

EVERY STUDENT CONNECTED

ADDRESSING TENNESSEE'S DIGITAL DIVIDE

EVEN PRIOR TO THE SPREAD OF COVID-19, **12 MILLION** students across the country could not finish school work each year because they lacked Internet access.

The **inequity** among students experiencing the homework gap is stark. According to Pew Research, rural Americans, lower-income households, and minority households are less likely to have broadband internet access at home.

Percentage of Households with No Access to Broadband

Rural	37%
Annual Income < \$30,000	35%
African-American	25%
Hispanic	23%

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN TENNESSEE

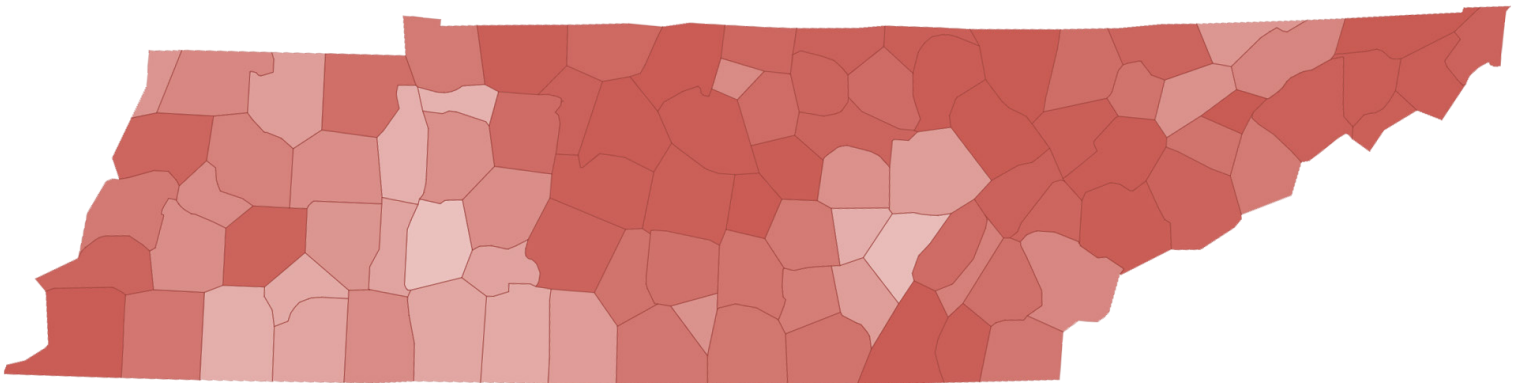
274,000

Tennesseans have NO wired Internet providers available where they live.

492,000

Tennesseans do not have wired Internet access capable of 25mbps download speeds, a minimum requirement for most online learning.

Rural Tennessee is most impacted by the lack of broadband internet access.



INTERNET COVERAGE BY COUNTY (25mpbs+ Access)

Less Access

Sufficient Access

Sources:

2019 Broadband deployment report. <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-19-44A1.pdf>
Internet/broadband fact sheet. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband>
Internet access in Tennessee. <https://broadbandnow.com/Tennessee>

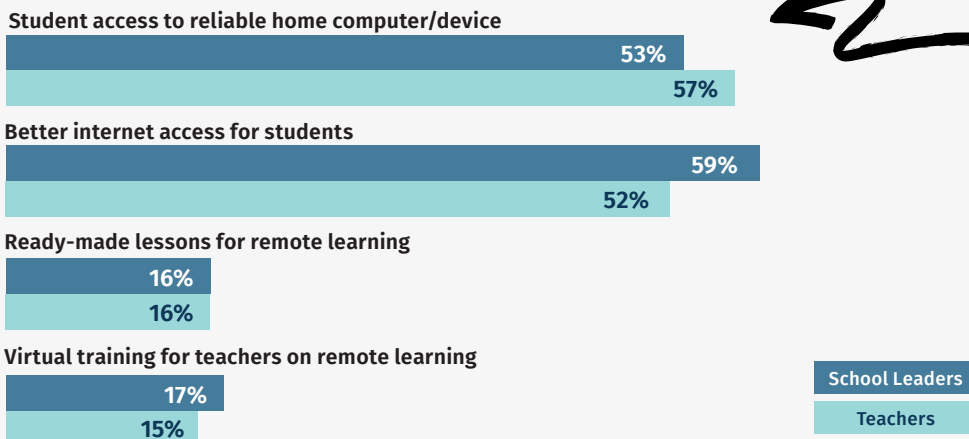


The Impact on Tennessee Students

The Tennessee Education Research Alliance recently released results from a survey of over 25,000 educators to better understand how educators from across the state have addressed challenges during coronavirus-related school closures - highlighting concerns with student access and technological needs.



MOST HELPFUL SUPPORTS FOR REMOTE LEARNING AS IDENTIFIED BY TENNESSEE EDUCATORS



Educators identified better internet access and/or reliable devices for students as the most helpful supports needed for remote learning.

75% of educator comments included keywords related to technology (e.g., computer, device, phone) or internet (e.g., internet, online, virtual).

The Digital Divide Hits Home in Rural Tennessee



In rural communities, which tend to have less access to high-speed broadband, **more than two-thirds of educators reported that better internet access is needed to support remote learning** (as compared to about half of educators in urban and suburban communities).

Within 19 districts across the state, more than 75 percent of responding teachers identified better internet access for students as one of the most helpful supports for remote learning.

All of these are districts located in rural communities within the following counties:

- > Benton County
- > Carroll County
- > Cocke County
- > Gibson County
- > Giles County
- > Hancock County
- > Henderson County
- > Hickman County
- > Jefferson County
- > Lake County
- > Lincoln County
- > McMinn County
- > Meigs County
- > Moore County
- > Perry County
- > Polk County
- > Sequatchie County
- > Union County
- > Wayne County

EVOLVING POLICIES TO

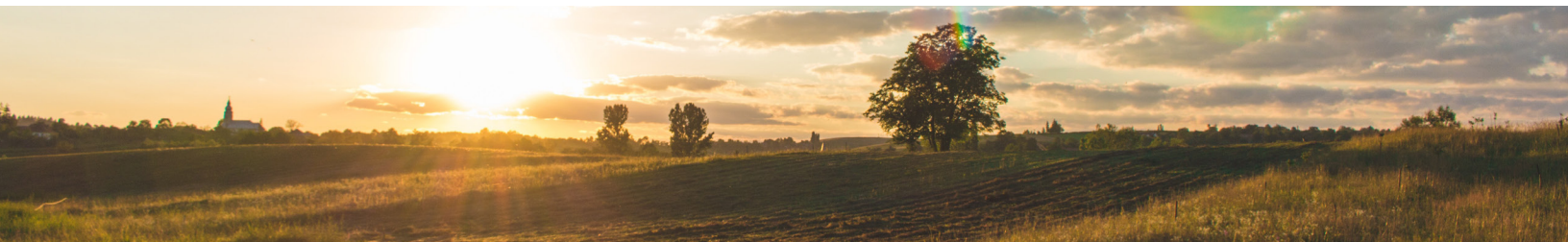
NARROW THE DIVIDE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted some critical gaps in Tennessee's internet access and our ability to educate students within a virtual or blended remote instructional model.

It is imperative for us as business leaders, educators, parents, elected officials, and policymakers to urgently advocate for **additional investments** and the **alignment of existing resources** to address **these critical needs to support our students and develop our future workforce:**

- > Broadband access for every family across Tennessee
- > Adequate technology/equipment for students to learn at home
- > Professional development for educators on how to successfully facilitate virtual and/or blended instruction



Tennessee has been a national leader and one of the fastest improving state's in the nation in increasing student achievement. Now, we must meet these new challenges and invest the time and resources to better serve our schools and students and bridge these gaps along our education continuum.



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