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# Equality Education and Closing the Homework Gap

## Linksys HomeWRK for Education | Secured by Fortinet

## Executive Summary

Before the world would adapt to the pandemic, around 15% of students were already unable to do their homework because of the lack of reliable computers and/or internet connection at home.[1] As the learning environment for students has shifted from traditional classrooms to virtual classrooms, it has exponentially widened that gap. According to a study from Common Sense Media, there are 15 to 16 million children in the U.S. who lack adequate home internet access,[2] which means 30% of all public K–12 students fall into the homework gap.

With the rapid shift to virtual classrooms, schools' constrained IT teams became overwhelmed with needed tools and apps for students' continuous access to curriculum and remote learning. The number of insecure remote access points (APs) left schools vulnerable and exposed to security risks. According to research, the 2020 calendar year showed a record-breaking number of publicly disclosed school cyber incidents.[3]

Fortinet and Linksys have partnered to offer a solution, Linksys HomeWRK for Education | Secured by Fortinet, designed to help close the homework gap by empowering school districts in the U.S. to provide underprivileged students with equal access to education through a secure, reliable, and affordable broadband connection.

**408 cyberattacks against U.S. public schools in 2020, 18% increase over 2019.[5]**
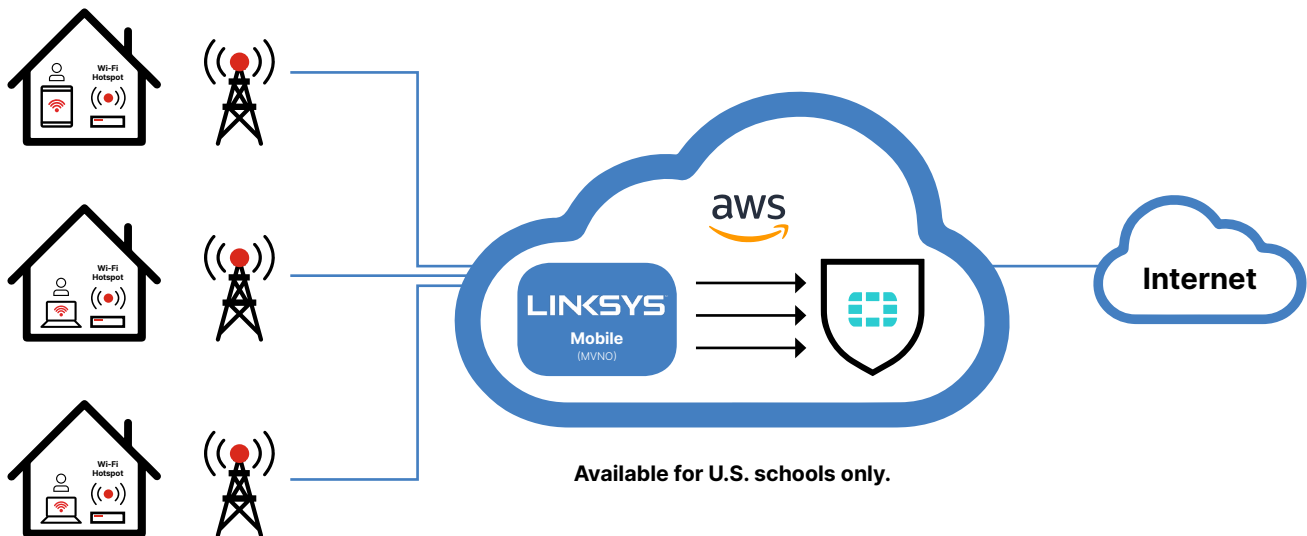
**On average, students with fast home internet access report an overall grade point average (GPA) of 3.18. This is significantly higher than the average 2.81 GPA for students with no access.[6]**

**LINKSYS HomeWRK EDUCATION**
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## The Internet Challenge

Many educational experts have indicated for decades that proper use of technology by students increases their academic performance outcome. Students with high-speed internet access at home participate in more educational activities online when away from school.

According to research from Michigan State University, in 2020, 82% of students in grades 8–11 reported that they often received homework requiring internet access.[4] Those who had no internet access from home often took longer to complete their assignments, spending an average of 30 additional minutes on homework per night, compared to their peers who had high-speed internet access.

While schools are reopening and/or offering hybrid models for learning as the pandemic begins to subside, the homework gap among students is still far from resolved. K–12 students who live in rural areas, or come from low-income families or communities, cannot have effective distance learning at home due to the lack of adequate broadband access or affordable services. This is a big challenge for schools across 50 states to enable students with equality in education regardless of their locations, race, or family income.

## Security and Reliability From Industry Leaders

Combining expertise in connectivity and security, Fortinet and Linksys have partnered to create a provision-free solution to help bridge the homework gap. This affordable solution, Linksys HomeWRK for Education │ Secured by Fortinet, comes with a plug-and-play hardware and nationwide data plans. This new solution allows school districts to easily provide students with reliable, secure home internet connections so that they are able to complete their homework for better academic achievement.

■ **Reliable connection with broader coverage and stronger signal:** Linksys HomeWRK for Education is connecting with major service providers to give underprivileged students the best broadband connection and service in their areas, without having to rely on an unreliable connection from one carrier.

■ **Advanced security and filtering features, powered by Fortinet:** Linksys HomeWRK is protected by the latest Fortinet security technology to intelligently filter inappropriate content and harmful malware. This secure solution helps schools meet the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) compliance requirements with safe internet access for what matters to students.

■ **Zero-touch provisioning devices require no IT effort:** Linksys HomeWRK for Education helps simplify students' onboarding process by offering easy plug-and-play devices with preactivated data plans. IT teams can easily roll the solution out to students for home connections in minutes, without IT's physical involvement.

■ **Affordable hardware and data plans based on student needs:** Linksys HomeWRK for Education gives schools more for less. Students have secure and quality broadband access from a selection of hardware and a simple data plan that covers their homework needs.



**Available for U.S. schools only.**

## Bridging the Homework Gap for Better Student Performance

Today's educators are doing the hard work of preparing students to build their skills so they can become contributing members of our digital world. Linksys HomeWRK for Education is designed to help schools close the homework gap by providing students without adequate internet connection at home an equal opportunity in access to education for a better future.

■ **Giving schools peace of mind with second-to-none security protection**
With the increased use of technology for student learning and remote access, schools have become more vulnerable to cyberattacks. Linksys HomeWRK for Education gives students secure internet access protected by Fortinet, recognized as a security leader by Gartner and many industrial analysts. The solution helps schools remain compliant with CIPA as well as provides students a safe environment beyond classrooms.

**Linksys HomeWRK hardware and subscription plans are qualified for many eligible government grants, including Emergency Connect Fund (ECF), Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I, II, III) fund, and American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funding.**

- **Streamlining student onboarding with a provision-free solution**
  Many schools are struggling with heavy IT workloads and lack of expertise and resources to support modern technologies. Linksys HomeWRK for Education eases IT's efforts by providing zero-provision hardware with simple data plans for students who need reliable internet connections at home. Simple plug-and-play devices help students get access to their homework in no time.

- **Enterprise-grade customer experience**
  Fortinet's channel partners have expertise in network security and connectivity, as well as the knowledge of various federal funding programs. They have experience in helping school districts personalize their digital strategies and execute their rollout plans. Secure and dependable broadband for students at home is available by government grant.

## Conclusion

Each school district is different, but all face the same challenge—the homework gap. Linksys HomeWRK for Education offers a collection of hardware and simple data plans to create an easily manageable secure remote learning network. Linksys HomeWRK for Education offers equality in education by providing connectivity for students without internet at home. Security provided by Fortinet supports CIPA compliance, making sure the students stay safe while attaining their educational goals, at home.

[1] Monica Anderson and Andrew Perrin, "Nearly one-in-five teens can't always finish their homework because of the digital divide ," Pew Research Center Survey, October 26, 2018.

[2] Sumit Chandra, et al., "Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning," Common Sense + BCG, 2020.

[3] Douglas A. Levin, "The State of K-12 Cybersecurity: 2020 Year in Review," K12 Six, March 10, 2021.

[4] Keith N. Hampton, et al., "Broadband and Student Performance Gaps," Quello Center, Michigan State University, 2020.

[5] Douglas A. Levin, "The State of K-12 Cybersecurity: 2020 Year in Review," K12 Six, March 10, 2021.

[6] Keith N. Hampton, et al., "Broadband and Student Performance Gaps," Quello Center, Michigan State University, 2020.

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