

Digital Access for All

The Patterson Foundation (TPF) created its Digital Access for All (DA4A) initiative to explore the efforts of multiple sectors working to enhance access to technology that connects people in ways that foster inclusion and well-being.



Summary + Observations: The Federal Role in Advancing Digital Equity, by [John Ferguson](#)



Recently, I had the incredible opportunity to represent [The Patterson Foundation](#) by serving as a commentator in the fifth installment of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's Learning Loss Recovery Challenge webinar series. My installment focused on The Federal Role in Advancing Digital Equity.

Dr. Vikki Katz of Rutgers University expertly served as moderator, leading a thoughtful, in-depth discussion around the federal role in achieving digital equity. Fellow commentators included Jack Lynch, director of state engagement at EducationSuperHighway, Claire Park, program associate for the Open Technology Institute of the New America Foundation, and three rockstar expert panelists: Larry Irving, CEO of the Irving Group; Angela Siefer, executive director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance; and Divya Sridhar, policy director of Digital Equity at ExcelinEd.

Each panelist provided historical and current context to the broader issues enveloping the pursuit of digital equity and added illuminating observations of how the federal government might aid that effort going forward. [Click here for a summary and links to resources shared during the webinar.](#)



Innovative Ideas: Digital Literacy + [Goodwill Manasota](#)



Goodwill's GoodPartner Coach, Yolanda Garcia, teaches a client how to file an online job application as part of the nonprofit's digital skills training program.

While many of you are aware of the vital employment and job support services [Goodwill Manasota](#) offers to veterans, people with disabilities, and asset-limited individuals living in our communities, did you know they are also one of the area's largest providers of digital literacy and skills training?

Each year through [Job Connection Centers](#) (four face-to-face and one virtual) located in Sarasota, Manatee, and DeSoto counties, Goodwill helps hundreds of residents prepare to enter the workforce by supplying access to computers with high-speed internet connectivity, one-on-one digital skills and literacy training (from resume writing to learning how to use Excel), and even advanced job placements in IT and other tech-related fields.

It doesn't end there. Thanks to innovative partnerships at national and local levels, Goodwill is constantly expanding its efforts to meet the digital access needs of asset-limited

What emerged was an affirmation of the importance of exploring digital equity and searching for innovative long-term solutions that could close the digital divide for good. It became evident that digital access is no longer a luxury but a critical tool for full participation in today's society.

Another crucial aspect of this conversation was the idea that kids do not live in isolation. As we consider digital equity solutions, it is paramount that they are designed with the whole family in mind, not solely focused on students themselves. When we lift up families, we lift up communities, which, of course, includes students. Community-driven approaches to closing the digital divide could have a much broader effect on our entire population.

Providing digital access (including the connection itself, appropriate devices for one's needs, and the skills and support to use them effectively) is one way to lessen and eventually close the digital divide. A holistic approach is essential as we consider what might be possible on federal, regional, and community levels to create and leverage systemic solutions to pave the way for digital access for all.

individuals and families in our four-county region and beyond. For instance, Goodwill Manasota and [State College of Florida](#) are collaborating to provide digital-literacy and skills training and coaching in five critical areas funded by a \$50,000, 3-year grant from Google.

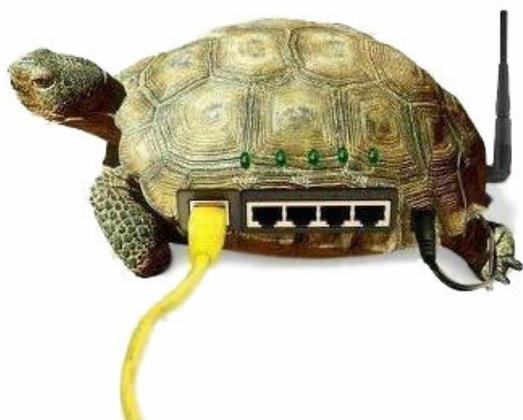
Another initiative, made possible in part by a grant from Microsoft, helped Goodwill Manasota and the [Women's Resource Center](#) form a Tech to Connect program for area women this past summer. The ten women who participated in the program received personalized training in 12 key digital-literacy areas and earned a free laptop computer for completing the entire course. Goodwill Manasota and the Women's Resource Center hope to continue the program in the future.

"As the world evolves, Goodwill will continue to evolve to meet our community's needs," says Margie Genter, Vice President of Mission Services for Goodwill Manasota.

[Learn more about Goodwill Manasota.](#)

DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING

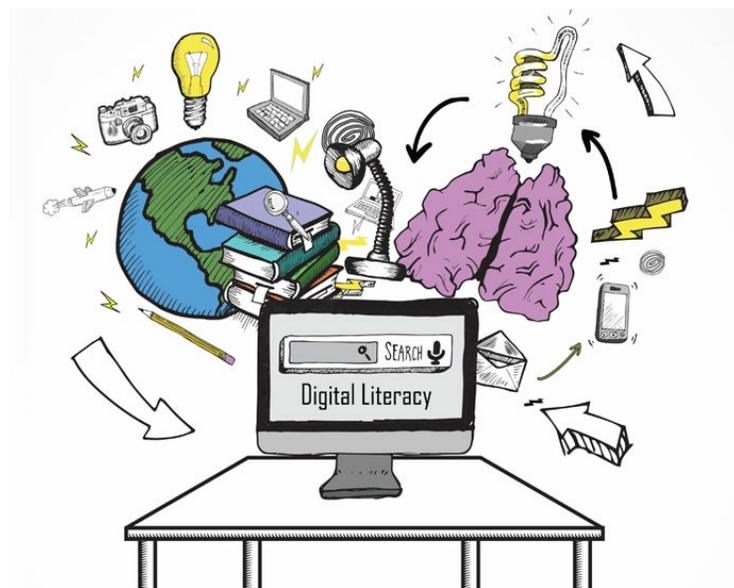
My Internet Speed



HOW FAST IS MY INTERNET?

Internet speed is complicated to understand. How much is enough for your needs?

Imagine the Internet as an open road with no posted speed limit and no safety concerns for going too fast. Wouldn't you want to put the pedal to the metal?



Digital Literacy -- What is it, and who does it?

Digital literacy encompasses a mix of essential computer and software skills and using technology to accomplish tasks. Essential computer skills include everything from turning on a device to setting up email accounts and connecting to the Internet. Software skills mean learning the Microsoft suite of products (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook), Google tools (e.g., Gmail, Google Docs, and Google Drive), and/or their Apple equivalents (e.g., Safari, Mail, Pages). A third area focuses on internet skills, including social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter), information literacy, job searches and resume building (Indeed, LinkedIn), video conferencing (Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams), privacy and security, and





The diagram above shows how most internet providers list speeds. **Download speed**, the number on the left, is the speed that information on the Internet (e.g., text and graphics) is transferred to your computer; that is, how

long it takes your computer to load websites and download files to display on your screen. **Upload speed**, the number on the right, is the speed that your computer can transfer or send information to the Internet.

[Source: Iowa Communications Network](#)

For most of our daily needs, the download speed requires the most bandwidth. The 25/3* federal minimum is considered to be high-speed internet, but many of us need more than a basic connection in today's world. For example, video calls and conferences (think Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or online classes) require more speed to be stable and seamless, especially as the number of people on the call increases. Additionally, the 25/3* connection speed begins to lag and become unstable when more than one person is connected to a device in the home -- part of our current reality due to the pandemic.

The higher the speed, the more flexibility in what we can do, how many people can be connected at a time, and how many devices can be used simultaneously. With many families working, living, and playing at home, it is more important to have fast, reliable, and affordable Internet.

How fast is my Internet? [Click here to test it and find out!](#)

Want to see the difference download speed makes in real-time? [Click here for a visualization from BroadbandUSA.](#)

online services (banking and bill paying, access to social services, voter registration, telemedicine). No wonder we feel like technology eats up our time and energy!

Who offers digital literacy training?

There are national curriculums like [Northstar](#) used by more than 1,030 Adult Basic Education programs, colleges, nonprofits, workforce centers, government agencies, and businesses. [Google Grow](#) focuses on entrepreneurs and small businesses. [EveryoneOn](#) tackles skills for asset-limited families and communities. Several services/organizations support education skills, including [Google for Education](#), [Common Sense Media](#), and [LearnFree](#).

What about local digital literacy options?

[Goodwill Manasota](#) offers job-related and digital-literacy skills training at selected locations. [Sarasota County Schools' ACE \(Adult & Community Enrichment\)](#) program offers in-person classes (currently moved to Zoom) for \$20 per term. Likewise, our libraries throughout Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties partner with community groups that offer regular classes at selected locations, as well as individual help at many libraries. Finally, the [Sarasota Technology Users Group](#) volunteers provide training and free devices to asset-limited individuals and nonprofits throughout our area.

How do you score on digital literacy?

Check your digital literacy. [Take the FREE Northstar assessment.](#)

Do you have a resource or idea to share with the community? Is there a national, regional, or local effort you'd like us to know about or feature in future publications? Contact DA4A at digitalaccess@thepattersonfoundation.org to be considered.



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