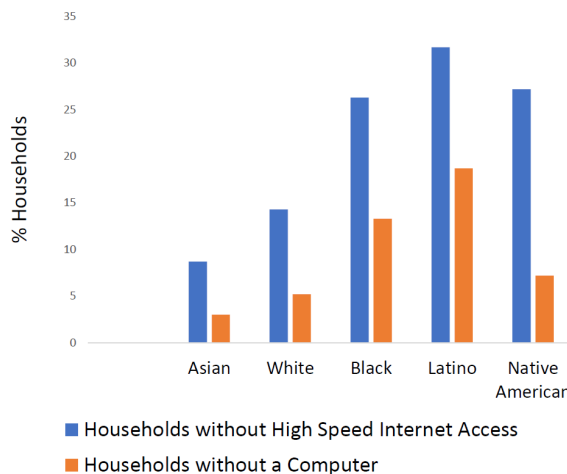


**WSPTA recognizes that to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ALL students must have access to communication tools and technology to facilitate K-12 learning and post-secondary opportunities.**

### Background

- Even before COVID-19, there was a digital divide in Washington: more than 280,000 children had no broadband at home, and more than 117,000 had no computers, with BIPOC students being twice as likely to lack access. This digital divide affected 15% of metropolitan and 26% of rural households. Over 2/3 of school districts reported that some of their students lacked broadband access.<sup>1</sup>
- A 2020 survey showed that engagement of students and families with schools could be enhanced by increasing access to technology, including online translation tools; leveraging community partnerships; and training for both teachers and families on the technology.<sup>2</sup>
- The Washington state legislature<sup>3,4,5</sup> and Federal government<sup>6,7</sup> have made significant policy changes and investments to address these issues; further legislation and appropriations must address all aspects of access and affordability of devices and broadband to close the digital divide.



### Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall support legislation, policies, and funding that ensure equitable digital inclusion and access for all students, families, and staff, including:

- Appropriate technology:
  - o Robust, up-to-date, universal broadband infrastructure
  - o Affordable broadband internet service
  - o Developmentally appropriate internet-enabled devices
- Effective engagement in online learning:
  - o District-wide consistency in learning platforms
  - o Professional development for educational staff including social emotional learning, equity and social justice in online environments
  - o Leveraging community partnerships, especially those that serve marginalized communities
  - o Training and technical support for families and caregivers, that are accessible and delivered in a culturally competent context
  - o Consideration for personal privacy issues and adherence to data privacy laws
  - o Identification of and support for sharing of best practices among districts

#### For More Information

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**For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website ([www.wastatepta.org](http://www.wastatepta.org)).**

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