

## BRINGING DIGITAL LEARNING HOME: Connecting 500 Miami-Dade County Public School Students

BY SHEILA DUGAN & REBA WATKINS

### ABSTRACT

As more and more school districts across the nation convert to a digital learning model and incorporate 1:1 device programs, the problem of home connectivity shifts to the foreground of how to prepare our students for success. EveryoneOn partnered with Mobile Beacon and Sprint to facilitate a bulk adoption program for 500 students enrolled in the Miami-Dade County Public School District.

### THE PROBLEM

The Miami-Dade County Public School District (Miami-Dade) is the fourth largest school district in the United States, consisting of 392 schools and 345,000 students. District students speak 56 different languages and represent 160 countries. The school district is over 2,000 square miles of rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Miami-Dade's Digital Convergence Plan is an ongoing fundamental evolution of the structure and environment of education in Miami-Dade public schools. District leaders understand the need for educators to connect with students so that instruction is relevant and engaging.

The goal of this plan is to bring together different technologies—mobile devices, interactive whiteboards, streaming media, and digital content—to increase student engagement and digital literacy.

In 2014, district leadership developed *Connect@Home*, an initiative aimed at providing laptops and home Internet connectivity for fourth grade students at select schools.

The goal of this initiative was to provide students with the opportunity to extend their

learning beyond the school day by taking advantage of various district resources and digital learning content.

### THE SOLUTION

EveryoneOn facilitated a bulk home adoption with district leadership by leveraging our partnership with wireless service providers Mobile Beacon and Sprint to provide low-cost, high-speed broadband options at scale to the homes of Miami-Dade students and their families.

Miami-Dade identified the students and families without home Internet access. EveryoneOn worked within Miami-Dade's procurement guidelines to help the school district secure service and equipment for program beneficiaries.

Miami-Dade distributed the Wi-Fi modems and facilitated training sessions for parents on the proper care and use of the laptops. Parents were required to attend one of the training sessions in order for the student to take a laptop home. Sessions were held in the morning and evening hours to accommodate parents' work schedules.

Teachers also received training on various topics, including the proper use and care of the device, blended learning techniques,

district instructional resources, and digital citizenship and safety.

## **RESULTS**

This strategy ultimately provided unconnected elementary school students and their families at nine schools with access to free high-speed, unlimited wireless Internet in their homes for the duration of the 2014 school year.

Miami Dade executed this project in two rounds. The first round utilized the wireless offer provided through Mobile Beacon and included an order of 1,008 devices. The second round was implemented through Sprint's ConnectED offer which featured an additional 1,200 devices.

After successful implementation of this program in the 2014 school year, Miami-Dade expressed interest in expanding this program with EveryoneOn to more than 3,000 students at 11 high schools for the 2014-2015 school year.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

In facilitating these adoptions, we have been

able to develop the following best practices:

### *Needs Assessment*

Work with key stakeholders and community-based organizations to identify unconnected households.

### *Coverage & Mapping*

Exact addresses at which the home Internet will be deployed are imperative for ensuring coverage prior to distribution.

### *Distribution*

Developing a streamlined distribution strategy is essential for program implementation.

### *Training*

In efforts to deliver a holistic solution with higher rates of technology retention, digital literacy and computer training must be considered as a part of the bulk adoption solution.

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

When collaborating with multiple partner organizations to deliver home access solutions, clear and defined roles and responsibilities allow for more effective and successful program implementation.