

SBCUSD program to close the digital divide for needy families

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For 5,000 socio-economically disadvantaged families in the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD), the digital divide will shrink starting this summer.

SBCUSD is offering the Family Chromebook Initiative beginning July 6 in partnership with California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF). CETF is providing \$100,000 in funding, as well as its School2Home curriculum in support of the Initiative.

Through the Family Chromebook Initiative, SBCUSD will provide free Chromebook computers and T-Mobile Internet service to 5,000 SBCUSD families. Eligible families were contacted by the SBCUSD automated phone system to identify those interested in the program. About 5,000 were willing to participate in the pilot program.

“So much of our society is going digital and we want to provide families who don’t have devices and Internet access at home the resources they need to help their children be successful,” said Barbara Richardson, the director of Accountability & Educational Technology for SBCUSD. “The Chromebook Initiative and School2Home program help provide those with the most need and the fewest resources a chance to even the playing field.”

As part of the Initiative, one adult and one student from each family must attend the School2Home training program in July. The initial training focuses on basic computer literacy skills and helps participants set up a free e-mail account and connect to Internet-based educational services, such as the SBCUSD Parent Portal. Additional, optional School2Home computer training will also be offered throughout the school year to help parents and students develop their computer skills and build a closer connection to the school community.

All School2Home training will be provided in English and Spanish. Parents and students who need additional accommodations, including services in other languages, will receive those services upon request.

SBCUSD will loan participating families one Chromebook and provide limited, home Internet service for one year, as long as they attend SBCUSD schools. The home-based Internet access will have the same protections as school-based Internet access.