Closing the Digital Gap: Steps to Bring Broadband Access to the Midwest’s K-12 Students, Businesses and Communities

Thursday, July 30, 2020 | 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. CDT

MODERATOR
Representative Mary Kunesh-Podein | Minnesota | Co-Chair, MLC Education Committee

PRESENTERS
Representative Rick Carfagna | Ohio | Chair, Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Mr. Jack Lynch | State Engagement Director | EducationSuperHighway
Dr. Carolyn Orr | CSG Midwest Staff Liaison  MLC Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
• The Council of State Governments
  • Only national organization that works with all three branches of state government

• CSG Midwest and the Midwestern Legislative Conference
  o Serves legislators in 11 Midwestern states and 4 Canadian provinces
  o Conducts policy research and publishes a monthly newsletter
  o Provides educational and networking opportunities through in-person and virtual events
  o Offers annual leadership training for new legislators
CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP: STEPS TO BRING BROADBAND ACCESS TO THE MIDWEST’S K-12 STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

MODERATOR

Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein
Minnesota
Vice Chair, House Education Policy Committee
Co-Chair, MLC Education Committee
CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP: STEPS TO BRING BROADBAND ACCESS TO THE MIDWEST’S K-12 STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

Today’s webinar will include:

• The importance of getting our region’s K-12 students and families home access to broadband and steps for state policymakers to take.

• A look at the potential opportunities to close our region’s rural gap in broadband access.

• A policy- and state-focused overview of the challenge of expanding broadband access to unserved or underserved households and communities.

• Question and answer
CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP: STEPS TO BRING BROADBAND ACCESS TO THE MIDWEST’S K-12 STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

PRESENTERS

Mr. Jack Lynch
State Engagement Director
EducationSuperHighway
jack@educationsuperhighway.org

Dr. Carolyn Orr
CSG Midwest Staff Liaison
MLC Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
carolyn@strawridgefarm.us

Rep. Rick Carfagna
Ohio
Chair, House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Rick.Carfagna@ohiohouse.gov
Student Connectivity: How State Legislatures can help schools get ready for fall
EducationSuperHighway partnered with all 50 states to bring high-speed internet access to over 99% of schools.

In 2013, 30% of school districts had broadband to support digital learning. In 2019, 99% of school districts have broadband to support digital learning.

The cost of K-12 Internet access has declined 90% since 2013.
Online learning during COVID has exposed an equity gap in student internet access at home

9.7M
Unconnected Students
(Overall)

5.1M
Students of Color

1.4M
Rural Students

Estimated Unconnected Students by State
Assuming 35% of FRL Students lack home access
No matter what model schools are adopting for fall, home internet access is essential

FULLY ONLINE LEARNING
Requires home internet access for all learning

HYBRID IN-PERSON/ONLINE
Requires home internet access while students alternate between brick-and-mortar and online learning to support social distancing in schools

IN-PERSON
Requires home internet access in the event of exposures at school, if local public health situations change, or when students/families have additional risk factors
School Districts are facing 3 big challenges when it comes to off-campus connectivity

**Data**
Knowing which families lack access

**Affordability**
Funding low-cost options for unconnected families

**Adoption**
Getting families to sign up for services
Barrier #1: Data
Identifying the need is the biggest challenge. School districts obtain a lot of data when it comes to students. However, no one thinks to document which students have access to the internet at home.

CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (SC)
The Digital Access Data Collection Blueprint provides guidance for states on closing this information gap

- Developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with EducationSuperHighway
- State participation from Wisconsin, Nebraska, Mississippi, Indiana, and Virginia
- Establishes a consistent approach based on pilot-tested strategies and industry best practices

Link: CCSSO Digital Access Data Collection Blueprint for State Education Leaders
Send memo to school districts requesting them to collect student home access data

Work with Student Information System (SIS) vendors to incorporate key data fields to support data collections

Provide school districts with resources (step-by-step guides, question banks, and tools) to help them complete the data collections
Virginia and California are requiring LEAs to report on student connectivity

- 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.
Barrier #2: Affordability
Americans across the political spectrum overwhelmingly agree that student internet access is a priority

Every student should have access to high-quality, reliable high-speed internet at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>DEM</th>
<th>SWING</th>
<th>GOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>AGREE</strong></td>
<td><strong>AGREE</strong></td>
<td><strong>AGREE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DISAGREE</strong></td>
<td><strong>DISAGREE</strong></td>
<td><strong>DISAGREE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the rebuilding of the American economy, do you support or oppose federal funding for home internet service for students forces to remaining home due to the coronavirus pandemic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>DEM</th>
<th>SWING</th>
<th>GOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPORT</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SUPPORT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPOSE</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>OPPOSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPOSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPOSE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: nationwide survey of 1,000 likely voters conducted by Frank Luntz from 6/14/2020-6/16/2020
CARES funding can support K-12 student 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
Indiana, Missouri and Texas are directing relief funds to student connectivity

- **$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*
Ohio issued a Request for Information to get low-cost options for schools

- RFI seeks educational pricing for devices, fixed and wireless broadband services, and creative mobile broadband solutions
- Responses will be used to create a pricing sheet for school districts

Link to RFI
Barrier #3: Adoption and Innovative Solutions
How North Dakota got access to 90% of unconnected student homes

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.
Chicago is partnering with their local providers to deliver connectivity to 60,000 student homes

1. **School district** acts as the bulk purchaser of residential connectivity services
2. **Service providers** identifies which student addresses are not currently served
3. **School district** issues an RFP for best-price offerings at unserved addresses
4. **School district** determines eligibility and conducts outreach to families to let them know they qualify for the plan
5. **Service providers** handle installation and technical support
6. **Funding** comes from federal CARES money, city funds, local philanthropy, and school district funds

A Win-Win for families and service providers
Legislatures can take action to help schools meet this challenge

1. Direct federal/state funding to student connectivity

2. Include requirements for school districts to report on student home access

3. Support collaboration with broadband service providers to deliver connectivity to student homes
Jack Lynch
Director of State Engagements, EducationSuperHighway
jack@educationsuperhighway.org
VISIT US AT

DIGITALBRIDGEK12.ORG

FOLLOW US AT

@EdSuperHighway

@Education Super Highway

@EducationSuperHighway
Carolyn L. Orr, Ph.D. P.A.S
CSG-Midwest
Agriculture and Natural Resources Staff Liaison
Carolyn@strawridgeservices.us
TestIT users crowd-sourced real world connectivity

65% of counties experiencing internet levels below FCC broadband definition

77% of small counties, 51% of medium and 19% of large

MAP of AVERAGE CONNECTIVITY LEVEL
Work Arounds

How communities responded

- **Wifi on School Buses**
  - Parked in different areas of the community

- **Government and Businesses Opening their Networks**
  - Land O’ Lakes Cooperative opened up wifi on 150 locations in 14 states
    - Use was incredible, averaged 20+ people a day with an average time of 30 minutes
  - Farm Bureau Insurance Offices
  - Other Retailers
Backbone

Aerial and Buried Fiber

Final Mile

Coax Cable
Fixed Wireless
Mobile Wireless
Satellite
Microwave
States with Municipal Roadblocks
Broadband offices established by statute or executive order
State programs are in different phases
State programs have different resources
States have different provider landscapes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Connect Illinois Broadband Grant</td>
<td>2019 - $400 million + $20 million Rebuild Illinois for schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Illinois Century Network</td>
<td>All state agencies, schools, libraries, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Next Level Broadband</td>
<td>2019- $100 million, $22 million awarded in Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Property Tax Exemptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Empower Rural Iowa</td>
<td>$1.3 Million in 7 grants and $5 million in new funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>CARES Act Coronavirus Relief</td>
<td>$50 million authorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Kansas Broadband Map Completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Connecting Michigan Communities</td>
<td>$20 Million authorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Completed Michigan Broadband Roadmap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2020 Legislative Session, 43 states addressed broadband issues. 23 states enacted legislation or adopted resolutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Border to Border Broadband Grant</td>
<td>$20 Million for each year 2019 and 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Nebraska Universal Service Fund</td>
<td>State funding for connections to hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>STAGEnet</td>
<td>Statewide network for state agencies, universities, local government and schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>CARES Act Coronavirus Relief</td>
<td>$40 million for Nebraska Broadband Grant Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Connect Ohio</td>
<td>No funding since 2017, Dept of Transportation issued report in 2019 Funding under consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Office of Economic Development</td>
<td>$5 million in 2019 and 2020, plus $6.5 million of CARES Act Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Broadband Expansion Grant</td>
<td>$48 million in 2019 for biennium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best Practices

- Leadership
- Dedicated Broadband Staff
- Policy Framework
- Broadband Data Collection and Mapping
- Defining Under and Unserved
- Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement
- Support Local Planning and Capacity Building
- Promote Local Partnerships
- Leverage Infrastructure Investments (Dig Once)
- Support Schools and Libraries Access to Erate
- Direct Funding of Broadband Development
- Leverage Federal Funds
- Increase Adoption and Digital Literacy
- Program Evaluation
Funding

State Funding
Public Private Partnerships
Federal Communications Commission
National Science Foundation
Department of Transportation
Department of Homeland Security
Housing & Urban Development
US Department of Agriculture
US Department of Energy
Economic Development Agency
Rural Digital Opportunity Fund
Success

Low hanging fruit completed

Goal is to create a business case that will encourage an ISP to build or extend to areas where costs are high and returns are low

Demand for funding from state grants exceeds amount available

Success defined by speed, coverage or both?

Many states seek universal availability: “Every Wisconsinite to have affordable access to broadband service if they so choose by Jan 1, 2025”
RESOURCES

TestIT Report
https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/understanding-true-state-connectivity-amERICA

Broadband Now Municipal Roadblocks

American Connection Project
https://www.landolakesinc.com/Press/News/American-Connection-Project

Five City Strategies to Accelerate Broadband Infrastructure Deployment
https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/ntia-blog/five-city-strategies-accelerate-broadband-infrastructure-deployment

State Level Broadband Policy

How States Are Expanding Broadband Access
https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2020/02/how-states-are-expanding-broadband-access

State Level Broadband Policy

Rural Broadband Policy Framework: Connecting the Unconnected
https://a4ai.org/rural-broadband-policy-framework-connecting-the-unconnected/
CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP: STEPS TO BRING BROADBAND ACCESS TO THE MIDWEST’S K-12 STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

DISCUSSION

Questions? Comments?
Type your question in the question pane to be read by staff

OR

“Raise your hand” and we will unmute your line when we announce your name
CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP: STEPS TO BRING BROADBAND ACCESS TO THE MIDWEST’S K-12 STUDENTS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

RESOURCES

CSG Midwest
• Midwestern Legislative Conference Policy Committees

EducationSuperHighway
• DigitalBridgeK-12

State of Ohio & the Ohio General Assembly
• Ohio Broadband Strategy Report
• House Bill 13 (2020) – residential broadband expansion

For further information or research assistance, contact Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org) or Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org).
Thank you for joining us today!

Visit the CSG Midwest website for recordings of past webinars and virtual sessions, including our recent series on:

Confronting a Crisis: The Midwest Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Looking Beyond the Pandemic: Midwestern Legislatures Address New Challenges

csgmidwest.org