

Bridging Digital Divides

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



The Digital Divide Program is a response to the recognition that, as more resources and information become available exclusively online, members of communities that are not connected are falling behind. These communities tend to be comprised of low-income families, senior adults, and immigrant families with English language learners. The goal of the program is to get all Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) families online by the end of 2023. As part of an ongoing effort to narrow one of Colorado's widest achievement gaps between white and Latino students, BVSD has been implementing a 1: Web program. However, immigrant parents with limited formal education often feel unable to assist with homework completed in unfamiliar online formats and miss out on the opportunity to experience homework as a collaborative activity.

Partners in the collaborative include the local school district (BVSD), housing authorities, public libraries, city government, CU Boulder, Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA), Sister Carmen Community Center (SCCC), "I Have A Dream" of Boulder County (IHAD), and other organizations that focus on the support and integration of second language learners such as Intercambio and Boulder Family Literacy.

Boulder's digital literacy series consist of 8 weeks of two hour classes, in Spanish and English, covering the basics of email, internet search and security, scams and phishing, typing and word-processing, as well as navigating local online resources and tools such as Infinite Campus. Childcare and dinner are provided, and participants with perfect attendance take home a Chromebook (\$180 value) for only \$60 at the end of the course. BVSD also assists parents with access to home broadband internet either free through a partnership with Livewire, or through Comcast's discount program.

After the class, parents reported not only feeling more equipped to navigate online systems, such as Infinite Campus, but also expressed a budding confidence in their ability to learn on their own. Parents with strong online skills are more likely to feel comfortable assisting their children with digital learning assignments and are more likely to engage in home-school partnerships. Family-oriented, two-generation approaches to rolling out technologies are crucial to the success of such efforts.

In the pre-survey, only 9% of parents said they were 'very good' at email, that number increased to 49% in the post-survey. 47% did not use, or had never heard of the calendar app, by the post-survey 70% rated themselves satisfactory or above. 78% had never used Google Docs or Word at the start of the course, 83% said they could use it by the end of the class. Satisfaction with the course was very high, with 96% of participants requesting a Level II course.

Recommendations for schools wishing to implement this practice include utilizing cultural brokers for community outreach, allowing ample time for registration, committing to more than one cycle, and providing follow-up support for parents in terms of assistance with broadband internet subscriptions and on-going learning opportunities.

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community