



Connected Futures Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are the Detroit Public Schools Community District's school buildings closed for the remainder of the school year?

Yes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan's Governor issued Executive Order 2020-35 which directed the closure of all K-12 school buildings in Michigan, while requiring districts to submit a plan to continue instruction to students through the end of the school year. Each district's plan must meet several criteria, including 14 specific elements including: delivering content in multiple ways, a description of plans to manage and monitor learning by pupils, an evaluation of participation in the plan by pupils and providing mental health supports to pupils affected by a state of emergency or state of disaster prompted by COVID-19 (Section II.B.1-14,p.5-6). The very first element of the plan indicates that if a district is promoting electronic instruction, the district must also ensure, to the extent possible, that pupils have access to a connected device capable of accessing the electronic instruction and must not penalize a pupil for the pupil's inability to fully participate (Section II.B.1, p.5). The District's plan was submitted and approved by Wayne County RESA as of 4/13/2020.

2. Are teachers required to work during the school building closure?

Yes. On April 18, 2020, the District and the Detroit Federation of Teachers finalized a special COVID closure Letter of Agreement that outlines the work expectations for DFT members.

3. Does the District have a Professional Development plan for teachers around on-line learning?

Yes. In the first week following Spring Break, all teachers participated in mandatory training on the District's Distance Learning plan and tools, as well as the core software at the center of the plan, Microsoft Team; sessions are organized by grade band and are fully accessible through the District's online learning portal. In addition, the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and the Instructional Technology team will be offering a suite of optional professional development options throughout the spring and summer to build teachers' pedagogical effectiveness with online learning tools, as well as weekly virtual office hours with content and technology experts to help teachers with individualized issues. These offerings are the top professional development priority for the eight instructional technology staff members, and the training and support coordinators for each subject area and grade band.

4. How familiar are DPSCD students with technology required for online learning?

Fortunately, current DPSCD students and staff are very familiar with utilizing online tools during the school day, accessible through Clever (i-Ready, Edgenuity, Khan Academy, etc.), as the District has made aggressive investments over the last three years to combat the digital divide during the school day by deploying 34,000 new



devices for student use. The District has the online tools, and students and staff know how to use them.

The District has data to show that during a typical week of school, when students have access to devices through school buildings, 31,000 unique K-8 students use the District's online learning tools. In the first week of the closure, that number dropped to a staggering 4,000 students, when schools were no longer the avenue for providing device and internet access. The issue is access at home. Closing the digital divide through device and connectivity deployment will allow students to log on to learning throughout the COVID-19 closure, and beyond.

5. What has the District done in the last few years to close the Digital Divide at school?

The District contracted Plante-Moran to conduct an audit, mapping current assets and outlining a plan that results in a future state of 1 device per student in every classroom. The District is on pace to upgrade 25 schools per year until this mission is achieved across all buildings. In fact, the District is well on the way toward this goal and has reduced the student to device ratio from 6 students to every 1 device in 2017 to a current ratio of 1.7 students per device during the school day.

Over the last 2 years, approximately 3,000 DPSCD teachers and all principals and assistant principals each received new devices and already have access to the Office 365 suite, including Teams as well as the online learning applications that are utilized with students. The District is on track to deploy new devices to all deans, counselors and social workers by the fall of 2020. Currently, student class lists have been populated in Teams through our pupil information system which will allow teachers to hold "class" virtually with students who have a device and connectivity. Our internal IT department has also created multiple resources and online trainings for teachers around online instruction and utilizing Teams to connect with students. Finally, during the week of April 13, each school held a virtual orientation for families to explain the transition to the remote learning plan, the expectations for student learning/schedule, contact information for staff and other support including our mental health and homework hotlines, and how they can create a supportive learning environment at home during the school closure.

6. How many District students have access to a device and data plan at home?

Recent research from MSU's Quello Center (Reisdorf, Hampton, Fernandez, and Dutton, 2018) found that more than three-quarters (79%) of Detroiters access the internet on handheld devices. Detroit is often referenced as the largest urban city with the greatest digital divide. This aligns with DPSCD's internal data, which indicates that many families lack access to a device with adequate specifications to fully engage with online learning tools, including basics like a keyboard. The Quello study also indicated that while Detroiters almost universally find ways to access the internet, many using a cellular data plan, connectivity is not reliable or consistent because of



cost limitations, data caps and throttles, and even suspicion about service providers. The District estimates that approximately 90% of the total student population (approximately 45,000 students) are in need of both educationally adequate devices and connectivity.

7. Who is eligible to receive a device, data and support through the Connected Futures initiative?

Any DPSCD student enrolled in the District during the 2020 Spring Membership Count who expresses need is eligible to receive a device, LTE data for six months and technical support. Eligible students will be extracted directly from the District's student information system, and their families will be contacted directly to participate. If all devices are not claimed by this pre-identified population of students by next fall, the District will distribute devices to new students, pending availability. The District will also extend LTE support to a subset of housing insecure and foster care students after the first six months of sponsored data.

8. When will a specific inventory regarding the students with devices and connectivity plans be complete?

Prior to deployment, the District will have a full accounting of student access, as well as updated contact, address and home language preferences, to facilitate stronger support services during the internet connectivity transition period. We will be partnering with school leaders and the District's central enrollment team to ensure high levels of participation across all schools.

9. What is the sustainable funding plan for the costs incurred after the initial startup?

The District owns the sustainability of the implementation beyond the start up. As devices reach their 36-month life cycle, they will be refurbished and distributed to new students and/or as replacement devices on a sliding scale cost to families. Data and technical support will be funded by the District and/or grants. Additionally, there will be a connection with the IT career academies operating at our high schools, where students can be trained to refurbish the expired District technology and provide technical support to students and families.

10. Will teachers be teaching, using the tablets we deliver, this summer?

MDE and the Governor have yet to offer guidance on summer school programming, but the District is working hard to plan for a range of paths forward, including the possibility of fully remote summer programming. Once students have a device and data, they will have access to the complete suite of the District's online learning tools, which will allow them to learn at their own pace throughout the summer, while working toward proficiency. The devices will also be critical to student participation in programs such as Grow Detroit's Young Talent, tele-medicine, and tele-mental health support.



11. What are the logistics around deployment?

Pre-Distribution

- A. Families will confirm need and update contact information.
- B. In preparation for deployment day, families will receive an agreement to sign that makes clear that replacing/repairing the device is the responsibility of the family, but there will be a sliding scale fee structure & that the device and data is to be used first for school-related purposes. The device can also be used for other purposes the family deems as necessary (tele-health; tele-mental health, GDYT, job search). Receipt of the form will trigger a confirmation for device pick up.

Distribution

The team is currently mapping two methods for distribution, with the project team:

- A. Physical distribution through the student's home school, using social distancing guidelines
- B. Physical distribution through the Grab and Go locations, using social distancing guidelines

Option A is preferred because of families' access to their schools, familiarity with the staff at the school of record, staffing at the school site that can be used to support deployment, and timing, but both are still in development.

12. Are there parental controls on the devices?

The data plan will include a parental control. The District is only considering data plans that have an educational filter/firewall.

13. What commitment is required of families receiving the devices?

Parents/Guardians will be required to sign a commitment agreement that outlines their responsibility related to the device as well as supporting the student/household in use of the device for educational and civic purposes.

14. What support will be provided to families?

During deployment, families will receive a package outlining how to activate the device and data, as well as reminders around how to log on to the complete suite of online learning applications that are normally used during the school day. The District's IT department is also preparing instructional videos that will provide additional support as families navigate the device and learning at home. Families will have direct contact from their teacher and other school-based staff. There will also be initial technical support provided through District IT and other partners.

15. What happens if a device is damaged, lost, or stolen?

Once the device is deployed, it becomes property of the family. They will be responsible for replacement and repair, which will be offered at a sliding scale cost.

16. What happens if a student drops out of school?

The device is the property of the family.



17. How will devices deployed to households also impact the larger community?

Deploying devices and connectivity to Detroit households will not only allow students to engage in online learning and connection to their scheduled course and teachers, it will also provide an avenue for high school students to participate in the revised version of Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT), complete AP coursework and exams, provide access to the online mental and physical health resources and office visits.

Additionally, the device and data will allow adults in the household to apply for jobs, complete online GED coursework, access tele-health resources and connect with online services from the faith community. Adults will also be able to easily connect with United Way 211, the City of Detroit's Detroit at Work Career Centers, MDHHS, unemployment benefits, and many other resources that are now exclusively online.

A low estimate projects that every student is connected to at least 2 adults that are either permanently or temporarily in the same household. By investing in 51,000 students, which represent approximately 35,000 households, tangentially there is an estimated impact on at least 100,000 Detroit residents, which moves Detroit from last to first in connectivity for cities of similar demographics in the United States

This investment is not just an investment in a device, it is an investment in improving our community overall. Although the urgency is being spurred on by the COVID pandemic, the lasting impact of this investment will be beyond the time that we are able to reduce social distancing and return to physical school buildings.

18. How does this initiative support citywide broadband if the brunt of the costs is going to devices?

Citywide broadband adoption is the de-facto end goal for the City of Detroit and every stakeholder committed to bridging the digital divide. While devices are the brunt of the cost (exacerbated by a strained supply chain), we have taken the necessary measures to ensure high-speed internet is a reality for all residents related to this initiative.

Our plan addresses broadband adoption the following ways:

Providing 6 months of LTE data with tech support will allow families who historically have never had high speed LTE data to familiarize themselves with both a "connected" experience and an in-home device; thus, setting the stage for moving towards a wired, broadband connection.

During the 6 month LTE period, [human I-T](#) will be helping "under connected" families sign-up with Comcast Internet Essentials. Comcast, within the past 60 days, has increased the speed of Internet Essentials to reflect the federal threshold for high speed internet. Currently, we have the best deal in America to receive citywide broadband for less than \$10 per month.



Contrary to popular opinion, in Detroit, the major pain point for citywide broadband is **not** infrastructure; however, in this case, it is awareness. Many households are unaware of Comcast Internet Essentials, or have difficulty with the sign-up process. This initiative directly addresses those points.

19. How will the District Monitor Implementation?

Once devices are deployed, engagement will be monitored remotely by evaluating the online tools log ins for the students; we will be able to compare these results to a baseline prior to deployment. Students have a District login through Clever, which will allow them to download the entire Office 365 suite on their device, as well as access the entire portfolio of online learning tools.

The District can review the IDs for the students who received the devices and determine if they have logged on. Teachers will be monitoring and marking attendance in academics twice weekly, and school support staff will be responsible for follow up phone calls to families who are not showing up in the system as regular users of the educational platforms. The team is committed to robust funder reports on usage and academic engagement.

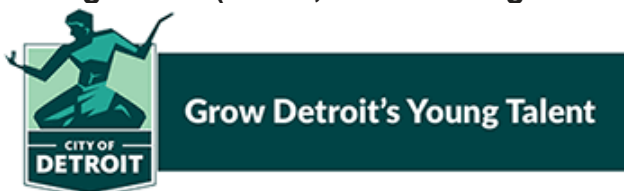
20. Can the CARES ACT or other funding be used to support Connected Futures?

The District is committed to allocating allowable and available funding to Connected Futures. Currently, it is unclear how much funding the District will receive from the CARES ACT. We anticipate at least 60 days before the District will receive any funding. Based on anticipated budget reduction at the state and federal level, the District may need to use the CARES ACT funding to fully fund elements of our budget that may be eliminated.

21. How will the Connected Futures project be monitored to ensure that necessary pivots are implemented as issues arise?

The Connected Futures project will include an advisory committee composed of the same group that conducted the analysis and problem solving that created Connected Futures: DPSCD, City of Detroit, DTE, Skillman and Quicken. This group will meet regularly to monitor the critical data points, discuss issues that arise, and jointly problem solve. Consistent with the philosophy of each of these organizations, an improvement feedback cycle will be facilitated. Additionally, a dedicated project manager has been assigned from both the District team and the DTE team, who will collaboratively work to develop and communicate an ongoing dashboard relative to implementation.

The next set of questions/answers are specifically related to Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT, transitioning to eGDYT for this summer).





22. Will GDYT 2020 be completely online this summer?

Currently, we expect the vast majority of GDYT's 8000 opportunities to be on-line (eGDYT). Only 2 employers (total of 30 jobs) have indicated plans to bring students on site. Even with employers who are willing to have eGDYT participants (aged 18+) on-site, GDYT commits to vet safety and social distancing protocols and ensure deployment of PPE. With full funding and access to digital devices for all participants ages 14-24, we will be ready to support 8,000 eGDYT opportunities.

23. What will an eGDYT experience include?

There are 3 eGDYT platforms currently under consideration. All programs feature multiple interactive modalities, including interactive exercises (measurements and temperatures, for example), Microsoft Teams or Zoom calls, teleconference style classrooms, chat features, whiteboards, small group work monitored by GDYT adult advisors, and capstone projects.

24. Will the devices provided through the Connected Futures initiative be compatible with the eGDYT platforms?

Yes.

25. Are we expecting youth to sit in front of a computer for 8 hours?

No. Programs run 4 - 5 hours per day and include breaks.

26. How will we know youth are participating?

Any eGDYT platform we use will have adult monitors, regular online check-ins, and phone follow ups as needed.

27. Will youth still be paid?

Yes. With adequate funding, we can pay stipends/wages for all youth. So that we can ensure learning and participation, youth will be paid on a project/assignment completion basis, versus time-in-seat.

28. When will eGDYT be ready?

With adequate funding, we can make decisions by May 1. All eGDYT online platforms will be finalized within 30 - 45 days of selection.