



# Closing the Digital Divide in Education

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What factors contribute to the digital divide in education?

Students may face a digital divide if they lack an educational device such as a tablet or laptop at home, because smartphones are ill-suited to in-depth academic assignments. They may also experience lack of home broadband connectivity if their family cannot afford a broadband plan or if infrastructure does not reach their residence.

### Why does the digital divide still matter if students are learning in-person?

Many homework assignments require research on the Internet or access to online learning platforms. Researchers have called this problem “[the homework gap](#).” Students can also access resources like tutoring or accelerated coursework online.

### Our state is distributing millions of dollars in broadband expansion grants. Will those help students get online?

Maybe, but you might not know even if they do. Most states could improve coordination between their state broadband and education agencies, particularly in terms of sharing data which communities include students whose homes lack broadband infrastructure. ExcelinEd’s Closing the Digital Divide in Education Act [model policy](#) provides opportunities for regular collaboration, data sharing, and joint recommendations from those agencies.

### How can I find out which students in our state lack home broadband or educational devices?

In some states, districts regularly survey parents about their home connectivity and device needs. These states are able to target resources to students and communities most in need of improved infrastructure and support for purchasing educational devices.

### What can policymakers do to help families afford home broadband and devices?

States can support districts and schools in making families aware of broadband affordability programs like the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) (ACP) and by providing proof of eligibility. ExcelinEd’s [communications toolkit](#) can help. [EducationSuperHighway](#) and [Common Sense Media](#) provide step-by-step tools to help eligible families sign up for the ACP.



### Spotlight on Nevada

Nevada adopted [legislation](#) in 2021 requiring its Office of Science, Innovation and Technology to develop a standardized, statewide system of gathering data from pupils and their families to assess the ability of pupils to access the internet at their homes.” The legislation also details requirements for annual reporting on the data along with recommendations on how to improve access.



### Spotlight on Indiana

Indiana has developed a robust [Digital Readiness Dashboard](#) that tracks key metrics such as school-level bandwidth and 1:1 device access through regular surveys of its districts and schools. The dashboard helps identify areas that need additional support, funding, or training.

### Where can I go for more resources?

ExcelinEd’s Closing the Digital Divide in Education Act [model policy](#) and [policy brief](#) offer more details on how state policymakers can improve access to home broadband and educational devices for students.

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