



## About the CoSN-Gartner Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) Tool

*Understanding the full range of costs associated with technology investments will assist school leaders in planning for the future. The TCO Tool is designed to help schools and school districts make sound budgetary decisions, conduct technology planning in an organized way, establish a baseline for future analysis and maximize benefits from their investments in technology.*

### What is the CoSN-Gartner TCO Web Tool?

The TCO Tool is the latest development in the Consortium for School Networking's four-year-old initiative, Taking Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) to the Classroom. CoSN has worked to help school leaders understand **all of the costs** associated with operating school networks and ensure that they have budgeted adequately to support their educational technology investments.

The online TCO Tool is a **vendor-neutral, free resource** available to help schools and districts manage their computer networks in a cost-effective way. The new resource is available online at [www.classroomtco.org](http://www.classroomtco.org).

Determining overall technology cost—a concept known as Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)—can help education leaders conduct the most comprehensive assessment possible of how well they are managing their technology infrastructure.

The TCO Tool measures direct and indirect costs of technology investments, such as hardware, software, direct labor costs for formal technology support and the indirect costs accrued for technology support.

The TCO Tool was developed for CoSN, by Gartner, one of the leading authorities on business TCO and the North Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NCRTEC) at the North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL®). Financial support was provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

### How does the TCO CoSN-Gartner Tool work? What “results” will it produce?

School leaders can prepare by reviewing documentation online to learn more about TCO in education. They are then asked to gather about 100 pieces of data that will form the basis for their TCO analysis.

The TCO Tool includes the following components:

- A **Web-based interactive “survey”** instrument
- A set of **definitions** to guide the districts in their data collection
- A discussion of **methodology**, suggesting **best practices** for undertaking a TCO assessment
- An introductory section, discussing **the benefits** of monitoring TCO
- **Case studies** that describe how school districts of varying sizes used the **TCO Tool's metrics to assess their own technology implementation**

When school leaders input their data, the TCO Tool performs some calculations automatically. The resulting metrics can then be evaluated.

While there is no one “right” number for TCO, the TCO Tool allows a school district to evaluate its own decisions over time, while also allowing it to compare itself against other school districts.

Because the TCO Tool is based on the methodology of an unbiased third-party expert, such as Gartner and includes Gartner's perspective on the results, the metrics produced by the tool should gain additional credibility with education policymakers.



## Who can use the CoSN-Gartner TCO Tool?

The TCO Tool is made available for free to education institutions only in the United States. A user ID and password will be provided to entities who supply their name and their institution's NCES number. (Note: National Center for Education Statistics identification numbers are used by the U.S. Department of Education for collecting education statistics.)

## Have any school leaders used the tool? What were their reactions?

The TCO Tool was developed with input from four "case study" school districts of varying sizes in California, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Utah. The case study reports are posted online ([www.classroomtco.org](http://www.classroomtco.org)) as part of the tool's documentation. They provide valuable lessons about technology management practices that the districts learned while using the TCO Tool.

## Why should a school do a TCO analysis? Who will benefit from this?

A TCO analysis can become an important part of ongoing technology and budget planning. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states and local districts are now in the process of reviewing their technology plans with an eye to demonstrating the impact that technology improvements have had on academic achievement. The TCO Tool can help school leaders make the case that the dollars they are spending on education technology are dollars that are well spent. This kind of analysis is likely to gain credence with education policy-makers, whether they are members of local school boards or members of legislative bodies.

## Why was the CoSN-Gartner TCO Tool developed? Who is involved in the effort?

The TCO Tool is the latest step in an ongoing CoSN initiative to help school leaders understand how to budget more wisely to manage their networks for the long term.

CoSN is a non-profit association dedicated to supporting the use of computer networks to promote learning in K-12 schools.

Gartner, Inc. is a research and advisory firm that helps more than 10,500 clients understand technology and drive business growth. Gartner's businesses consist of Gartner Research, Gartner Consulting, Gartner Measurement and Gartner Events.

The North Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium at NCREL® helps states, districts and schools effectively integrate technology into education by providing high-quality professional development, building the capacity of leaders and disseminating information on critical technology issues. NCREL specializes in the educational applications of technology.

Business partners have provided additional support for dissemination of information about the TCO Tool. They include Apple, Microsoft, Sprint, HP, IBM, Intel, Texas Instruments, Inc., 3Com Corporation, AOL@School, AT&T, Blackboard, Inc., Dell, eChalk, Inspiration Software, Inc., Palm, PLATO Learning, Inc., and the Center for Digital Education.

For more information, please contact:

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