

>> THOMPSON: Okay, I'm Charlie Thompson, and I am with Edmonds Community College just north of Seattle, and I'm going to talk this afternoon about digital access for low-income students. The digital divide is a really large barrier for education. Only 40% of households that earn less than \$20,000 a year have access to the Internet, and that creates quite a problem when you're trying to learn as much as you can as fast as you can, because the lack of information, not only for computer technology but in education in general, if you can't get the information, then you have a lower paying job and you have less opportunity, and it becomes this vicious circle that keeps somebody trapped more in poverty.

So we know that education is the number one thing that lifts folks from poverty. And Internet connectivity equals opportunity, and in-house access is vitally important. You can't just go to the library and study and make it happen. So a big important part of our program at Edmonds, from the beginning, is this computer access and teaching, because you can see -- I was going to do a game show thing, but anyway, participating in all these benefits you can see popping up on the screen here are important and are available to all families who have Internet connectivity, and for many of us, we just take it for granted. But for a lot of folks it isn't available. But it isn't really simple, you can't just give them a computer and say "Here, go," you know, this is it.

So I wanted to share the four elements that we need to make this work. There's actually five because we can't do this alone. We're an education organization. We're not a computer organization. So we partnered with Business Access out of Dallas, Texas, and they work with TANF organizations across the country in setting up these kinds of computer program opportunities. They've been doing it for 14 years, and they do a really good job for us.

So I'm going to start with the digital literacy part. I mean give people a computer, but you've got to teach them how to use it. And it is amazing the number of students that we have who really have never been involved with using computers, and you can see the things that are available up there through our program, and one of the big things is we have a thousand soft-skill courses that are available online, not only to the student but also to their whole family. And they range from everything about employment skills, but also programming skills, preparation for Microsoft technician exams, or GED. So it can be used for the whole family.

So get down to the nuts and bolts is that we provide them with a really nice laptop, not super expensive, but it has to work well enough to be able to stream video, because so much of our lessons are taught that way. Also provide Wi-Fi and mobile broadband connections, and most importantly, we provide replacement protection for that. I mean if it gets stolen, if it gets destroyed, we replace it. We also have to have broadband Internet, that's not always dependable, and so we provide a year of mobile broadband from Verizon so the student can study any place, at home or wherever they can find a quiet spot.

A very important part then, too, is also administrative oversight. We have total control of this network. It's a protected portal. They have to log into the business access site in order to even turn the thing on. It's got web filters to keep people from inappropriate places. And here is an example -- boy, this five minutes is going fast -- of the portal page, and as you can see it, it

covers lots of different ground, but it has all the major links that we need to have them. We work with two colleges so it goes into the Canvas Learning System for either college, and a lot of other things too. And it does create the community for like a -- we do a lot on Facebook, but we also use this. So the results are great not only for the individual but also for the family, and you can see computer literacy beginning when they're five and six is even better. So they set the example for the children, so thank you very much.