



How to Launch an Off-Campus  
Learning Program: Best Practices  
from Over 200 Deployments

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## Overview: The Homework Gap & Digital Divide

The use of online tools, collateral, and multimedia has become commonplace in every type curriculum and across every grade level. Educators are quickly incorporating digital learning into classroom pedagogy because they understand the power these resources bring to the learning experience.

Today's students are technologically savvy and easily embrace digital learning. In fact, a recent study shows that more than 70% of students in grades K through 12 think every student should have access to a mobile device during the school day to embrace learning.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, 30% of high school students use the Internet on a daily basis to complete their studies.<sup>2</sup>

As districts and schools continue to expand their digital learning, 1:1, and BYOD programs, it often creates an unintended digital divide or Homework Gap between those students with adequate, off-campus, access to the Internet and those students who lack access.

Within every district, there are hundreds, or even thousands, of students who do not have Internet access once they leave the classroom. Nationwide, 5 million households with school-age children lack Internet access at home.<sup>3</sup>

Low-income students feel the impact of the Homework Gap far more than their more affluent classmates. Ultimately, this disadvantaged position jeopardizes the student's performance, grades, and even graduation rates.

### Statistics

- Roughly 7 in 10 teachers assign homework that requires access to Internet<sup>4</sup>
- 42 percent of teachers say their students lack sufficient access to technology outside of the classroom<sup>5</sup>
- Even worse, only 3 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools said that their students have the digital tools necessary to complete homework assignments<sup>6</sup>
- 5 million households with school-age children do not have high-speed internet service at home. Low-income households – and especially black and Hispanic ones – make up a disproportionate share of that 5 million<sup>7</sup>
- 31% of households whose incomes fall below \$50,000 and with children ages 6 to 17 do not have a high-speed internet connection at home<sup>8</sup>
- High school students who have broadband Internet at home have graduation rates 6 to 8 percentage points higher than students who don't<sup>9</sup>
- Students' average RIT score in math improved by 11.26 points (24% higher) with 1:1 devices AND Internet connectivity<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Project Tomorrow Speak Up Survey

<sup>2</sup> Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey

<sup>4</sup> Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2014.

<sup>5</sup> The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: Teachers Know Best Report.

<sup>6</sup> Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center.

<sup>8</sup> Pew Research Center.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Reserve Study.

<sup>10</sup> Project Tomorrow Making Learning Mobile 3.0 report 2016.

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# Quantify the Need for Connectivity

## Do You Have Students Without Internet at Home?

Schools and districts that have deployed, or are in the process of deploying, 1:1 initiatives are most vulnerable to students falling in the Homework Gap. Although the obvious intent of all this spectacular and useful technology is to ensure that students have access to modern tools and technology to compete and learn in a modern world – if the district does not also have a plan for connectivity outside the classroom, a number of students will actually fall further behind.

The first step in a successful off-campus Education Broadband program is to determine the number of students who require connectivity, but do not have it at home. This step is critical as it will determine the scope of the program moving forward, including: necessary budget: funding mechanism(s), program management, and expected program impact.

- Which students require Internet connectivity because they do not have it outside the classroom?
- Which students will require devices such as laptops, Chromebooks, NetBooks or tablets?

## Quick Calculation

To quickly scope the issue, Kajeet has learned from its client base that a “general rule of thumb” is approximately 15%-25% of students participating in the Free Meal Program (not Free + Reduced) *will not* have adequate broadband access outside of school.

## Formal Survey

The more accurate way to determine the need for connectivity is to conduct a formal survey of the students and/or parents. So a few tips:

1. Be sure to clarify the type of Internet access they may, or may not have. For example, a student or parent may consider a Smartphone as having an Internet connection, but a Smartphone is not an adequate tool or resource to complete most homework and school assignments. Be clear about high-speed Internet that can be accessed by a laptop, computer, Chromebook, netbook or tablet.
2. It may sound simple, but remember, if the household does not have Internet connectivity, they cannot answer an Internet-based survey form. Provide a paper-based, in-school survey, text-based message survey, and/or even phone-based survey to reach all households.
3. The households most easily missed are often those with students in greatest need. If necessary, involve your existing community outreach to catch all households – Title I coordinators, migrant program staff, homeless program staff, counselors, home advisors, etc.

To assist you, Kajeet has created a [sample student connectivity survey](#) based on the best questions from hundreds of our clients. Please feel free to use this survey in whole, in part, or as a starting template for your survey.

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## Market Demand Method

If a formal survey is not possible, due to time or resource constraints, another option is to implement a pilot check-out program through school libraries and/or media centers. If your team decides this is the best way to assess the need, it is important to still follow the steps in this guide including developing a plan, creating a team, marketing the program, etc.

The process is rather straightforward: place a number of devices in each of your school media centers and make them available for check out – much the way you would other school technology. Ensure the students, parents, and staff in each school are aware of the program (see Attachment B for an example of a notification flyer) and then monitor the demand in each media center through the Sentinel® portal.

After 2-3 months of usage, you will discover which schools are utilizing the devices, are consistently out of stock, and which schools have lower utilization rates. You can then transfer the underutilized devices to those schools with higher need and even purchase additional devices at any time to add to a school's library checkout pool.

## Identify the Students Who Need Connectivity

Surveys and estimation based on Free Meal Student numbers will help when determining how many students need connectivity, but the next step is to identify which students need the Kajeet Smartspots.

**SMART TIP:** Many times there is a stigma attached to taking home a Kajeet SmartSpot. If your school is checking them out from the media center, make it a positive experience for the students.

### Connecting Kajeet SmartSpots® with Students

Here are a few ways our clients have ensured Kajeet SmartSpots® get into the hands of students who need them the most:

- Identify students in need from social workers, counselors and/or teachers.
- Advertise within the school and community.
- Visit classrooms to let them know it's available when they need it.
- Let teachers advocate for connectivity.
- Provide an application for students/parents.
- Involve staff member who know the students.

### Fund Your Connectivity Initiative

Technology requires funding and funding continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing schools. This should be a part of your digital strategy and part of your budget.

Often it is challenging to get a program up and running without including it into the budget of the previous year. Consider one-time infusions such as Bond funds to use over a multi-year period.

Piloting a program with clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes will help support additional funding and possible expansion for the future. Examples of clear goals include: increasing test scores, increasing parent participating, increasing online homework hours.

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The good news is that there are private foundations, local grants, and federal funds that can be used to fund or assist in funding off-campus connectivity. Many districts are already tapping into these funds to help close the Homework Gap, purchase and develop new or existing technologies, enhance students' computer skills, offer professional development, increase parent involvement, and work with data to improve academic achievement for all.

Initial funding to launch a program is a great start, but there should be commitment to sustain it for the future.

Kajeet has created a free, online database of more than 100 foundations and grants that can help schools close their Homework Gap. Visit [HomeworkGapFunding.com](http://HomeworkGapFunding.com) to find grants that may be viable for your school and project.

## Identify Your Team

Relationships and communication with cross-functional teams are critical to the success of any program. Establish an interdisciplinary team to plan and manage the initiative. Technology and curriculum staff may be the obvious partnership, but don't neglect other areas like special education, librarians, transportation or the top district administrators.

Connectivity at home can lead to better test scores, grades, graduation rates and attendance. Others will be interested in seeing your program succeed to help the entire district.

### Who Might Be Part of Your Team?

Consider all the stakeholders for connectivity and what role they might play:

- Director of Curriculum/Instruction
- Director of Technology
- Chief Academic Officer
- Director of Special Education
- Library/Media Resource Directors
- Director of Federal Programs
- Chief Information Officer
- Parent Teacher Association Representative—help survey the community.
- Student Representative—give the student perspective
- Director of Student Services
- Director of Transportation
- Teachers
- Social Workers
- Director of Communications

### Roles

Decide who will do what and in what timeframe. Start a conversation in your district about digital equity and discuss how it can improve student achievement and improve the community. Involve teachers, students, and community representatives. Engage the PTA in offering the parent perspective. In developing your team, the [CoSN District Leadership Team Assessment](#) might help to

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evaluate your team’s success. One or more individuals may fill the following important roles in the program:

- Program administrator (access to Sentinel, primary point of contact with Kajeet, deployment lead, point of contact for school or district staff)
- Technical lead (filtering and content management advisor)
- Instructional lead (reviews reports and analytics)
- Executive sponsor (champion, liaison with administration and School Board)
- Purchasing lead (procurement, keeper of the agreement and terms)

## Develop Your Connectivity Plan

Now that you have your team in place, it’s time to start planning. Creating a plan shouldn’t seem like a daunting process. In fact, having a plan in place with goals, objectives, action items, timeline, budget, and ways to measure, ensures buy-in from the administration which can lead to success.

**SMART TIP:** Need help developing your connectivity plan? Here is a sample [plan](#) to help with this process.

It is likely that your off-campus connectivity strategy is tied to a larger plan, like your district’s technology or mobile learning plan. Begin there.

### Your Plan Should:

- Define success based on measurable data (e.g. increase in student attendance, parent engagement, student test scores, graduation rates, student engagement, etc.)
- Ensure you have unfettered access to the data.
- Ensure any set goals tie off-campus connectivity to your core instructional goals.
- Define how to gather support and participation of all of your interdisciplinary team members.

Indicate a specific funding source or plan to secure funding from that source.

- State timeframes and deadlines. Include time to procure the devices and service, staff training, device testing, student and/or library deployment, health checks and program evaluation, results analysis meetings.

### Points and Details to Consider:

- Which students/schools need intervention? How do you know? Can connectivity help them?
- Could (or should) your plan support Title I Parental Involvement goals?
- Will you assign a Kajeet SmartSpot to each student OR create a library lending model?
- How do SmartSpots get from the warehouse into student’s hands?

## Establish a Timeline

It is almost inevitable that any program will have aggressive timelines for implementation. Often, many line items on the timeline can be under – or over – estimated, especially when there is no past

experience to draw upon. Below is the lifecycle of the Education Broadband program, use this guide to help establish your timeline.

| Prepare  | Deploy   | Analyze/Adjust   | Expand   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify team</li> <li>✓ Define team roles</li> <li>✓ Get executive buy in</li> <li>✓ Connectivity plan</li> <li>✓ Establish a clear goal</li> <li>✓ Identify need</li> <li>✓ Have you surveyed, analyzed and published results?</li> <li>✓ Community involvement</li> <li>✓ Funding secured</li> <li>✓ Measureable objectives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Which plan is right for you?</li> <li>✓ What solution? SmartSpot checkout or 1:1</li> <li>✓ Device distribution</li> <li>✓ Fully charge laptops and SmartSpots for distribution.</li> <li>✓ Will you use the Sentinel Media Center Check out function or your own asset management system?</li> <li>✓ Which of your staff will monitor the Sentinel dashboard?</li> <li>✓ When is your 30 day Kajeet Health Check? Who is participating?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See Kajeet Health Check deck.</li> <li>✓ When is your 30-day Health Check?</li> <li>✓ What are the findings around device usage?</li> <li>✓ How do the findings impact next steps?</li> <li>✓ Does the data suggest that a change is necessary? If so, what how and when?</li> <li>✓ Does the data usage suggest the most appropriate deployment (checking out vs 1:1)?</li> <li>✓ With whom can we share results?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Was our pilot successful based on initial data and established metrics?</li> <li>✓ How have parent and students responded to the experience? (Satisfaction survey)</li> <li>✓ What are some of the key strengths or weaknesses in the program?</li> <li>✓ Who needs to know about the results? Community, leadership, funders?</li> <li>✓ What is the plan for contributing to the professional learning community through collaboration? (White paper, press release, case study, hosted webinar)</li> </ul> |

## Manage the Program

Whoever you choose to manage your Education Broadband program will depend based on your interdisciplinary team and the plan (your goals/objectives/timeline/metrics). Every program needs a leader and one who is accountable for the outcomes.

Because Kajeet is at the intersection of technology and curriculum, likely candidates might include the Coordinator for 1:1 Programs or Blended Learning who are familiar with stakeholders and deployment methods, challenges and successes.



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## An Effective Program Manager Should:

1. Be a leader who can communicate and reflect the vision of the program.
2. Understand the district ecosystem and all the stakeholders.
3. Manage the technology and support, and understand the curriculum.

## Market the Program

Now that you have identified and quantified the students with the greatest need, you need to get the word out. Experience has taught us that simply placing devices in the media center or alerting the principals will not ensure that your students are fully aware of the program. Whether you're distributing as a library check-out to students or assigning as part of a 1:1 program, it's important to market your program.

### Name your program

The easiest way to generate "buzz" and excitement around the program is to give it a name. A program with a symbolic, meaningful, or catchy name is easy to remember and something the district, administrators, teachers and parents can rally around. Even better to create a memorable acronym, one that is easy to remember and pronounce.

- Connecting Students for Success (CSS)
- GOT IT (Get On The Internet Today)
- Wi-Fi On the Go (Miami Dade County Public Schools)
- Tomorrow\*ed (Cincinnati Public Schools)

## Work with the schools or district administration to notify the parents and students

### Distribute flyers

- In-classroom flyers students can take home.
- Have available for parent-teacher meetings and back-to-school night.
- Place flyers in the waiting area of your schools or post them on common area bulletin boards.
- Include in your regularly scheduled district or school parent communications.

### Send text messages

Most students who need to participate in the Kajeet Education Broadband program do not have Internet connectivity at home so many may not have email addresses. However, most will have a cell phone with texting capability. If your school or district collects parent cell phone numbers, then an effective way to alert the parent-base may be to send text messages.

### Automated phone messaging service\*

Those families that do not have, or cannot afford mobile phones, will likely have landlines in their residence. There are a number of inexpensive services that can send automated phone messaging to your parents.

- School Messenger ([www.schoolmessenger.com](http://www.schoolmessenger.com))
- CallFire ([www.callfire.com](http://www.callfire.com))
- One Call Now ([www.onecallnow.com](http://www.onecallnow.com))

- 
- Dial My Calls, Inc. ([www.dialmycalls.com](http://www.dialmycalls.com))
  - PhoneTree ([www.phonetree.com/industries/schools-students](http://www.phonetree.com/industries/schools-students))

*\*Kajeet does not endorse any vendors listed. These are simply organizations we are aware of that provide the service mentioned.*

## Train Staff

Someone at the district level has most likely made the purchase for your Kajeet SmartSpots or Kajeet SmartBus, but teachers and school-based staff (for the SmartSpots) and bus drivers (for SmartBus) need to understand what's available and how to operate it, successfully.

Before deploying your Education Broadband devices, determine all the players of your team. [Since you already identified your team and their roles earlier, this should be easy.] Make sure they all understand the goal, the metrics to measure success and how to operate and market the program. The more people within a district who understand the potential and its use, the more successful your program will be now and in the future. How you chose to implement your off-campus connectivity plan, will determine who should get trained.

**SMART TIP:** Professional development days or mini technology camps your district already has are also a great time to train your entire team and rally support for the Education Broadband program.

## Engaging Teachers

Understand how teachers use technology in their classrooms so they can provide relevant instructional support. Make sure teachers are familiar with the technology. This solution is meant to provide students with broadband connectivity off campus, and it is not intended to be incorporated into lesson plans and will not require modifications from the teachers.

1. **Market the program and availability of resources.** Often, teachers don't assign online homework because they believe their students don't have access to the Internet. As classroom leaders, teachers often find themselves out of the loop - and not aware of all resources available to support their lessons. District leaders should market the SmartSpots so teachers know that their students have access to safe Internet.
2. **Provide opportunities for teachers to learn, practice, and share instructional strategies.** Make resources available in a variety of formats. Support instructional staff in developing new technology-rich lesson plans.
3. **Remove barriers to access technology by making SmartSpots easily available to students who have a need.** Encourage teachers to support students taking home SmartSpots to finish homework.
4. **Share utilization data.** Show teachers the Kajeet Health Check. In a 1:1 SmartSpot deployment, each device represents a child. Tell that child's story.
5. **Recognize teacher's efforts by celebrating success.** Reward the teacher responsible for accumulating the most online homework hours. Host a ceremony for the student and teacher team that made the most measurable improvement. Invite parents and students to participate in a joint celebration with their teachers.

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6. **Gather feedback from teachers.** Find out how devices are working and if students are progressing towards their goals.

## How Will You Use Education Broadband?

### **Library Check-Out of SmartSpots**

**Train:** Librarians, Media Resource Specialists, School-Based IT Specialists, Teachers

### **1:1 Program**

**Train:** School-Based IT Specialists, Teachers

### **SmartBus™ Homework Zone**

**Train:** Transportation Director, IT Directors, Bus Drivers, Athletic Coaches/Staff

### **Migrant Family Programs**

**Train:** Migrant Student Director, IT Director, Librarians, Media Resource Specialists, School-Based IT Specialists, Teachers

## Parent Engagement

Securing parental approval and support for the technology in the home is crucial and districts are finding that a few key steps, such as strong communication and asking for input, can help their tech initiatives be more successful.

### Communicating with Parents

Involve parents and community stakeholders at every stage of the process during planning, deployment and evaluation. Although there is no one right way to communicate with your parents, face-to-face has the biggest impact since it allows for dialogue.

***Explain to parents how the technology is being used and how it helps overall academic, social, and emotional success. Share success stories from your district.***

Here are a few suggestions from district administrators who have seen great success.

**District-Wide Parent Evenings:** Host district-wide evenings to discuss the 1:1 program and form a committee with parent representatives from each school to meet regularly and talk about your 1:1 initiative.

**Parent Ambassadors:** Enlist current parent ambassadors who are champions for your plan to reach out to other parents and host coffee hours that administrators attend to build relationships.

**Student-Led Parent Professional Development:** Students walk family members through the technology (hardware and software) used at home/school to get parents excited about the possibilities.

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**Community Organizations:** Use community centers and organizations to communicate district technology plans and how it will improve the community. This also helps spread the word for when additional funding may be needed.

**Student Volunteers:** Use student ambassadors to speak at churches, libraries, community centers, or help reach out to students whose parents/family aren't able to make events on campus.

The venue to communicate is important and specific to your parent population. Keep in mind working parents or parents who may work two shifts. Most of these parents may not have access to email so online communication may not be the most effective. In addition, note the native language. For many families, their children are the translators for the parents. By hosting sessions in their native language, you will gain their trust, show you care, and build that relationship.

## Ask for Input

Communication goes two ways. While presenting your plan is always important, listening to what parents and community organizations have to say about the tech plan is equally important.

### Survey and Market to Parents

Focus groups are a great forum for getting feedback and establishing relationships with parents. It is also an opportunity to brainstorm solutions when there may be challenges for certain students.

## Training

There are parents who make the decision to opt-out of tech programs. This happens for a variety of reasons. Many times they are afraid of the responsibility, fearful of the technology, or afraid of what Internet access will bring.

It is important for districts to educate parents on proper tech usage and web filtering. Some districts amend policies so that students who bring home SmartSpots aren't liable for broken devices, as long as there is no negligence.

Some schools offer tech classes that cover general technology topics, as well as the devices and tools the district students use. Many parents are unfamiliar with the equipment or being online, so it's helpful to do some ground work before discussing devices.

## Measure

Parent engagement is a key metric for districts to show success. Many funding sources, including Title Programs (Title I, Title III, etc.), look to fund programs which will increase parent engagement.

Some potential metrics:

- Number of parent interactions/training session.
- Volume of parent traffic on district portal or LMS.
- Number of parent/teacher conferences.

Whether your families hear about your district's tech happenings via flyers, snail mail, email, text, twitter, Facebook, your website or district app, or face-to-face at a Back to School Night, the key is to make them feel included, listen to and address their concerns, and clearly describe what is

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happening and why it matters. Having parents on board can help take your tech program from good to great.

## Parent, Family and Student Acceptable Use Guidelines & Permission Forms

It is critical before sending any technology home that both students and parents understand the expectation for their Kajeet SmartSpots. Districts should always get permission from parents before sending home technology.

Here are sample documents to help with this process:

1. Loaner Device Agreement [[PDF](#)] [[Word Document](#)]
2. Code of Conduct [[PDF](#)] [[Word Document](#)]
3. Acceptable Use Agreement [[PDF](#)] [[Word Document](#)]
4. Parent Permission Form [[PDF](#)] [[Word Document](#)]
5. Kajeet Guide for Parents and Students [[PDF](#)]

## Device Deployment: Best Practices

Once your team has determined which students will receive SmartSpots, it's time to put them into their hands and get them connected.

A launch event is the easiest way to instruct students of usage, highlight digital citizenship programs, discuss filters, and acceptable use.

### Best Practices from Kajeet Clients:

1. Fully charge laptops and SmartSpots prior to the distribution event. Nothing breaks the heart of a child more than turning on the device and having it not work because someone didn't charge it.
2. Pre-set Kajeet SmartSpot passwords to the laptops prior to the deployment so when the student turns it on, the password is already set.
3. For a 1:1 program, pre-assign and bundle (perhaps using a knapsack) laptops and SmartSpots before the event. This saves the team time during distribution.
4. Invite district technology and school-based staff to address issues during deployment. Sometimes separate district filters can disrupt connectivity and having someone from the school-based team, as well as the district, can help students and parents feel confident.
5. Invite all stakeholders to the launch/deployment, including the program administrator, technical lead, instructional lead, and executive sponsor.
6. If your school culture supports it, enlist student tech teams/leaders to help with deployment.
7. Use the opportunity to explain to parents and students about the filters and acceptable use. This [document](#) may help.

## Establish Ongoing program Health Check Meetings

Once your program is launched, it is important to regularly check in with Kajeet and your entire program team to check on its progress. Is the program heading in the direction to achieve

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objectives? What does the data in the Sentinel dashboard tell you about usage? How could/should devices be differently distributed?

### Health Check Meeting Attendees

It is important for the initial call and the one-year meeting to include the following team members:

- District staff
- School-level staff
- Partner participants (e.g. Verizon)
- Kajeet staff

A 30-day, 6-month and 1-year health-check meeting helps the team stay focused. During the initial health-check meeting, Kajeet will discuss with your team:

- Project history and design
- Measurable project goals
- Number of student participants, grade levels, selection criteria, distribution process
- Sentinel dashboard: reporting categories, usage behavior, homework gap hours
- Parent involvement plans
- Possible summer suspend/summer school options
- How to share success with the community

## Reporting Program Success

Reporting progress on your program to all stakeholders gives you an opportunity to shine, as well as make the necessary modifications to improve.

### A few SMART TIPS to follow:

- Report progress of your plan in regular intervals. The Kajeet Account Management team hosts Health Checks which can help you plan and report out your success.
- Report progress in consistent language/terms with your district instructional goals. In your pre-deployment call, your Kajeet team can establish which of your instructional goals our program supports.
- Report progress to all stakeholders, including parents, instructional leaders, students, potential funders, community, and media.
- Report progress in a variety of formats, including newsletter, parent conferences, press releases, and board meetings.

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# Acknowledgments

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## About Kajeet

Kajeet, the industry leader for safe mobile student Internet connectivity, is bridging the digital divide in school districts across the country. Kajeet provides an affordable mobile broadband solution that connects economically disadvantaged students to the resources they need to complete required assignments and projects outside of school. The Kajeet SmartSpot® solution, a portable Wi-Fi hotspot combined with the innovative Sentinel® cloud portal, enables administrators and teachers to provide CIPA-compliant, customizable filtered Internet access that keeps students focused on school work and provides off-campus Internet connectivity without worry of data abuse. Kajeet products and services, which operates on both the Sprint and Verizon network, are protected by the following issued U.S. patents: 9,237,433; 9,137,389; 9,137,386; 9,125,057; 8,995,952; 8,929,857; 8,918,080; 8,774,755; 8,774,754; 8,755,768; 8,731,517; 8,725,109; 8,712,371; 8,706,079; 8,667,559; 8,644,796; 8,639,216; 8,634,803; 8,634,802; 8,634,801; 8,630,612; 8,611,885; 8,600,348; 8,594,619; 8,588,735; 8,285,249; 8,078,140; 7,945,238; 7,899,438; 7,881,697. Other patents are pending.