

How States Can Close the Distance Learning Digital Divide: A Look at Three State Models

September 1, 2020



The Campaign for
**GRADE-LEVEL
READING**

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How states can close the distance learning digital divide: a look at state models

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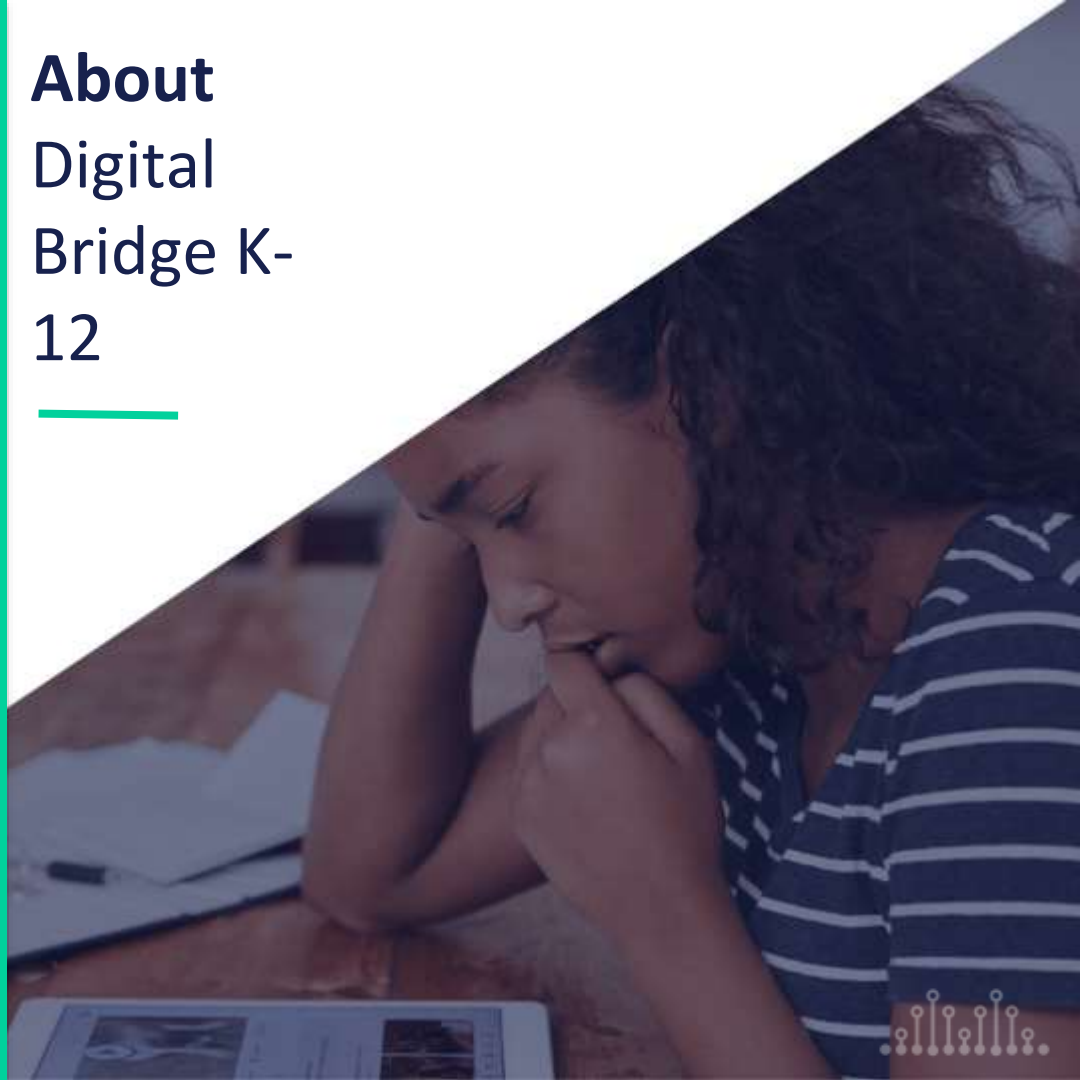
Agenda

1. Intro: Common Sense Media and EducationSuperHighway
2. Recap of June 20th Common Sense report on the K-12 Digital Divide
3. Preview of follow-on report: Principles for taking action to close the K-12 Digital Divide
4. Examples of state action
5. Next steps
6. Q&A

Digital Bridge K-12 is an initiative from the national non-profit, EducationSuperHighway.

As schools prepare for remote learning in the fall, we are taking urgent action to support states and school districts to keep students learning during COVID-19.

About Digital Bridge K- 12



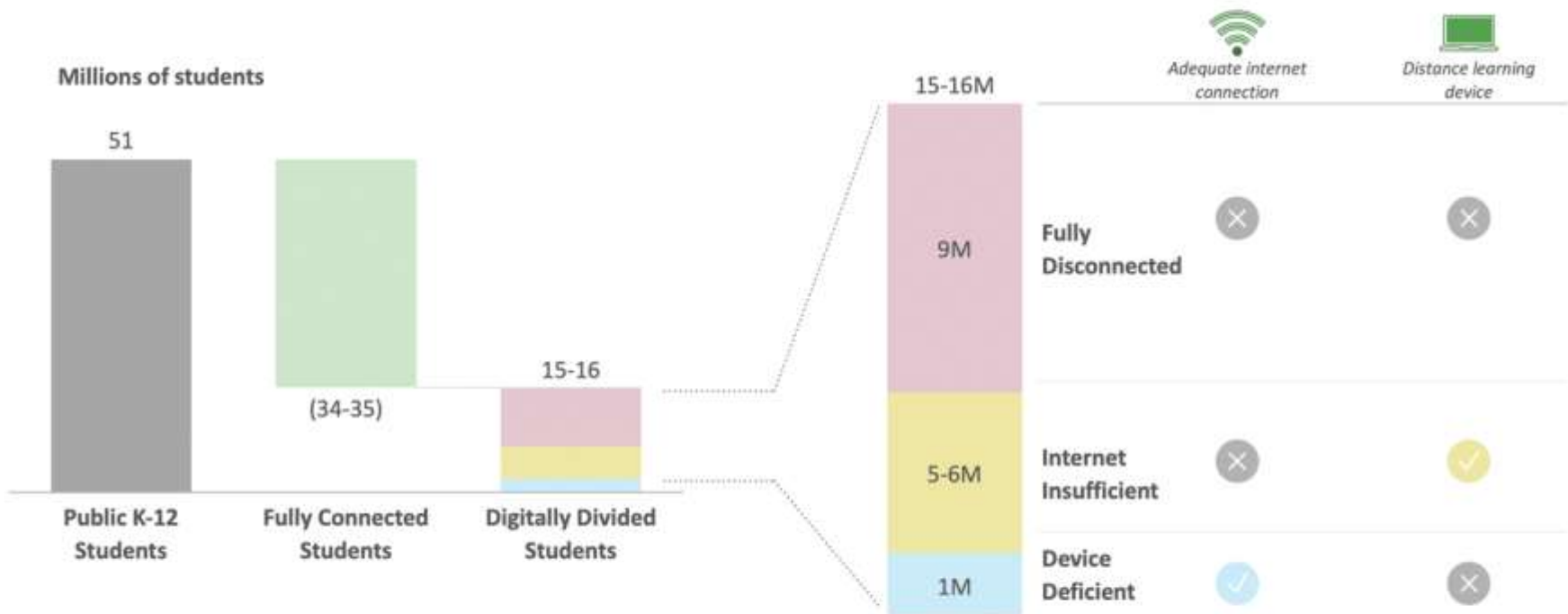


Recap: Closing the K-12 digital divide in the age of distance learning

June, 2020



15-16M digitally divided students make up ~30% of K-12 students



Note: Distance learning devices are considered to be laptops and tablets (excludes a cellular device alone). Adequate connectivity is defined as DSL/ADSL, cable, fiber, or satellite. Cellular connection alone is not considered adequate, but can be with the right supplements. Source: ACS 1-year survey compiled by US Census Bureau – aggregated at household level, NCES, BCG analysis

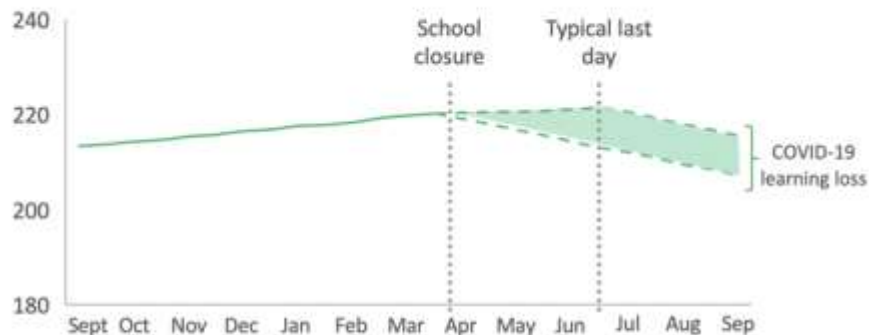
The digital divide matters, with the potential to accelerate learning loss for students during school closures

"Students have not made the necessary growth they would have made had we continued in school. [...] I have been able to remain in contact with all of my students via telephone calls [...], but this is no comparison to what I am able to get done with the two students I can see weekly in a Google Meet. [...] I see how our students compare to those in neighboring districts who have one-to-one devices, and I feel that they are not afforded the same level of instruction they desperately deserve."

- Leslie, preschool, pre-K, and elementary school teacher, Ellenburg Depot, New York

Without distance learning tools, students—esp. in low-income and rural households—risk significant learning loss

Projected student academic growth trajectory in math



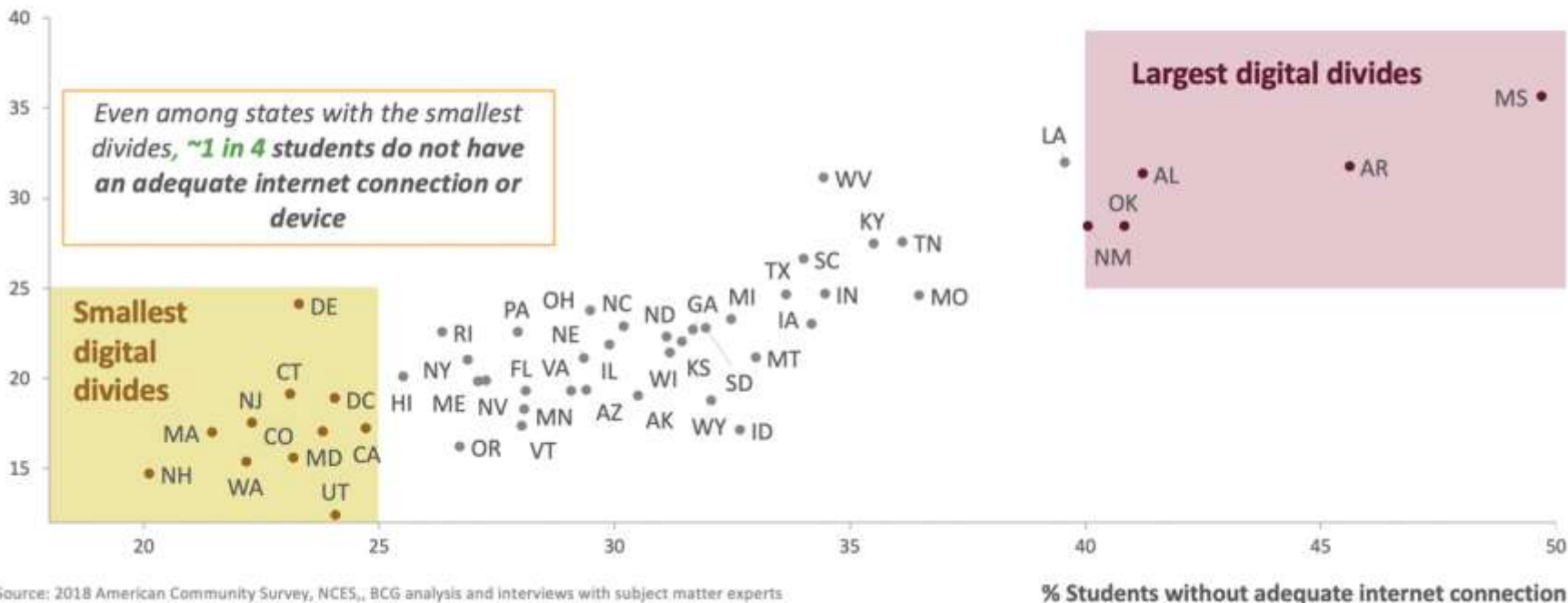
Source: NWEA Collaborative for Student Growth Research Center; Common Sense Media Connect All Students teacher survey; spring 2020.



A major digital divide persists in all 50 states

Percent of students in households without devices and adequate internet connectivity, by state

% Students without adequate devices

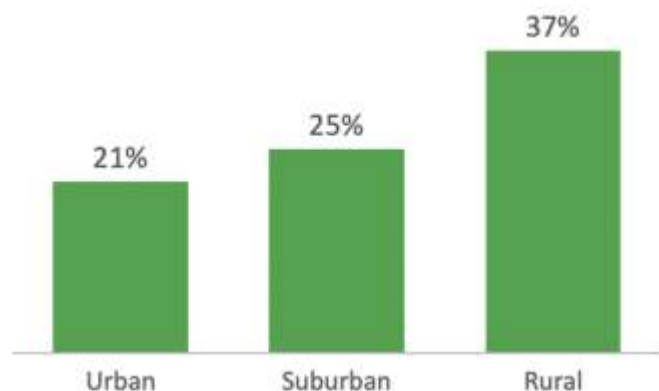


Source: 2018 American Community Survey, NCES, BCG analysis and interviews with subject matter experts

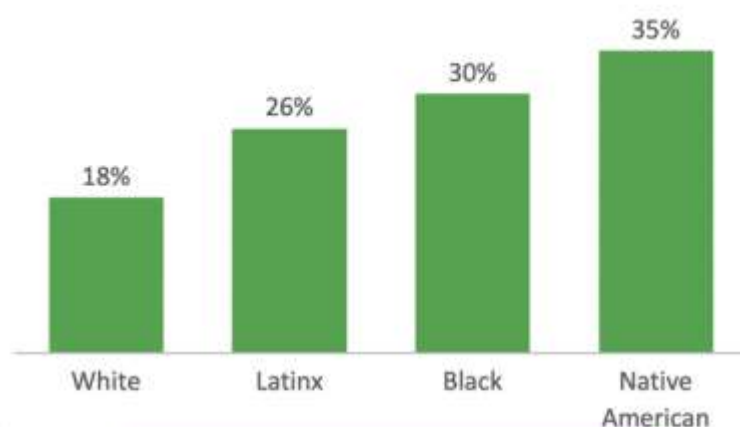


Digital divide disproportionately impacts rural communities, and Black, Latinx, and Native American households

% of students without broadband, by geography



% of students without broadband, by race/ethnicity



1. <https://greenlining.org/publications/online-resources/2020/on-the-wrong-side-of-the-digital-divide/>. Source: U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee. (2017, September). *America's digital divide*. Retrieved from https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ff7b3d0b-bc00-4498-9f9d-3e56ef95088f/the-digital-divide-pdf; Perrin, A. *Digital Gap between Rural and Nonrural America Persists*. Pew Research Center, 31 May 2019. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/31/digital-gap-between-rural-and-nonrural-america-persists/

Note: Asian race/ethnicity not included in bar chart; Indigenous refers to American Indian and Alaskan Native Census classification

Research by the Greenlining Institute has shown districts subject to financial redlining practices in the 1930s face a higher digital divide today¹

Technology choices make a difference in distance learning experiences for students



Broadband internet service

- Speeds and data sufficient (200/10Mbps) for multiple hours of two-way video, serve multiple users for uninterrupted experience

Distance learning experience with **robust technology**

- Baseline speeds (25/3 Mbps) will connect to video, may be pixelated, disrupted
- Data caps limit engagement time

Distance learning experience with **minimum required technology**



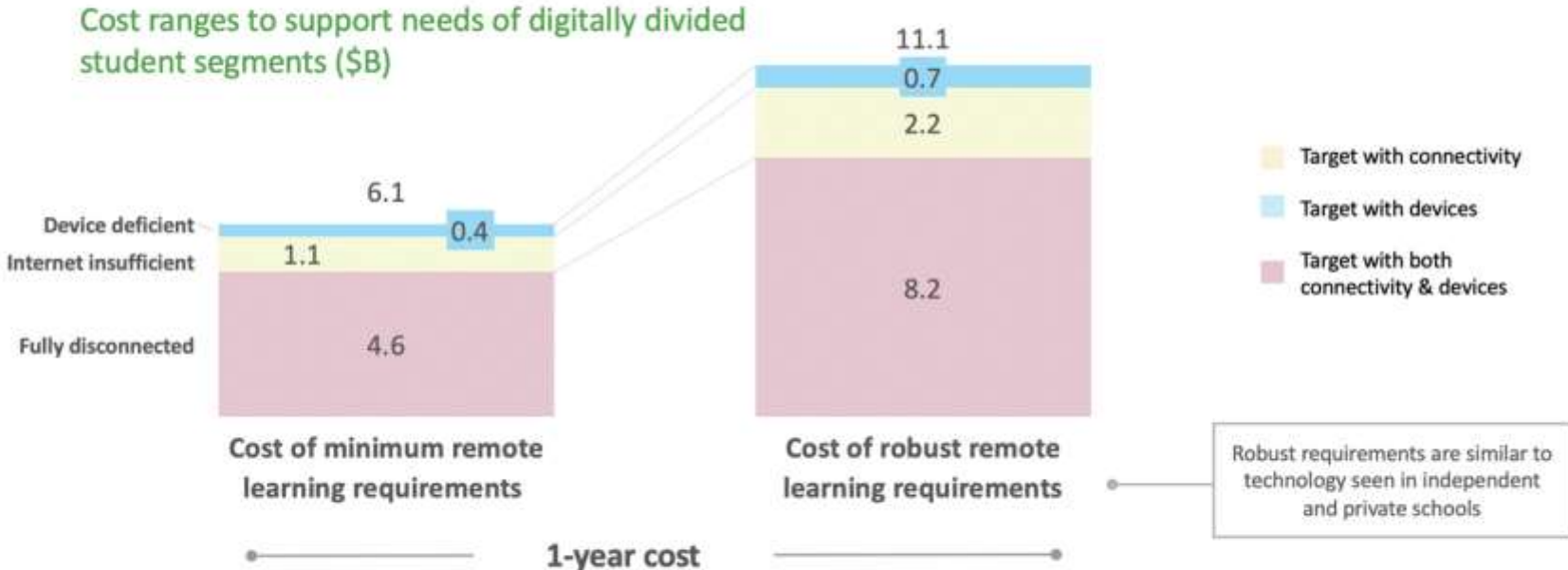
Illustrative

Internet-enabled devices

- New device with high memory allows for quick-load apps, real-time learning tools
- Refurbished device, with
- slower processing speeds



One-year cost of closing the K-12 digital divide is at least ~\$6B and as much as ~\$11B



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There are 3 principles states should consider to close the K-12 digital divide

Assessment: which students are impacted by the digital divide and how do we track progress?

Procurement: how can solutions be delivered?

Funding: where does funding come from, how should it be delivered, and what is the ongoing need?

01

ASSESSMENT



We are moving from understanding the estimated percentage of students who do not have home access to understanding *specifically which students* do not have access, in order to be able to connect those students.

This information will enable education leaders to:

- Understand the impact that home digital access has on **learning outcomes**
- Target **resources** to students in need of access
- Determine the most effective **connectivity solutions**
- Advocate for **state and federal funding** to close the digital access gap

Why this Data Collection is Critical



The first step in solving this pressing equity challenge is to conduct high-quality data collection to identify which students are impacted.

CCSSO has partnered with nonprofit EducationSuperHighway on their Digital Bridge K-12 project to develop a [blueprint](#) for how state leaders can facilitate this data collection.



The State Education Agency's role in home access data collection



Establish common
data elements



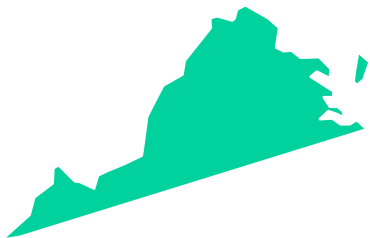
Communicate
guidance to LEAs on
data collection
strategies



Recommend data
management best
practices



Virginia and California are requiring LEAs to report on digital access



- Virginia DOE is requiring school divisions to report on the number of unconnected students three times a year



- The California state budget provides funding for remote learning but requires districts to demonstrate that all students have a device and connectivity



States are taking part in Digital Equity Outreach Month



This September is K-12 Digital Equity Outreach Month – a nationwide effort by school districts in every state to connect with families, understand their home digital access needs and gather the data they need to close the digital divide.

[#connecteverystudent](#)



02

PROCUREMENT



Texas is purchasing and distributing personal hotspots and computers



- State is allocating \$200M in CARES funding
- State created a bulk purchasing contract for hotspots with 1 year of service and devices
- LEAs get 50% of matching funding from the state for purchases through the statewide contract
- Cannot be reimbursed for volumes that exceed the number of economically disadvantaged students in an LEA



North Dakota worked with providers to get access to 90% of unconnected students



1

DATA GATHERING

116k student addresses,
with considerations for
student/customer privacy



2

SERVICEABILITY

work with Broadband
Association of North Dakota
(BAND) internet service
providers to identify
locations currently served



3

CLOSING THE GAP

2,000 addresses identified
as lacking connectivity.
1,865 could be rapidly
served by local providers.



Connecticut is partnering with cable providers and funding service



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

- 50,000 laptops
- 12 months of internet access provided by state in partnership with cable providers
- Personal hotspots provided by Kajeet
- 200 public access hotspots at community centers

The logo for Cox, with the letters 'COX' in a stylized font. The 'C' is blue, the 'O' is green, and the 'X' is blue.

The logo for Kajeet, with the word 'kajeet' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'k' is black, and the 'a' has a blue dot above it.

The logo for Optimum, with the word 'optimum.' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'o' is blue, and the rest of the letters are black.

The logo for Charter Communications, with the word 'Charter' in a blue, sans-serif font and 'COMMUNICATIONS' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it.

The logo for Comcast Xfinity, with the Comcast peacock logo above the word 'COMCAST' and 'xfinity' in a lowercase, sans-serif font below it.

The logo for Atlantic Broadband, featuring a stylized blue 'A' shape above the word 'ATLANTIC' and 'broadband' in a lowercase, sans-serif font below it.



03

FUNDING



States are using CARES funding to address K-12 connectivity



\$3 Billion

Governor's Emergency
Education Relief Fund



\$13 Billion

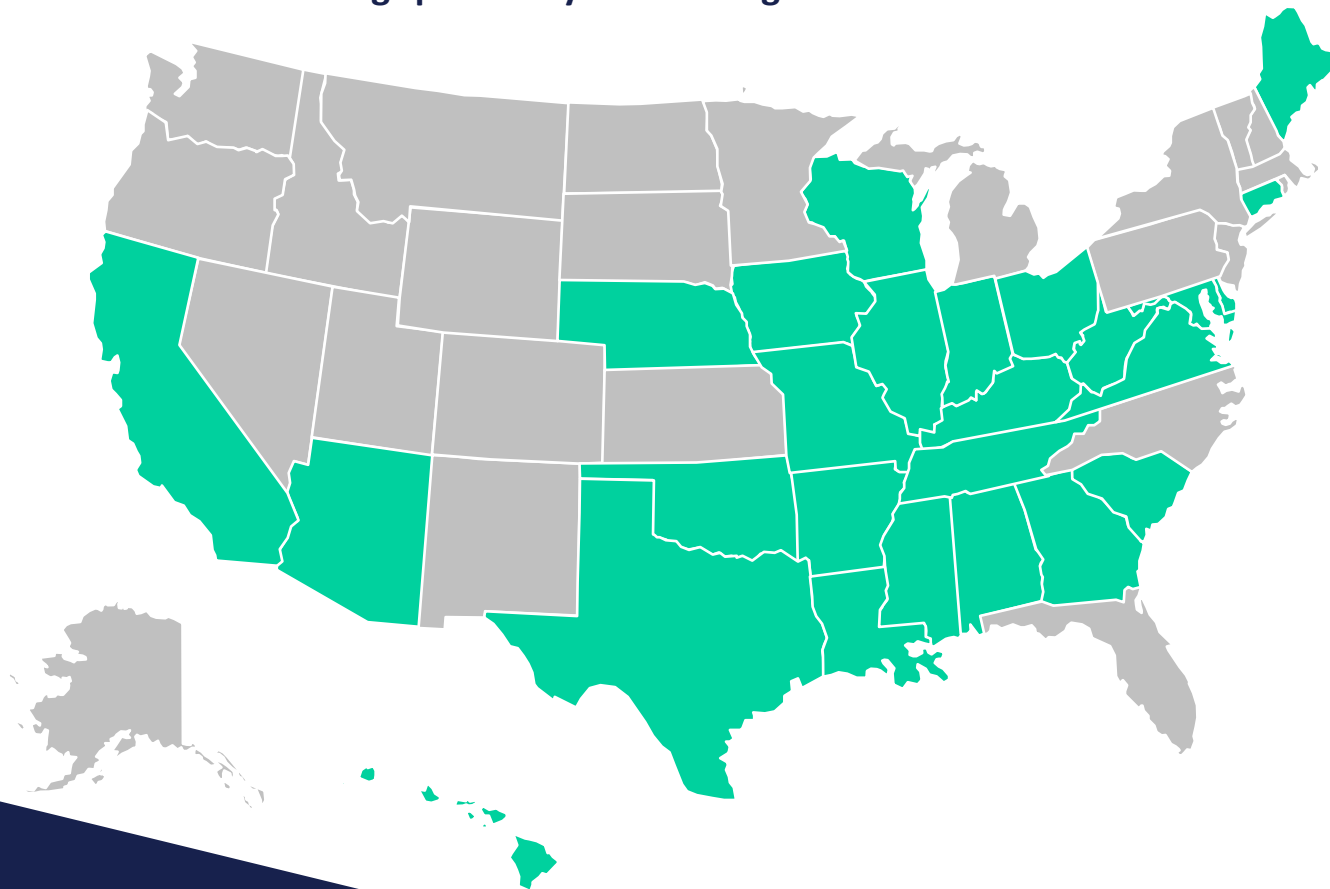
Elementary and Secondary
School Emergency Relief Fund

- Allocated to Local Education Agencies based on Title 1 formula
- 10% held at the State Education Agency to address needs arising from COVID-19

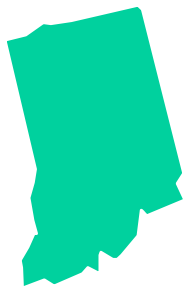


26 states have allocated CARES funding specifically for K-12 digital access

Detailed tracker [here](#)



State CARES funding for K-12 Connectivity: Examples



- **\$62M** grant program to support student devices, connectivity for remote learning, and educator capacity for remote learning



- **\$10M** to reimburse K-12 school districts for connectivity expenses
- **\$20M** for providers to install wired connections to student homes



- **\$200M** to the Texas Education Agency to support eLearning devices and student connectivity

Additional information: [Indiana](#) [Missouri](#) [Texas](#)



Funding: Policy Outlook

Engage broadly to help drive down costs of service and drive up quality of service. At both the State and Federal level infuse the needs of distance learning into any policies related to broadband.

- **State and Federal Broadband Plans**
 - Include specifics on distance learning: data gathering, speeds, cost support, devices, digital inclusion.
- **State and Federal Broadband Deployment Programs**
 - Universal Deployment
 - Improved standards for deployment (fiber, qualified areas)
 - Municipal Broadband
 - Open Access
- **State and Federal Broadband Adoption Program**
 - Cost (for service and devices)
 - Training
 - IT Support



Next Steps for parents, funders, school leaders

- 01** Conduct a detailed needs assessment
Sign up for Digital Equity Outreach Month at www.digitalbridgek12.org
- 02** Check on initiatives happening in your state
[Link to state by state tracker](#)
- 03** Explore partnership models with local service providers
- 04** Advocate to state and federal representatives for more funding for home access



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Comments

- **Data:** federal duty to collect accurate data on broadband deployment, states need this data
 - *Push agency to improve data collection practices*
- **Funding & Procurement:** school districts bearing costs for internet service
 - LAUSD: **\$6.8 million** for Verizon and T-Mobile
 - Baltimore: **\$650,000 up front** for Comcast IE service
 - *Potential for cities to organize to get better deals and/or counter offers; expanded free service and benefits through pandemic*

Other Useful Tools

Remove state legislative barriers to municipal broadband

- Municipal and community broadband networks can stimulate competition, lowering costs and increasing speeds
- Texas: municipalities and municipal electric utilities currently **prohibited** from offering some telecommunications services to the public either directly or indirectly

Questions & Discussion

Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars:

SPECIAL WEBINAR

Prioritizing Learning Amidst COVID: Essential Guidance for Schools and Parents

Tuesday, September 8, 12:30 p.m. ET/9:30 a.m. PT

LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY WEBINAR

PBS Unlocks Digital Learning in Science With *Elinor Wonders Why*

Tuesday, September 8, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

Please join us!

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