



For Immediate Release

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### **Shift to Remote Learning Highlights Need for Broadband, Instructional Technology Professional Development Funding**

As Wisconsin schools begin to discuss plans for the fall that will likely include remote learning, new data released today by the Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association (WEMTA) highlights the need for investments in broadband and instructional technology professional development. Nearly two-thirds of school library and instructional media technology professionals surveyed about their experiences with virtual instruction during COVID-19 indicated that parts of their school district still don't have access to broadband. While 80% of respondents said their district needs funding for instructional technology professional development to prepare educators for potential hybrid in-person and remote learning in the fall.

"School library and technology professionals stepped up to make remote learning possible for Wisconsin teachers, students and families during COVID-19. While this experience showcased the dedication and creativity of educators across the state, it also highlighted how the lack of broadband infrastructure in Wisconsin creates barriers to at-home learning for our students," said WEMTA Legislative Chair Emily Dittmar.

School library media and instructional technology professionals across Wisconsin say that the potential for additional remote learning in the fall requires increased funding for broadband. While 76% of respondents said that their school was able to provide one-to-one devices to every student who needed one, these devices offer little value if students cannot access the Internet at home. Some school library programs tried to increase broadband access during COVID-19 by providing hotspots or WiFi cards to students, but roughly 1 out of 3 respondents said they were unable to do so.

The abrupt transition to virtual instruction also demonstrated the need for investments in instructional technology professional development. However, there is not currently a dedicated state funding source that supports these types of professional development activities. School library and technology professionals put in extra hours during COVID-19 to help teachers provide effective remote learning and instruction. Forty-two percent of respondents said that they spent 16 hours or more each week helping teachers provide online learning.

"Teachers across the state had to transition their classrooms to an entirely virtual format without any warning due to COVID-19. Educators need ongoing training and support on the effective use of instructional technology as remote learning will likely continue in some form

next year, but school districts need funding to help make this happen, ” said WEMTA President Raquel Rand.

WEMTA looks forward to working with the Department of Public Instruction, policymakers and other education stakeholders to ensure that every student and teacher in Wisconsin has access to high-quality remote learning opportunities.

*The Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association (WEMTA) represents school library media and instructional technology professionals. School library programs provide access to a wide variety of essential educational materials such as books, magazines, digital resources, web resources, information databases, and the technology needed to utilize these resources.*

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