



“As the gap between rich and poor in the United States continues to grow, the ability to benefit from the opportunities delivered through computers and the Internet can help a generation of young people move out of poverty. Digital opportunity for kids is the equity issue of the 21st century”

– The Children’s Partnership. Digital Opportunity for Youth Issue Brief Number 4: April 2008



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Access: Putting Technology into the Hands and Homes of Students Who Need it Most

Computers4Kids (C4K) brings technology to students who need it most. In a society where computer skills are a necessary prerequisite to applying for a job, access to technology is critical to both surviving and thriving. C4K volunteers mentor low-income middle and high school students using technology—PCs and Macintosh computers—in our staff supervised, after-school computer learning labs. Students also have the opportunity to earn a free home computer. Volunteers at C4K refurbish donated computer equipment and provide students with ongoing tech support or repair services. Our community donates computer equipment, and C4K recycles it into the homes of students and their families.

- C4K volunteers refurbish and distribute approximately 40 free home computer systems annually. To-date over 500 students have received a home computer.
- All systems now run on Windows XP and contain Pentium-class processors of two gigahertz or faster, a CD-RW drive, and a color inkjet printer.
- Students and their parents attend training on computer maintenance before receiving their home system, and volunteers are available to repair computers on an on-going basis.
- C4K has staff supervised after-school learning labs where students can access professional grade software on 14 PCs, and 26 iMacs.
- Between 2:45-8pm Monday through Friday, students meet with their mentors, or just drop-in to do homework, practice typing, and develop technology skills.

Bridging the Digital Divide

What is the Digital Divide? It is the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not. Low-income and minority students are the LEAST likely to have access to computer technology. This is a critical disadvantage in a society where entry-level jobs require computer skills for both the initial application and job performance.

- 77% of households in Virginia earning less than \$15,000 per year do not own a computer compared to 33% of all Virginia households.

Source: The Children’s Partnership: Virginia Youth and Technology Fact Sheet

- **100% of C4K students are low-income.**
- Latino youth are more than three times as likely as Caucasian youth not to use a computer; and African American youth are more than two times as likely as Caucasian youth not to use a computer.

Source: The Children’s Partnership: Virginia Youth and Technology Fact Sheet

- **90% of C4K students are minorities.**
- The Children’s Partnership’s April 2008 Issue Brief on Digital Opportunity for Youth indicates the U.S. Department of Commerce has reported 95% of newly created jobs require computer skills.



Meeting a Local Need

In a locality where there is a lack of adequate after-school programming for older, low-income youth, C4K is meeting a critical need. An astonishing 54% of youth living in Charlottesville qualify for free or reduced price school lunches, and according to the Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families, this number is growing. Low income youth with less access to technology are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, and are more likely to drop out of high school. Local and national experts have recognized that access to after-school programming is a much needed protective factor for our youth. Mentoring in particular, is a powerful tool for helping students believe in their own abilities and meet their potential. C4K has created a winning combination: after-school one-on-one mentoring that enables students to develop the technology skills essential to success in academic and career settings.

Community Support: Your Impact

You can make a direct impact on the life of a local student by investing in C4K. In addition to a track record of recognition for program success, C4K keeps costs low with an annual operating budget below \$500,000. 90 cents out of every dollar donated to C4K goes directly to program costs and services provided to deserving students. The dedication and generosity of our supporters sustains our efforts to give students a vibrant learning environment and a knowledgeable support system so that they have every chance of success. We thank you for helping us give local at-risk students these tools for success, and the chance to make their own positive contribution to our community.

