

NEWSWORTHY TRENDS

Is Internet Service On Your Back To School List?

(NAPSA)—The Internet has changed the way Americans communicate, work, shop, play games and access information. However, research indicates one in four Americans have access to a residential Internet service, but have not purchased it. It's hard to believe, but while the majority of America is online, many low-income families and their children remain at a disadvantage because they don't have a computer or Internet service at home.

To help close this so-called "digital divide," Comcast is offering a program called Internet Essentials. The goal of the program is to help level the playing field for low-income families by connecting students online with their teachers and their school's educational resources, and by providing adults with critical access to job openings and to health care and government services.

Experts have identified three primary barriers to broadband adoption: a lack of understanding of how the Internet is relevant and useful to one's daily life, the cost of a home computer and the cost of Internet service. Internet Essentials is a groundbreaking, ambitious and comprehensive broadband adoption program designed to attack these barriers.

Internet Essentials provides low-income families, those with children eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), with low-cost Internet access, the option to buy a low-cost computer



Parents, educators, community leaders and others can join the effort to get more people connected to the Internet, get a low-cost computer and receive training.

and receive digital literacy training in print, online and in-person. The program is available to more than 30,000 schools in 39 states as well as Washington D.C.

New in 2012

Now in its second year, Comcast has improved the program by making the following enhancements:

- Expanded eligibility criteria to include families with children eligible to receive reduced price school lunches under the NSLP. This means nearly 300,000 additional households are now eligible for the program, bringing the total to 2.3 million eligible families;

- Doubled broadband speeds of up to 3 Mbps downstream and up to 768 Kbps upstream;

- Upgraded the free Internet safety software to include the Constant Guard Protection Suite, which includes top-rated Norton Security Suite, identity theft protection and more;

- Enriched digital literacy

training efforts both online and in-person, including offering a series of short videos featuring NBC and Telemundo news personalities Al Roker, Kate Snow, Jenna Wolfe and Jose Diaz-Balart discussing how to use job search tools and social networking sites, as well as tips on what parents should know about cyber bullying;

- Streamlined the approval process by providing an instant approval process for all students who attend schools with the highest percentage of NSLP participation, which includes Provision 2 schools;

- Introduced a bulk order program that empowers community-based organizations to purchase Internet Essentials accounts so they can connect the eligible families they serve.

For this program to be successful, however, it requires support. Comcast is asking for help from parents, educators, community leaders and government officials to join in this effort and spread the word to those who are eligible so they can get connected to the Internet, purchase a low-cost computer and receive training.

For general information about Internet Essentials, visit www.internetessentials.com (for English) or www.internetbasico.com (for Spanish). Educators and third parties interested in more information and free, downloadable materials should visit www.internetessentials.com/partner. Parents looking to enroll in the program can call 1-855-846-8376 or, for Spanish, 1-855-765-6995.