



Bridge The Educational Divide

21st century technology came with a promise: to help provide all students with rich pools of knowledge available at their fingertips. But simply buying technology isn't enough to bridge the educational divide. All schools—and therefore all infrastructures—are not created equal.

Often the schools with the most need are the least funded and with the oldest resources. Yet these schools have the most to benefit from the digital bounty of free or low-cost material learning materials: if they only had the high-speed Internet service and modern devices to make use of them.

It's a sad fact: those with the most resources tend to know where to find the best tools and have continuous access to them. Even when a school gets a grant for technology, these programs often have trouble funding in the long term. And often these grants go for devices, but then the school will soon discover that these devices are only as good as the infrastructure that supports them. Long load times and frustrating user experiences will soon turn these devices into pricey paper-weights. Educators need to feel confident with new technology or else they will not integrate these tools into their curriculum.

To reinforce the importance of infrastructure, the United Nations released a report on how broadband access in schools can help “bridge educational divides, empower students.” The numbers are pretty stark: whereas 93% of 15-year-olds in the developed countries have access to Internet at school, that figure drops to 3% in places like Kenya.

All schools deserve upgraded infrastructure to support rich online media and seamless interactivity on the latest devices. Districts should also highlight a diverse set of exemplar schools and teachers making strides with student learning, to help other schools to innovate. And all schools—and especially those in need—must also support education leaders with the time and resources to show their peers how to integrate technology in their classrooms so that technology functions as a natural extension of their teaching skills.

As our technology grows and improves, our infrastructure must follow suit; especially in our least-resourced school districts.