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Creating 1:1 Technology-led Solutions for Virtual Learning

School District Guide



Introduction



Bridging the Gaps of the Digital Divide in a Critical School Year

As a school district IT decision maker, it's no secret that you're facing considerable challenges for the upcoming school year. The COVID-19 pandemic shows very few signs of slowing down, forcing many school districts into full-time distance learning. Teachers must quickly pivot to leading their classrooms with this model for the fall instead of ending an in-progress school year with it as they did this past spring. Families are struggling to support remote learning for their children for indefinite periods of time.

Worst of all, many families aren't equally capable of facing these challenges head-on for their children. It has created a digital divide with devastating effects:

- **9 in 10** American adults use the Internet, but only 56% of households with incomes under \$30,000 have access to broadband internet
- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly **20% of teens** were unable to finish homework because of lack of adequate broadband Internet access at home

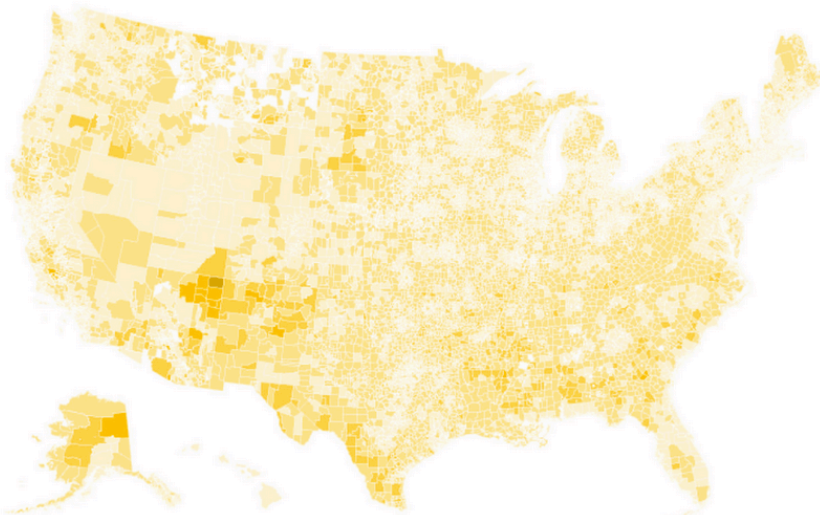
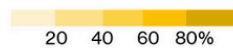
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, this “digital divide” has become distressingly problematic:

- Nationwide, only 24 percent of public school teachers reported that all of their students had access to a computer or tablet to use for school work.
- According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 14% of children ages 3-18 don't have internet access at home.
- Preliminary research suggests students nationwide will return to school in the fall with roughly 70% of learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year, and less than 50% in math, according to projections by NWEA, an Oregon-based nonprofit education-services firm.

This perfect storm of educators, government bodies and the pandemic are leading to innovative approaches to crafting a sustainable and supported technology-led distance learning program for students to close that digital divide. Let's consider the key ingredients to the solution.

Lack of Internet Access

Percentage of households with no access to internet, by school district



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 ACS 5 year estimate, table B28002

(Marie Patino)

Bloomberg

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In this guide we outline the core components to put together a successful tech-led distance learning programing:

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Let's Start With Funding



Unprecedented Times Call for Unprecedented Funding Flexibility

With respect to traditional educational funding, the landscape is sub-optimal at best. With already tight state and local budgets potentially cut significantly due to tax revenue losses – and technology budget needs being stretched beyond the breaking point to support 1:1 initiatives, new avenues to funding need to be explored.

The recently passed federal CARES Act provided approximately \$30 billion to address these challenges including:

- \$13.5 billion for K-12 schools
- \$14 billion for higher education
- \$3 billion for governors to spend for their states

However, some school districts have yet to access these funds as the trickle down may be delayed by unclear eligibility requirements, stalled paperwork or offsets from previous budget reductions. While this gap is daunting, bridging it is possible if districts are willing to step out of reliance on their federal, state and local government sources. Specifically, districts that are leaping ahead are investigating:

- Grants
- Voter-approved bonds
- Nonprofit/private sector partners

The funds through alternative sources such as these are often more tailored to the immediate and



CARES Act
Education Funding
\$30.75 billion Education
Stabilization Fund

\$13.5 billion

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Distributed to states based on their share of ESEA Title I-A funds. State education agencies to distribute at least 90% of funds to school districts and public charter schools based on their share of Title I-A funds.

\$14 billion

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Direct grants to post-secondary institutions and some career tech schools with adult education programs.

\$3 billion

Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

To allocate at their discretion for emergency support grants to LEAs that the state educational agency deems have been most significantly impacted by coronavirus.

specific local needs of their districts and the children they serve. One notable recent example involves the private organization known as The Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF).

This congregation of private philanthropist foundations is committed to improving outcomes for the people of Michigan however possible, and recently seized upon an opportunity to help the large population of underserved Michigan students caught on the wrong side of the digital divide in education. When the districts that each of their foundations serves had to quickly pivot to distance learning, many students without devices and supporting infrastructure were in desperate need of assistance. Stratix (in conjunction with CMF and State of Michigan) quickly crafted a mobile technology program that leveraged partnerships with Samsung, HP, Bark

and T-Mobile – among others – to provide the devices, configuration, and student support needed for a seamless out-of-the-box experience.

Alternative Funding Sources

- Grants
- Voter-approved bonds
- Nonprofit/private sector partners

None of it would've been possible without readily accessible alternate funding sources. It's a clear indicator that school administrators and decision makers must be prepared to apply innovative strategies to obtaining funding if they hope to thrive amidst an increasingly challenging fiscal environment for their districts.



Procuring Devices

Pump Up the Volume

Back to School Supplies

- ☐ Chromebooks
- ☐ Laptops
- ☐ Tablets
- ☐ Cases
- ☐ Accessories
- ☐ Charging Stations

Procuring High-Demand Devices is Essential for Making Distance Learning Work

If you're an IT decision maker for a school district, you already know supporting remote learning for your students will require a bundle that will have some, if not all, of these elements:

- Chromebooks, laptops or tablets to execute work on
- Mobile hotspots to ensure reliable broadband access to homes without it
- Assorted accessories such as cases to protect the equipment during usage or headphones

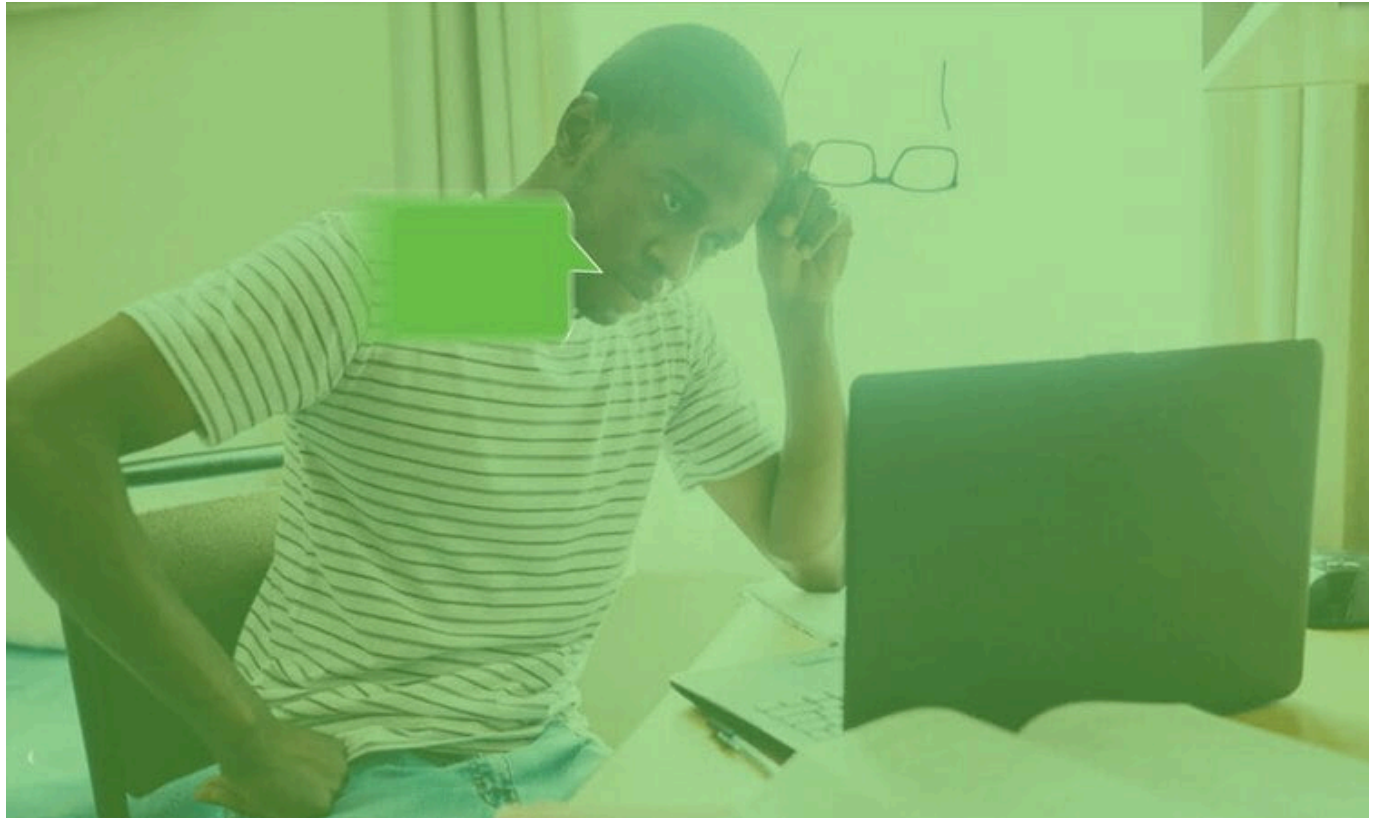
Check, check and check. Of course, this list assumes that another all-

important element is in place: availability. For districts that did not already have 1:1 programs in place, especially disadvantaged districts where the individual student need is higher, it's likely been a struggle to procure the needed devices through traditional educational supply chain partners. As consumers discovered when trying to obtain toilet paper, disinfecting wipes and meat at various points during the early months of the pandemic – a supply chain built for efficiency isn't built to be flexible and responsive to unprecedented spikes in demand.



It's advantageous to leverage non-traditional technology providers who both serve enterprise customers (as well as the education sector) and come to the table with a wide ecosystem of partners. Providers who specialize in relevant areas such as managed mobility services can lean on their strong relationships with OEMs such as Samsung, LG, HP and Google give them a head start in being able to procure much-needed and much in-demand devices at volume. Best of all, they're an ideal starting point for crafting a program that will address the configuration and kitting of these solutions for your students – an absolute must-have.

Even large school districts may not possess the purchasing clout needed to secure high-demand solutions, but they can supplement that by choosing wisely when considering the technology providers they opt to partner with.



Year in the Life of a Device

Establish Connectivity

Connect the Dots



No Distance Learning Program Can Succeed Without Ample Broadband Connectivity

Internet connectivity, and its massively outsized role in our lives amid the pandemic, is something too many of us take for granted.

For many underserved children, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

A recent study estimates that 31% of U.S. households don't even meet the minimum requirements for broadband access. While the bulk of those are rural users, this remains an issue even in high-density urban areas. There, students may live in large apartment buildings, shelters or other buildings where individual

Internet access isn't easy to acquire. One recent example in Phoenix, AZ involved three seniors, worried about graduation, huddled together under a blanket outside a nearby school to finish their homework using the school's internet. Bandwidth is another issue, even in homes with internet access can prove problematic when multiple children are simultaneously doing schoolwork with parents also working from home.

The digital divide is at its most disruptive when students are both literally and figuratively "cut off" from their peers due to lack of

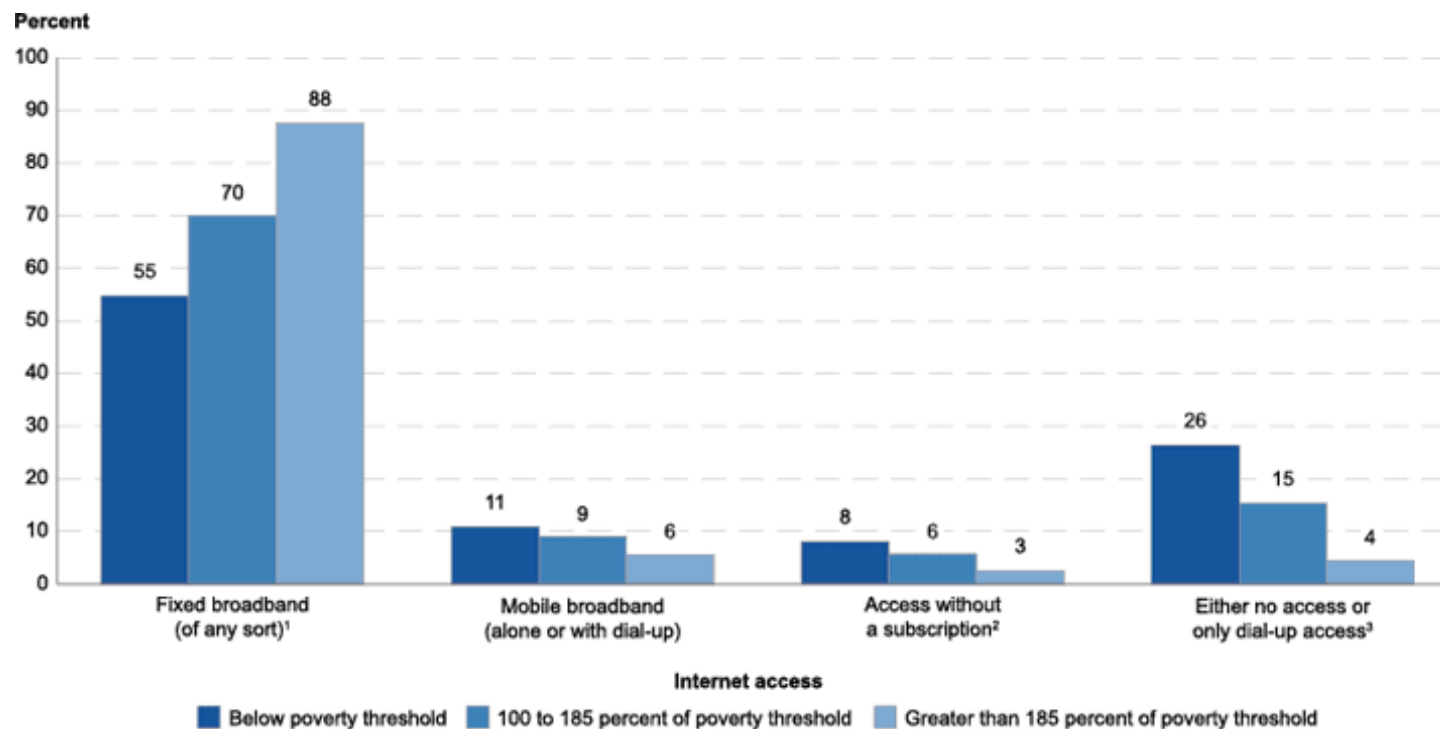


broadband access. That's why it's more crucial than ever to have a multi-tiered plan to address this lack of connectivity for students in your district. Administrators and district decision makers must:

- Engage technology providers who have established partnerships with major carriers. Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile form the backbone of our national mobile connectivity grid. They're also ideal to engage for strategic deployment of devices and support to address these challenges.
- Obtain and deploy individual mobile hotspots to families. Be certain that you have the partners and inventory necessary to deploy mobile hotspots at volume to serve your students.

It's more vital than ever to account for persistent connectivity and broadband access for both individual households and the community at large when crafting your distance learning programs.

Percentage of students 5 to 17 years old, by internet access at home and poverty level



National Center for Education Statistics



Set Your Program Up for Success

Get Devices into the Hands of Students

Make Sure Your Devices are Ready to Use and Configured When They Get Into Student's Hands

Consider the end-user, your student and the environment that they will use the solutions, this pre-work will make or break the end user's success

Parents and school decision makers know that it's one thing to put a fully-functional mobile smart device in the hands of a child; it's quite another to know that the child is well-positioned to get work done without difficulties, distractions or susceptibility to online perils.

Challenges are understandable – after all, children have the same difficulties distinguishing between work and play when using the same

device for both as adults do. The overwhelming amount of time that students spend online when distance learning, however, means that the burden of responsible digital citizenship can't rest solely on children. Educators and parents must partner together to provide the tools to ensure their safety and productivity. In short, devices must be:

- Ready to use “Out of the Box”
- Asset-tagged with serialized trackability
- Enrolled in Google Classroom and on-line safety programs



Selecting the right child safety suite is a particularly important element, as it is the first line of defense against the ever-persistent threat of online perils such as cyberbullying, violent threats, grooming by predators and suicidal ideation. The proliferation of social media channels has given a platform to these and many other online perils to spread unabated.

Leading security/monitoring suites such as [Bark for Schools](#), however, provide a detailed Parent Portal that allows families to receive alerts about suspicious behavior on their child's device – even after-hours when schools are closed. Enlisting parents to partner with district device administrators creates a complete circle of protection that lets kids be free to be their best selves online.

It's so important to bundle these features to provide a superior Day-One user experience for students using these devices – in short, there's a lot more that goes into the designing the program than just getting devices.



How Bark for Schools Helps Keep Students Safe

Year-Round Device Support



Comprehensive Day-Two Device Support Means Less Disruptions to Learning

The best-conceived distance learning programs will consider everything that we've touched upon thus far. They may even consider in detail how to be smarter about procuring funding and devices, allowing for connectivity, and leaving no stone unturned when it comes to configuring them for safety and performance. All of those aspects fade in importance, however, if your distance learning program isn't built around another essential concept: sustainability.

Sustainability, in this case, simply refers to keeping the device viable for its entire lifecycle. Accidents will most certainly happen, especially when so many will be going to underserved households using them for the first time. Your investment of hard-won funding into distance

learning-related devices is valuable, but keeping your devices up and running over the long term is where services design comes in to increase ROI.

It just makes sense to scale up your help desk and device repair resources to meet the immense pressure of supporting so many parents, students and educators remotely. Most school districts have pieced together a technical support department with a small staff. To give context, large companies usually have at least one technical support person for every 50 devices. If a school had 400 students and faculty members, they would need a technology staff of eight, which is hardly the norm. The technology support teams they do have in place rarely work directly with school staff. They

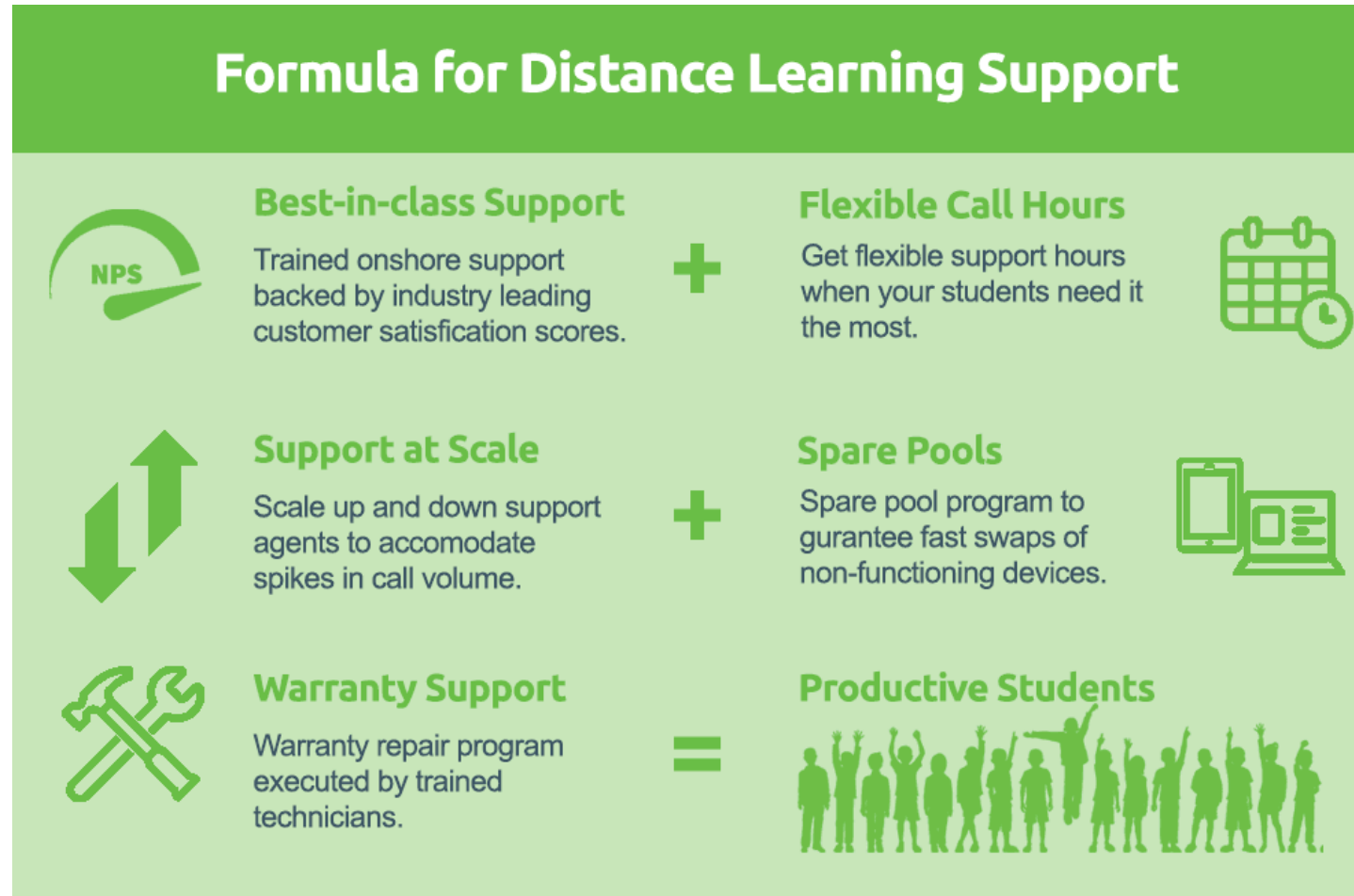


usually only visit schools when there is a major infrastructure malfunction or new equipment being installed.

In order to prevent excessive device and student downtime, your distance learning support program must offer:

- Best-in-class tech support at scale backed by a high satisfaction rating
- Flexible call hours into evenings and weekends
- Ability to scale up and down to accommodate spikes in call volume
- Local spare pools of devices to rapidly swap for non-functioning devices
- Execution of warranty repair by trained technicians

Even the largest of districts would struggle with the capacity to address these support needs, you can engage with a provider experienced in managing and supporting these devices at scale. These technology partners are adept at crafting mobile technology blueprints and programs that



roll a range of associated support services into a manageable, sustainable fee per device.

When it comes to ensuring that your students receive well-supported devices, make sure that the math adds up.

End of the Year Device Support

Create a Plan for Sustainability



Recovering and Refreshing Devices is Essential to Maximizing the Return on Your Investment

Among the challenges districts are facing: locating and recovering missing devices; making sure clear policies and procedures are in place for distribution, collection, and liability; filing insurance claims for those that can't be found; and budgeting time and staff to inspect, repair, and sanitize the computers and tablets that do come back before they're redistributed.

Another key to the sustainability of your distance learning programs is ensuring that you squeeze every drop of viability from your device pool. Well before the school year ends, you need to have a plan in

place to recover your devices, subject them to a thorough cleaning (of both any sensitive, personal data and their physical casing) and refresh them for the next school year.

What do you envision is the program to get devices back from students at the end of the school year and how will you handle them? Will local staff spend the summer cleaning and disinfecting each device, wiping data and refreshing them for next year...perhaps, like many enterprises, they will be stacked in closet and dealt with later. What about devices that are no longer working, will you dispose of them in an eco-friendly



way and ensure you thoroughly wipe the device? Sustainability takes both planning and IT resources.

We've talked about engaging technology providers with experience with supporting rapid deployments at scale. Make sure that your preferred provider passes the grade to support you in this effort as well.

Enabling smart end-to-end lifecycle management and support is how you make the grade!

End of Year Check List for Your Provider

- ☐ Has the capability to refresh your devices to 'new' at the end of every year
- ☐ Can thoroughly clean and disinfect returned devices
- ☐ Offers a reverse logistics program to securely wipe device data and refresh them for the upcoming school year
- ☐ Will retire your EOL devices in a safe, secure and environmentally-friendly manner

Putting It All Together



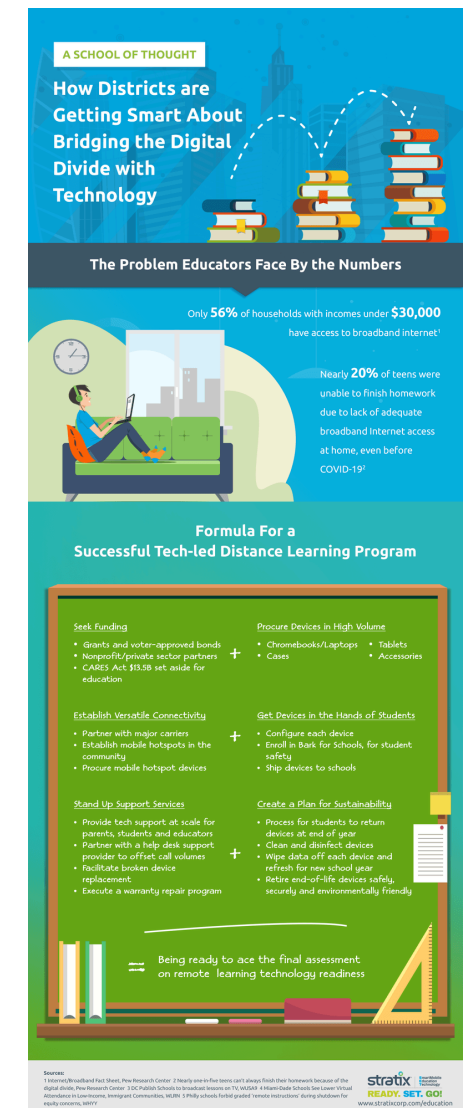
Smart Tech-led Distance Learning Programs Don't Have to Be Difficult

The challenges of this school year are like no other, and that requires an exceptional response. That can only be achieved by establishing a sustainable technology-led distance learning program from end to end. It absolutely must involve:

- Seeking appropriate funding from sources such as grants, voter-approved bonds and private-sector partners.
- Procuring and deploying at scale the devices like tablets, laptops and Chromebooks that will ensure your students' success.
- Establishing connectivity for all students whether through partnerships with major carriers or distribution of mobile hotspots to individual households.

- Configuring and deploying devices, accessories and critical software such as student safety suites at scale
- Standing up technical support help desk services along with repair and accidental damage protection to promptly address all relevant issues.
- Implementing a comprehensive plan for sustainability to reclaim, clean and renew devices at the end of the year to ensure maximum return on investment.

America's school districts can't afford to fail this test. Engage the right technology partners to augment your resources, serve your students and supercharge your distance learning programs.



Infographic: Bridging the Digital Divide in Education

About Stratix

We are the most experienced and largest managed mobility service provider in North America. Stratix's SmartMobile programs ensures that our customers, whether they're states, government agencies, or private enterprises, have the right technology, tools and support to deliver exceptional results. We take the time to learn each unique process and develop managed services programs that enable flexibility, scale and success. We are passionate about education and committed to delivering the highest quality technology experience possible to enable student learning quickly and efficiently.

With Stratix, there's no need to manage the details of a rollout like coordinating multiple third parties, staffing a help desk, supporting spare pools, or overseeing service and repair delivery. We handle everything on-shore in Atlanta, Georgia, 24x7x365 – providing real-time visibility to your mobile assets, ensuring Nonstop Mobility and providing you the freedom to run, improve and grow.

This knowledge drives the recommendations Stratix makes, ensuring that each solution includes the devices, services and support best suited to your needs and the needs of the student. In today's virtual world, students and educators rely on Stratix to support their mobility needs now more than ever before.



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