BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Baltimore City Council
Education & Youth Committee Hearing

August 27, 2020

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Chief Executive Officer

Overview of Today's Presentation

- City Schools tech preparedness plan for SY 2020-2021
- To provide context, I will start with a brief overview of City Schools Fall Reopening Plan.

The complete **Fall Reopening Plan** can be found at:
https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/reopening

As a reminder …….

Fall Reopening Plan

Starting all Virtual

All schools in the district will **open the 2020-2021 school year virtually**

We will **assess the need** to **prioritize certain small groups of students** for **in-person instruction** during the virtual learning period and for the addition of the hybrid model later in the fall

Transition to add the Hybrid Model

Families will have the **option to transition to hybrid model** or **continue with a virtual** learning model

We will provide **time to transition** to hybrid in-person learning and **opportunities to train** and orient **staff, families, and students** to what the experience will be like for those who choose that option

Adding the Hybrid Model

We will **reassess our ability to add the hybrid model** as conditions allow later in the fall. Transition to hybrid learning may look like:

- Ensuring our most **struggling students come back first** (eg. students who have not engaged well in the virtual space; students far behind in reading and math; English Learners; and/or students with IEPs)
- **Particular grades** may come back first, such as PK, K, 1st, 6th, and 9th (transition grades and youngest learners)
- All students come back in an **AA / BB** schedule format

Virtual instruction option continues:

Virtual instruction will continue to be offered to all families who do not feel comfortable returning their students to school in-person

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DRAFT PLAN

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Baltimore City's Digital Divide

The American Community Survey (2018) suggests the following about the digital divide in Baltimore:

- 96,000 households in Baltimore (40.7%) did not have wireline internet service, such as cable, fiber, or digital subscriber line service.
- 75,000 Baltimore City households, or one in three, do not have either a desktop or laptop computer.
- 19,200 households with children in the city do not have wireline broadband at home, or 34.7% of such households.
- Nearly 20,000 households with children under the age of 17 do not have wireline broadband or computers at home.

Horrigan, J. B. (2020, May 12). *Baltimore's Digital Divide: Gaps in Internet Connectivity and the Impact on Low-Income City Residents* (Rep.). Retrieved May 13, 2020, from Abell Foundation website: https://abell.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020_Abell_digital%20divide_full%20report_1.10.pdf

City Schools Tech Preparedness Plan

Goals: Device Distribution and Internet Access

- To provide devices and internet access to as many students who require these supports.
- To distribute 65,000 student devices and 5,000 staff devices.

Continually Analyzing Need …..

- We estimate that there are approximately 20,000 students who do not have internet access.
- We experienced an internet and device survey response rate of 48%.
- Principals and school communities are continuing to survey families to understand clear needs for devices and internet access.

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Overview: Device Distribution

- About 70,000 devices will be available for staff and students.
- Approximately 25,000 devices and 3,000 hotspots have been distributed to City Schools students.
- We plan to distribute 10,000+ more devices before the beginning of the school year, Sept. 8th.
- Further orders have been placed and we expect that approximately 20,000 devices will be available for distribution by mid-September.
- Over 1,200 devices have been distributed to teachers/staff this week.
- City Schools has ordered (but not purchased) 1,000 devices on behalf of charter schools to help ensure that they have what they need by Sept. 8th.

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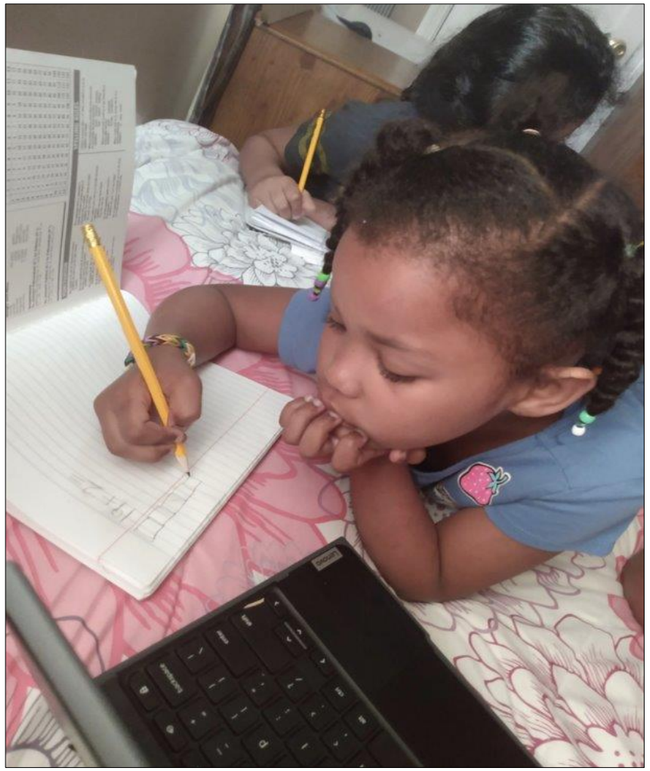
Comcast Strategy

- City Schools is planning to enter into a sponsorship agreement with Comcast to ensure that City Schools students have access to the Internet for virtual learning.
- City Schools expects to sponsor up to 7,000 households that have signed on for Internet Essentials to ensure continuation of service.
- State resources will be utilized to support this sponsorship agreement through December 31st. Raising funds to support families who have been connected through Comcast Internet Essentials beyond December 31st.
- Comcast has agreed to guarantee service levels of at least 25 mbps download and 3 mbps upload with 1 to 3 simultaneous users.
- Working through other contract items with Comcast – e.g., service window for installation for any new Internet Essential customers, collection of data.



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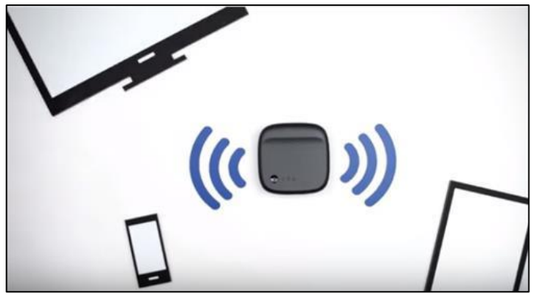
T-Mobile Strategy



- We have distributed 3,000 hotspots from T-Mobile, and will be distributing 12,000 additional hotspots along with devices in the coming weeks.
- Through state funding, we have covered this cost through December 31st. We hope to extend the service on the T Mobile hotspots from January to August 2021 with fundraising efforts.
- City School is looking into including charter schools under our T-Mobile contract to support them in their purchase of hotspots under the same terms.

Mesh Network Strategy

- City Schools partnered with the Digital Harbor Foundation to implement a mesh network pilot (Project Waves) in four school neighborhoods: Lakeland, James McHenry, John Rurah and Baybrook.

- As a result of this pilot, 68 families have access to internet free of cost for 5 years.

- District leadership is working with the Project Waves team to investigate long term mesh network implementation.

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