

2003 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM
Application Form

1. Program Name

Learning Without Limits

2. Administering Agency

Learning Without Limits is jointly administered by the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Virtual University with the assistance of a 32-member statewide advisory group from government, education, business and industry.

3. Contact Person (Name & Title)

David Seitz, Policy Development Coordinator

4. Address

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8. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The program is designed to improve student achievement by providing Michigan's K-12 students with access to 21st century learning tools and eventually achieving one-to-one access to wireless computing in all Michigan schools. The \$9.5 million competitive grant program underwrites equipment, software and related expenses for five demonstration sites and 10 application sites in different regions of the state.

9. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

Michigan House Speaker Rick Johnson unveiled his education technology initiative in November 2001. After funding was secured, the plan was announced in May 2002 and became operational in August 2002.

10. Why was the program created? (What problem(s) or issue(s) was it designed to address?)

This learning initiative was created to engage students, empower teachers, parents and students, and increase academic achievement.

With one-to-one wireless computing, students are empowered with “any time and anywhere” learning. Students can access homework assignments at home or school, even work on tasks during bus rides.

Students can take the classroom home, where parents can actively participate. Teachers can approach their work more creatively—with more options for interacting one-on-one with students and parents.

Parents are empowered with easy access to their children’s teachers and daily classroom work.

Schools can create equity for all students, regardless of geography.

11. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

May 30, 2002 – News release announcing that MVU will coordinate initiative

Aug. 30, 2002 – News conference launching \$9.5 million program and application process

October 2002- -- Reviewing applications and selecting grant recipients

Nov. 19, 2002 --- Winning applications announced

February 2003 – Demonstration site news conferences at locations throughout the state as equipment arrives in local school districts

12. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Wireless computing provides more mobility, flexibility and excitement in learning. In our fast-paced world, days like Sept. 11, 2001 can change everything in an instant. Textbooks can become outdated before they are even delivered. With computers, the world becomes your classroom and every student has a seat in the front row.

We educate our children on an agricultural timeline in an industrial setting while telling them they must reach the standards of a digital age. This plan allows students to learn any time, anywhere—without limits.

13. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide detail about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The costs for establishing the demonstration sites (grant process, evaluation and coordination) through MVU is less than \$500,000.

14. What are the program's annual operational costs?

Administrative costs are approximately \$500,000. To add a grade of students each year to the LWL program will cost \$30 million.

15. How is the program funded?

The Learning Without Limits program was funded with \$3.5 million by the Michigan Legislature in the 2002 School Aid Act for the 2002-2003 school year, and about \$6 million in federal education funds to the program through the Michigan Department of Education.

The intent is to continuously expand the program across the state through additional funding from state, federal and private sources. Individuals, community organizations, companies and governmental entities can support the LWL program. Gifts are tax deductible and qualify for Michigan tax credits and federal tax deductions.

16. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

Public Act 191 of 2002 (the school aid budget for fiscal year 2003)

House Bill 4401 (the school aid budget for fiscal year 2004) is still under consideration by the Legislature. It passed the House on April 10, 2003.

17. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

There are many partners who provide equipment to local school districts throughout the state. They include Apple, Compaq, Dell, Gateway, GoKnow, and Palm.

18. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address and telephone number.

Yes. Speaker Johnson was impressed by some innovative techniques at a school in his district in rural northern Michigan and researched several other county efforts. Coming from a region where schools face transportation problems and students located in a wide geographical area, he was intrigued by the prospect of using technology to address the challenge. Then Johnson sat down with his staff and began to develop a vision for a STATEWIDE program.

19. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ.

There is a similar program in Maine. Learning Without Limits is different because Michigan focused first on professional development and integrating into the classroom. This was accomplished by the Teachers Training Initiative, which has already distributed 88,000 laptops to faculty around the state.

20. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

NO. The goal is a phased implementation. The next step is reaching every Michigan sixth-grader in 2004.

21. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem(s) or issue(s). Provide tangible examples.

Pro. We have engaged students and parents in this innovative system. Even in these early months of the demonstration projects, instructors in Bear Lake have seen a decrease of students in detention. The faculty in Chelsea have a lower dropout rate. The excitement among students is evident.

Con. Because we have several partners, rather than one statewide partner for equipment, we have not realized the cost efficiencies that are available when purchasing items in volume.

22. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

We created a phased-in implementation. We also expanded the program to focus on the federal "No Child Left Behind" system. The goals of the federal plan include 100 percent academic math and reading efficiency by 2011.

23. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Funding in uncertain economic times will remain a serious obstacle for other states attempting such a program, even though, in the long run, it is cost-efficient.

The "generational gap" between those raised in the computer era and those who came before. This impacts both teachers and policymakers, who may not understand the full implications, and possibilities, of modern technology.