

ADMINISTRATION -- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Telecommunications Access for Educational Agencies,
Digital Learning Collaborative, and Educational Technology Grants
[LFB Paper #128, Substitute Alternative]

Motion:

Move to adopt Alternative 2. In addition, move to:

State Support for a Digital Learning Collaborative. Provide \$2.0 million SEG in 2015-16 and \$1.0 million SEG in 2016-17 to a newly created annual, sum certain state segregated Universal Service Fund (USF) appropriation under the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for a digital learning collaborative established for the statewide web academy and for delivery of digital content and collaborative instruction under ss. 115.28(53) and 115.28(54) of the statutes. Specify that the funds could be used by any of the member organizations of the collaborative, including DPI, for the purposes provided above.

Reduction to Telecommunications Access to School Districts. Reduce USF funding provided to school districts for telecommunications access by \$2.0 million SEG in 2015-16 and \$1.0 million SEG in 2016-17.

Educational Technology Grants. Expand permitted uses of remaining USF funding appropriated for telecommunications access for school districts (\$9,105,100 SEG in 2015-16 and \$10,105,100 SEG in 2016-17) to permit the Department of Administration (DOA) to provide educational technology grants as follows:

a. Information Technology Infrastructure Grants

Allow DOA to provide competitive block grants to school districts for information technology infrastructure in 2015-16 and 2016-17, on the basis of an application which provides information regarding: (1) specific infrastructure, including equipment, that would be purchased by the district; (2) the plan for purchase, installation, and utilization of the infrastructure; and (3) the readiness of the school district to utilize the infrastructure. Specify that an applicant school district's membership in the previous school year divided by the school district's area in square miles must be 13 or less to receive grant funding under this provision. Further, specify that the maximum amount a school district may receive over the 2015-17 biennium for information technology infrastructure would be determined on the basis of enrollment as follows: \$30,000 for districts with fewer than 750 students; \$40 per student for districts with between 750 and 1,500 students; and \$60,000 for districts with more than 1,500 students. Specify that no more than \$7,500,000 SEG may be expended in each of 2015-16 or 2016-17 for this purpose. Specify that schools with a greater percentage of enrolled students who receive free or reduced price lunch be given priority in determining which districts receive grant funding. Prohibit any grants from being provided under

this section after June 30, 2017.

b. Teacher Training Grants for Educational Technology

Allow DOA to provide grants to consortia of three or more school districts for the cost of training teachers on the use of educational technology, based on the following formula: \$7,500 for districts with fewer than 750 students; \$10 per student for districts with between 750 and 1,500 students; and \$15,000 for districts with more than 1,500 students. Specify that each school district's membership in the previous school year divided by the school district's area in square miles must be 13 or less for a consortium to receive grant funding under this provision. Specify that no more than \$1,500,000 SEG annually may be expended for teacher training grants. Specify that DOA would prorate grants provided if the amount of grants as determined by the formula specified would exceed \$1,500,000.

Note:

The motion would adopt Alternative 2 of Paper #128, which would maintain separate appropriations for educational agency types under the technology for educational achievement (TEACH) program. The motion would also modify the use of USF funds currently appropriated to school districts under the program. Appropriations for other educational agency types would be unaffected by the changes specified in the motion. School districts are eligible for federal e-rate aid. The Department of Administration estimates e-rate aid for the state at \$10 million FED annually. The 2014-15 opening balance of the federal e-rate aid appropriation, from which moneys can be expended to support telecommunications access for school districts, was \$32 million FED.

Under current law, \$11,105,100 SEG annually is provided for telecommunications access for school districts under the TEACH program. The motion would reduce the appropriation to school districts by \$2,000,000 SEG in 2015-16 and \$1,000,000 SEG in 2016-17, and would provide an equal amount of funding to a newly created annual appropriation for the state's digital learning collaborative.

Current law requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to provide statewide access to online courses for a reasonable fee through a statewide web academy, with access available to school districts, cooperative educational service agencies, charter schools, private schools, and tribal schools located in the state. The collaborative known as the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative (WDLC) is the web academy that is being used to satisfy this current law requirement and is a collaboration between DPI and its two partner organizations, the Wisconsin Virtual School and the Wisconsin eSchool Network. The partner organizations provide services such as technology, software, and virtual content that allow districts to offer online courses to their pupils. Currently, WDLC is funded through revenue generated from fees paid by participating school districts.

Funding under the motion would be provided to the newly created digital learning

collaborative appropriation for: (a) the cost to purchase or create digital content (\$750,000 in 2015-16); (b) the purchase of software licenses for the digital learning platform (\$250,000 in 2015-16); (c) administrative costs (\$500,000 annually); (d) support and maintenance (\$250,000 annually); and (e) integrating the digital learning collaborative into local school district technology systems (\$250,000 annually). It is anticipated that this funding would reduce costs for participating school districts, as well as increase the amount of digital content owned by WDLC.

The motion would also permit remaining base funding of \$9,105,100 SEG in 2015-16 and \$10,105,100 SEG in 2016-17 to be used for other purposes in addition to the current law purpose of providing subsidized access to telecommunications services for school districts. The grants provided for educational technology infrastructure and for teacher training would be available to school districts with 13 or fewer students per square mile (measured as student membership in the previous school year divided by the school district's area in square miles). Based on 2013-14 enrollment data, it is estimated that 259 school districts would meet this requirement. If all school districts that met the requirement applied for and received the maximum educational technology infrastructure grant as specified under the formula defined in the motion, infrastructure grants would cost an estimated \$9,561,700 SEG over the 2015-17 biennium.

[Change to Bill: \$0]

