she said, then added a comment that goes to the heart of what I've been saying for years now about why bringing the latest technology to our Idaho classrooms is so imperative.

"For a 21st century worker, a computing device is an essential tool," Dr. Clark said. "Equipping students with these devices while in high school, under the guidance of a well-trained and highly effective teacher, will enable them to take control of their own learning and simulate real-world activities."

Her words, her leadership and her support for a "new day" in Idaho education were compelling and inspiring.

I was disappointed to see that so few members of the news media bothered carrying her comments or even conveying her message. I appreciate her willingness to let me repeat some of them here, and to reaffirm my own determination to ensure Idaho's public schools offer all our students a world-class education that prepares them for the competition of the wider world and a brighter future right here at home.

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