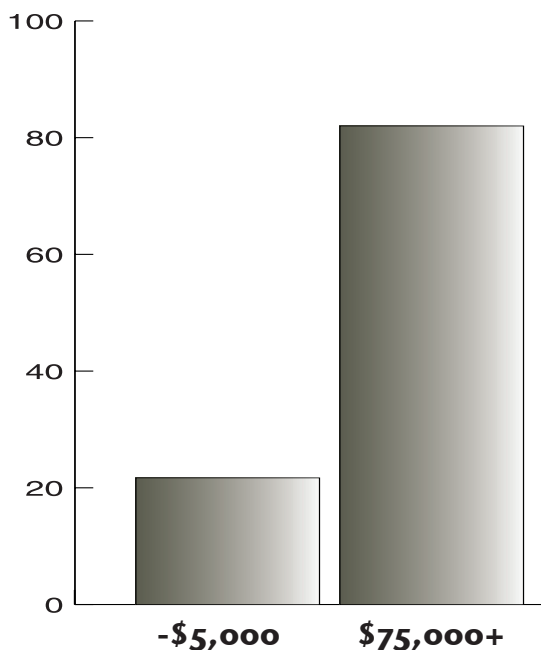# 1) Bridge the Digital Divide

*"To ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain high-quality education and at a minimum, reach proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments." NCLB*

The passage of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 reinforced the belief that all children can learn and that high standards must be set for all children. This landmark legislation reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 through the appropriation of the largest funding in history for Title I schools to pursue a standards-based reform agenda (Borman, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In a speech to the Commonwealth Club of California, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige emphasized the same belief of NCLB that all students can learn.



He stated that educators must "let go of the myths and perceptions about who can learn and who can't" to ensure that all students, despite their level of poverty can reach high academic standards (Paige, 2003).

While great strides have been made over the years in access to the Internet, a digital divide still occurs in the way technology is often used with low-income students. Providing universal access so that everyone can have access to the Internet regardless of income level or job status is only one part of the solution. Students must improve technology literacy so that they can participate intelligently and thoughtfully in the technical world around them. It is critical that students not only be given access, but training to better understand the Internet and its value, because the more likely they will be to make the effort to learn how to use it.



**Percentage of 10–14 year old students using computers at home for school work. Children in high income families are four times more likely to use computers than those in low income families. Statistics are from a 2001 survey conducted by the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.**

The disparity in available computer hardware between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is striking. Providing every student with a laptop that can be taken home will have a tremendous impact upon those who are shut out from the world of technology, but only if we implement it fairly. Maisie MacAdoo has summarized the importance of equity extending beyond boxes and wires. "The issue of equity now centers not on quality of equipment but on the quality of use. The computers are there, yes, but what is the real extent of access? What kind of software is available? How much computer training are teachers getting? And are schools able to raise not just students' level of tech-nical proficiency, but also their level of inquiry, as advanced use of technology demands?"
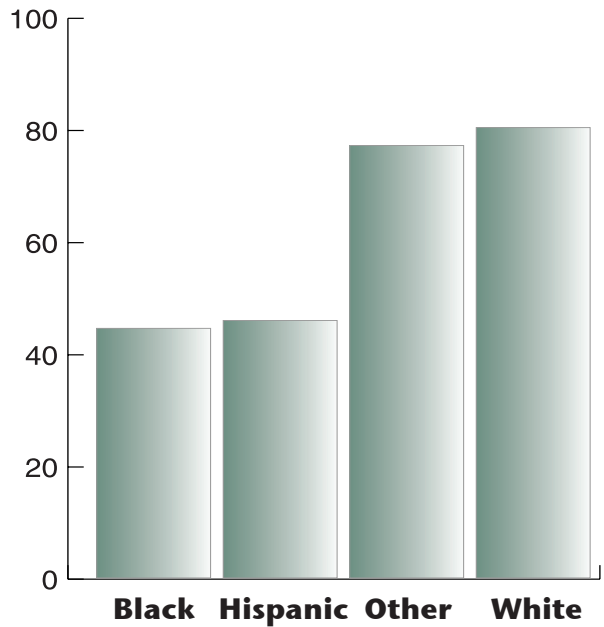


**Percentage of students aged 10–14 who use computers at home for school work. Black and Hispanic students are more than twice as likely to not have computer access than their white and other race schoolmates. Statistics are from a 2001 survey conducted by the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.**



❑ **Guiding principle:** All students must have access to appropriate tools and to challenging curriculum in order to bridge the digital divide by moving beyond basics and towards 21st century skills.