



The Universal Technology Access Program

Program Need

Today, opportunity and success are increasingly tied to the use of telecommunications. Yet, according to The Children's Partnership, over 50 million Americans are unable to access or use the online services they need to be successful. For those with low income, limited literacy skills, or disabilities, a persistent "access gap" leaves the promise of the Web unfulfilled.

Program Overview

In September, 2004, The Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District (CFBISD) located in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, initiated a **Universal Technology Access Program (UTAP)**. This pilot program was designed to develop a model to provide underserved families with a computer and access to the Internet. The ultimate goal of the program is to truly leave no child behind in terms of access to relevant, high quality content. In addition to access to resources, we know that technology in the home also leads to increased abilities and confidence for the student, their siblings, and their parents—resulting in success in school and work. Students are selected for the program based on income level, test scores, and teacher referral. Students and their parents attend a one-hour training class and leave with a repurposed computer (less than 3 years old) and a list of Internet Service Providers that are able to provide Internet access at a reasonable cost. As of December 15, 2004, the district has provided over 100 computers to students; and we've just begun.

Although the program is too new to report longitudinal data, we are confident that it has changed the lives of the families of CFBISD. We believe that the model can be easily replicated to other school districts and have exponential impact on narrowing the access gap for underserved families. The district is ready to expand the program and is seeking partners to provide financial support. More information of the UTAP can be found at the program web site: <http://cfbstaff.cfbisd.edu/universalaccess/>

Program Expansion

In order to expand the program, the following aspects of the model need to be addressed:

Internet Access:

The District is initiating a pilot of WiMax technology (802.16) to provide wireless access to the Internet from the students' homes without costly antennas. The strength of this method is that the school district already has filtered Internet connectivity that goes virtually unused after 5:00 p.m.—the exact time when home technology would be used.

Content Portals:

The purpose of a portal is to aggregate and filter high-quality content that is relevant to the student. The district is working with our Application Service Provider (ASP) vendors to provide the same content to the home that students have in the classroom.

Technical Support and Training:

The district is testing various methods to provide technical support and training to our families. The best way to provide this support is through a help-desk staffed in the evenings combined with regularly scheduled face-to-face and online training opportunities. We would appreciate the opportunity to share the details of the Universal Technology Access Program with you and to seek common ground between the program goals and the goals of your foundation.

Contact Information:

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