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COMPTROLLER LIU: DIGITAL DIVIDE THREATENS NYC STUDENTS' POST-HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

*Calls for Expanding Programs that Develop Critical Technology Skills
and Improve Educational Outcomes*

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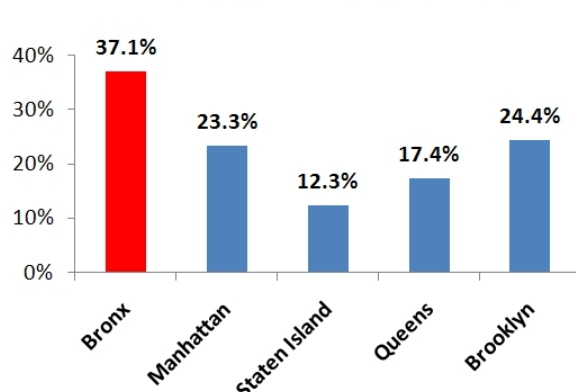
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NEW YORK, NY – A report released today by City Comptroller John C. Liu found that nearly one-quarter of households in New York City lack a computer, highlighting a digital divide that threatens to leave many young people without the technology skills necessary to succeed after high school. Black and Hispanic households are especially likely to have no computer (41 percent and 29 percent respectively), as are households in the Bronx (37 percent). Additionally, 60 percent of households without broadband Internet have annual incomes lower than \$30,000, and 73 percent are headed by someone who did not attend college. To address these disparities and improve students' ability to use technology, the report recommends working to expand computer ownership, broadband adoption, and technology training for students and their families.

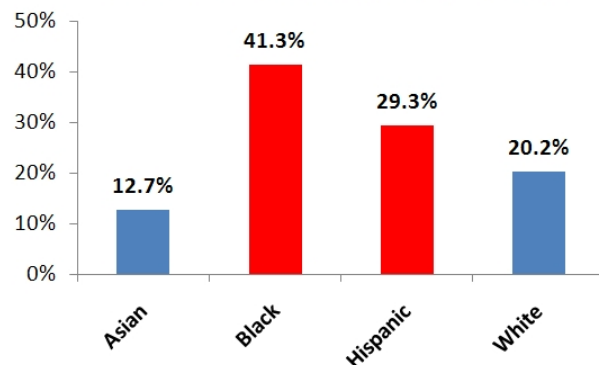
“We must confront this digital divide in order to ameliorate inequities that limit the potential of our city as a whole,” said **Comptroller Liu**. “In today’s digital world, technology skills are no longer optional — they’re necessary for success.”

**PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT
A COMPUTER BY BOROUGH**



Source: Current Population Survey, 2010

**PERCENT OF NYC HOUSEHOLDS
WITHOUT A COMPUTER BY RACE**



Source: Current Population Survey, 2010



On Thursday, April 4, 2013, Comptroller Liu visited a MOUSE technology program at MS 328 in Washington Heights.

[Click here to view video from the event.](#)

The report makes several key recommendations:

- Expand the CFY (formerly “Computers for Youth”) program to include all middle schools where at least 75 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. CFY provides participating families with refurbished home computers, training workshops, educational software, and technical support at no cost. In addition to improving digital literacy and broadband subscription rates, the program has been shown to improve students’ academic performance and deepen the connection between schools and families. Expanding the program to the roughly 40,000 students who would qualify would cost between \$16.1 million and \$28.2 million per year.
- Offer MOUSE (formerly “Making Opportunities for Upgrading Schools and Education”) programs at every public middle and high school. MOUSE, which can be taught as an elective, club, or extracurricular activity, provides students with critical 21st-century skills and trains them to handle technological support and repairs at their school. Students who take advantage of MOUSE learn valuable technology and leadership skills, and past participants have overwhelmingly reported being better prepared for college and more likely to pursue careers in technology, science, math, or engineering as a result of the program. Because MOUSE reduces schools’ technology costs, implementing programs in every school could result in net annual savings of roughly \$15 million.
- Provide free computers to college-bound New York City public school graduates from low-income families. A 2011 study of financial aid recipients at a large community college found that minority students, in particular, exhibited better educational outcomes after receiving a free computer for home use. The report’s proposal would affect an estimated 18,000 students and cost about \$5.4 million annually.
- Require businesses that receive technology and communication grants to donate “used-but still-useful” computers. The National Cristina Foundation, which connects companies looking to donate used computers and other electronic hardware with local charities or schools, could facilitate the donation process.
- Promote digital-literacy training and resources through the NYC.gov website and at government offices.

The proposals in the report can be paid for by reducing unnecessary costs in the Department of Education's budget, which in Fiscal 2013 is \$20 billion, or nearly a third of the City budget. The Comptroller's Audit Bureau has consistently found ways the department could have done more to eliminate waste and capture cost savings — including \$133 million for universal pre-K that went unused and had to be returned to the state, and \$80 million for the glitch-prone ARIS data system, which has led to no discernable improvement student learning and is so faulty that it is being replaced.

“Through CFY's digital learning work with more than 100 schools and 50,000 families nationwide, we have seen how technology can provide exciting opportunities to help students, teachers, and parents work together in innovative ways to improve educational outcomes,” said **Elisabeth Stock, CEO and Co-Founder, CFY**. “The Digital Literacy report from the Comptroller's office provides an important review of key factors that can help New York City take advantage of these opportunities to better prepare all of its students for college and career success.”

“Digital literacy is essential in preparing today's youth with the technology and critical-thinking skills needed for success in the 21st century economy,” said **Daniel A. Rabuzzi, Executive Director, MOUSE**. “We applaud the Comptroller's recommendations in ‘Bridging the Digital Literacy Divide’ and his dedication to advancing digital learning for all NYC public school students.”

“This comprehensive report clearly outlines the major issues and potential solutions for delivering a 21st century education to New York City's public school students,” said **Andrew Rasiej, Chairman of the New York Tech Meetup**. “It also makes clear once and for all that making low-cost high-speed Internet access available in the homes of public school families is essential to making sure New York City can properly compete in the hyper-connected global economy in which we now all live.”

Background:

The report, entitled “Bridging the Digital Literacy Divide,” is part of Comptroller Liu's “Beyond High School NYC” initiative. “Beyond High School NYC” seeks to increase the proportion of New Yorkers with a college degree to 60 percent by the year 2025 through strategic investments in public education. Three other reports have been issued:

“No More Rubber Stamp” makes recommendations for reforming the City's Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) and sets out 15 common-sense educational, managerial, and personal criteria for the Schools Chancellor position. Information and a link to the report can be found here: http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2013_releases/pr13-01-023.shtm and here: http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/2013/NYC_NoMoreRubberStamp_v24_Jan2013.pdf

“The Power of Guidance” shows that a critical impediment for students seeking success in higher education is the lack of quality counseling, advising, and mentoring programs in New York City public high schools, and makes five recommendations to enhance student support systems to help overcome the obstacles to obtaining a college degree. Information and a link to the report can be found here: http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2012_releases/pr12-10-108.shtm and here:

http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/2012/Power_of_Guidance_Oct_PDF.pdf

“Beyond High School: Higher Education as a Growth & Fiscal Strategy for New York City” found that New York City, which regards itself as the intellectual capital of the country, is actually only in the middle of the pack of major cities based on the percentage of the working-age population with an Associate’s Degree or higher, and shows how that hampers the City economically. Information and a link to the report can be found here: http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2012_releases/pr12-09-105.shtm and here: <http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/2012/Higher-Education-Report-FINAL.pdf>

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johncliu” to 40404. View the latest Comptroller’s office videos on YouTube.*

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