



BROADBAND USE IN TEXAS

Connected Texas' mapping and research has provided data-driven analyses of the challenges and opportunities to enhance statewide broadband deployment and adoption. As access and adoption rates increased over the last five years, so has the need for digital skills.

Digital literacy, or the knowledge of how to use a computer and the Internet, is growing in importance as today's workforce becomes more closely tied to technology. The United States Department of Commerce notes that 62% of all employed adults in the United States use the Internet for their jobs.³ Yet even with this widespread use, the Federal Communications Commission reports that 66 million Americans do not have sufficient computer or Internet skills, representing one in five Americans.⁴ Teaching Texans these skills is vital to ensure that those who are employed today, as well as those looking for employment, have the ability to compete with workers from around the world. The need for digital literacy skills is reshaping the old mantra in education of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Embracing information and communications technologies in the curriculum are important in the twenty-first century.⁵

[Providing Learning Anywhere: K-12 Education in Texas](#) (2012) showed that one-half (50%) of Texas households with children said that their children used home Internet service for schoolwork. In addition, more than six out of ten adults with children at home (61%) said that children were using the Internet at school for schoolwork. Statewide, approximately one million Texas parents subscribed to home broadband service because someone needed the service for school.

[How Broadband Impacts the Texas Economy](#) (2013) revealed that Texas broadband subscribers reported

that, thanks to broadband, they made an average of 2.4 fewer trips to the doctor per year, they drove an average of 165.6 fewer miles per month, they saved an average of 15.36 hours per month, and saved an average of \$3,161 annually in fuel and maintenance costs as a result of driving less. The combined savings of broadband adoption on the Texas economy was \$40.9 billion per year.

[Online Shopping in Texas](#) (2013) reported that approximately 11.4 million Texas adults made some sort of purchase online over the previous 12 months. The median household income of online shoppers was nearly \$17,000 higher than the state average; in addition, nine out of ten online shoppers (90%) lived in urban or suburban portions of the state, while 80% had a college education. Approximately 7.1 million Texas adults used the Internet to order goods or services from businesses located within the state, and 8.4 million went online to place orders from American businesses outside of Texas. This translated into an estimated \$4.4 billion spent annually for Texas businesses and \$6.4 billion per year for American businesses in states other than Texas.

[Broadband and Education – Connecting Students in Texas](#) (2014) showed that more than 950,000 students in the state did not have broadband at home at that time. One in five Texas parents of K-12 students (20%) said their children's school provided students with laptop or tablet computers, yet 25% of rural parents said their children do not use the Internet at school at all. Many parents saw the value of technology in education, though; over one-half of parents of K-12 students whose schools provided computers said that those computers helped their children's grades, and six out of ten parents who did not have broadband at home agreed that having Internet service at home would make it easier for their child to do homework.

³ http://www.commerce.gov/news/fact-sheets/2011/05/13/fact-sheet-digital-literacy#_edn4

⁴ <http://factfinder2.census.gov/> and <http://www.connect2compete.org/news/07-23-12/getting-past-catch-22-digital-literacy>

⁵ http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1067_NewLiteracies21stCentury.sflb.aspx

Texas' Broadband Conference

Throughout the grant, technology trends were presented to state stakeholders at various meetings and events, such as broadband summits.

The state's first-ever broadband summit, themed *Getting Every Community Online*, drew stakeholders from across the state to the Gaylord Texan Hotel on June 5-7, 2012. Attendees representing a range of sectors – from education to agriculture – discussed many topics including job creation and the economic development that comes from expanding broadband access, adoption, and use. Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples delivered the event's keynote address highlighting the important role of broadband in rural development and gave encouraging news about the government's efforts to expand broadband use. One of the key focuses of the summit was on growing broadband adoption particularly in rural areas. Connected Texas released a new rural broadband adoption report to kick-off the event revealing technology adoption and usage is lower among rural Texans than among those living in suburban and urban counties, including computer ownership, broadband adoption, and mobile broadband usage. This means that approximately 1.2 million rural Texans do not have broadband service at home for a variety of reasons. More than one in four rural Texans who do not subscribe to broadband (27%) say that cost is their main barrier to adopting high-speed Internet.



Connected Texas and TCEA co-hosted the [Texas Broadband Symposium](#) October 7-8, 2014 at TCEA's headquarters in Austin, concentrating on the

importance of connecting all students to broadband and the steps to follow to overcome various obstacles toward statewide implementation.



The event began with the announcement of Connected Texas' release of the [Broadband and Education – Connecting Students in Texas](#) report, and followed with panel sessions on challenges at the state and national level, historical and present funding of broadband access, success stories from around the state, approaches from other states, and school and community connections.

Our compliments to TCEA for holding a great symposium and it's clear that we collectively in Texas owe it to every child, and ultimately every citizen, to be able to provide the technological and computer support in schools around Texas. Hopefully what we've come out of this symposium with are some great ideas on how to move forward and achieve those results.

Judge John E. Firth
Coryell County

Speakers included Don Shirley and Tom Koutsky from Connected Texas and Connected Nation; Dr. Walt Magnussen, director of telecommunications at Texas A&M University; Dr. Mickey Slimp, executive director, Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities (NETnet); Gloria Meraz, director of communications of the Texas Library Association; and Jeff Mao, senior director of learning solutions programs at Common Sense Media, to name a few.

Attendees were divided into groups and were given the opportunity to collaborate on the identification of key barriers to providing broadband access to Texas schools, categorizing strategies that policymakers and practitioners can support to overcome barriers, as well as solutions and next steps.

The event helped provided a better understanding of the challenges and best practices of providing broadband access to school districts across the state.