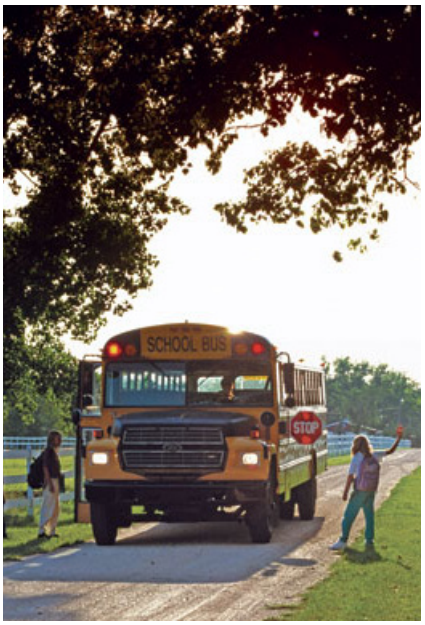
Transforming Education



MoBroadbandNow Initiative

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Transforming Education

High-speed connectivity, or broadband, has the potential to transform education in Missouri, including:

- easing classroom overcrowding when traditional on-site classes fill up, allowing students to get popular core classes without losing time as they are working towards a diploma;
- enabling students who cannot come to class to access digitally captured lectures;
- enabling students to collaborate on a shared virtual "blackboard" -- integrating social media tools, videos and chat rooms in conjunction with course curriculum and other class resources;
- videoconferencing that allows several school districts to bring classes to areas where they are not available.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Plan

The FCC's National Broadband Plan includes goals for our education system. These goals serve as a starting point for regional discussions about the best way to deliver and use broadband technology to transform education. The Plan's recommendations include:

"All levels of the education continuum, including primary, secondary, post-secondary, home-schooling, and continuing education programs, stand to gain incredible opportunities. High speed connectivity offers the promise of remote class instruction, shared course offerings, and teachers and administrators networking with peers."

Modernize broadband infrastructure to support 21st century teaching and learning

Through the FCC's E-rate program, 97% of American schools now have Internet access. But as technology changes, so do schools' needs. Programs like E-rate have to be continuously monitored and updated to help education keep up with student needs, and ensure that E-rate's funding can keep up with inflation.

Expand access to broadband with common sense reforms

Communities are best served when schools and libraries leverage their technology resources. Wireless educational options that can serve students wherever they are and giving schools and libraries the choice to purchase their area's low-cost broadband option are changes to E-rate that the FCC's plan recommends. Giving schools the option of opening up access to their networks after regular school hours for programs like continuing education will enable more Missouri residents to be served without an additional cost.

Improve access to high-quality, online instruction

Teachers and students will benefit from high quality online learning solutions. Advancements in online learning require research and development of online learning systems including creating online course material and ways to share it (such as making it easier to share materials across different districts). It is widely held that many students learn best when instruction is personalized to meet their individual learning needs, and online learning can help teachers provide this.

In Their Own Words ...

Current limitations include the ablity to only test 6 people at a time for proposed online state standardized testing.

— Morgan County R-II Public School District

Unlock the hidden power of educational data

To make properly informed decisions that will improve education, all stakeholders -- teachers, parents, schools and government agencies at all levels -- need to be able to quickly access correct, current educational data. Broadband will put the data teachers need to help students succeed at their fingertips. With proper privacy protections, sharing data provides parents with valuable information about their child's scholastic progress and promotes home-school partnerships.

How can Broadband Transform Education in my area?

Several other factors need to be considered along with implementing broadband technology. Are the right tools in place for teachers and students to leverage broadband? Do current processes and procedures allow enough room for use of broadband? Is everyone properly trained to use the technology effectively?

Questions to Consider about Education and Broadband

1. Are the right tools in place for teachers and students to leverage broadband? If yes, what tools are in place? If not, what hardware, software and other equipment do you need? Can you provide examples of how it would improve today's education?
2. Do current processes and procedures encourage the use of broadband? What could you do differently with broadband that would promote its use in education?
3. Is everyone properly trained to use broadband technology effectively? How can we better prepare teachers and students to utilize broadband to its maximum benefit?
4. Does broadband access and availability meet minimum standards for effective online instruction? If yes, how? If not, what are the locations that need broadband enhancements and the challenges in getting it there?
5. Is broadband technology cost prohibitive? If so, what are some cost-saving measures that could be implemented to increase use?

"Today's educators are helping students of all ages become tomorrow's highly skilled leaders and critical thinkers. But they are doing so in the face of some enormous challenges, including an exponential increase in information, a 'digital divide' that threatens to leave low-income students behind, and the ability to deliver world-class education in rural and cash-strapped schools."

MoBroadbandNow, a five-year initiative launched by Gov. Nixon in 2009, coordinates efforts to obtain funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Commerce specifically set aside for broadband expansion. *MoBroadbandNow* seeks to expand broadband accessibility to 95 percent of the total population, a significant increase from the current projected accessibility of 79.7 percent.

One approved project involves the United Electric Cooperative. As part of their system construction, UEC will add additional fiber strands to create a dedicated 1 gigabit education network, increasing broadband access for Missouri rural school systems and libraries. The Cooperative Network for Rural Education Advancement (CnREA) will expand access to advanced education options through video and networked resources.

MoBroadbandNow can provide education, awareness, and facilitate communication of funding opportunities for education.

But, we also need to have a fuller understanding of how education entities would like to use broadband, and what are the barriers and challenges to integration?

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