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South Dakota recognized for leadership in school connectivity

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota recently was ranked [No. 2 in the nation](#) for school internet connectivity by Connected Nation, according to data published through the nonprofit’s [Connect K-12 website](#). Rankings are based on the percentage of school districts that are at or over 1 Mbps of bandwidth per student, which is the Federal Communications Commission’s recommended bandwidth to allow for digital learning in every classroom, every day.

“South Dakota is one of the nation’s leaders in providing reliable, high-speed internet to our students,” said Gov. Kristi Noem. “Connectivity in every classroom, every day, arms our students with the tools they need to prepare for their future careers and to advance South Dakota’s economy. That’s why we made historic investments in high-speed broadband this legislative session.”

South Dakota’s leadership in broadband connectivity started several decades ago when Gov. Bill Janklow oversaw the initial wiring of K-12 schools. Over the years, the state has partnered with broadband providers to ensure connectivity at critical locations such as schools and libraries, according to Tiffany Sanderson, Secretary of Education. In addition, the state provides schools with free technology-related resources such as providing email systems, website hosting, and technical support through the K-12 Data Center. A portion of the Department of Education’s budget funds these services on an ongoing basis.

This past legislative session, Governor Noem and the state legislature invested \$75 million in grants to finish connecting the state to high-speed broadband. Additionally, Governor Noem leveraged \$25 million in CARES Act dollars in pursuit of the same goal.

“These partnerships proved essential last school year, as schools pivoted to distance learning options in order to continue serving students throughout the pandemic,” Sanderson said. “South Dakota had a great foundation already in place, thanks to state and local leaders who have seen the value of continued investment in technology infrastructure in our schools. So, this ranking comes as no surprise.”

Based on the experiences of the last 13 months, Sanderson expects South Dakota’s commitment to providing high-quality technology infrastructure in schools will only get stronger.