

[Background: The TechSETS Connection to Student Tech Support Teams](#)

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According to the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) and the 2005-2006 California School Technology Survey, there are 6,251,444 students, 1,500,696 instructional computers, and 8,964 FTE tech support staff in California's 9,720 schools (includes site- and district-level staff, certificated, classified, contract, student, and volunteer personnel). Stated in terms of ratios, this amounts to a tech support rate of 1.4 FTE per 1000 students, or 6.0 FTE per 1000 computers. Compare this latter statistic to the standard of 10 FTE per 1000 computers in enterprise environments, and it explains why, in the same survey, only 52% of California schools reported that the time required to resolve hardware or software issues was between 2 and 5 days, with 26% of schools reporting a week or more, and 6% reporting a month or more. It is fair to say that, given these figures, California schools need to identify new sources of technical support for instructional technology.

Over the years, as state and federal funding to support technology has become scarce, many schools have turned to their own students, who often know a great deal about technology from their own personal use, to fill the gap left by budget shortfalls. According to the 2005-2006 California School Technology Survey, 10% of schools report using students for tech support with a total of 285 student FTEs across the state. Assuming that a given student spends no more than 5% of their time at this activity, this amounts to over 5,700 students involved in tech support. And this is without state programs that encourage students to get involved. Just think of the potential for our schools if the state were to provide training and support mechanism for student tech support teams!

Research shows that other states have had outstanding success implementing and supporting student tech support teams. Elaine Harrison of the Kentucky Department of Education writes, "Students who are creative, knowledgeable, and interested in technology are a great resource for planning, implementation, support and using technology. With guidance and support, they can provide a missing, and important, link between having and using technology for learning. Student technology support programs engage students with a talent or interest in technology, and help them make a positive contribution to their school community's capacity to use technology to support teaching and learning."

[Generation YES](#), a national organization that developed GenYES, a model of technology professional development that relies on student collaboration with teachers, recently created Generation TECH, a program that provides middle and high schools with a rigorous multi-level curriculum, assessment framework and program management resources to build a sustainable student technology support program. [MOUSE Inc.](#), a New York City based not-for-profit, operates its MOUSE Squad Student Tech Leadership program nationwide, and has an active and growing program in California ([MOUSE Squad of California](#)). In addition to these other similar programs, technology companies such as Cisco Systems offer programs aimed at high school students who desire to learn technology support as a career. All of these types of programs have shown success at creating in-house, student-led tech support systems that supplement the efforts of district and site technology support professionals.

TechSETS' StudentTECH section provides aimed at developing the skills of student technologists. These resources include links to student tech support programs, case studies, white papers, and examples of student-created projects TechSETS has also established strategic partnerships with the two student tech support programs mentioned above, Generation YES and MOUSE Squad of California. In conjunction with this partnership, TechSETS offers free [MyTechDesk](#) accounts to all schools involved in student programs. In return, the partners allow TechSETS to post samples of their materials on the TechSETS web site.

The inclusion of students in the technology support community is a win-win proposition. The students gain valuable technical, productivity and communications skills, while schools benefit from expanded availability of on-site, level-one troubleshooting and technology support from the students. This option allows the professional tech support staff to focus their efforts on resolving the more complex technology-support issues.