

HIGH SPEED INTERNET

AND K-12 EDUCATION



OVERVIEW

High speed Internet enhances every level of education from kindergarten through high school to college to graduate school. Advances in information and communications technology means that education is no longer confined to the classroom. New broadband-enabled educational tools allow for remote collaboration among fellow students on projects, videoconferences with teachers and real-time video exploration of faraway areas. The educational advantage possible with high speed Internet has become indispensable to students preparing to enter the 21st Century workforce. Those students with limited or no access in their formative elementary school years are falling behind. Computer skills must go beyond technical competency, to include higher-level skills such as critical thinking and problem solving as well as the creative use of technology. The earlier every student in America is connected to high speed Internet, the brighter our country's future will be.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Students on the losing side of the digital divide are being denied the powerful educational advantages possible with high speed Internet, while those in connected areas become accustomed to the digital world at an early age. Although general broadband adoption rates are rising, this increase is happening at disproportionate rates among different demographic groups. In 2008, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that only 25 percent of low-income Americans had broadband at home, compared with over 50 percent among American adults. Students with little exposure to digital technologies translate to adults with limited career opportunities. Workers lacking technological versatility put the American workforce at a competitive disadvantage within the world economy.

BENEFITS OF HIGH SPEED INTERNET

- Two-way, interactive video conferencing allows busy parents to confer with their students' teachers more frequently and conveniently.
- Fast connection speeds allow students to easily form online study groups and work on school projects both in face to face and virtual communities.
- Broadband connections enhance curricula at every grade level with dynamic and interactive Internet applications. For example, virtual field trips take students on tours of faraway places such as to our nation's capitol and the streets of foreign cities, or even to the depths of oceans and to the far reaches of outer space.
- Students in remote locations can have access to education specialists.
- Elementary and high school students with high speed Internet at home can access the resources of their school libraries remotely, including digital videos and high-volume data files.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Efforts to expand broadband must focus on underserved areas and demographics so every American student can take advantage of the educational benefits of high speed Internet.
- Community organizations should be engaged in working with community members to facilitate the use of tools and applications available through high speed Internet.
- Educators must have access to high quality professional development in effective technology use.
- Quality maintenance and technical support for computers should be readily available in every school.

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