Statewide IT Academy

Statutory and/or Budget Language

$3,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and $3,004,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for a statewide information technology academy program. This public-private partnership will provide educational software, as well as information technology certification and software training opportunities for students and staff in public schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this funding is to provide statewide support for the information technology academy program to provide curriculum and certification opportunities to middle and high school students at no cost to participants. OSPI partners with software and certification curriculum providers to advance access to industry recognized credentials in support of skill attainment by middle school and high school educators and students across the state. Certiport, CCI Learning, and Prodigy Learning are Microsoft partners that provide certification resources and support directly to schools as a component of this program.

Description of Services Provided

Funding is used to support a statewide license agreement and renewal though WSIPC that results in the following services provided to middle and high schools in the state.

Curriculum:
- Microsoft Official Academic Course (MOA) digital textbooks
- Microsoft Education Coding in Minecraft Software (Prodigy Learning)
- E-learning, Lesson Plans, Student Projects and Test Banks
- Curriculum Mapping to Washington CTE courses
- Digital Literacy

Professional Development:
- E-Reference Online Library
- Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT) Membership
- Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE)
- Teaching with Technology E-Learning curriculum
- Certified Educator Coding in Minecraft Education curriculum

Certification:
- Certification test center site license for each school including:
  - Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) exam vouchers for teachers and students

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- o Complimentary MOS, Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) and Microsoft Certified Educator (MCE) exam vouchers for faculty and staff professional development
- o Discounted Microsoft Certified Professional Exams
- o Certification student badge Coding in Minecraft (Make Code, and Java or Python)
  - o

Partnership Resources:
- ITA Membership Plaque
- Posters to help recruit students
- Use of Microsoft IT Academy logo
- Teacher Training on ITA Tools & Benefits
- How to Guides

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

All Washington state high schools, middle schools, State Tribal Education Compact Schools (STECs) and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) are eligible for site licenses to offer IT Academy software and certification opportunities.

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

Number of School Districts	Microsoft Certifications 98, Coding in Minecraft 225
Number of Schools	Microsoft Certifications 175, Coding in Minecraft 730
Number of Students	Microsoft Certifications 12,506, Coding in Minecraft 12,229
Number of Educators	Microsoft Certifications 93, Coding in Minecraft 491
Other	N/A

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	$3,000,000	$2,926,070
2023	$3,000,000	$2,998,759
2022	$3,000,000	$3,000,000
2021	$3,000,000	$3,000,000
2020	$3,000,000	$3,000,000

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
2024	175
2023	186
2022	128
2021	83
2020	129

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

When originally established, the statewide contract did not include middle school access to software or certificates. This access was added to the contract during the 2015–16 school year. As of August 1, 2022, Microsoft IT Academy began offering Coding in Minecraft by Prodigy Learning. Coding in Minecraft by Prodigy Learning is a computer science credential program with supporting curriculum, delivered through the popular digital game, Minecraft: Education Edition. The pathway includes four courses that provide students with access to the Minecraft world allowing users to develop coding skills using MakeCode and JavaScript or Python. In 2022, CCI Learning partnered with Prodigy Learning to help with marketing based on its presence and relationship with WA teachers through Microsoft certification deployment. Currently in the fourth year of implementation, the adoption of this product has expanded to include access to Coding in Minecraft Education in K-12 schools. Other Microsoft software and certification products remain available for middle and high school educators and students. Combined with the partnership reports, 905 schools are using either or both Coding in Minecraft, 584 teachers trained, with 24,805 students accessing these resources.

In 2023, the Microsoft Imagine Academy was rebranded to Microsoft Certification Resources. Microsoft Technology Associate was retired in 2022 and replaced by Microsoft Certified Fundamentals. These role-based certifications meet current and upcoming skill gaps in technology, including Azure Fundamentals, which provides foundational knowledge of cloud concepts and core Azure services, which is essential for understanding how cloud platforms support artificial intelligence (AI) workloads.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

The number of districts participating/using the software and/or providing testing continues to demonstrate demand with 98 educators earning a Microsoft Fundamentals or Microsoft Office Suite (MOS) certification, and 491 educators earning the Coding in Minecraft Certified Educator designation.

The introduction and integration of Large Language Models (LLM), Generative AI, and machine learning into education and industry has transformed various industries since the introduction of

the Microsoft IT Academy. Multiple districts report the need for educator training and certification in new software developed using LLMs, Generative AI, and machine learning. Students also need access to the certification resources and support provided directly to schools as a component of this program.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

Many school districts are using one-to-one technology which may not support the structured IT Academy platform for certification access. Gaps in student technology and internet access continue to impact software and certification accessibility. Schools are facing a loss of funding at a time when the demand for digital literacy and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy is increasing. Professional development in new technology is essential to remain current with the latest trends and advance workforce needs. Many software based curricula options are free, professional development and certifications carry cost irrespective of vendor. With the concern for data security increasing, data collection for this proviso relies on districts to self-report.

Future Opportunities

Evolving skill requirements for high school graduates now include LLMs and Generative AI, which have introduced new tools and methodologies in many fields. Students now need to understand how to effectively and ethically use and integrate these technologies. Increased funding for educational software as well as information technology certification and software training opportunities for students and staff in public schools will support expanded access to the tools students need for higher education and workforce entry, digital equity, and credentials in artificial intelligence (AI) literacy and cybersecurity. Improved reporting and analysis will result in a greater understanding of access and completion rates among student groups in Washington.

Other Relevant Information

OSPI has released guidance on the integration of Artificial Intelligence in K–12 schools. The OSPI Career & Technical Education department is developing statewide equivalencies aligned with current IT technologies with an emphasis on software skill attainment in industry recognized credentials as it relates to digital literacy, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.

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