



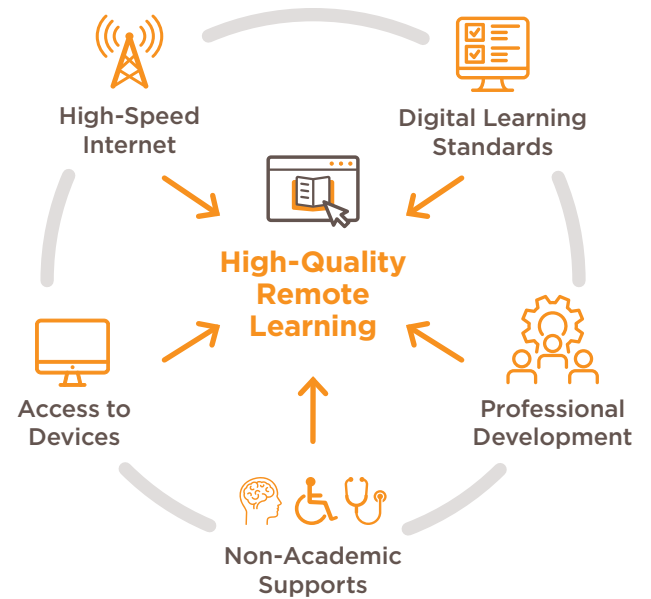
REMOTE LEARNING



OVERVIEW

Multiple barriers limit access to quality remote education, including the **lack of broadband infrastructure**; the **cost of technology hardware** and broadband connectivity; insufficient state, district and school investment in educational technology; limited educator access to devices; **inadequate educator professional development**; and logistical challenges to the delivery of nonacademic supports, particularly to students who have **Individualized Education Programs**, are **English learners**, are **experiencing homelessness** or are safer at school.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, **8.4 million households** — including 16.9 million children — did not have access to high-speed home internet. This digital divide has **disparate impacts** by race, ethnicity, household income and access to food. The cost of **obtaining and maintaining** devices has been prohibitive for students and schools. In addition, because the **demand for** and **availability of** fully remote K-12 education has historically been low, states and districts have not prioritized investments in educational technologies to support quality online learning and distance delivery of **non-academic supports**.



COVID-19 IMPACT

The **large-scale school shutdowns** brought on by the pandemic required a dramatic **shift to remote learning** for all students. As a result, students, families and communities who already had **limited access to technology** infrastructure or devices, now had **limited access to learning**. In addition, the shutdowns brought on an **economic recession**. Millions of people **lost their jobs**, amplifying their financial barriers to device and broadband access. As a result, the pandemic **compounded traumatic experiences** for many students. Over the next few years, state and local governments will face **large budget shortfalls**, making it harder to invest in building out technology infrastructure or providing schools with the hardware, software, educator professional development and nonacademic supports necessary to ensure quality remote learning experiences.



EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has **exacerbated** existing inequities in access to remote learning, particularly for students and families of color, as well as **rural and low-income** families who have already faced the worst consequences of the digital divide. These families are also more likely to see **negative effects beyond technology** access. For example, during the pandemic, high-poverty districts monitored student work less frequently, were less likely to use digital resources and were more likely to focus solely on content review than low-poverty districts. **Family engagement** is a key ingredient for academic success, yet essential workers, whose employment obligations prevent them from providing in-person learning support to their dependents, are more likely to be **Black or Latinx**. Lack of access to high-quality remote learning opportunities puts students at higher risk of **learning loss**.



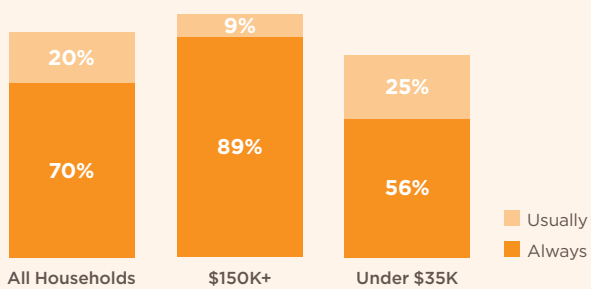
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Use data to target resources where needs are **most acute**.
- Leverage existing investments in technology and **build relationships with internet** service providers to expand broadband access.
- Develop standards and guidance for effective **practices in digital learning**.
- Implement educator professional development programs **focused on remote learning** and ensure educators have appropriate devices and connectivity.
- Ensure continuity of access to nonacademic supports — such as **counselors**, translators and physical therapists — in **remote and hybrid** learning environments.



Access to Internet by Household Income, United States

Households That Say Their Children Have Access to Internet for Educational Purposes, June 4-9, 2020

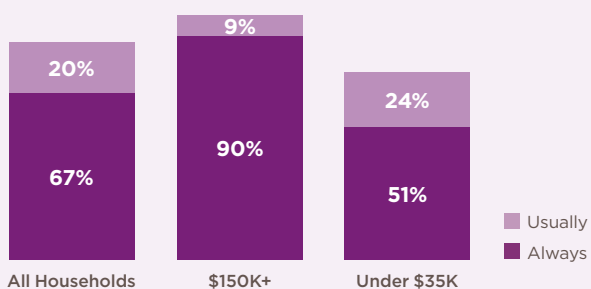


Source: United States Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, June 4-9, 2020. Apparent differences may not be statistically significant.



Access to Devices by Household Income, United States

Households That Say Their Children Have Access to Devices for Educational Purposes, June 4-9, 2020



Source: United States Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, June 4-9, 2020. Apparent differences may not be statistically significant.



POLICY EXAMPLES

AL Alabama has used federal funds to tackle connectivity issues by funding internet subscriptions for those in need. Gov. Kay Ivey **announced** on July 31, 2020, that \$100 million of federal **CARES Act** funding would be allocated to fund **Alabama Broadband Connectivity** for Students. This program provides home internet access vouchers **for equipment and service** costs for families of students currently eligible for free and reduced-price lunch or meeting other income criteria through Dec. 31, 2020.

AZ Policymakers in **Arizona** have taken action to ensure teachers are supported as education shifts between remote and hybrid environments. On Aug. 6, 2020, policymakers in Arizona announced a **collaboration** to provide professional development and training to help all teachers deliver **quality instruction** in online and blended learning environments. The \$7.5 million partnership will fund free group and teacher training via Arizona State University's **Arizona Virtual Teacher Institute** including a free three-day "Thriving as a Digital Teacher" program.

GA Georgia has made strides in using data to identify areas of greatest need. In 2018, Georgia passed the **Achieving Connectivity Everywhere Act**, which charged the department of community affairs with creating a map showing areas of the state without internet access. Statewide and county-level data, **published in July 2020**, specifically **highlights** how the new data provides more location-specific shortage information than what was previously available from the FCC. The **same act** also authorized funds to "expand broadband services to unserved areas of the state."

NY **New York City** has targeted implementation to ensure that communities most in need of assistance can be the first to receive support. The New York City Department of Education executed a **multiphase rollout** of their iPad distribution, with priority given to certain student populations, including students who reside in shelters, temporary housing and foster care, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students in public housing, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

TN The city of **Chattanooga, Tennessee**, has leveraged existing infrastructure to quickly increase broadband access. In July 2020, the city **announced** a partnership between the city, **the county school district**, the municipally owned energy and internet provider, and community partners and foundations to provide free internet subscriptions and routers to all households with students who receive free or reduced-price lunch. This service is expected to provide internet access to 28,500 students and run over the next decade if anticipated funding levels are maintained.