

# SHOULD SCHOOLS PROVIDE A LAPTOP AND INTERNET ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS?

**THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.**

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### AS CLASSES MOVE ONLINE, WHAT HAPPENS TO STUDENTS WITHOUT INTERNET OR COMPUTERS?

NPR - WAMU | March 18, 2020 | Article  
740 words

Some schools in the US will not implement remote learning during school closures because they cannot guarantee equitable access to the requisite digital resources for all students.

- Many educators worry that students without access to technology will fall behind in their educations, exacerbating existing education-related equity issues.
- Some schools are handing out hard copies of instructional packets, while others are providing devices to students who need them.
- Families face many barriers to access including having to share internet access and devices between multiple siblings, the closure of spaces – like public libraries – previously used for school work, and schools that provide devices only for use on school grounds.

### ELIMINATING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

PBS SciTech Now | January 29, 2018 | Video  
6:42 minutes

Lack of reliable internet access and high-tech learning tools can put low-income and rural students at a disadvantage

- The superintendent of Coachella Valley Unified School District – which covers an area larger than the state of Rhode Island – believes pushed and succeeded at passing a levy to get every student an iPad and internet access.
- School buses outfitted with solar panels and WiFi are positioned around the huge service area to ensure every student has internet access. Since the program began, the graduation rate has increased from 70% to 80%.
- Federal programs like the FCC's e-rate program provide some relief to rural school districts, but approximately 5 million households with school-aged children still do not have Internet access at home.
- Megan Smith, U.S. Chief Technology Officer, says, "...whether it's going to come from the school district, a municipal leader, or one of our national players, we need everybody in on this game working on it. It's a very important fundamental resource."

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

## HOW LIMITED INTERNET ACCESS CAN SUBTRACT FROM KIDS' EDUCATION

NPR | February 6, 2016 | Audio

3:34 minutes

About one-quarter of lower-income families with school-age children say a mobile device is their only way to access the internet at home, according to a national study.

- Rutgers University and Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop surveyed nearly 1,200 parents with children aged 6-13 with family incomes below the national poverty line.
- Smartphones reduce historic Internet use disparities among different racial and ethnic groups; people with lower incomes tend to rely more heavily on their smartphones to access the Internet.
- Accessing the Internet through a smartphone means that children are less likely to use the Internet on a daily basis, making it harder for a kid to become digitally savvy.
- Some discount programs for Internet access have barriers in place – like only offering wired Ethernet connections or requiring that families do not have Internet access for a period of time – that prevent families from signing up.

### KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Broadband
- Equitable
- Access
- Digital Divide

### CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

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## DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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