



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Director of the Department of Education

Connect Oregon Students for Learning Coalition House Education Committee September 21, 2020

In March, as news about the COVID-19 virus spread and Governor Brown issued [Executive Order 20-08](#) to close schools temporarily, it became apparent that Oregon would need to rapidly expand its capacity to support digital learning. In order to support this expansion, the Oregon Department of Education partnered with the Oregon Business Council, the Oregon Community Foundation, and the Coalition Oregon School Administrators to form the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Coalition.

Learning About The Needs in Oregon

In March and April, the Oregon Department of Education developed and distributed two surveys to gather information about districts' capacity for online learning. The Connect Oregon Students for Learning Coalition reviewed the reports generated from these initial surveys and the most recent [broadband report from the Oregon Broadband Office](#). Four key areas were identified as needs:

1. Broadband Infrastructure (lack of fiber/cable built in an area);
2. Internet Service Access (families' inability to afford or choose not to have access);
3. Device Access (lack of laptops, chromebooks, ipads, hotspots, etc.); and
4. Digital Literacy and Knowledge (educator and family understanding of how to use devices and programs, educator's and administrator's lack of online pedagogical best practices, and familiarity with student privacy issues).

Connect Oregon Students for Learning Summit

On May 28, 2020, the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Coalition hosted the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Summit. Approximately 100 partners from education, business, community-based organizations, philanthropy, industry, governance/policy, and others met to co-create a plan to provide every Oregon student with access to a reliable and engaging digital learning experience. At the center of the Summit work was an essential question: *How do we address equity of access to digital learning by building capacity for both families and schools in the following key areas: infrastructure, equipment, network service, and digital literacy and knowledge?*

Partners shared these beliefs:

- Access to reliable, high speed Internet is no longer a commodity; it has become a utility, and we must come together to help Oregonians who cannot currently access this fundamental need.
- Each and every student has the right to access the technology, tools and learning opportunities that are used to individualize engaging learning experiences that address their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses and development as a life-long learner and creator of knowledge.
- Educators must be equipped with the technology, tools, professional learning in pedagogy and use of digital tools, resources and skills to create opportunities for students to use technology for deep learning.

- Foundational to this re-engineering is the equitable implementation of anti-racist policies, practices, procedures, and legislation that translates into resource allocation, education rigor, and opportunities for historically and currently marginalized youth, students, and families including civil rights protected classes.

During the Summit, participants identified three critical next steps:

- We must re-engineer and reinvent the student learning experience for now and for future success by engaging their strengths and curiosity.
- We need strong momentum, commitment, and unified voices across Oregon to meet urgent family and student needs.
- We must create systemic and sustainable opportunities to meet urgent needs and build a stronger Oregon future.

Comprehensive Distance Learning Grants

The Oregon Department of Education engaged the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Coalition partners, district superintendents, Education Service Districts, and the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts to plan the design of the [Comprehensive Distance Learning Grant program and application](#). The 28.1 million dollars in grant funding came from three sources: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, and the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funds. **The goal was to develop an application process that met the local and immediate needs of our schools as they implemented Comprehensive Distance Learning.** The table below illustrates key elements of the grant design that extend from the beliefs and critical steps from the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Summit participants. In addition, the grant incorporates the essential question in the Connect Oregon Students for Learning Summit through requiring districts to address how they will plan for changing inequitable systems and through the planning that went into the funding formula.

Flexibility	Local & Immediate Needs	Equity and Anti-Racist Policy	Equity-Based Funding Formula
<p>Applications could be submitted by a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single district • Consortium of districts • ESD on behalf of districts within their region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Connectivity: Adequate infrastructure and/or services that enable internet access and connectivity for student learning; • Student and Teacher Devices: Appropriate devices for students and teachers to navigate through distance learning curriculums and programs of study; • Digital Content and Curriculum: High quality, adaptable, culturally responsive, and effective digital learning curriculum and content that fosters student learning and engagement; • Learning Management Systems: Online technology that allow educators to successfully deliver their teaching content and lessons; and • Professional Learning for Educators: Various supports and training that ensure effective use of all digital learning tools. 	<p>Districts were required to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How they will change inequitable systems that prevent equal access based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age. • Plan to provide equal access to education for currently and historically underserved students • Plan for to provide equal access to low-income students and families that may lack the resources necessary for internet services. • Plan for supporting schools that are rural and/or remote, or lack technology or resources to adequately implement CDL. • Confirmation of consultation and coordination with Tribes and tribal organizations as required for that district. 	<p>The funding formula focused on equity by factoring in the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students represented by Average Daily Membership • Percentage of students living in poverty • Percentage of English language learners • Multiplier for districts that receive the small elementary school and small high school correction in the State School Fund formula

For additional information about this program, please contact Jessica Ventura, Government Relations Director, Oregon Department of Education at jessica.ventura@state.or.us.