

Digital Equity Task Force Education Subcommittee Town Hall

Summary Notes

May 31, 2023

The Digital Equity Task Force Town Hall on Education served as an opportunity for ConnectALL to hear from experts, community leaders, and representatives of covered populations about what unified vision for digital equity, barriers and assets, implementation plans, and outcomes should be included in the State's Digital Equity Plan as it relates to education in New York. A comprehensive overview of New York State's ConnectALL Office programs was also provided, highlighting various initiatives like municipal infrastructure, affordable housing connectivity, digital equity planning, rural broadband, and innovation.

Creating a Unified Vision for Digital Equity:

- **Inclusive Broadband Access:** Define broadband as a fundamental right, ensuring availability to all citizens.
- **Holistic Digital Literacy:** Foster digital fluency across age groups, subjects, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Equitable Device Accessibility:** Provide accessible devices and tech support to bridge digital divides and promote equitable learning opportunities.
- **Data Privacy and Empowerment:** Raise awareness about safety measures and data privacy to empower individuals.
- **Collaborative Endeavor:** Encourage partnerships between government, educators, communities, and corporations to develop a comprehensive digital equity strategy.

Breakout Group 1: Access to Broadband:

- Frustration over ongoing broadband discussions.
- Urgency to classify broadband as a utility, shifting from luxury to necessity.
- Need for a consistent broadband definition and addressing reliance on profit-driven corporations.
- Unanimous agreement that full coverage requires treating broadband as an essential utility, accessible to all.

Breakout Group 2: Skills & Digital Literacy:

- Digital literacy extends beyond K-12, including college students and adults.
- Inclusive approach integrating digital fluency across all subjects.
- Educators' vital role in teaching foundational digital skills.
- Necessity for educator support and training.

- Importance of offering services in multiple languages.

Breakout Group 3: Devices & Tech Support:

- Addressing the cycle of device obsolescence and continuous tech support.
- Vision for accessible devices with built-in features.
- Funding from state and federal levels, community partnerships, and diverse voices.
- Environmental and economic impacts of device disposal.
- Emphasis on sustainable choices.

Breakout Group 4: Safety & Security:

- Focus on safeguarding personal data in the digital realm.
- Ensuring awareness of safety measures and data privacy.
- Addressing social justice concerns and protecting minority groups.
- Balancing government role in safety with corporate data collection.
- Educators' role in fostering empathy and online safety.

Implementation Strategies

- **Utility Designation:** Advocate for legislative recognition of broadband as a utility.
- **Comprehensive Educator Training:** Develop robust digital fluency programs for educators across all educational levels.
- **Community-Centric Approach:** Establish multilingual services and community partnerships to ensure holistic digital literacy.
- **Sustainable Device Solutions:** Prioritize meaningful and environmentally sustainable devices, addressing obsolescence.
- **Balanced Data Regulation:** Collaborate with governmental bodies to establish regulations that safeguard data privacy while promoting innovation.