

The digital divide affects many students, schools, and communities across our country. Project Appleseed is working to bridge the digital divide in St. Louis and create more opportunity.

Background

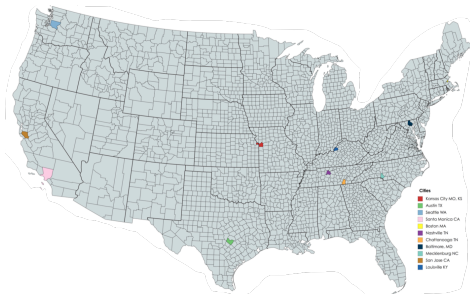
- The digital divide is defined as a gap in access to internet and internet-enabled devices.
- Students, families, and communities that do not have access to these resources face larger barriers. Related to education, students may struggle to finish homework and parents may be more disconnected with their child's school.
- Project Appleseed has been involved with the digital divide in St. Louis for 20 years and wants to examine how other cities have worked to bridge the digital divide.

Research Goals

- Examine initiatives utilized to close the digital divide in cities across the United States in order to increase digital inclusion in St. Louis.

Activities

- Reviewed projects and case studies from 11 cities, as well as additional general research.
- Interviewed 5 community members that have worked with the digital divide or the effects of it. The roles of the community members ranged from a teacher to library personnel.
- Surveyed 11 parents from a local elementary school.



Measures and Results

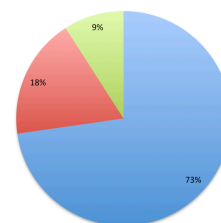
- From the data review and case studies, the group was able to find common barriers of program implementation and tips for effectively bridging the divide. Cities that housed effective programs that were examined for case studies are shown in the map above.
- Some of the barriers that continued to appear include inequality in schools, inequality in use of online resources, and social and cultural factors.
- Some of the tips that continue to appear include coordination of efforts between community organizations and governmental personnel, technology training for teachers and parents, and programs that work to address stereotype threat.

Measures and Results, continued

- A team member attended parent's night at a local school to conduct survey with 7 questions (n=11).
- Although most parents see internet as an important tool for educational success, over half of parents know students who do not have internet access.
- Team members conducted interviews with community stakeholders (n=5)
- Efforts to increase digital inclusion in St. Louis are siloed.
- Community partnerships are necessary.

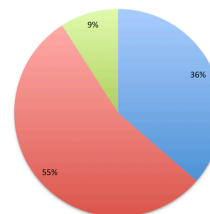
Do you see access to the Internet as a necessity for children to reach their academic potential?

Yes No Other



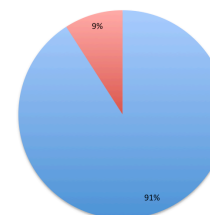
Do you know of any students who do not have access to the Internet?

Yes No Did not respond



Do you see access to the Internet as a tool to know what is going on in your student's educational journey?

Yes No



Conclusions & Recommendations

- Through research of other cities, community interviews, and parent surveys, the group has 3 main recommendations for projects aiming to bridge the digital divide:
 - Ensure that all marketing and communication materials are culturally sensitive and updated.
 - The use of an intersectional lens is imperative and collects a larger audience to buy into community programs.
 - Create a wider network of connections within the community, organization, and local government.
 - The team collected a list of stakeholders, some of who participated in research interviews, that have also worked on the digital divide and may be great partners.
 - Get input from the community regarding what they want and what they believe will help to solve lack of access to technology.
 - Engaging and integrating community members' perspective in program design increases participation.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by Project Appleseed, specifically Mr. Kevin Walker, Founder, President, and National Director of Project Appleseed. Additionally, this project would not have been successful without the guidance of Janelle Gibson and LaShawnda Fields.

Contact Information

Contact Janelle Gibson: jagibson@wustl.edu

- Note: The work presented here was done for the purposes of a course and is not my thesis or dissertation.