CSG MIDWEST WEBINAR — SCHOOL CLOSURES AND E-LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Webinar. The Council of State Governments (CSG) Midwest held a webinar on April 30, 2020, related to school closures and e-learning. E-learning is defined as learning that utilizes electronic technologies to access educational curricula outside of a traditional classroom.

Statewide Digital Platforms. According to the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), the following states have statewide or territory-wide digital e-learning platforms: Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Oregon, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Puerto Rico. The CRPE provided recommendations on using federal funds for infrastructure and capacity building including:
  - Expanding broadband, providing student Wi-Fi hotspots, and building statewide virtual platforms.
  - Training in competency-based and remote instruction.
  - Addressing achievement gaps by providing for remediation through training and additional personnel.

Minnesota Department of Education. Representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education (DE) provided examples of two school districts addressing remote learning differently during school closures. One was identified as a digital district, with the following information provided:
  - Grades 6-12 are using a digital platform, with iPad devices provided to every student.
  - The school day schedule is comprised of a morning academic block, lunch and independent learning time, and an afternoon academic block.
  - Student engagement is at 90.0%.

The second school district was identified as a paper district, with the following information provided:
  - Hard-copy educational materials are mailed or delivered.
  - Student check-ins are completed by telephone or email.
  - A choice matrix is used by students to complete assigned work.

The Minnesota DE continues to provide information and guidance by maintaining a COVID-19 hub on its website. The DE is also responding to COVID-19 by providing professional development and support in the areas of social-emotional needs, family engagement, and online learning strategies. Schools within the state that were already fully online have been used as a support for schools statewide, and over 100 districts had already established e-learning day plans.

Minnesota Legislature. The Minnesota legislature is considering the following legislation:
  - HF 3029, which provides for broadband grants for distance learning.
  - HF 4415, which provides for sustaining hourly worker pay and addresses school loss of fees.

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