STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Tony Evers, Governor
Joel Brennan, Secretary

September 30, 2020

TO: Governor Tony Evers
      Senate Chief Clerk Jeff Renk
      Assembly Chief Clerk Patrick Fuller

FR: Chris Patton, Deputy Secretary
      Department of Administration

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9/30/2020 | 10:07 AM CDT

RE: TEACH Program Biennial Report

This report is required by s. 16.993 (6), which obligates the Department of Administration to provide a report to the Governor and appropriate standing committees of the Legislature by October 1st of each even-numbered year concerning the activities of the Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) program.

The TEACH program consists of two primary components: 1. A program to provide subsidized broadband connections to access the internet to eligible[1] entities and 2. A grant program[2] to fund IT infrastructure improvements for eligible school districts and libraries.

Entities can also receive subsidized BlueJeans video conferencing licensing for educational purposes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the number of BlueJeans licenses purchased by DET has more than tripled, allowing school districts to use video to provide instruction to students at home.

Between fiscal year 2010 and fiscal year 2020, the State has provided more than $257 million in assistance to school districts, libraries, and other entities throughout Wisconsin. In fiscal year 2020, the TEACH program received $15.9 million from the state Universal Service Fund for the TEACH program and applied for $6.3 million in federal E-Rate subsidies. The TEACH Program also received $1.3 million in cost sharing revenue from TEACH customers for the non-subsidized portion of their broadband connection. The TEACH program paid $2.8 million to the managed service provider, spent $8 million with subcontracted telecommunications providers for subsidized broadband connections, and awarded $3 million in infrastructure grants.

Subsidized Broadband Connections

The TEACH subsidized broadband connection program receives state funds from the State Universal Service Fund and leverages federal Universal Service Fund monies by seeking reimbursement of broadband connection costs for eligible customers through the federal E-Rate program. These customers, which include elementary schools, secondary schools, and libraries, are eligible for a sliding scale of subsidies based on the proportion of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and the ruralness of the customer. By using federal funds to offset program costs, the TEACH program can expand its reach and serve additional customers.

In addition to serving elementary schools, secondary schools, and libraries, the TEACH program also provides subsidized broadband connections to statutorily-identified customers that may not be eligible for the E-Rate program, such as private colleges and technical college districts.

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[1] Eligible entities are found at s. 16.971 (13) – s. 16.971 (16).
[2] Found at s. 16.9945.

Eligible organizations that participate receive dedicated broadband connections up to 10 gigabits per second, which enables recipients to provide high-quality, reliable broadband access. As noted in the first chart, there are 661 entities that participated in the TEACH program as of June 30, 2020, including 271 public K-12 school districts and 334 public libraries.

The second chart, "TEACH Costs by Level of Service," shows the significant subsidy received by TEACH program participants. DOA charges recipients $100 per month for service up to 1 gigabit per second and $250 per month for service over 1 gigabit per second. The overall subsidy saves school districts, libraries, and other eligible organizations millions of dollars each year that can be spent on instructional costs.

TEACH Customer Bandwidth Usage by Site Type

	Mbps				Gbps				
	6	20	50	100	1	2	5	10	TOTAL
Public K-12	2	0	0	12	252	4	0	1	271
Public Library	0	43	167	110	12	1	1	0	334
Private K-12	0	0	0	8	11	0	0	0	19
Technical College	1	1	3	4	10	0	0	0	19
CESA	0	0	0	4	7	0	0	0	11
Private College/University	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	5
State School	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	3	45	170	138	298	5	1	1	661
Site information is from June 30, 2020.									

TEACH Costs by Level of Service

	Mbps				Gbps			
	6	20	50	100	1	2	5	10
Customer Cost	$100				$250			
MSP Cost[1]	$4	$14	$34	$69	$690	$1,380	$3,450	$6,901
Average Connectivity Cost[2]	$378	$647	$801	$834	$1,263	$3,724	$9,990	$4,468
Total Net Cost to DET[3]	$282	$561	$735	$803	$1,703	$4,854	$13,190	$11,119

All prices are rounded to the nearest dollar.
1: "MSP Cost" is apportioned by level of service across all TEACH and BadgerNet customers.
2: "Connectivity Cost" is averaged by level of service across all contracted telecommunications providers.
3: "Total Net Cost to DET" is the sum of "MSP Cost" and "Connectivity Cost" net the amount paid by the customer ("Customer Cost").

IT Infrastructure Grants

In 2017, the TEACH program was expanded to permit DOA to award IT infrastructure grants to school districts and libraries in rural areas to fund the purchase of IT equipment and certain IT services. To date, more than $10 million in grants have been awarded, including $3 million in fiscal year 2020 to 125 school districts and 38 libraries.

The State of Wisconsin has established robust grant monitoring to ensure that funds are spent appropriately, that purchases and expenditures are correctly documented, and that monies awarded are used in line with the grant agreement.

TEACH Program Feedback

Below is feedback received from three participants in the TEACH program:

"It is a huge benefit in assisting our District with making purchases that may have otherwise been delayed or omitted due to lack of funds. Applying for the grants has been a fairly painless process. There are so many technology updates that we have been able to do over the years, along with the hotspots that we were allowed to get during one year's grant. A few of the hotspots were used quite a bit by certain families since we got them, but all of the hotspots came in extremely handy in FY18 as we are a very rural district and Wi-Fi is not an option in many of our areas."

Pamela Tesch, Director of Business Services, Pittsville School District

"The TEACH program has been an integral part of our learning environment! Thanks to this program we have been able to develop a high-quality infrastructure capable of supporting hybrid and digital learning that equips our students to develop the key Future Ready skills they need when pursuing their post K-12 career. Without TEACH's commitment and assistance, we would not have been able to develop a K-12 1:1 program with iPads and Chromebooks that allows for flipped classrooms, media supported, and collaborative technology-rich learning environments.

This may seem counter-intuitive because the grants do not cover the devices themselves, but the ability to supplement e-Rate funding for many of the key components of a solid network means that we can invest our district funds differently. In addition to the freeing of funds for other elements of a quality digital learning environment, the TEACH grant allows us to afford a reasonable refresh cycle on our network components, network security audits and more thus maintaining a solid learning environment capable of handling increased demands over time."

Amy Eppinger, Director of Instructional Technology, Portage Community School District

"TEACH provides wonderful services to Wisconsin School Districts through their access program, grants, and resources. I believe that the TEACH Infrastructure grants are an amazing opportunity for School Districts. Utilizing the grants in conjunction with e-Rate funding allows districts to purchase needed networking equipment at a reduced cost and stretch their technology dollars to provide access for students and staff.

We have been able to use our TEACH Infrastructure Grants in conjunction with our e-Rate funding to upgrade our network and wireless infrastructure district wide. We were able to upgrade all our wireless access points district wide as well as many of our switches district wide. We now have almost 100% wireless coverage in our instructional and common area spaces district wide. This coverage has allowed us to provide an exceptional environment for our student 1:1 devices to access network and internet resources with little to no delay or issues."

Chris Stierman, Director of Technology, Sparta Area School District