Home Internet Connectivity

Barriers and Opportunities to Closing the Digital Divide for Connecticut Students

February 22, 2021

Contents

Introduction

To support remote learning enacted to stem the spread of COVID-19, Governor Lamont launched the Everybody Learns initiative to ensure all Connecticut students have a computer and home Internet connection. In July 2020, local education agencies (LEAs) provided the State with estimated totals for the devices and connections needed to close the digital divide. Those numbers remain much higher than connectivity totals to date through the Everybody Learns initiative. In late January 2021, the Commission provided each participating school and district with its original estimates and updated fulfillment and usage totals. That communication also requested each LEA to complete a brief survey to identify any barriers to home Internet adoption. This report reflects responses to the survey, with data collected from 124 LEAs, as follows:

Andover	Derby	New Canaan	South Windsor
Ansonia	East Haddam	New Fairfield	Southington
Avon	East Hampton	New Hartford	Stafford
Barkhamsted	East Hartford	New Haven	Stamford
Bethany	East Haven	New London	Stamford Charter
Bethel	East Lyme	New Milford	Stonington
Bloomfield	Elm City	Newtown	Stratford
Bolton	Montessori	North Canaan	Suffield
Booker T.	Enfield	Norwalk	Bridge Academy
Washington	Fairfield	Norwich Free	Thomaston
Academy	Glastonbury	Academy	Thompson
Bozrah	Granby	Norwich	Torrington
Bridgeport	Greenwich	Region 7	Trumbull
Brookfield	Griswold	Odyssey School	Vernon
Brooklyn	Groton	Old Saybrook	Voluntown
Canterbury	Guilford	Park City Prep	Wallingford
Canton	Hamden	Plainville	Waterbury
Capital	Hartford	Plymouth	Waterford
Preparatory	Hartland	Pomfret	Watertown
Harbor	Integrated Day	Portland	West Haven
CREC	Charter	Region 12	Westbrook
Chaplin	ISAAC School	Region 15	Weston
Cheshire	Kent	Region 17	Westport
Clinton	Killingly	Region 18	Willington
Colchester	LEARN	Region 4	Wilton
Colebrook	Ledyard	Region 10	Winchester
Columbia	Madison	Region 13	Windham
Common Ground	Manchester	Region 8	Windsor Locks
High School	Mansfield	Ridgefield	Windsor
C.E.S.	Meriden	Salem	Wolcott
Coventry	Middletown	Salisbury	Woodbridge
CT Technical High	Milford	Seymour	Woodstock
School System	Monroe	Shelton	Academy
Danbury	Montville	Somers	

Survey Responses

The following sections reflect responses from public school leaders to a Commission survey on home connectivity solutions — cable Internet and cellular hotspots — through the Everybody Learns initiative to support remote learning, brought about in an effort to stem the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
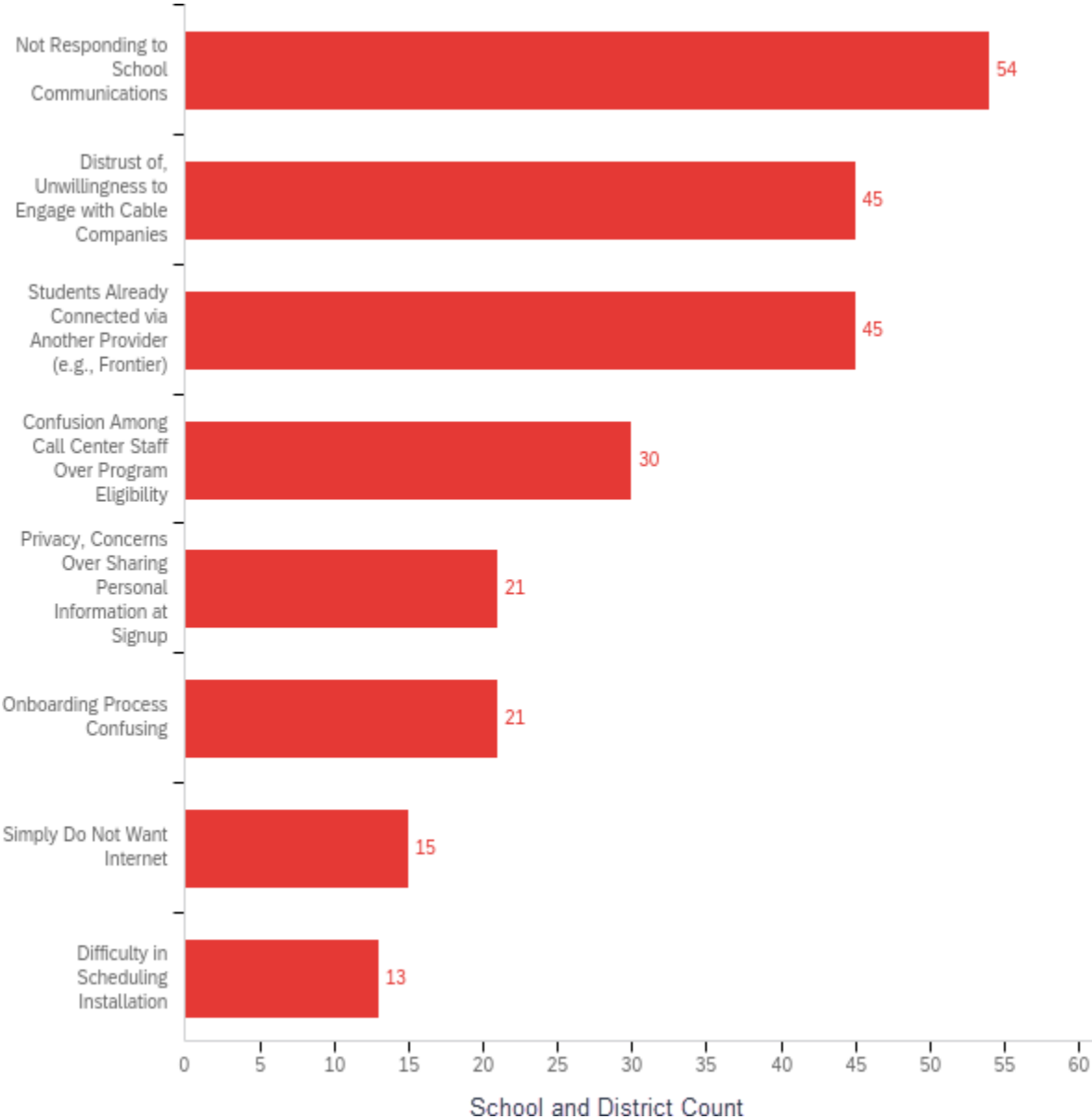
Demand vs. Fulfillment

Q: Thinking about your school or district, what factors explain why fewer students have connected using State-sponsored cable Internet services than you originally estimated? Check all that apply.
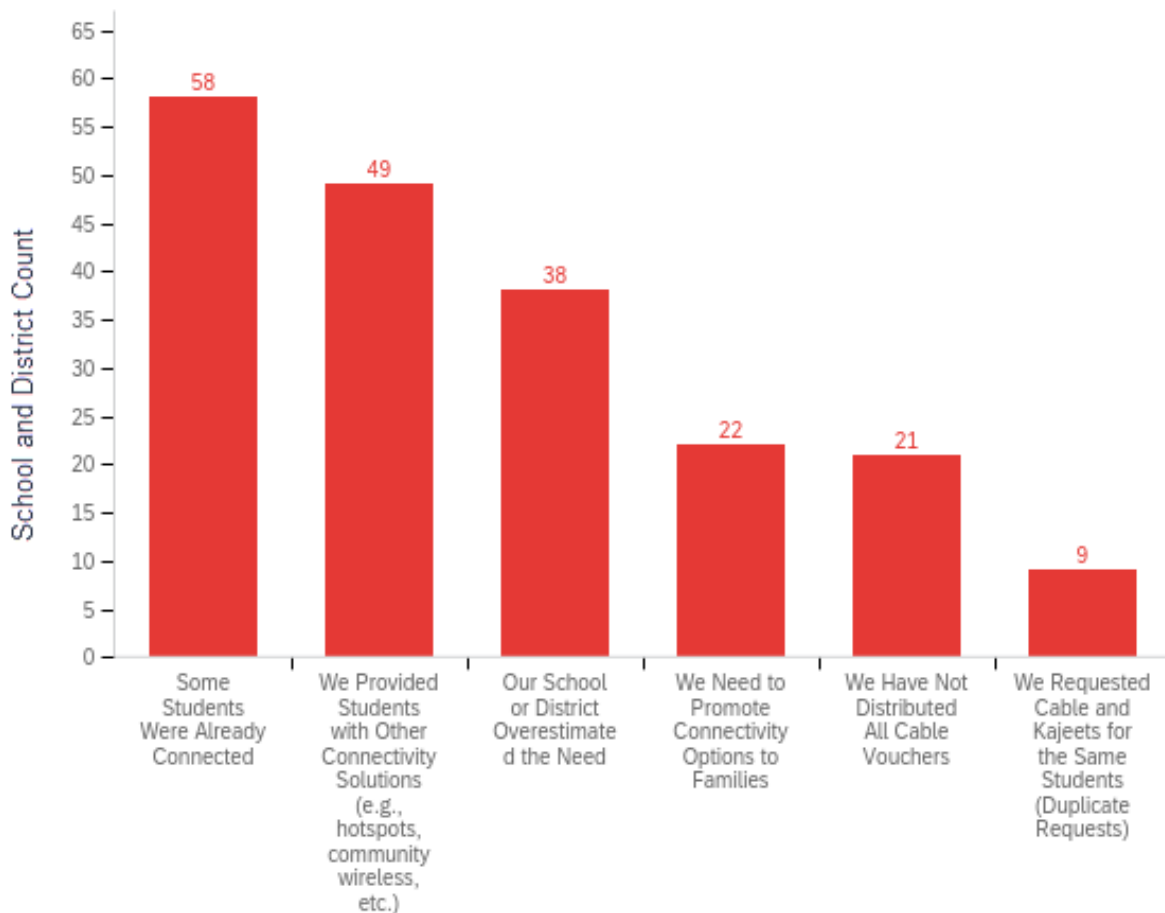
Barriers to Cable Internet Adoption

Q: Among families, what have been the biggest challenges to cable Internet adoption? Check all that apply.

Barrier	School and District Count
Not Responding to School Communications	54
Distrust of, Unwillingness to Engage with Cable Companies	45
Students Already Connected via Another Provider (e.g., Frontier)	45
Confusion Among Call Center Staff Over Program Eligibility	30
Privacy, Concerns Over Sharing Personal Information at Signup	21
Onboarding Process Confusing	21
Simply Do Not Want Internet	15
Difficulty in Scheduling Installation	13

Other Challenges with Cable Internet Adoption

Q: What other challenges have you faced as a school or district in supporting the home connectivity needs of students via cable broadband? What other reasons can you share why families have not taken advantage of free cable Internet?

From more than 100 responses to this question, several themes emerged (see the Appendix for the full text of all responses):

- In-Person Learning: Last summer, many districts assumed that remote learning would remain the predominant means of instruction this school year. However, many LEAs have been able to provide in-person instruction at higher-than-expected rates, decreasing home broadband demand.

- Eligibility: Families are hesitant to share eligibilty documents with cable carriers. Some call center representatives did not have full knowledge of the program. In some cases, carriers incorrectly denied access to families because of past due balances, even though State agreements specifically exempted such cases. Also, some families cannot install cable Internet because of landlord restrictions.

- Commitment: Some families fear hidden costs or commitments to continue with service after State funding ends and so did not connect through cable carriers.

- Mobility: Many families did not connect with cable Internet because of housing instability or high levels of student mobility (e.g., joint custody, quarantining with other family members, etc.).

- Underconnectivity: Many families struggle with the limited capacity of a single cable connection — often the gateway for multiple students and adult workers in one houshold — and so request mobile hotspots for individual learners. These situations also apply to educators, sometimes limiting their ability to teach from home.

- Other Means: Many eligible families connect through their cell phones, community wireless, or other carriers. Others have purchased broadband service in the time between when districts estimated needs (summer) and when the State formally launched the no-cost Everybody Learns options (fall).

- Disengagement: Many students simply do not log into remote class. Families have expressed burnout and do not pursue connectivity options provided through the State.

Cellular Hotspot Use

Q: Regarding the Kajeet cellular hotspots your district requested, what reasons explain why you may not be using all of the units you received? Check all that apply.
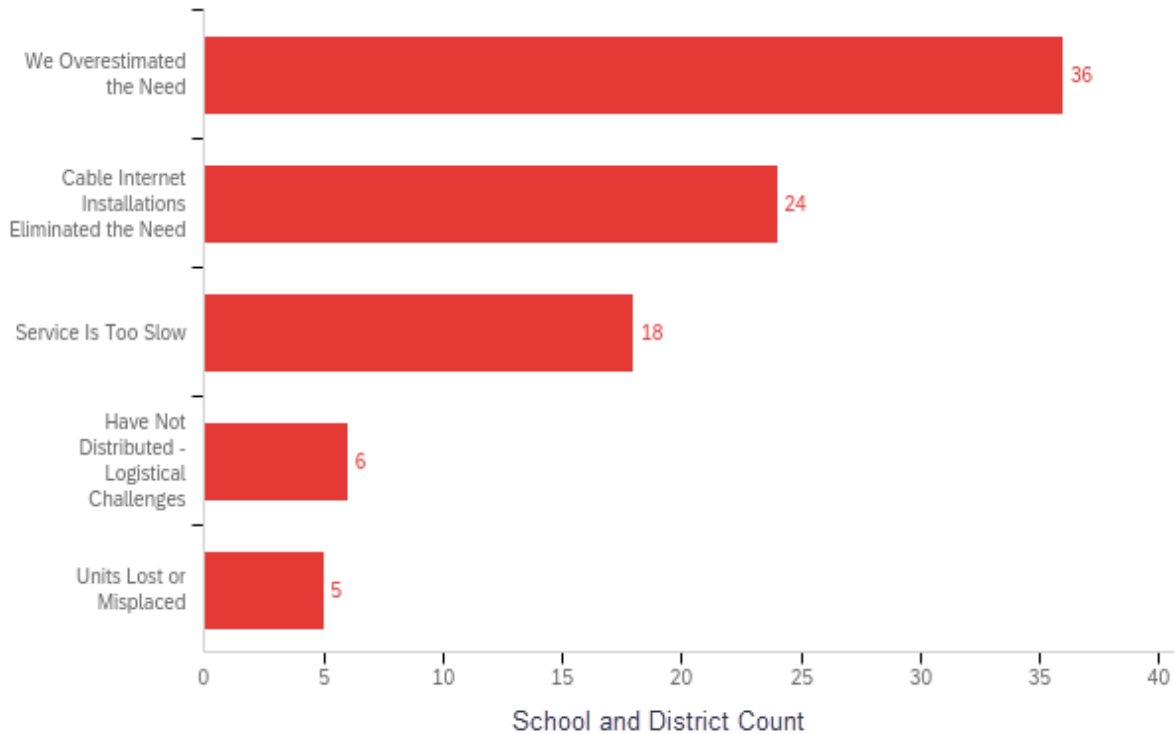
Other Hotspot Challenges

Q: What other reasons can you share why students are not using the Kajeet hotspots you received?

Narrative responses from districts reflect many of the same challenges expressed on page 5, as well as several points in particular concerning the cellular hotspots provided by Kajeet (see the Appendix for the full text of all responses):

- Management: Some districts found it challenging to manage large numbers of devices and track their utilization among students.

- Incidental Usage: In contrast to cable Internet, hotspots are sometimes not consistently used because districts often deploy them to students experiencing temporary housing insecurities, are quarantining, or living in a home where family cable Internet subscriptions have been shut off, among other other situations.

- Redundancy: Some families have returned the Kajeet devices, deployed statewide in August, once cable Internet connections became available in the fall. That said, many families appreciate the dedicated connection offered through the hotspot for individual students, alleviating bandwidth demands from other members of the household who also may be engaged in remote learning or work from home.

- Restrictions: Some families took issue with student content filtering. Also, use of the hotspots among some learners went beyond the allotted data cap.

- Speed: Some students living in areas with a weak signal have correspondingly slow Internet connections. Use of cellular hotspots for high-bandwidth activities such as video conferencing make these experiences frustrating or impossible.

Current Connectivity Levels

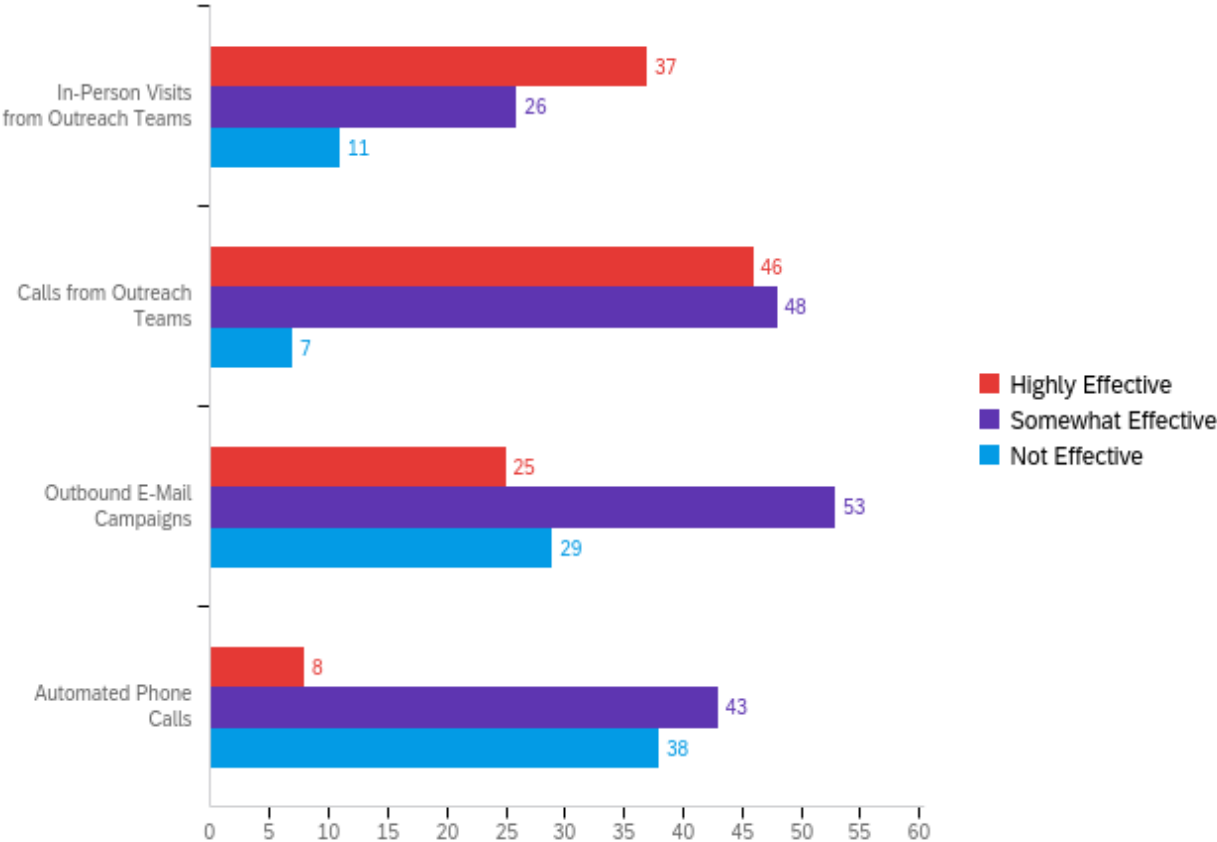Q: At this point, what percent of your students have broadband access at home?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Count
27	100	87.3	125
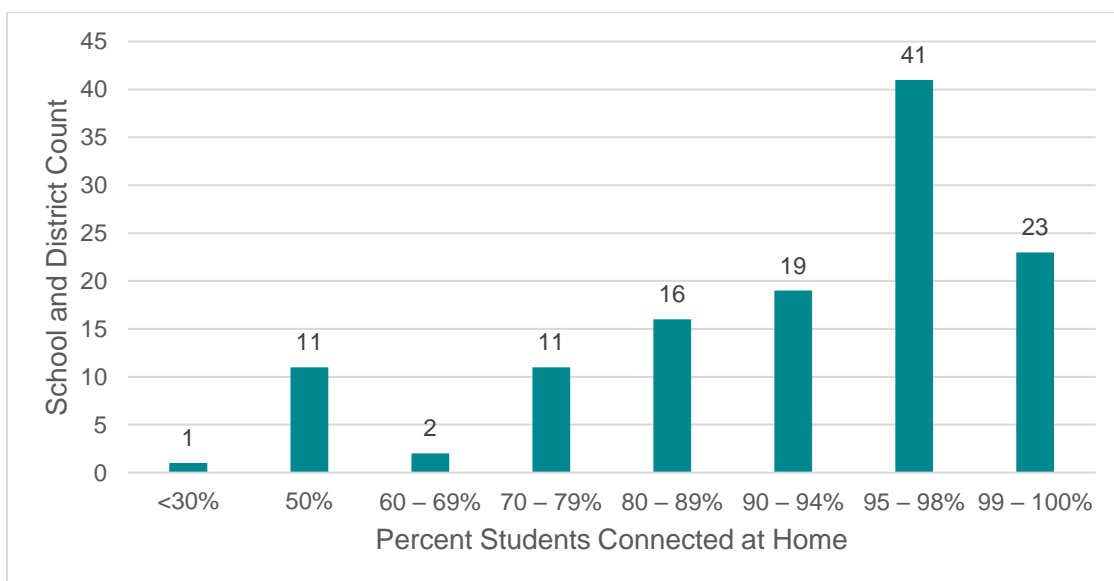
Outreach Approaches

Q: From the choices below, what approaches have you used to help students and their families get online, and how effective has each proven? Rank each approach that you have taken.

Final Thoughts and Suggestions

Q: Finally, are there any innovative approaches you have taken to connect students at home? Any particular challenges in doing so? Any other feedback you can share with the State?

Connecting students for at-home learning remains challenging, as responses from district leaders have indicated. Modes of instruction vary (e.g., in-person versus remote), family financial and housing situations can change overnight, and trust and communications issues persist in working with third-party providers.

That said, districts appreciate the work of the State and its partners to provide broadband for any public school student in need. And collectively they point to the need for personal relationships and ongoing support to close the digital divide.

Responses to the winter connectivity survey (see all responses in the Appendix) reflect the tireless efforts of school leaders and educators to identify and address barriers to learning, in school or at home. Following are highlights from their feedback:

- Personal, Team Approach: Districts found success in identifying and addressing connectivity and other remote learning challenges through a coordinated, team approach. Most highlighted the role of building principals, guidance counselors, social workers, secretaries, technology specialists, and even world language educators (i.e., translation) to connect students to the Internet. Many conduct home visits, equipped with cellular hotspots to leave if Internet is not available. In addition to the full set of comments in the Appendix, the following comments highlight the success that district leaders have experienced:

    "It's really the personal connections of staff to families that helped us identify those families that need Internet. There needs to be a level of trust built."

    "Our school principals and their key staff are the vital link; they know and have relationships with families that are so helpful and essential."

    "The one to one is all that has worked for me, delivering a hot spot to the family's home, writing a set of directions specific to the family. Relationships. That's what it's all about."

    "The principal of our elementary school hosted live training sessions for families and made himself available to families for 1:1 time if needed. He coordinated with the Director of Operations to assist with families whose predominant language was Spanish."

> "We track daily students who are not engaging in online learning. When we see a pattern, our team conducts a home visit to determine needs."

- Digital Inclusion Teams: In addition to school- and district-based teams, some respondents shared details around community-based efforts to close the digital divide. For example, Norwalk launched its Community Navigators program through the public library to address the connectivity and basic needs of 400 families.

- Community Solutions: District feedback strongly supports efforts such as the community wireless component of Governor Lamont's Everybody Learns initiative. Deployed through the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), the project provides outdoor wireless Internet access from schools and libraries in some of Connecticut's least connected communities. Other approaches to providing long-term, sustainable connectivity include the use of Eduroam, championed by the Commission and CEN for the past several years. Survey responses reflect interest in the work of New Haven Public Schools and its partners, helping that city become the first in Connecticut to offer this community wireless solution. Comments also encouraged approaches like getting group and public housing locations online to address the Internet needs of some of Connecticut's most needy families.

- Expanded Technology Support: Many districts have expanded their technology support beyond in-school help for faculty, staff, and students to include before- and after-hours help desks for families engaged in study from home. Some have designed specific processes to identify and resolve challenges that parents and students may encounter, exemplified by one district's set of comments on this topic:

  > "We developed an audit process for families so we could assist in determining the root cause of connectivity issues in schools. Some examples include the location the student is working within the home relative to the location of the router/wireless access points, strains on bandwidth from all home devices coupled with educational technology, weak carrier signals in certain areas and finally, limited hardware specs of certain machines running robust software."

- Expand Existing Service: Respondents suggested that funding higher tiers of connectivity for current customers would allow for effective remote learning in homes where multiple students and adults share the same connection.

- Prioritizing In-School Learning: Some districts have prioritized in-school instruction for specific student populations. Conversely, they indicate that older students and those with greater independence have more success in learning from home.

Appendix: Text Responses

The following sections include the full narrative responses from district leaders to specific questions.

Q: What other challenges have you faced as a school or district in supporting the home connectivity needs of students via cable broadband? What other reasons can you share why families have not taken advantage of free cable Internet?

29 vouchers were given out, only 11 connected to the Internet

Our biggest challenge has been getting families to interact with the cable company. Families are intimidated. This is challenging for the average family but when you also consider language and other economic barriers it becomes almost impossible. The system would have been more successful if the districts could have worked with the cable companies directly on behalf of the families.

When the cable was not available, we handed out T-Mobile Hotspots last March. I am thinking that when one year is up, we may need to provide cable vouchers to families.

3/4 of the people who request service do not get approved either because of billing issues or issues with installation and the parents give up. Additionally, there is a language barrier with the Parents and the providers that seems to cause issues with getting to completion with Altice.

A couple of families did not qualify either due to an existing account or not within the timeframe of having canceled the accounts. One family in particular moved and was not in an area that would allow a cable Internet connection. We tried to get a Kajeet hot spot but was denied so the school purchased a Verizon hot spot for the family and currently paying that bill.

All numbers were created with surveys to parents

All our hotspots are in use

Almost all of the families we offered cable vouchers to did not want them for various reasons. Most of them requested hot spots instead.

Although we only had a small number of students who had issues with connectivity during the initial COVID closure, many of them found solutions prior to the state-

sponsored program becoming available. We also had a few who left the district so no longer were on our roster.

Altice has been very slow in getting families connected and communication from Altice to the families is lacking. Installers show up without appointments, do not show identification and also do not show the letter from our district to prove to families the legitimacy of the installation. Altice uses in our opinion unqualified 3rd party contractors.

Our school did not encounter to many Internet issues. If we did... they were minor.

Based on two surveys, we supplied vouchers to all who said they needed it. We can assume families were able to provide it in a different way as there doesn't seem to be a cry out for connections.

We have never been in a fully remote setting yet for all students. 85% of our students attend school five days a week. We believe families have not requested cable vouchers or hot spots, because there is no immediate need at this point. We also believe some families are using phone connectivity to get by. We have promoted each program via hard copy flyer, phone calls and student outreach. We anticipate, once/if we go fully remote more families will be requesting support.

Connectivity has not been the issue; it is actually engaging remote learners via computer - synchronously or asynchronously. Also, the CEN network outages have been problematic.

Cost of services and lack of choice. Rural areas with limited cable options.

Even though we are always reaching out to parents, they are not willing to have the cable company come in, or they are not willing to admit that they need help.

Families did not report that they needed connectivity help until just recently. The survey that was sent out in April to our school community came back the 99% had connectivity. By December we, it was down to about 70%. I am not sure what has happened, but the families are now saying they do not have a good Internet connection.

Families don't want to respond to our inquiries

Families have been slow getting back to us with information required to ensure proper apartment or floor number

Families have experienced mixed results when contacting the ISP to set up their access. Some were asked to provide proof of eligibility and were not comfortable doing so while others were allowed to sign up regardless of eligibility verification. Once issue we

faced was some of the families in need were originally identified as eligible based on their previous NSLP status but were no longer eligible. This, combined with some families having still not completed their returning student registration with updated information, led to some inaccuracies. Other families have simply refused to connect or prefer the hotspot as the student is staying with an extended family member temporarily.

Families' needs change over time, and so while they may have requested a solution at one point, their needs may change (ex. completing a survey in the summer is data at a point in time).

Families not actually following through with the appropriate steps to fulfill the voucher.

Families not responding to scheduling requests from the Internet providers.

Families seeking the "free" Internet when they actually currently have an account.

Families understanding who provides support for what, families not allowing technicians into homes.

Found that Spectrum (Charter) was too restrictive in their Internet offering (i.e. couldn't have service 6 mo. prior, location, etc.)

Households with multiple students experience slow Internet speeds with the Internet provided through the state-sponsored Internet service, making it difficult to stay reliably connected during video conferencing or when running multimedia (videos, etc.).

In our rural area, a street may have cable access, but the houses are far enough off the street that to install cable requires a substantial cost (thousands of dollars). It is my understanding that these vouchers won't cover that kind of installation cost. Another reason we did not distribute all the vouchers is that we have been in person since the start of the school year. We have had a small percentage of distance learners and sporadic cases of a cohort temporarily distance learning. We have been able to use some of the hotspots for short term needs. In speaking to students and parents there was not positive feedback about having anyone in the home, or with something that wasn't ""free"" meaning that after the term they would then be charged.

It seems as if some families have found other ways to get access.

It was challenging for individuals to connect with Comcast due to outstanding bills, or because families with existing Comcast service are struggling to pay bills. In the event that Comcast discontinues service due to non-payment, there is 90 day wait time until the vouchers can be used, or families can enroll with Internet Essentials. In many instances, students are staying with relatives due to pandemic logistics, and vouchers could not be used because they are not at their home address.

Just trying to reduce the stigma for families about having a need.

Lower than expected need within the service area for the provider that we specified.

Many families are not responsive to Internet assistance announcements. There are also a lot of non-English speaking families who I feel are intimidated to take action on seeking Internet assistance.

Many families could have used an affordable cable option but because they were already subscribers, they were ineligible. Also, we have a very small Comcast footprint in Southington which was a different voucher provider.

Many of the families were did not want the hotspots because the block non-school traffic. Comcast connections have been difficult because most who are not connected are located deep in the woods, making hookups impossible.

Many of the homes we identified were rejected by Altice because they already had Internet service. it wasn't until much later that they began providing an override document to allow the installation instead.

We had also already issued 90 Kajeets using district funds before the state program was available. Most parents did not want to swap.

The state program with Altice required a technician to come into the home. many of these folks were uncomfortable with someone coming into the house and refused."

Most families had Comcast in the last 90 days and were not eligible for the free Internet from Comcast.

Most of our students in need found other ways to get Internet as they could not wait for the cable vouchers as school had already started.

Most of the families are using Direct TV.

None of the above are the real reasons. The real reason is it is quite difficult and time consuming to connect via Comcast. At least half of the families I have spoken to have said they were berated by the Comcast rep about past behavior with not paying, sometimes saying they were not eligible until they paid. So wrong on every level. The other side is that this is not just a tech issue. Many students are not engaged this year, and that has little to do with their connectivity. Many students are not successful in this mode of instruction, and many are dealing with such major issues in their lives, attending virtual school is far from the top of the list of priorities.

None. School-to-home relationships are key to keeping students engaged.

Not too many to note. One family has taken advantage of the Altice / Cable option.

Not understanding of what will happen once the year is over and not being able to cancel freely. Transit students moving between homes or locations. Families being non-responsive to repeated communication. Program was rolled out later in the process and families found alternate method.

One address was just not accessible by the cable company, or the cable company was not willing to run a line down the road to provide the service.

One family still has no Internet- seems to be a domestic issue and the provider will not service the address because it is already listed as under an agreement.

Our chart says that 100% of requested connections are connections to date.

Our district is also providing hot spots purchased prior to the Everybody Learns initiative. We continue to receive requests for hotspots from families who attend magnets and live outside the town, are former cable customers and are ineligible for the vouchers, or whose financial situation has changed since the rollout. In hindsight, Kajeet may have been a better decision, as several of the families we distributed vouchers to told us that they did not work. I am not sure how many got discouraged and did not request a new voucher. We receive requests from families who have home connectivity and would like district support filtering inappropriate content. It would be helpful to have more information to provide them based on their Internet provider. We have tested the state iboss and it's had its problems as well.

Our estimate was spot on based on requests made by families. Unfortunately, many are not using the hot spots. One family I spoke to recently stated the Kajeet hotspots did not work well. Your number of hotspots in use does not match our records, although our numbers show many Kajeet Hotspots distributed not being used as well. We have reached out to these families and requested they return the hot spots so we may redistribute to others.

Our program has existed for about four years, and we saw a huge increase in requests during March and April 2020. Our families were taken care of last spring.

Our students are from a variety of towns across Connecticut. We have many schools but are represented by almost every town in CT. Figuring out which kids are from which towns and then matching that with the right cable provider was a huge tasks especially when we already provide all students with connectivity options.

Over half of our families that we identified we labeled by Altice as existing customers and ineligible. We started asking families when they said they had connectivity issues if

they had any type of cable at all and all the newly identified families did. Altice's service that they had was just not cutting it for the number of family members in the house. We ended up giving those families Kajeets, that we had purchased separately prior to the grant being available, to supplement their home access. We also have allowed students needing support services to attend school 4 days a week so that helped ease the stress on many of our families. Of those families who qualified we had about half accept the offer. They were very grateful. The others did not say why they did not accept the offer.

Parents that did not respond to the initial survey of need and then later requesting support that was no longer available.

Prior to my tenure, a spring survey determined the submitted number of households that requested Internet access. Some of these households either acquired Internet access on their own or were requesting it due to existing connectivity issues which can be addressed by the existing provider.

Some families that qualify are fearful to take the option as they believe they eventually have to pay for it. And for additional reasons, many families have declined the offer in spite of our best efforts to inform them of the benefits. Also, we have discovered some discordance between the residence addresses in our data base compare to the cable providers.

Some families, even after receiving vouchers and communicating with our staff, did not follow through on activating the cable vouchers. Some families after multiple attempts to communicate, have not responded to outreach. Also, a majority of the families that indicated they did not have Internet access in fact did and needed the hotspot option as a booster.

Some of the options that were given for families for free broadband wasn't available in our area. We did not have enough hot spots for the amount of families that requested after initial survey.

Someone to walk the parents/guardians though the process. Parents/guardians not following through after the requests are made.

Stability of home networks have been biggest issues faced in our district. Speeds are often a concern for video.

Students with hotspots are still not using them even if supplied with them for home use.

The families we provided the vouchers and had a hard time with Comcast. We have provided the information to the schools and Comcast support was not properly trained and the families gives up. We provided Kajeets to the families.

The installation process is complex. Despite our attempts to inform parents in advance, often times installers are not able to get in contact with someone at home and the installation doesn't happen. This creates the process for now having to reach out to the family to see if they are interested. For smaller districts this may be manageable, but for our district it is very challenging (we have 750 such cases currently). Language barriers for families and living conditions also make it difficult. While Altice has been excellent to work with, there has not been a hotline for families to call related to challenges with implementation and we, the district, have fielded hundreds of calls with the response being either be patient or we will add you back on the list.

The majority of our families already have Internet. Some did not fill out the surveys sent out about Internet connectivity at home.

The process of signing up with cox was too difficult for most families and most people we spoke to did not want to go through all the hoops to get cheap Internet. Not being able to help families by providing the free and reduced information was also a hurdle and making families go through that was something some did not want to do. The biggest thing that would have helped, and I would be able to tell you that our numbers would have been higher, is if we had actually been able to just give a voucher to families and they would have just got cable Internet our numbers would have been much higher. The voucher system as the program was laid out would have been better.

The solution (Comcast Internet Essentials) does not provide enough bandwidth/speed to support our students. We have had to provide families with multiple children hot spots in addition to their Internet connection.

The voucher program is not a viable option because most of our parents requesting help, who qualified, did not have permission to install cable from the landlord. The voucher program did not expend to a lot of our families in need. We overestimated how we could support the parent needs based on a survey sent to parents in the late Summer and early Fall. The majority of our parents with poor Internet connections upgraded to a new service provider in this area. Connecting with parents to fill out the paperwork and distribute Kajeets has proven to be a little more difficult than anticipated.

There was a significant wait time to get the vouchers. This forced us to get our own hotspots to send out. In addition, it took several months with no solution for the families that had no Internet but did not qualify for a program (i.e., free/reduced lunch). The language barrier is an issue, it took time for our staff to walk parents thru it. Some families

already had service. Others didn't want anyone in the home or were distrustful of the "voucher." We used every voucher we were given and requested more when needed. If they got their own service, we gave the voucher to another family.

There was no detail or direction or time so I put anyone who might have had a problem on the list. The vouchers stated they were for free and reduced only but that wasn't detailed up front so those seemed useless then we were told that that wasn't the case.

This has actually been fairly seamless for us.

Two challenges:
(1) Some are still families who are challenged in terms of their income, but had reached the point where they decided they would find a way to purchase cable broadband on their own despite their financial limitations, so at that point, they no longer qualified.
(2) Some are larger families, often with parent(s) who also need access as well for their own needs, so while they do have cable broadband, it isn't enough to handle the needs of the multiple children and parents all at the same time (particularly when many of them all need to do things like Zoom at the same time for their own individual school, work, or personal needs).

Used multiple means of communicating: SchoolMessenger, school staff — parent may not have followed through due to other factors

We conducted a survey last year to learn the families that had connectivity issues. When we offered to put people on our school list, no families said they needed assistance. Some families already had service with poor reliability. We have been in-person throughout the year, so we have not experienced the same problems as last spring.

We did not run into any major issues. If we did, they were minor.

We didn't know we were issued cable vouchers only hotspots.

We do not have much of a need. We currently are using 17 hotspots. The hot spots are essential because these students often come from split homes and that have various Internet connectivity.

We had one family that Comcast was not able to run wiring down their street so they could be connected. We gave them a hotspot. Some families were connected but had multiple children and the band width was not sufficient to allow them all to be zooming at the same time. We supplied the family with a hot spot to help improve access.

We had several families who requested access to the Cox services who were denied. These reasons included:

- Address was not verified as an eligible service address by Cox
- Existing customer, not yet defaulted on bill
- Existing customer, defaulted on bill
- Previous customer (within 6 months of service termination)

We have been fortunate to only have a handful of connectivity issues. Also, the families that expressed interest did not need this when the vouchers became available.

We have had a few families reach out that they currently have cable, it is just not strong enough to meet the needs for Distance Learning.

We have handed out 279 vouchers to date with at least 1 – 2 requests still coming in weekly, I am not sure how the numbers are so far off.

We have notified families numerous times of options to use for connecting, and we are not able to have the families accept the help. We also found that in some situations multiple families have been using the same mobile hotspot. In other instances, the hotspots have been issued to families and not utilized.

We have some families that just won't act on the voucher despite being eligible and prodding from staff.

We have used the guidance department at each school as the contact for any teacher, student or parent that reports or even suspects a connectivity issue. They make an inquiry and then request a hotspot from IT which is promptly provided.

We helped a few of our families get connected and as far as I know all our families are connected.

We only requested 16 cable vouchers because at least initially, our district was allocated 26 State provided connections. This allocation was based on survey data that was not directed to the Technology or Food Service people. We had provided 6 T-Mobile Hot Spots last year at the expense of the District, so we split our 26 connections between Kajeet units and Comcast vouchers resulting in approximately 16 of each type of connection. Having only the 16 vouchers, and about 90 students on Free or Reduced lunch, it was difficult to decide which Free and Reduced students would get them, so we relied on building administrators and teachers to identify students having trouble connecting. Principals and teachers were queried multiple times. This information paired with the Enrollment Model /Student engagement / remote attendance data collections identified only one or two students as disengaged on any given week.

We originally thought about 300 users, so 320 seems fairly on track (we uploaded all student residences as we hoped that would make the process easier for families)

I'm hoping the disparity between signed up/connected numbers is due to the fact that many of our families didn't start the sign up process until December / January. It is possible they are still waiting for the boxes to be delivered. I've put through 23 manual address corrections so I can't imagine why only 19 people have connected. Working with Cox has been a challenge. I think people are calling the local Cox company for support /questions and they are getting wrong/different information because there was no communication about this to the call centers. Many of the issues we've dealt with have to do with the website not working correctly, we usually troubleshoot through that with them (either IT or our family outreach). I've had people turned away (2x) due to a previous bill. People have had a difficult time getting the paperwork set up.

We reached out to our community in March to see who would have trouble accessing the Internet prior to state adopting this initiative. We got 13 people who said they needed a connection. After we requested our vouchers only 2 of those people followed through on the onboarding process. We anticipated needing more vouchers as people lost jobs, but it just never came to fruition. Communication to the home from the state in the form of a commercial or from the providers would have been helpful to get the word out.

We shared information about home connectivity with all eligible families multiple times via multiple platforms including mailing letters home as well as sending emails and automated phone calls. In addition, when any family reaches out about Internet access or a hotspot, we check their information against our list and provide them information for how to get connected via this program.

We surveyed families and I contacted each family first by phone and then email if I didn't get a response to the phone call. Some families believed that I was simply trying to sell them something. As a last try I had building administrators reach out to the remaining families. Bottom line nearly every family had signed up for broadband already.

When I made my original request, I did not realize we would maintain the ability to be in-person for as much time as we have been. We have only had 7 school days of virtual teaching this year. The hotspots were used during that time for students and two staff members. The staff members were responsible for delivering virtual instruction but live in an area with weak Internet.

With cable broadband - we sent the company a listing of 8-9 families but was told only 1 qualified. Since the Internet provider to our town was so late and we were told to use that before hotspots, it was a challenge. Then, after reaching out, some mentioned they were set since they first indicated the need.

Working with the different vendor routers has been challenging especially with parent controls conflicting with the need to filter.

Q: What other reasons can you share why families have not taken advantage of free cable Internet?

All of our families have Internet

All our hotspots are in use

Are afraid of be automatically billed at the end of 12 months.

As mentioned, there is a lack of effort in some instances where families currently have a hotspot and feel it's easier to keep it rather than sign up with an ISP, even though the benefits of a broadband connection are much greater than a mobile hotspot.

As stated above, our families appear to have made alternate arrangements before the program because available. Some due to having to work from home in addition to having their children at home. Because we have been back in school in person since the start of the year, with just breaks for remote learning when needed due to weather or quarantining, the issue has not been prominent.

[We have a] highly mobile population with many people essentially homeless or moving constantly, it makes it very difficult for families to engage with a location stable provider. This coupled with billing and prior customer accounting issues had made this process extremely difficult with the carrier in our area. We are doing our best to ensure that we assist with all installations until it is handed off to the vendor.

Being in the Northwest Corner of CT, our students connectivity issues are geographical or financial. All families have Internet service, but it may not be a very strong signal. We only asked for Internet service and not hotspots when originally asked. Families have been told by Charter that the company cannot get Internet to their home.

certain instances where family had prior unpaid account balance with provider

Comcast was telling our parents that if they had outstanding balances (at least at the outset) that they wouldn't be able to turn on the free service until the balance was paid. I believe that got rectified at some point, but it probably excluded quite a few

households from participating as many of those households don't have Internet due to lack of payment in the first place.

Families are afraid to interact if they have a past due bill. There have also been issues for families that have had the Internet turned off.

General distrust in Altice and poor communication and unfriendliness.

I am really not sure other than some of the limitations put out by the cable companies in terms of qualifying. Now it's totally possible that those families were already connected but it did seem to prove difficult to get some families approved despite the need.

I have had a member of my team working with families to try to get them connected. It has become a very long process to take care of and the time on the phone explaining the program to Comcast has been time consuming. I can understand why some families have been having issues.

I imagine they already have their own Internet service

I will need to involve administration to discern the reason if the numbers are accurate that have been supplied.

Initially there were issues with the website, so when a family would go to the Cox site to check eligibility, they would receive a message that said our school district was not participating in the program.

Lack of follow up any the families.

Many families responded that their existing Charter Internet connection was poor, and Charter came out to their location several time with the same results

"many families were concerned that their usage would be tracked.

Many families had Internet, but not sufficient Internet to deal with the need when multiple students and adults were using streaming services.

Most parents cannot distinguish between Internet and WiFi

WiFi problems were more the cause of student issues than lack of access to an Internet source

The process with cable is too cumbersome. we provide a list of names, and we end up as the go between, but the scheduling was done by the provider, without our input- we get reports of installation appointments, but then the installer is refused at the door, or

the appointment is cancelled. In a nutshell too many parties involved none of which had the entire picture.

We also found that there are many families where the student is at two or more homes. The hotspots were preferable as they were portable, even if their connections were not as good. "

Many families were reluctant to reach out with the voucher stating they've had issues with Comcast in the past or were concerned about prior debts with the company.

Many reasons are listed above, 90 day wait time, home address, etc.

Most (Except 1) families in our district were already set up with cable.

Need is not as high as expected.

Having not blindly distributed the 16 vouchers to free and reduced families, we do not know if there would have been reluctance to participate. We distributed only to those who responded to the building administrators or teachers.

Kajeets were our first choice for distribution because they were much more straightforward on our end and requires no intervention on the part of the family.

Not wanting to do the self-install.

Optimum service in this area is notoriously unreliable in this area. They are the only choice for cable Internet.

Other issues involved impacting decision to proceed by parent/guardian

Our district has been mainly in person learning throughout the pandemic.

Our district over estimated need based on Free and Reduced lunch counts. Most of these families had existing Internet. It is our understanding the state sponsored cable Internet was only for new connections not existing connections.

People who have had their cable shut off are embarrassed to call.

possible issue could be language barrier with non-English speaking parents.

Some were offended by the offer even if it was better than what they had.

The eligibility requirements for Internet Essentials are pretty stringent and complex, whereas the Kajeet solution is immediate.

The families have had Comcast services and trouble with their bill and when they call the number provided for support. They are declined for services for bill overdue, service in the past, etc.

The families that completed the surveys in the spring asking for or needing better Internet either made their own arrangements or found a better provider and did not need access to free Internet.

The majority of families did not have permission to add cable services to their rental space.

The same as above, they currently have a lower speed Internet and were hoping to get an upgrade to meet their needs, when referring them to call Comcast, they did not want to.

The same reason listed above: the cost of cable installation in houses far off the road.

The summary of connected Comcast connections for our district only includes 1 Comcast connected household. Of the 10 total vouchers we requested, 9 were offered to families that expressed need from the start of the schoolyear to now. Printed vouchers with clear instructions were mailed to 8 households. One family expressed that they did not want to have Comcast Internet and accepted a hotspot instead.

There was some trepidation over what happened after the voucher was over. Many when called said they were going to look into that "soon". Some had relied on hotspots and then didn't want to switch.

They already have it and there is no upgrade option with this program, even if they have bad connectivity.

They had cable but are now not able to pay, they are not comfortable reaching out and sharing their situations I believe.

They have stayed with our district hotspots because they don't trust that the cable companies will not all of a sudden send them a huge bill. They know with the district that our hotspot is free and without a financial commitment.

They live in places where they cannot take advantage of it because they can't have any wiring done in the space.

I think some of our families are just fatigued after months of COVID and tech uncertainties they just aren't interested in rocking a boat that is working for them.

Those in need are potentially not indicating need or responding to our requests.

Time handling other issues.

Two challenges:

(1) Some are still families who are challenged in terms of their income but had reached the point where they decided they would find a way to purchase cable broadband on their own despite their financial limitations, so at that point, they no longer qualified.

(2) Some are larger families, often with parent(s) who also need access as well for their own needs, so while they do have cable broadband, it isn't enough to handle the needs of the multiple children and parents all at the same time (particularly when many of them all need to do things like Zoom at the same time for their own individual school, work, or personal needs)."

We have had only a few families without Internet access. When needed, we were able to supply a Verizon hotspot.

Way too many hoops, people don't want to jump through them. Vouchers and they get Internet. Done deal.

We did not offer the State-sponsored cable Internet services.

We didn't have significant issues with cable Internet

We have also been able to provide cell based Internet access through our wireless provider and some families prefer that type of access.

We have heard that some voucher numbers did not work, or the families are ineligible. Based on our engagement feedback, we are unable to determine how many families are eligible and not taking advantage. We do know that some students are living in joint custody arrangements or spend time with non-custodial family members and need the hot spot when learning outside their primary home.

We have not sent another survey to find out as people seem connected. My above answer is a guess.

We have provided anyone with slow or no Internet with Kajeet devices we purchased ourselves.

We provided 40+ ATT cell phones as hotspots to connect families in the spring. We had expected these families would switch to Comcast but have preferred to stay with the district sponsored hotspots.

We received no inquiries for cable Internet and the hotpot option has been a great success.

Q: What other reasons can you share why students are not using the Kajeet hotspots you received?

Again, surveys were sent out to parents and numbers were tabulated thru that. All hotspots have been handed out.

All devices have been distributed

All our hotspots are in use

Although we only had a small number of students who had issues with connectivity during the initial COVID closure, many of them found solutions prior to the state-sponsored program becoming available. We also had a few who left the district so no longer were on our roster. We do have students moving into the district and continue to monitor the situation and are keeping the hotspots available for anyone who may find the need.

Cell phone services are not as strong in some areas of town, also hotspots losing connection or speed once inside, Multiple users trying to use 1 hotspot. Brookfield has handed out all but 2 of our 12 hotpots, yet it is showing that only 4 are in use. I believe other connections are being used, and usage does change when we are in-person learning.

Families feel they do not need one because they have tried using their phone and it was not successful. I have had many families that have gone ""somewhere"" and have lost them. UGH.

Families seem to slowly be letting us know that they have a need. Elementary students are in school 5 days a week so only need to utilize on remote learning days.

Found that the survey results were skewed

Hot spots frequently misplaced, families feel the smaller items were difficult to keep track of especially if students move between more than one home, or to and from school, losing their charger, etc.

I believe there are more than just 4 families using the hotspots.

I gave them all out and another one I received from another district.

Kajeets have another level of filtering that we have no control over.

Mainly performance

Many families initially indicated a need, but we learned soon after it was more for supplemental or back up purposes as their home networks were strained with all family members home in the spring. That was been somewhat alleviated this spring given many students returning for at least some in person learning and many parents and guardians returning to work.

Many have been distributed but not used.

Most of ours are out but realized only 1/2 are actually being used. We are going be contacting the ones showing no use shortly.

For the most part, students/families have been using the Kajeet devices we distributed via the NHPS supply. We've experienced this to be a strong solution for many families.

We distributed all 10 of the Kajeet hotspots and were unaware only 2 have been in use.

Not sure since we have a hard time trying to get answers from the families as to why they are not being used. Many times, families do not respond to our requests

Not sure. Perhaps it was a misunderstanding and they were taking something for free when they did not really need it.

On the original needs survey, I estimated that 1% of our student population had connectivity issues, which meant we received 46 hot spots. We have adjusted and have redistributed all but 19 hot spots to other districts.

"Our Schools have distributed a total of 46 hotspots.

Windham Public Schools picked up 70 hotspots.

Adult Education was given 50 hotspots.

We have 34 unassigned.

Parents did not respond to say they needed it.

Passed out multiples to families. They keep reporting they don't work well.

Possible reasons would be that the Kajeet hotspots do not support multiple devices at once without getting bogged down.

Reception and the blocking have caused them to be returned

We have been fully in-person since August 31st. We have not needed to access remote learning. Additionally, we have had families who have been able to access other community supports to connect students.

Students are using the Kajeet hotspots. We received them just before the holiday break in December and have distributed roughly 75%. We still receive requests on a daily basis, and I anticipate we will be through our hotspots by the end of February.

The filtering is causing issues and requiring us to reactivate AT&T hotspots for our users. We tried to setup a District account, but Kajeet limited out users to 2GB of data month thus making the units unusable. So, we moved back to the State of CT filtering.

The Kajeets are lifeline to the families that have the devices. Other families did not want/need the devices once the program was explained. Most families already had Internet, but they were located in rural areas that did not have good cell coverage and/or only one Internet service provider was available in the area.

The only real hurdle was getting the hot spots out to the families in the community. Also, similarly to the cable Internet the families that said they needed free access no longer required this when the hot spots arrived.

they are and I have given some to other districts in the state.

they don't work well with multiple students at home.

To this point, we do still have 2 – 3 devices remaining for distribution. We feel they will likely be deployed prior to end of year.

We actually took 25 hotspots from [another district]. I'm still waiting for access to the system that controls them, but in the meantime, we've sent out over 1/2 of them in just under a month. I anticipate all will be distributed within the month of February.

We have had almost no complaints about the Kajeet hotspots as long as we provide one for each student. They require no paperwork up front and have been a simple and elegant solution.

We have over 300 of our own T-Mobile hotspots out to families as well.

We are actually showing more data usage that in the accompanying email, however many of our families are simply disengaged and do not connect to remote learning. We have teams in place addressing this.

We are not sure why they are not being used as they have all been distributed. We are seeing similar situations with district provided hotspots.

We are reserving some of the hotspots while we continue to "convert" our current hotspot homes over to a broadband connection. Those that we do, we reclaim the hotspot and save for another use case.

We ARE using all of our Kajeet hotspots and actually just received more form another district.

We are using all of our Kajeet hotspots and obtained 3 more from a neighboring district.

We are using all of the ones we requested and are using some beyond that which we were able to get from other Districts later in the school year that were able to spare some of their hotspots.

We are using every one that we received. They are flexible and easy to manage and have allowed us to provide access even if it was a temporary need (student displaced due to fire, or travelling between households)

We are using most now, the others we gave to [another district]

We built up a small reserve due to our transient population. As we receive students, we do not have hot spots and as students leave, they do not always return the device.

We continue to offer the option to families. Some families have also been able to find their own solutions.

We deployed roughly 85% of our allotted Kajeet hotspots. Some families may not have used them because they have since signed up for Internet at home.

We do have our own small fleet of them and very few of them are actually used once handed out. We live in a town with poor cell service to begin with and so a cellular hotspot does not always work. Many families also had some level of service and thought that Kajeet would boost their current home service and didn't realize it was its own service and has limits on what can be accessed so it didn't meet their hopes/desires of what '"'free hotspot'"' meant to them and so they just don't use it. We leave it with them, so they do not have an excuse for why their child didn't connect to class or access their work.

We did not receive access to free hotspots in a timely manner (prior to the start of distance learning) so the district provided them to those in need vs requesting them from the state.

We did overestimate the numbers somewhat. We did give 55 units to other districts that needed them, and we are still getting requests for hotspots, so we are still giving them out. We had another request this week for one.

We didn't order any because it was emphasized to use Cable Internet connections when possible. We felt Cable Internet was an option for all our families.

We didn't order Kajeet, opting to go with Comcast. There have been legitimate needs and we have borrowed from the state, library and South Windsor

We didn't receive any Kajeet hotspots

We distributed all hot spots. These work GREAT! We actually underestimated the need and impact of the hotspots.

We distributed them to students and families who requested them. When we requested the hotspots back because of little to no use we had trouble getting them back.

"we estimated based on the need of previous hotspots that are being retired. (no longer compatible and are failing)

we asked for 80 and assigned 35 to students. another 30 have been issued temporarily to school for students who need them as the situations change with quarantine

We gave out the few we had immediately, and had I had more to begin with, I believe we would have had greater connectivity. We got them too late - students were already used to not being in school (virtually or in person), so were disengaged.

I am going to try to get more Kajeets ([another district] gave us 10) and find out why those with them are not all using them."

We had already distributed AT&T hotspots and had hoped to replace them with Kajeet hotspots but the logistics of setting up the Kajeet and distributing them hasn't been worth the ROI up to this point.

We have all of our hotspots distributed, however, not all are currently in use. We have been running reports and reaching out to families to see if they still need them, support them in using them and seeing if this option is best for their Internet needs. Some families have been difficult to reach. We are continuing to follow up with these families so that we can acquire the hotspots and distribute them to other families that have indicated a need for connectivity support.

We have been handing out the hotspots as people are being evicted (now in shelters/hotels) and job losses are causing them to default and loose cable broadband.

We have been teaching in person.

We have been working to find families who have lost Internet due to financial constraints. It has been slow, but we always have a few on hand so we can help immediately.

We have deployed all of our Kajeet hotspots and reached out to the students that were not using them to get them back and redeploy them to students who may need them. We believe that the students who aren't using them either had alternate access to the Internet OR did not want to participate in schoolwork.

We have distributed all but one hotspot now. A few students have not picked theirs up, but a majority has.

We have distributed the Kajeets 2400 the families complain that the service is slow.

We have found that many families request the devices, but when they discover it is filtered Internet with data limits and a curfew, they stop using them. We also have had multiple students exceed the monthly data limit of 30,000 MB and then assume the device no longer works.

Estimates also included increased numbers in the event we went to a full distance learning model, but we have been able to maintain in person learning since September.

I also continue to question the data as Kajeet's Sentinel system, where devices are assigned, shows 256 devices are checked out. All of the Kajeet hotspots have been distributed to schools so they are available as needed. "

We have found that some of the Kajeet hotspots do not solve the connectivity issue for the students and that there may be physical barriers to the signal or that the demands for and of virtual learning platforms like Zoom require more bandwidth or strength of signal to function properly.

We have handed out more than your activity indicates so we have families who wanted it and don't use it. The service is slow. We also added a few in the event we had people lose Internet and could not afford any other options. We have issues 8 of the 15.

We have not had very many requests for them.

We have signed out all of our devices. we are now looking into why the utilization is very low

We keep extras on hand and the needs of student change from day to day. For instance, I had a request last week for one because the family's Internet was shut off.

We noticed that once families knew about hotspots, they were requesting them even though they had Internet at home. They would say that there WiFi doesn't work or didn't want to slow up parents working connections.

We now have distributed a significant amount of them. In the beginning we were not allowed to hand them out to families per the CSDE process, until they completed or attempted an install with Altice. Now we are able to hand them out and they have been going significantly faster.

We offered vouchers first before hotspots as it is the better option to have broadband access. The hotspots are reserved for areas where broadband is not available or when household preference dictates. Early on, Comcast vouchers were only available for families who qualified for certain programs and not all students. The hotspots were intended to be a safety net for areas where Comcast is not available and where households declined vouchers.

We only requested 12 - we used about 20+ of our own to supplement. All are handed out and have been handed out since the fall - we are calling to see why 4 do not seem to be using it (your report says 5 are not using but that doesn't match my Kajeet portal). We wonder if they have lost it.

We ordered one Kajeet hotspot potentially for a family who did not wind up needing it who found another solution. We have that one on hand in the event that a family requests one.

We passed out all of the hotspots that we received. If a family is not using them it's because they broke or lost the device.

We underestimated need and have purchased an additional 500 from our operating budget.

We used all of these hotspots. If I had known the issues with Comcast, I would have ordered more hotspots

We were not given any hot spots, by the time we needed them, the window to order had closed. Since we had to order in August, we did not have accurate information to get the supply we ultimately needed.

We were not offered any hotspots.

We were remote and have since gone back to school full time, meaning that students are not home during the day to use the hotspots because they have connectivity at school. Less bandwidth being used at home.

Weston has bad cellular signal in certain areas, so the hotspots would not function.

"When the request for hotspots was made the need was greater as the students were all learning from home. Our district has been very successful at keeping student learning in person and the need for hotspots at home has declined. However, obviously the need would ramp up if we needed to go all remote learning again. Some hotspots have not been utilized because they were not received until after students came back for in person learning.

Also, some students/parents have said that some sites are blocked using the Kajeets that they need to utilize, and it is frustrating to them. "

when we went to offer the hotspots, some families now say they do not have the need

Q: Finally, are there any innovative approaches you have taken to connect students at home? Any particular challenges in doing so? Any other feedback you can share with the State?

Allowing families to qualify for the program even if they currently have service. Many are option to pay for cable and get food from the food banks. They can't cancel their service and wait to qualify. Boosting the current level of service they have as well.

An was an offer to put a second cable box in some homes that would then be managed by the school, but families didn't want to remember which box went to which device and we would have trouble supporting that to. We wouldn't know what to collect back, etc.

At this point I think if there was a direct number we could have to get families online without having to go and email others, it might help.

Cell service and WiFi access in the rural areas of Connecticut are challenges.

Created a district Google tech help form for any parents or staff in need of technology resources (i.e. devices, password resets, Internet access, etc.). This link has been sent out via email, parents updates letters and is posted on our website.

Eduroam and external access points located in school building in the inner city neighborhoods guided by a student population heat map.

Encouraging all members of our staff to identified families that may be in need to critical. If a child is not connecting digitally, there is a process to follow-up on the "why." This must be slow, deliberate, and personalized communication. Typically, the teacher or staff member will reach out to the guidance office, who will reach out to Tech. This also is one of the reasons for the slowness of getting the hotspots out to families. Language barriers are a smaller issue.

Every case is unique in a rural setting.

Exact percentage requested above is unknown; estimate based on addresses and requested connections

Finding out who doesn't have access at home, and then making deliveries to homes, and having a central pick-up space at the district office which is right in the middle of town. Some families that don't leave the house are fearful to come into a building for help.

For Internet access to be highly successful in [our city], either building complex/neighborhood WiFi or LTE/5G Hotspot are needed to address the inherent issues with our deployment model. Cable modems while fast are more difficult to get deployed to families facing the challenges we have in the city.

For the most part, our students are connected. We have worked with families that have reached out. Administration have communicated needs for hotspots, and we have met those needs, supporting families through explanation of use, and follow up. Our initial numbers indicated data presented through a family survey. Our numbers in need of cable broadband were higher than the actual need, as many families either acquired Internet in the meantime or had Internet already. Of the 22 requested vouchers, we issued 3. Some of the families who originally indicated a need for home Internet actually needed hotspots. Our biggest need has been for hotspots to support service with the increased demands put upon families due to multiple family members streaming at the same time.

I wouldn't exactly say innovative, but we've provided 24X7 support for students where we've never provided that in the past. We implemented a new help desk support center JUST for distance learning. That has been highly effective, but we still have an issue with kids just not connecting even though they have the technology to connect.

In hindsight, I would have requested only hotspots. Our families are mobile and live in single rooms in a single family home where cable will not give them a second connection. In addition, the hotspots can be obtained by contacting one person within our district and most families have a trusting relationship with at least one person at their child's school. We are doing a lot of family outreach and home visits that include

bringing a device and hotspot to them. We are working closely with local shelters to be sure kids are getting devices and hotspots so they can continue their education despite having a tumultuous home life.

in-person visits or assisting parents directly have had the most impact

It requires strong family engagement at the school level from a myriad of staff.

It turned out that the overwhelming majority of our families and students were already set up with very good connectivity at their homes. In the spring when we began remote learning it was tough to tell exactly what kind of a problem we'd be facing from a connectivity standpoint. Some requests rolled in (not only from students, but from some staff as well) and we dealt with each individual situation as we felt appropriate. When we began to look toward going back to school in the fall, again, we weren't sure how many of our students would be requesting hotspots for hybrid learning. So, we felt that the amount that the district was provided (18) was appropriate, though it looks as if we are currently only using a handful, it was helpful to have them all around. Some were only borrowed for a short duration, others appeared to not work out of the box. So, having the oversupply was helpful. We're happy to give some back if they will get used in other districts. Please let us know.... Thank you so much for helping our students!

It's really the personal connections of staff to families that helped us identify those families that need Internet. There needs to be a level of trust built.

Make the cable Internet process through cox much easier and it will or would be taken better advantage of.

No, but the main way we learned student were in need was when they reached out to their teacher/school. Most schools organized their own methods to find families in need.

Norwalk worked in partnership with the city in order to get philanthropy to pay for "Community Navigator" positions that were able to assist with outreach to families not only for Internet but for other basic needs like food access or social services.

Other than the email, we used our school based support staff to work with families one on one when we heard they needed Internet. Anyone who asks for a hotspot is offered a chance to work with IT or a family liaison to sign up for Cox. Like I said, I would really like to know how I can help the remaining 300 families

Other, related feedback: Regarding the question about the percentage of students that have broadband access, this is only an estimate based on the few requests from families and the observations of faculty. Unfortunately, surveys sent out by the District in the fall asked about access to devices, not specifically about broadband connection.

The District has issued a Chromebook to every student, we are fully 1:1, so combined with our remote attendance information, the assumption has been that the connectivity rate is very close to 100%.

The expectation that we would offer Comcast vouchers to all Free and Reduced lunch students would have been important to communicate to whomever was sent the original needs survey. Somehow, we were originally allocated 26 connections. We could have easily distributed them to the 90 or so families who qualify for Free or Reduced meals if we had that many, but we only had 16 vouchers.

Regarding the Kajeet units, we will reach out to all of the families who have been allocated a Kajeet and ask if they are having trouble or need assistance.

Our approach to communicate how to get connected was to use as many forms of communication as possible which seemed to have positive impact.

Our families have all been connected.

Our Family Engagement Facilitator is focused on providing solutions to our community relative to Internet connectivity and remote learning. Her effective communication, via telephone and in-person visits is largely responsible for many of our successes.

Our in-person visits have proven to be the most effective - this is usually done in cases where language is a barrier in getting connected.

Our school principals and their key staff are the vital link; they know and have relationships with families that are so helpful and essential.

Our Social workers and school administration have been very active in lobbying for students to request Internet if they need it. School secretaries have taken an active part in this project. Often EL's are intimated by needing to call companies like Comcast. Our Language department works with all of their families to try to get them Internet.

Personal calls with the family

The biggest thing for us is having our IT staff answering phones and helping students and parents get connected and resolve issues.

The difficulties we now face are from multiple students streaming at home all at once. We are mostly telling parents to contact their service provider as we do not have enough hot spots to hand out.

The majority of the town we cover have Internet already. Our schools sent surveys to their families enquiring about Internet and they did not reply. The 3 or 4 families that did come forth did so after the school year started/the deadlines of communicating that to the state. Anyone that enquired after the fact was directed to Comcast's and Frontier's Internet Assistance Programs. Those links are also posted on our district website.

The one to one is all that has worked for me, delivering a hot spot to the family's home, writing a set of directions specific to the family. Relationships. That's what it's all about.

The principal of our elementary school hosted live training sessions for families and made himself available to families for 1:1 time if needed. He coordinated with the Director of Operations to assist with families whose predominant language was Spanish.

The questions of percentage of students with broadband and what approaches we have used to help students and their families get online are difficult to accurately assess. Our teachers, administrators, social workers, and other support staff are trained to assess situations where connectivity is a problem. We are not sure that mass notification, especially from the district office, are very effective.

The student's teacher (or the school counselor in the case of the high school and middle school) will reach out to the family of students who are having problems connecting online. The teacher then informs their administrator, who then informs me to help the family find a solution.

Using guidance counselors as an intermediary between the teacher, parent or student and the Technology Dept. We have let the people that work closest with families make the decision as to who should get a hotspot. IT then provides it and supports it.

Utilized specific school staff to directly communicate with certain parent guardians with extenuating circumstances

We conducted a technology readiness survey in the spring and identified families early on with connectivity issues. The IT department worked with those families to come up with alternatives before the state program came about. We did order a small number of the Kajeet hotspots knowing that there might be a need later in the year but to date we have been okay.

We constantly talk with our families to help them trouble shoot issues. I do not think we are doing anything that has not been done in other districts.

We developed a connectivity audit process for families so we could assist in determining the root cause of connectivity issues in schools. Some examples include location student is working within the home relative to location of router/wireless access

points, strains on bandwidth from all home devices coupled with educational technology, weak carrier signals in certain areas and finally, limited hardware specs of certain machines running robust software.

We did have families use the hotspots even though they had Internet. They had multiple students on their WiFi, and the hotspots allowed their students to have adequate service.

We did not have a large need to begin with as many of our families have been fortunate enough to have some type of access. Our schools have been open for in person learning since September 1st with very limited interruption so the option to be in school has reduced the pressure on many families to have broadband access. We have been able to prioritize our most at risk students and keep them in school and underestimated our ability to do so when we talked about broadband in the past. This has been the biggest factor in lower than expected need for broadband connections. Should our schools move to remote learning for an extended period of time we may see more families reaching out for the available devices.

We have also applied through the T-Mobile Project 10 Million Grant program for 5 years of free Internet connectivity.

"We have found that providing multiple access points- whether two broadband connections, or two Kajeets helps. Again, because people don't understand the limitations of WiFi.

I would suggest any future program support a temporary increase in bandwidth to families to support learning rather than a full separate Internet connection."

We have little need for connectivity. The biggest issue we hear is multi-device homes and slow speeds.

We have made phone calls. It is difficult when they speak Spanish and need to wait until the translator can call them back. Some parents will not answer the phones or VM is full.

We have provided Kajeet hotspots to families of students who are not attending remote sessions due to weak connectivity issues.

We have sent instructions home with students that take home hotspots. We have reached out to families individually to see what the issues are with using hotspots, why they aren't connecting, etc.

We instituted both an online and phone parent support lines with both English and Spanish speaking technicians available. Our family school liaison team has delivered

hotspots when a family is unable to visit their home-based school for devices. Distance learners are able to obtain devices from any school. Through ParentSquare, the district was able to reach 12,349 users with information about the program, with 1,727 people appreciating the post.

As previously mentioned, signing families up for the Cox program has been difficult due to the eligibility requirements. Families are also concerned about potential bills when the program expires.

The Kajeet hotspots work well when they are specifically used for educational purposes, but frequently run out of data before the end of the month.

We appreciate the partnership and the ability to offer these options to our families.

We just continually asked about connectivity and any remote connection issues and helped the families in any way we could.

We just reached out to families with phone calls and communicated virtually with Zoom when needing to share diagrams to help with set up.

We sent out a technology survey to families before we distributed hotspots. This allowed us to know who needed one and who already had Internet services.

We track daily students who are not engaging in online learning. When we see a pattern, our team conducts a home visit to determine needs.

We used social media to assist notifying families of availability of the Kajeet devices.

We're not sure this is innovative, but we've encouraged students who experience the most challenge to attend school in-person. We have connected with families at their places of work to help them troubleshoot tech access/connection. We have also worked to connect specifically with the daily caregiver of the child (ex. childcare professional), which may not be their legal guardian.

"with regards to the percent of students - this is an estimate based on feedback. I feel like there may be students who need connectivity but have not reported back.

With regards to helping connect with families, we have worked with our building administration and personnel to make connections with families and worked to provide responsive support. We have a family ticketing system so that families can reach out for any tech help, which has helped us troubleshoot with families in support of ensuring ongoing connection to learning."