Increasing Education Equity by Closing the Digital Divide 2023 Legislative Priority



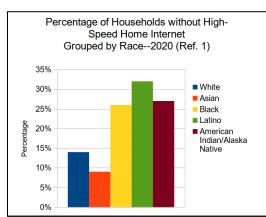
WSPTA recognizes that to be successful in the 21st century, ALL students must have access to the communication tools and technology needed to facilitate learning and post-secondary opportunities.

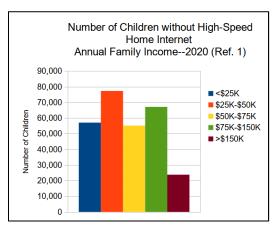
Background

Providing high-speed internet access and technology to effectively use internet-based resources for education is a diversity, equity and inclusion issue. According to a 2020 analysis of the American Community Survey data, more than 345,000 children in Washington State do not have high-speed internet access at home due to these key

barriers:(1)

- Location: This digital divide affects both metropolitan and rural children; 15% of metro households (242,899 children) and 26% of rural households (34,348 children) have no high-speed connectivity.⁽¹⁾
- Income: Annual household income also affects access. More than 189,000 children in households with \$75,000 annual income or less have no connectivity. (1) A family of four in Washington State needs an annual income of \$72,673 before deducting taxes, housing and food. This living wage enables families "to meet basic needs without dipping into poverty or relying on outside help." (2)
- Race: Children who identify as Black, Latinx or Native
 American/Alaska Native are twice as likely to lack access to broadband at home.⁽¹⁾
- According to OSPI, there are five significant reasons why Washington needs statewide broadband access:⁽³⁾
 - Access to native language speakers
 - More sources of data
 - Offer special education services off-site
 - Attract and retain STEM and AP teachers
 - Increase family and community engagement (FACE)





Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall support legislation, policies, and funding that ensure equitable digital inclusion and access for all students, families, and staff by implementation of a statewide digital equity plan, including adoption of best practices and strategies for use of technology to improve student education and behavioral outcomes.

Citations

- (1) All4Ed. Homework Gap (July 2020). "16.9 Million Children Remain Logged Out Because They Don't Have Internet at Home." https://all4ed.org/publication/homeworkgap/
- (2) CNBC. "This map shows how much money a family of 4 needs to earn to get by in every US state." (May 2019) https://www.cnbc.com/2019/05/16/how-much-money-a-family-of-4-needs-to-get-by-in-every-us-state.html
- (3) Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. "K-20 Network in Washington State." https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/school-technology/k-20-network-washington-state