DIGITAL LEARNING GAP

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers ™

As schools react to the pandemic and prepare for the new normal of blended learning – which refers to the flexible combination of face-to-face and online instruction – this is no longer simply the "homework gap," but instead is now the "learning opportunity gap."

Educators and families across the country have transitioned to online learning in response to COVID-19 related school building closures. However, 41 percent of districts report that they are not prepared to lead online learning for all students. The pandemic has revealed the serious implications of the "homework gap," where vulnerable student populations — particularly from low-income families — do not have reliable at-home internet service or access to a computer or laptop.

More than **9 MILLION STUDENTS** don't have reliable internet connectivity at home.

ROUGHLY 35% OF US HOUSEHOLDS* with children ages 6 - 17 and an annual income below $30,000 do not have a high-speed internet connection at home.

*PEW RESEARCH CENTER STUDY

DIGITAL LEARNING GAP
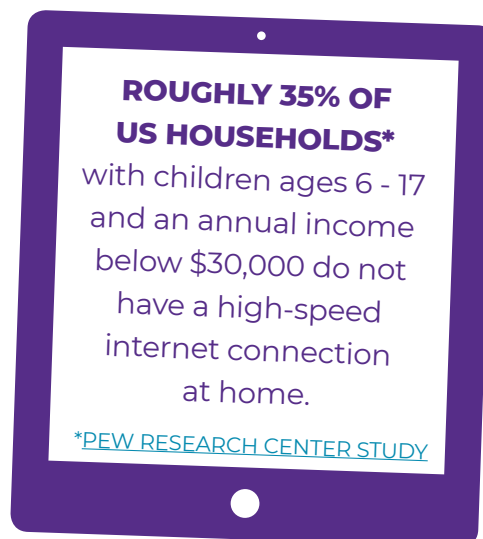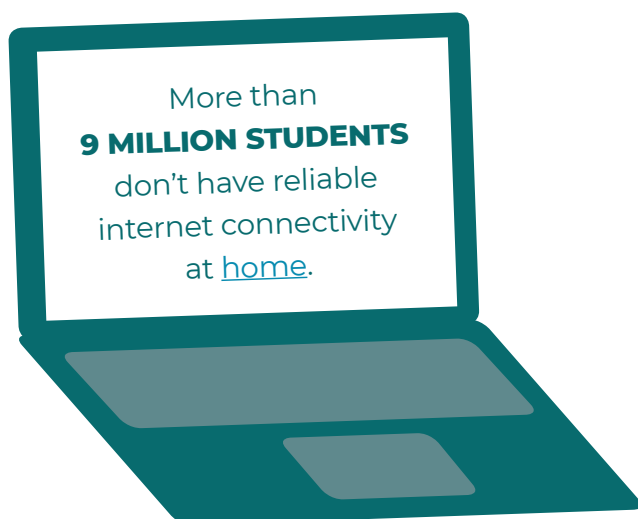
CCSSO is well-positioned to lead and champion a new initiative designed to describe the impact and urgency of the digital learning gap. The initiative would support states in developing a strategy designed to close their digital learning gap. CCSSO recognizes that a successful distance learning program requires a robust and comprehensive framework that includes high-quality learning content, training, and communication in addition to a strong data and technology infrastructure.

This initiative is working in close collaboration with the CCSSO Equity Team's Educational Equity: The Digital Learning Gap & Divide initiative that is focused on reaching and serving vulnerable populations: homeless youth; migrant/immigrant students and families; youth in the juvenile justice system; students of color; students living in poverty; students with disabilities; and English Learners.

THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE, CCSSO AND KEY PARTNERS WILL SUPPORT STATE EDUCATION AGENCY (SEA) LEADERS TO ADDRESS THEIR DIGITAL LEARNING GAPS. CCSSO WILL:

ASSESS

Help SEAs assess and identify the critical challenges associated with their state's digital learning gaps

PLAN

Provide eLearning/Distance learning plan templates and share best practices from other SEAs

Develop strategies and recommendations on how best to distribute and use available digital learning funding

DO

Support SEAs as they work to research and pilot strategies designed to increase off-campus connectivity and access to devices

Partner with internet service and device providers to develop and implement solutions, determine service options, and evaluate supply chain needs and special circumstance offerings

Support CCSSO and state advocacy efforts to obtain federal funding for K-12 internet connectivity and devices

REVIEW

Provide ongoing implementation and data collection support to SEAs by leveraging the existing CCSSO Education Information Management Advisory Collaborative (EIMAC) programming, meetings, and conferences

Provide ongoing support to SEAs as they develop and implement a robust and comprehensive distance learning framework

STATE-LEVEL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

THE NEED

SEAs play a critical role in supporting school districts to ensure that all students have access to the technology necessary to fully engage in a distance learning curriculum

SEAs can start by assessing districts' and students' needs to provide customized support, solutions, and resources that will effectively close the gap

By conducting a state-wide needs assessment, SEAs can:

· Create a strategy for helping districts close the digital learning gap

· Allocate resources to the schools and students with the highest level of need

· Advocate for funding and policies that are targeted at addressing the gap

· Help school districts overcome procurement challenges with devices and services

THE GOAL

Curating best practices for needs assessment at a district and state level

Producing a blueprint for how state chiefs across the nation can lead and conduct an effective needs assessment

The initiative will produce recommendations for:

· Establishing an assessment and data collection strategy at the district and state levels to determine which students do not have access to adequate devices and internet service at home

· Creating a centralized data collection tool

· Aggregating needs assessment data to perform analysis and identify actionable data insights

· Working with the service and device provider communities and state regulatory commission to identify device and internet service options

Outcomes of this initiative will include:

1. Definition of the data being collected and the challenges the data will help to address

2. Data collection strategies, student data privacy considerations, and tools that can be provided to school districts, with the ability to aggregate data at the district and state levels

3. An outreach strategy and plan for communicating with districts

4. Analysis and mapping of student device needs and connectivity service options for participating states

5. Roadmap for sustained data collection efforts across all states

STATE-LEVEL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

CHALLENGES THE DATA WILL HELP TO ADDRESS

1. Advocacy – Provide states with the data necessary to inform federal and state policymakers regarding digital learning gaps and related asks

2. Further data collection – Continue to build a refined understanding of the exact households with unconnected students

3. Procurement – Provide the insights necessary to steer the demand associated with the supply chain

4. Considerations for funding – Provide states with a better understanding of the high-need areas to inform equitable funding allocations, responses to requests, and budgeting

5. Convening stakeholder groups – Accurate and timely data can serve as an incentive to bring the appropriate stakeholder groups to the table

6. Best practices sharing – The collection of data and development of case studies, including data privacy considerations, will be shared among states and other interested stakeholders

7. Determining serviceability of homes – State and local leaders will have reliable information that can be used to determine the serviceability of all K12 student homes within their state or district

THE TIMELINE

BY 5.29.20

Identify states who will actively participate in this initiative

Hold kick-off with all stakeholders; confirm roles and responsibilities, timeline, and definition of success

Define use cases for state needs assessment (i.e. what decisions will be informed by data collected?) and reporting requirements

Establish data-sharing agreements

KEY OUTPUT:

Definition of the data being collected and the challenges the data will help to address

BY 6.12.20

Collect best practice examples, including student data privacy considerations, of state and district needs assessment efforts

Collect best practice examples of state Public Utility Commissions (PUCs) gathering and leveraging provider data

Collect best practice examples of state and district device delivery programs

Confirm specifications for uniform data collection tool

KEY OUTPUTS:

Analysis and mapping of student device needs and connectivity service options for participating states

Specifications for collection tool and reporting

BY 6.19.20

Compile recommendations for state and district outreach and communications

Create beta version of data collection tool

KEY OUTPUTS:

Outreach strategy and plan for communicating with districts

Beta version of data collection tool

STATE-LEVEL NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

THE TIMELINE (CONT.)

BY 6.30.20

Finalize blueprint and incorporate student data privacy considerations

Determine process for sharing findings, recommendations, and toolkit with all states

KEY OUTPUTS:

Finalized data collection toolkit

Roadmap for sustained data collection efforts across all states

BY 10.31.20

Establish a review and feedback process for the data collection toolkit

Work with the CIO Network to synthesize the feedback and apply the necessary updates to the data collection toolkit

Collect, document, and share best practices and lessons learned from leading states

Provide ongoing implementation and data collection support to SEAs by leveraging the fall 2020 CCSSO EIMAC conference

KEY OUTPUTS:

Revised data collection toolkit

Lessons learned and best practices resources added to the repository

BY 6.30.21

Establish a review and feedback process for the needs assessment and data collection blueprint

Work with the CCSSO members, including chiefs and CIOs to synthesize the feedback and apply the necessary updates to the blueprint

Collect, document, and share best practices and lesson learned from leading states

Provide ongoing implementation and data collection support to SEAs by leveraging the spring CCSSO EIMAC conference

KEY OUTPUTS:

Revised blueprint

Lessons learned and best practices resources added to the repository

The **HOMEWORK GAP** is more pronounced for black, Hispanic & lower-income households.

ROUGHLY 6 IN 10 STUDENTS*
say they use the internet at their home to do homework every day or almost every day

*PEW RESEARCH CENTER STUDY of data from the 2018 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)