

Looking At The ISSUES

Stark Education Partnership

August 28, 2020 [View as a Website](#)

Stark County Collaborates for Connectivity



Key research findings from [Opportunity for All?](#)¹ tell us that **most low- and moderate-income families have some form of internet connection, but many are under-connected, with mobile-only access and inconsistent connectivity.** *"More than nine in ten (94%) surveyed parents have some kind of internet connection, including 90% of families living below the federal poverty line, but more than half are 'under connected' in some way. Fifty-two percent of parents with home internet access say it is too slow, a quarter (26%) say too many people share the same computer, and one-fifth (20%) say their internet was cut off in the last year due to non-payment."*

Connecting Our Kids Initiative

In greater Stark County Schools, district leaders have worked to help close that digital divide by committing to equipping all children with a digital device to use at home for remote learning and/or homework. The next step is ensuring that all students have a reliable internet connection robust enough to engage in school work at home. Having the technology device solves half of the digital challenge.

The need for high quality broadband for all of Stark's citizens has been researched and discussed in Stark County since 2014 when the Broadband Task Team formed and completed a feasibility study. Recently, the coronavirus has forced education and community leaders to take action.

The *Connecting Our Kids Initiative* was created to find solutions for high quality internet access for families for the 2020-21 school year. Partners in the work include leaders from AT&T, Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, Charter Communications-Spectrum Cable, MCTV, Stark County District Library, Stark County Educational Service Center, Stark County Public Schools, Stark Education Partnership and Strengthening Stark.

To date, data has been collected and maps created to identify if the issue is access or availability. The internet service providers – under the leadership of Bob Gessner, retired President of MCTV – have worked collaboratively to offer very low cost special

rates to eligible families sufficient to support the curriculum for the 2020-21 school year.

In addition, Stark County districts applied for a grant from the Governor's Office to support internet connections for families. Districts will be notified soon about their awards. Grant dollars will be extremely helpful, but additional funding will still be needed to ensure that all Stark students have full online access to their education.



¹http://digitalequityforlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/jjec_opportunityforall.pdf

The Stark Education Partnership (a 501(c)3 non-profit organization) collaborates with education, business, civic and community members across the entire spectrum – cradle to career – to create and respond to opportunities that will provide ALL students with education and career success.

