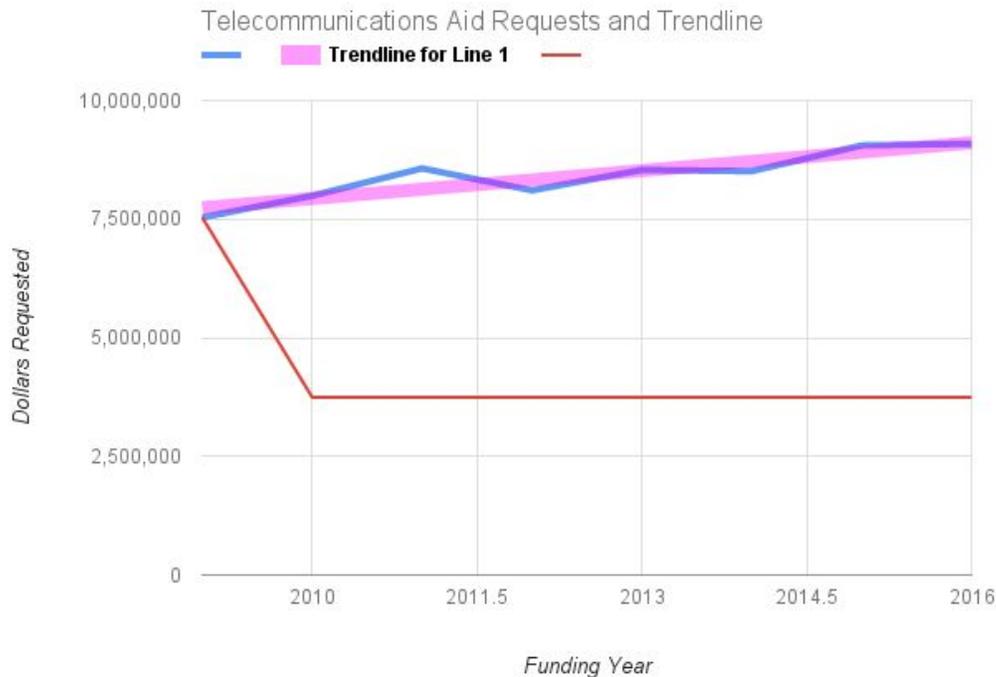


K-12 Broadband Equity Aid

Minnesota schools receive state support to help pay for the cost of high speed Internet access that remains after federal E-rate discounts have been applied. The annual appropriation for public schools was capped in 2010 and is \$3.75 million. Total requests for this aid are nearing \$10 million and steadily rising. the result is a proration amount of approximately 40% leaving districts to pay the remaining balance. In the graph below, the red line is state funding, the blue line is actual cost (after E-rate reimbursement) and pink is the trendline.



Internet access is mission critical for schools. Digital content, increasingly accessed over mobile devices, requires higher levels of bandwidth. Schools use the Internet in their daily operations including student instruction, food service, communications, transportation, accounting, and procurement.

Use of mobile devices has exploded over the past 2 years. This dramatic increase has severely taxed the capacities of both wireless infrastructure and bandwidth in general. Minnesota schools need to greatly expand the broadband networks serving their institutions in order to keep up with the demands of their users.

Due to many factors including lack of provider competition, distance between schools and communities, and lack of regional infrastructure, the out-of-pocket cost to provide the same type of broadband Internet service to schools in some parts of the state is as much as 115 times or more per pupil than that of districts in the Twin Cities Metro and other larger communities.

- According to the latest statistics (FY2015) from the MN Department of Education (MDE), Ivanhoe public schools in Southwestern MN pays \$140.37 per pupil (after E-rate and state funding) to provide broadband Internet services to their students and staff. This is nearly 2.5% of their total per pupil general aid.
- Suburban Columbia Heights schools pay \$1.20 (after E-rate and state funding) per pupil to provide broadband Internet services to their students and staff. This is 0.02% of their total per pupil general aid.
- The average per pupil cost (after E-rate and state funding) in Southwest Minnesota is \$49.01 per pupil while in the Metro region, the average cost is \$5.95 per pupil.

Supporting Organizations: Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA), MN Office of Broadband Development, Minnesota Education Technology Networks (METN), Minnesota Library Association (MLA), Information Technology Educators of Minnesota (ITEM), Governor’s Task Force on Broadband

Examples of how broadband access is used by schools include:

1. Schools are increasingly creating and using digital learning resources instead of purchasing traditional textbooks. Schools are also expanding networks to allow for students to bring their own Internet enabled devices for educational purposes and are using more school-owned tablet devices in classrooms. These conditions are causing a steady increase in the amount of bandwidth needed by schools. Students continue to use school-owned tablets at the public library to complete homework after school, in the evenings and on the weekends.
2. Students access distance-learning opportunities from post-secondary education institutions, other Minnesota K-12 schools, and online learning programs. Examples include the Online College in High School program, various interactive video courses, and the Online Chinese Project that provides instruction in Mandarin Chinese that is not available in their home districts to students throughout Minnesota.
3. Internet-based audio and videoconferencing technology is used to connect educators and peers across the globe. Students, teachers, and administrators use broadband access to collaborate on curriculum development, conduct meetings, participate in professional development, and access information beyond the geographic and resource limitations of their communities.
4. Institutions such as museums, historical societies, zoos, and other centers of culture provide interactive learning opportunities to students through “field trips” using broadband connections and videoconferencing. These experiences provide 21st century learning opportunities to students in rural areas who might otherwise miss out because of the high costs of long-distance visits.
5. Parents use districts’ broadband connections to access information from district databases on their child’s educational progress and achievement, manage lunch accounts, and participate in the school community.
6. Schools use broadband and cloud services to conduct their daily business using cloud-based classroom documents and email, managing finances and tracking student achievement on outsourced cloud-based databases, reporting required data to the state and federal government, and connecting with the local community.
7. Students in school library media centers use resources found in the Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM), and the thousands of e-books, including electronic textbooks, available to all citizens through NetLibrary, eBooks MN and other sources. Public libraries provide access to downloadable audiobooks and ebooks, as well as electronic magazines, from remote locations to the users’ devices.



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