Statewide IT Academy

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.

Proviso Purpose

This funding provides statewide support for the information technology academy program that provides 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 software and certification resources, and offers support directly to schools as a component of this program.

Services Provided

Funding is provided via purchase agreement that results in the following services provided to middle and high schools in the state:

Curriculum:

- Microsoft Education K–12 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

    - Complimentary MOS, Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) and Microsoft Certified Educator (MCE) exam vouchers for faculty and staff professional development
    - Discounted Microsoft Certified Professional Exams
    - Certiport IC3 Digital Literacy, CCS Generative AI, and IT Specialist certifications pilot program
- Certification student badge Coding in Minecraft (Make Code, and Java or Python)

Partnership Resources:

- ITA Membership Plaque
- Posters to help recruit students
- Use of Coding in Minecraft logo
- Teacher Training on ITA Tools & Benefits
- How to Guides

Criteria for Receiving Services/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 2024–25 School Year

Number of School Districts: Microsoft Certifications 115, Coding in Minecraft 204

Number of Schools: Microsoft Certifications 165, Coding in Minecraft 724

Certifications Earned: Microsoft Certifications 13,174, Coding in Minecraft N/A

Number of Educators Trained: Microsoft Certifications 156, Coding in Minecraft 74

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2025	$3,004,000	$3,003,999
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

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

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2025	319
2024	175
2023	186
2022	128
2021	83

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

The legislature provided reduced funding for this work for a single year. Beginning July 1, 2026, the funding will end and OSPI will no longer implement this purchase agreement.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

The number of districts participating/using the software and/or providing testing continues to demonstrate demand with 2,901, grades 7–12 educators earning a Microsoft Fundamentals or Microsoft Office Suite (MOS) certification, and 565 K–12 educators earning the Coding in Minecraft Certified Educator designation during the length of the program.

The introduction and integration of Large Language Models (LLM), Generative AI, and machine learning into education and industry have 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. In the 2024–25 school year, a pilot program offering access to three AI certifications resulted in 767 students earning one or more of the Industry Recognized Credentials.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

Many school districts are implementing one-to-one technology models, which may not support the structured IT Academy platforms required for certification access. Gaps in student access to reliable devices and internet connectivity continue to hinder equitable opportunities for software use and certification attainment. For example, some proprietary software platforms require a Windows-based operating system to run its full software suite, presenting a compatibility challenge for schools that provide students with Google Chromebooks. These limitations are compounded by funding reductions at a time when the demand for digital literacy and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy is rapidly increasing. Professional development in emerging technologies is essential for educators to stay current with evolving trends and to meet workforce readiness goals. While many software-based curriculum options are available at no cost, professional development and certification programs—regardless of vendor—often carry significant expenses, creating additional barriers to implementation.

Future Opportunities

This body of work has been discontinued by the legislature in year two of the budget. Future opportunities will depend on future legislative direction and resources dedicated to the work.

If this work were to be continued, future efforts should explore the expanding range of technological skills expected of high school graduates. As industries increasingly rely on advanced digital tools, automation platforms, and AI-integrated systems, students must be equipped to navigate, apply, and ethically engage with these technologies. Preparing learners to understand and utilize emerging tech tools will be essential for success in both higher education and the workforce.

Other Relevant Information

OSPI has released guidance on the integration of Artificial Intelligence in K–12 schools, and statewide equivalencies that promote the ethical use of AI. The Career Technical Education department is developing additional 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 2025 Fiscal Year.

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