Statewide IT Academy

Budget Language

$1,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 is 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 and high school educators and students across the state. Prodigy Learning is a Microsoft partner that provides software can certificate resources and offers support directly to schools as a component of the program.

Services Provided

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

Curriculum:

- Microsoft Education K–12 Coding in Minecraft Software (Prodigy Learning)
- E-learning, Lesson Plans, and Student Projects
- Digital Literacy

Certification:

- Certification student badge Coding in Minecraft (Make Code, and Java or Python)

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

All Washington state K-12 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 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts:	209
Number of Licenses Started:	567
Number of Students:	N/A
Number of Educators Trained:	133

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$1,500,000	$1,305,483
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
2026	209
2025	319
2024	175
2023	186
2022	128
2021	83

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

Since inception, the statewide IT Academy has evolved in response to legislative funding levels and changing program priorities. For fiscal year 2026, the legislature reduced funding for this work for a single year, which required a narrower scope of services than in prior years. Beginning July 1, 2026, the funding ended and OSPI will no longer implement this purchase agreement.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

The number of districts using the software demonstrates 133 K-12 educators participated in Coding in Minecraft Educator or AI Ready Skills Certified Educator trainings during the length of the fiscal year 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 IT Academy, formerly known as the Imagine IT Academy. Multiple districts report the need for educator training and certification in new software developed using LLMs, Generative AI, and machine learning.

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 as funding has ended for this program.

Future Opportunities

This body of work has been discontinued by the legislature in year two of the budget. Future opportunities will be shaped by legislative priorities and available resources.

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 with a clear understanding of ethical implications will be essential for success in both higher education and the workforce.

Other Relevant Information

In 2023, OSPI 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 data science, digital literacy, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

Program Contact Information

Name: Holli Ryan-Kalaleh
Title: CTE Business and Marketing Program Supervisor
Phone: 360-725-4476
Email: holli.ryan-kalaleh@k12.wa.us