

Adequate Telecommunication Infrastructure is Essential to Meet Education Goals

- **Current administration and legislative proposals assume the statewide existence of a "free" electronic highway - the Internet. A connection to the Internet is not free, and availability, performance and cost vary widely.**
- **The Learning Network of Minnesota was created to allow students, staff and library users equal access to worldwide learning resources, including those available on the Internet. While the volume, quality and relevance of instructional content has greatly increased over the last ten years, many schools and libraries cannot afford to increase the capacity of their connection and cannot take full advantage of these resources. Some districts have decreased their capacity due to budget constraints.**
- **As schools increase the use of online learning techniques to meet their instructional needs, particularly to serve special populations, connection capacity is being further strained and degraded.**
- **Accountability reforms spawned by NCLB and Minnesota statute require rapid, secure access to student performance data. The use of network-based programs and regional servers for online testing, data warehousing and data-driven decision making is increasing.**
- **A stable, efficient and secure telecommunications infrastructure is essential to continued productivity gains in administration. E-mail and web posting of documents allow asynchronous communication. The mailing of printed reports between MDE and school districts has been replaced with digital data transmission, and videoconferences and electronic field trips are saving time and reducing travel costs.**
- **Regional cooperation and collaboration for K-12 education and public library telecommunications and Internet access infrastructure development has proven to be cost effective and service efficient and should be recognized and fostered by legislative funding.**
- **While the unit cost of telecommunications capacity has generally decreased, telecommunications costs are distance-sensitive and cost disparities exist throughout Minnesota. Telecommunications equity aid will reduce those disparities for both urban and rural schools, allowing them to afford the connection capacity necessary to achieve their education goals.**

Telecommunications Infrastructure - the Line in Online!