Questions, Responses, Resources and Strategies Generated from "Connecting the Unconnected," a webinar produced as a part of the STEM@HOME series

More than 230 people from several countries joined an April 7 discussion focused on connecting those who live in homes without broadband access or devices for accessing the internet.

A summary of the conversation, which featured Internet Father Vint Cerf and others is here.

Below is a list of some of the many questions and comments that were asked during the discussion as well as resources that were shared.

If you have additional resources or responses to add to any of the questions or comments below, please send them to info@stemecosystems.org

GENERAL USEFUL RESOURCES:

https://action.cosn.org/ctas/all-students-displaced-by-pandemic-need-access-to
Please join CoSN in calling on federal leaders to close the "homework gap" once and for all. Act now by using the model letter provided to contact your Members of Congress and the FCC.

https://speed.digitalinclusion.org/
(Digital inclusion advocates are collaborating in an initiative to build understanding of the impact that increased teleworking has on the Internet regionally, and to document how broadband connectivity speeds are impacted by this increased load over time. Take the test.)

https://www.everyoneon.org/
EveryoneOn is a nonprofit dedicated to creating social and economic opportunity by connecting low-income families to affordable internet service and computers, and delivering digital skills trainings.

https://www.brookings.edu/events/webinar-whats-being-done-to-address-the-growing-u-s-digital-divide/
Join the Brookings Institute for a conversation with the FCC Commissioner from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. EDT on April 8. Or, watch the recording if you miss the live discussion.

https://www.digitalinclusion.org/
The National Digital Inclusion Alliance is a unified voice for home broadband access, public broadband access, personal devices and local technology training and support programs. We work collaboratively to craft, identify and disseminate financial and operational resources for digital inclusion programs while serving as a bridge to policymakers and the general public.

https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-waives-rhc-and-e-rate-gift-rules-due-covid-19

The FCC has recently changed erate rules that now allow schools and libraries that have received e-rate funds to open their network to serve homes and communities.

COMMENT:
I live in Appleton, WA (a TINY rural town about 60 miles east of Portland, OR. I do NOT have internet access at my home, so I'm excited to hear some of this! I am currently working from an office in The Dalles, OR.

COMMENT: (Tribal Issues)
From Rick Varner, Scobee Ed. Ctr.: "Parts of the U.S. were never connected to the grid for what most of us consider basic utilities. I believe this is also a part of the conversation with Native American communities."

COMMENT: (Tribal Issues)
From Lisa Zahralddin: "Greetings from sunny Virginia where we do have tribal and inner-city barriers to broadband access."

>**RESPONSE**:
>From Melissa Thibault: "Yes, @rick the rural disconnect is more pronounced in tribal communities. I'm working with a team of 100Kin10 partners to determine strategies for supporting STEM education in tribal communities. If anyone is interested in learning more please ping me at thibault@ncssm.edu"

>**RESPONSE**:
>From Jennifer Nevarez: "Is there a current national resource, website, map, or clearinghouse to see which tribes have already applied for the Educational Spectrum? We are in Northern New Mexico and have at least 17 tribes in our region with large numbers of students that now cannot participate as schools have closed and moved online recently."

>**RESPONSE**:
>https://www.fcc.gov/25-ghz-rural-tribal-window

COMMENT: (General digital divides)
From Robert Boyaajieff: "Hola everyone, and greetings from Philadelphia where we have digital divides across the metro area."

>**RESPONSE**: From Rick Varner, Scobee Ed. Ctr. : San Antonio College set up wireless connectivity in the parking lot of the college so students without home access 'could' drive or be in a vehicle at the college without being in contact with one another to have internet connection.

COMMENT:
From Ebony Mitchell: "Greetings from North Louisiana STEM Alliance in Shreveport, LA. This is a serious issue for our area and State at large."

QUESTION:
From Kristen Tanner: "Can you please share the article you mentioned regarding poverty and access?"

> **RESPONSE**:
> https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/coronavirus-schools-attendance-absent.amp.html?referringSource=articleShare

QUESTION: (Internet Providers)
From Kari McGann: "I would like to know who, if anyone, is talking with our largest Internet providers such as Verizon to negotiate with them to provide contracts for school districts that do not require locking in to a 12-month contract to purchase jet packs for students that are economically disadvantaged and do not have Internet access. Comcast and Xfinity have offered ways to support families. Verizon has not."

> **RESPONSE**: From Carol O'Donnell : See:
> https://www.verizon.com/about/news/verizon-provide-unlimited-internet-lausd
>
> **RESPONSE**: From Sue Lacy:
> "AT&T and Spectrum have offered free installation and service for 2 months in Akron, OH"
>
> **RESPONSE**: From Kari McGann:
> https://www.verizon.com/about/news/verizon-provide-unlimited-internet-lausd
> Shows that they offered to students in Los Angeles. In NJ we don't have this agreement.
>
> **RESPONSE**: From Patti Curtiss:
> https://www.everyoneon.org/
>
> **RESPONSE**: From Michelle Moore:
> Spectrum is offering free internet in Ohio areas
>
> **RESPONSE**: From Robert Boyaajieff:
> "Hi Kari, Rob Boyajieff from Siemens here. we are trying to solve this issue by 'privatizing' broadband services across a region which involves consolidation of utility services for county, school districts, and neighborhoods and provide a business model for affordability.

RESPONSE: From Diana Pecina:
"Keri, I am working with the Pandemic Relief Fund here in NJ. We're exploring options for getting computers & access to students - would be happy to hop on the phone. My email is diana@bedtimemath.org"

RESPONSE:
From Kari McGann: "We have investigated Verizon JetPack, Kajeet SmartSpot and Kajeet SmartBus. We've used Comcast and Xfinity packages that were free for a limited time, but they are at capacity and the band width is showing signs of maximum usage. We need advocacy to support conversations with Internet provides to lessen contract requirements; i.e, 12-month mandatory contracts."

QUESTION: (Affordability of Internet)
From Gilda Brown Ebanks: "We also have many African American families who live in urban areas that can't afford monthly bills. How can we address that issue?"

    COMMENT: From Pamela Sammarco: "Sounds like technology cost is luxury and a social barrier where many families can't even afford to feed their children, much less $50 - $70/month for broadband.

    COMMENT: From Angelia Reid Griffin: "Definitely agree drivers for technology is economics."

COMMENT: (Connecting a Community)
From Rick Varner, Scobee Ed. Ctr.: "Connecting a community does not need to be the same as a personal connection. Think of it like a 'telegraph' office where access exists, but the people in the community would need to choose to go to the location to access it. It - access - exists then it becomes a choice as opposed to a denial of opportunities."

    COMMENT: (General Need)
    From Lori Flippin: "As a nation, we need to address universal access to broadband for both telehealth and education in light of what is happening. "

    COMMENT: From Jennifer Nevarez : "May be a bit radical, but seems like we need a paradigm shift that IT access should be a public service or something accessible to ALL! Just sayin…"

    COMMENT: From Barb Termaat : "@ Jennifer. Agreed! internet access is a basic human right today."

COMMENT: (Impact of remote learning on school districts)

From Lauren Mastroianni: "This is a problem I'm currently seeing. I work with all public/ private and charter schools throughout NJ, NYC , LI and SI and helping students through e-learning is without a doubt a struggle not many were anticipating."

RESPONSE:
From Lisa Zahralddin :
https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/19/rapid-deployment-of-remote-learning-lessons-from.html
"The district is also benefitting from a grant from Kajeet, a former cellphone company that now works to close the "digital divide" by providing school districts with connectivity tools, such as outfitting buses with Wi-Fi. Those buses will be deployed to low-income neighborhoods to serve as mobile hotspots, said Schwartz.
'We're doing an assessment now to figure out where we can get the most benefit from these buses," he said.

QUESTION: (Kenya)
From Tom Okaya : Hi, I wish to get the email address to help me work with Google to increase students' access in Kenya whose access is seriously limited.

    RESPONSE: From Vint Cerf: my email is vint@google.com

QUESTION: (Certification)
From Betsy Stefany : can we create micro-certification for these younger people? Is there a larger group that would be thought of as valuable to gain a certification?

QUESTION: (Kansas City)
From Kari Keefe : Does anyone know of any providers in the Kansas City metro area that can help us resource economically disadvantaged students with internet, smartphones, or other connected devices?

    RESPONSE: From Vint Cerf: Google fiber might be worth contacting.

COMMENT: (General Strategies)
From Steve Peters: "I am Coordinating the Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network that has recently created a COVID-19 Digital Access Task force to address the immediate needs. First thing we have done is bringing together people from, gov, education, service providers etc to begin to understand the needs and share info. We have also been identifying federal and state changes and resources . Lots of things are happening. info aticarizona@gmail.com.
www.arizonatele.org"