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TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Public School Leaders
Charter School Leaders
RIC Directors and Level 1 Project Managers

FROM: Rose LeRoy, Director of Educational Data and Research

SUBJECT: Digital Equity Survey Data Collection and Reporting via SIRS

DATE: September 7, 2021

You are receiving this information to assist Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), public school districts, and charter schools with the collection and reporting of student level Digital Equity data via the Student Information Repository System (SIRS).

Identifying student digital equity, also referred to as student digital resources within the eScholar data model template, is essential for understanding, investigating, and promoting educational equity. Student home access to the Internet has become fundamental for schools across the nation as they plan strategies for continuous learning. To better serve students, families, and educators, it is imperative for the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to have access to data as reported by BOCES, public school districts and charter schools, and maintain an accurate and complete picture of the state of digital equity for each individual student, grades Kindergarten through 12, to provide confidence in understanding the true levels of a student's access to the Internet as well as the devices they use.

The Digital Equity data collection via SIRS is structured to provide a survey to parents as the critical first step in collecting student-level data beginning in the Fall of 2021. The student-level information will replace the Technology questions 8B and 8D previously collected as part of the Basic Education Data System (BEDS) Institutional Master File (IMF) BOCES, Public and Charter School Forms. The school and educator Digital Equity information will continue to be collected as part of the BEDS IMF.

Standards for Data Collection:

- NYSED has provided a standard set of questions and responses to be used to survey parents or guardians (**Appendix A: Standard Survey Questions and Responses**).
- Parents or guardians are encouraged to complete the survey for each child.

- A Digital Equity survey should be administered to all students in the fall and any student who transfers to your BOCES, district or charter school.
- When a student changes locations within the school district (i.e., enrolls in a new school), the Digital Equity data is to be revisited and a new record reported by the student's new school as needed.
- NYSED has provided standard guidance for reporting entities to use to assist parents as needed (**Appendix B: Digital Equity Survey Question Guidance That may be used to Assist Parents with Responses**).
- Further guidance is provided (**Appendix C: Digital Equity Questions and Answers That May be Used to Assist Survey Administrators, RICs, and Big 5 Level 1 Centers**).
- SIRS format requirements are defined in the eScholar Data Model template. All fields, with the exception of the Reporting Date, are required for this collection. The required Student Digital Resources template format is available on the [NYSED Office of Information and Reporting Systems Vendor homepage](#).
- Student Management System (SMS) vendors were notified at their annual summer vendor meeting of the collection responsibilities to house the survey responses and export survey results from their system for the reporting of data to SIRS.
- SMS vendors are encouraged by the Department to register and test their products each fall and as frequently as they would like through the NYSED Vendor Testing Site to best serve their customers. Such testing using Level 0 rules helps ensure vendor preparedness when they begin moving actual data. Formal testing results are publicly available. We encourage you to insist they support your vested best interests and deliverables as a contracted third-party vendor of your school, district or BOCES.

Collection Strategy

- As mentioned above, collection of Digital Equity surveys must take place in the fall of each school year and be updated at other times throughout the school year, such as with new student registration or student transfers.
- Distribution of the standard set of Digital Equity questions should be determined by each local reporting entity using various methods that meet the needs of your educational community (i.e., registration packets, annual new school year mailings, website, mailings, backpacks, parent meetings, school events/gatherings, online surveys, paper-based surveys, scan sheets, and Student Management System Portals).

- The RICs have worked in conjunction with the NYSED to create various technical solutions and support for this data collection. Please work with your Regional Information Center (RIC) or Level 1 Big 5 Center to assist with methods of administering, collecting, saving, and moving Digital Equity data to the NYSED Level 2 Data Warehouse.
- Include your data warehouse District Data Coordinator (DDC), Chief Information Officer (CIO) and District Privacy Officer (DPO) as you distribute, receive and store Digital Equity survey data in your SMS so they are aware and involved in the methods being used and to meet data privacy and security best practices.
- To assist further with additional outreach ideas, a “Helpful Blueprint for State Education Leaders” can be found at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) website:

[Restart & Recovery: Home Digital Access Data Collection: Blueprint for State Education Leaders](#)

As of December 2021, and after the close of the 2021-22SY data collection, the Department will analyze preliminary data as reported by each reporting entity to the NYSED Level 2 Data warehouse. Additional data extracts will be produced upon request, at any time throughout the 2021-22SY data collection as needed for program, Department, Legislative and FOIL requests. Therefore, as with all student level data as reported to the Department via SIRS, all reporting entities should practice due diligence to input, update, verify and maintain accurate data in their source data systems and work with their RIC or Big 5 Level 1 Center to move data on a regular basis throughout the school year.

For assistance with Digital Equity data collection via SIRS, please contact your local RIC or Big 5 Level 1 Center. For questions about reporting data in SIRS, please contact the Office of Information and Reporting Services at Data Support.

Thank you for everything you do for the children of New York.

Appendix A

Digital Equity Standard Survey Questions and Responses

To the Parent/Guardian of (Student Name)

*Collecting accurate data regarding digital resource access for our New York students will greatly help educators to better serve their students and families. In order to accomplish this, the New York State Education Department is asking parents or guardians to complete a Digital Equity survey (for each student in the family) in grades Kindergarten – Grade12. This survey will provide information on student access to devices and internet access in their places of residence. To assist us in this process, **please answer each question below** and follow any additional instructions provided for submitting or returning the survey.*

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Question 1: Did the school district issue your child a dedicated school or district-owned device for their use during the school year?

Responses: YES NO

Question 2: What is the device your child uses **most often** to complete learning activities away from school? (This can be a school-provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.)

Responses: DESKTOP LAPTOP TABLET CHROMEBOOK SMARTPHONE NO DEVICE

Question 3: Who is the provider of the primary learning device identified in question 2? (This can be a school-provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.)

Responses: SCHOOL PERSONAL NO DEVICE

Question 4: Is the primary learning device (identified in question 2) shared with anyone else in the household?

Responses: SHARED NOT SHARED NO DEVICE

Question 5: Is the primary learning device (identified in question 2) sufficient for your child to fully participate in all learning activities away from school?

Responses: YES NO

Question 6: Is your child able to access the internet in their primary place of residence?

Responses: YES NO

Question 7: What is the primary type of internet service used in your child's primary place of residence?

Responses: RESIDENTIAL BROADBAND CELLULAR MOBILE HOTSPOT COMMUNITY
WIFI SATELLITE DIAL UP DSL OTHER NONE

Question 8: In their primary residence, can your child complete the full range of learning activities, including video streaming and assignment upload, without interruptions caused by slow or poor internet performance?

Responses: YES NO

Question 9: What, if any, is the primary barrier to having sufficient and reliable internet access in your child's primary place of residence?

Responses: AVAILABILITY COST NONE OTHER

Appendix B

Digital Equity Survey Question Guidance

That May be Used to Assist Parents with Responses

Overall:

“Device” is defined as a computing device, such as a laptop, desktop, Chromebook, iPad, or full-size tablet. “Device” for the purposes of this survey, is NOT a phone or mini tablet, nor is it a mobile internet access point, such as a MIFI.

“Dedicated” devices are devices that are not shared, where the student is allowed to take the device when they leave the school building to participate in learning outside of school. They are for single student use and are not shared with other students or household members.

“Sufficient” access means that the student does not regularly experience issues (slowdowns, buffering, disconnections, unreliable connection, etc.) while participating in required or assigned instruction and learning activities, as measured during peak household usage.

“Reliable” access should be judged against the goal of “All the Time” access, as indicated in the National Educational Technology Plan. The Plan states the expectation that technology-enabled learning should be available for all students, everywhere, all the time (NETP 2017).

Question 1: Did the school district issue your child a dedicated school or district owned device for their use during the school year?

“Yes” means the school district issued the student a dedicated device to use at home.

“No” means that the school district has not issued a dedicated device to the student to use at home.

Question 2: What is the device your child uses **most often** to complete learning activities away from school? (This can be a school-provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.)

Choice can be a school-provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.

DESKTOP LAPTOP TABLET CHROMEBOOK SMARTPHONE NO DEVICE

Please select a response other than “No Device” if you previously responded “Yes” to Question 1.

Question 3: Who is the provider of the primary learning device identified in question 2? (This can be a school-provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.)

“School” means that the school district provided the device for the student to use.

“Personal” means that the student uses a device not provided by the school district.

“No Device” means the student does not have a device to use.

You should answer “No Device” if you previously responded “No Device” to Question 2.

Question 4: Is the primary learning device (identified in question 2) shared with anyone else in the household?

“Shared” means multiple students/people share the device for school or work. This can be a school provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.

“Not Shared” means dedicated to one student. This can be a school provided device or another device, whichever the student is most often using to complete their schoolwork.

“No Device” means the student does not have a device to use.

You should answer “No Device” if you previously responded “No Device” to Questions 2 and 3 respectively.

Question 5: Is the primary learning device (identified in question 2) sufficient for your child to fully participate in all learning activities away from school?

“Yes” means the student has a sufficient device (a computer or computing device such as a laptop, desktop, Chromebook, or full-sized iPad or other tablet), that is able to connect to the internet (even if an internet connection is not always available); has a screen size of at least 9.7”; has a keyboard (on-screen or external) and a mouse, touchscreen, or touchpad; and can run all applications, allowing for full participation in learning without or with very limited issues.

“No” means that the student does not have a device that meets the criteria above.

You should answer “No” if you previously responded “No Device” to Questions 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

Question 6: Is your child able to access the internet in their primary place of residence?

“Yes” means the student has internet access in their primary residence where the student typically resides.

“No” means the student does not have internet access in their primary residence.

Note: If student has multiple residences that share equal time, answer this question according to the residence that has the more limited access

Question 7: What is the primary type of internet service used in your child’s primary place of residence?

“Residential Broadband” means a high-bandwidth connection to the Internet at your home by using a cable (fiber or coaxial) connected to an Internet service provider such as Spectrum, AT+T, Frontier, etc.

“Cellular” means wireless Internet access delivered through cellular towers to computers and other devices. Uses your cell phone provider for internet access.

“Mobile Hotspot” means a wireless access point created by a dedicated hardware device or a smartphone feature that shares the phone's cellular data. For example, a cellphone or a device like a Kajeet, Verizon Jetpack, Netgear Nighthawk or MiFi.

“Community WiFi” means allowing Internet connection to visitors and guests using an existing Wi-Fi infrastructure in the community such as a library, café, hotel, etc.

“Satellite” means a wireless connection through the use of a satellite dish located on your property.

“Dial up” means a service that allows connectivity to the Internet by using a modem and a standard telephone line.

“DSL” Digital Subscriber Line means a high-speed bandwidth connection from a phone wall jack on an existing telephone network that works within the frequencies so you can use the Internet while making phone calls.

“Other” means none of the other choices apply.

“None” means that you do not have Internet access in your home.

You should answer “None” if you previously responded “No” to Question 6.

Question 8: In their primary residence, can your child complete the full range of learning activities, including video streaming and assignment upload, without interruptions caused by slow or poor internet performance?

“Yes” means the student experiences very few or no interruptions in learning activities caused by poor internet performance in their primary place of residence.

“No” means the student regularly experiences interruptions and is unable to complete all learning activities due to poor internet performance in their primary place of residence or lack of internet access.

You should answer “No” if you previously responded “No” and “None” to Questions 6 and 7 respectively.

Question 9: What, if any, is the primary barrier to having sufficient and reliable internet access in your child’s primary place of residence?

“Availability” means you cannot actually get fiber (or satellite or cell service) at your home.

“Cost” means the service available to your neighborhood is cost prohibitive.

“None” means that your child has sufficient and reliable access to the internet.

“Other” means none of the other choices apply.

You should answer “None” if you previously responded “Yes” to Question 8.

Appendix C

Digital Equity Questions and Answers

That May be Used to Assist Survey Administrators, RICs, and Big 5 Level 1 Centers

Q1. What is the purpose of this survey and how is the data being used?

A1. This data will be used on an ongoing basis throughout the year to help identify specific needs and target resources and funding opportunities when they become available. The data are also used to inform State policy and legislative initiatives. In addition to informing Department policy the CARES Act reporting has indicators that collect information on whether LEAs within the State used CARES Act funds to provide home Internet access for any students along with data on the student to device ratio.

Q2. Can any information from the previous digital equity survey be shared to help parents understand the importance of completing this survey?

A2. If a school, district or BOCES believes prior information is going to be helpful to the parent or guardian, it can be shared. Information from the previous Digital Equity Surveys can be found on the NYSED [Digital Equity webpage](#).

Q3. What is the reason for the initial December 6, 2021, collection deadline?

A3. The Department will be providing an annual update to the Board of Regents.

Q4. Can the survey be administered to students in the classroom?

A4. Best practice would have the student's parent or guardian fill out the survey to get the most accurate data possible, but this is a local decision by the school, district or BOCES.

Q5. Would the NYSED accept partial survey data on a student if the parent doesn't complete the survey?

A5. No. Every question requires a response. If no response is provided for the question(s), the data will not pass the validation business rules and the survey results for that student will not move to the Department.

Q6. Will parents be given an option to answer "no response" for the survey questions?

A6. No, this is not an option. All questions must be answered.

Q7. What if the parent refuses to take or complete the survey?

A7. Every question requires a response. If the survey is not complete the data will not pass the validation business rules and the survey results for that student will not move to the Department. The student will appear on a "Missing Survey Report" that will be provided by both Level 0 and Level 2 to school districts, BOCES, and schools to assist them with their review.

Q8. Will the survey be offered in languages other than English?

A8. The school, district or BOCES should plan to accommodate the language needs within the school community.

Q9. When developing the survey am I required to use the standard survey questions and responses in the order as shown in Appendix A?

A9. Yes.

Q10. Will questions on the survey be consistent across the state?

A10. Yes.

Q11. Should the school, district or BOCES fill out portions of the survey before it goes to the parent?

A11. Yes, the school, district or BOCES can prepopulate student demographic information, such as the student's name, local student id, location, and school, district or BOCES information.

Q12. Schools may already have device data for the student. Could a school, district or BOCES "prefill" the device data for parents on applicable students?

A12. Yes, for Question 1 only, if you have an accurate way to provide that information to parents before they take the survey.

Q13. Is it Important to have a survey for every kindergarten thru grade 12, including ungraded students?

A13. Yes, every K-12, including ungraded students, should have survey information reported. If a student has multiple residences that share equal time, use the residence that has the more limited access.

Q14. What happens if parents submit the survey twice for the same student?

A14. If multiple surveys are submitted for the same student in the same location, the last survey reported by the school, district or BOCES will be the survey information sent to SIRS.

Q15. Who is responsible to survey Foster Care students?

A15. The school, district or BOCES where the student is placed for main instruction.

Q16. Who is responsible to survey full day Out of District Placed (OODP) students?

A16. The OODP location where the student is placed for main instruction.

Q17. Who is responsible to survey students that attend a school and a BOCES program?

A17. The school or district that has accountability for the student is responsible for reporting the survey data. BOCES would only report students that are receiving full-day instruction.

Q18. How do we report students who change locations/buildings within the district or BOCES?

A18. Students changing a location/building within the district or BOCES should be re-surveyed for updated information.

Q19. What are the consequences if the Student Management System (SMS) vendor is not ready to accept and process this data until later in the school year?

A19. If the SMS vendor isn't ready, their data will not be reported to SIRS, however the school, district or BOCES can enter their data directly into Level 0. Districts should be working with their SMS vendors to coordinate a process for loading survey data into their student system.

Q20. Is collecting the data the responsibility of the SMS vendor?

A20. No, it's the school, district or BOCES responsibility.

Q21. Does the SMS Parent Portal serve as a method to provide survey information from parents?

A21. This is vendor specific depending on the capabilities of the system.

Q22. Once the data is in the SMS, will there be an opportunity to edit a record if the information changes?

A22. This is vendor specific depending on the capabilities of the system.

Q23. Who is responsible to collect and maintain the survey data?

A23. See questions and answers 15 thru 18.

Q24. What is the best way to provide outreach to staff and parents to help them understand the potential benefits to their child when the data is reported?

A.24 Outreach to parents is a local decision, but it is encouraged to utilize resources provided by the Department (e.g., at registration, backpack letters, open house, letters mailed home). Refer to the June 8, 2021 memo titled "[New Student-Level Digital Equity Data Collection.](#)"

Additional outreach strategies can be found at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) website: [Restart & Recovery: Home Digital Access Data Collection: Blueprint for State Education Leaders.](#)

Q25. Should there be some type of standards agreed upon and/or required concerning the collection? (e.g., IDEA compliance, multiple languages offerings, security minimum standards, etc.)

A25. Yes. Please consult your District Privacy Officer (DPO).