



October 7, 2015

White Bear Lake Area Schools is a Minnesota school district with over 8,000 students. As the Director of Technology & Innovation, I know the impact technology and Internet access have on our teachers, students and their families. Indeed, just four years ago, we were operating with 20 percent of the bandwidth we have today. With the community's support, we passed a Capital Projects Levy and strengthened our network. We now have the bandwidth and devices within the District to support all of our robust curricular needs including our growing 1:1. Now our teachers can make decisions based on what is best for learning, rather than on availability and access.

Strong access within the District is critical, but we see the biggest impact when students can leverage the educational benefits of their 1:1 device both at home as well. Indeed, 95% of our families have Internet access at home. Our goal is to work with the remaining 5% to reduce that gap. In doing so we level the playing field for those families without Internet access at home.

In addition to our 1:1 Chromebook program, we offer a powerful combination of tools including a computer (netbooks that had been refurbished by our students) with Internet access made possible by Mobile Citizen's low-cost program.

Our quest to close the digital divide in our district continues, both through this targeted program as well as broader initiatives. We pursue partnerships where we bundle devices, access and training to help even more families in our community get online. When fully developed, this program will include adult-based education as well, so all families can help their children become productive digital citizens. It's not about handing out free equipment or services, it's about enabling all families and that requires they have same tools and resources. That is where technology and the Internet have the most value.

Mark Garrison  
Director of Technology & Innovation  
White Bear Lake Area Schools