CAN YOU SEE MY SCREEN?

How does the digital divide impact students?

What is the digital divide?
How does the lack of digital equity impact students doing remote learning?
What could the future of digital learning look like?

In the spring of 2021, CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Stephanie Eche and students from KAPPA International High School in the Bronx to investigate digital equity. Students designed their ideal remote learning environments, surveyed their peers and community members, and interviewed key stakeholders working on the issue. The team gathered what they learned and created this poster to teach others about the digital divide and how we might close the gap.

Digital Divide
"The digital divide is the lack of digital equity. This includes the lack of reliable Internet access and the lack of devices, particularly in marginalized communities that are already vulnerable, such as students in temporary housing and low-income communities of color."
— **Tajh Sutton**, Program Manager, Teens Take Charge

Digital Literacy
"[Digital literacy] involves educating people about the Internet and educating people about technology in general. We use a term called 'community technology'. That means you want to teach people about technology in a way that's easy to understand, to learn and easy"
— **Monique Tate**

Digital Equity
"Digital equity means equal access to the Internet for everyone. Everyone should have high speed broadband Internet, that's easily accessible and affordable."
— **Monique Tate**, Detroit Digital Justice Coalition Initiative, Equitable Internet Trainer, Digital Steward Community Technology, Detroit Community Technology Project

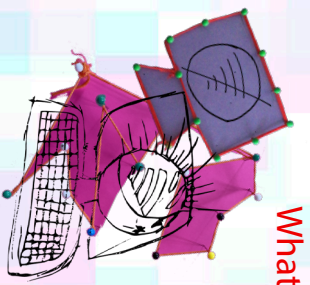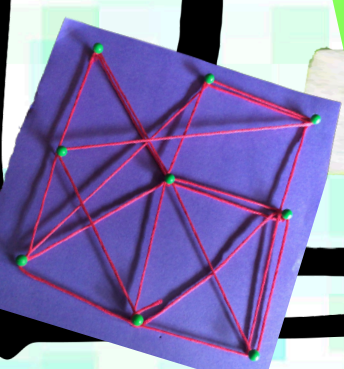---

What are some barriers to digital equity?

When schools closed in March 2020, about 16 million K-12 students in the U.S. didn't have access to a working device, high-speed Internet, or both. This digital divide disproportionately affects Black, Latinx, and low-income students.

Structural Racism
"We all have a fundamental right to communicate. We all have a fundamental right to be able to access the Internet and use it in the way that other communities are using it. [But] more low-income [communities] and communities of color are left behind. That's structural and institutional racism. If we don't have an equal opportunity and a chance at the table, then we're only going to be left behind."
— **Monique Tate**

Competing Priorities at Home
"We have kids who have to take care of their siblings and learn. We have kids who are working to help out their family income and learn. [These are obstacles] that students generally don't have to deal with."
— **Samantha Heiderscheid**

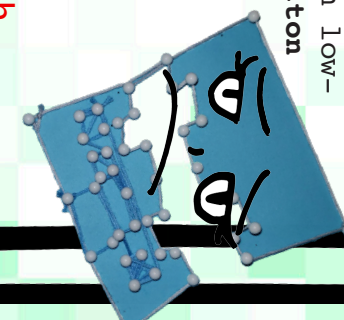### Obstacles to Attendance for Low-Income Students
"The attendance rate for low-income students doing remote learning [was] six times worse this school year than in prior years. Attendance has been a serious concern connected to access to technology, access to wifi, and students being able to just have a space to focus on learning and stay motivated throughout the zoom day."
— **Samantha Heiderscheid**

Lack of Support for Students Learning English
"For our students who are learning English as a new language, it has been really hard because you can't replace that personal touch."
— **Tajh Sutton**

Lack of Support for Students with Special Needs
"We need to be talking about assistive technology and making sure that students with disabilities also have access to the right kinds of technology that fit."
— **Tajh Sutton**

Lack of Resources
"Schools that have the advantage of more money and more resources can do things like buy some tents and some space heaters and have their kids outside and in learning pods, even though the school buildings are closed. That's not the kind of opportunity that we have access to in low-income communities of color."
— **Tajh Sutton**

Lack of Access to Devices
"48% of KAPPA students did not have a device until December 1, 2020. Almost half of our student population didn't have the basic fundamental resource needed to engage in remote learning."
— **Samantha Heiderscheid**, Assistant Principal, KAPPA International High School

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How has remote learning impacted students?

"If I'm a New York City public school student and I have to wait six months for a laptop, I don't feel very valued. I don't feel like my life and my education matters." — **Tajh Sutton**
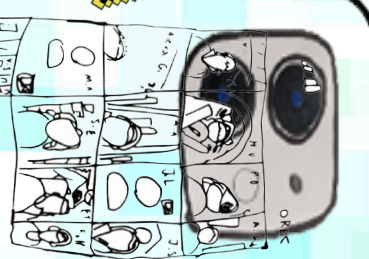
"Remote learning has positively impacted my grades because teachers are now more understanding and are giving out less homework. But my concentration and motivation has decreased."
— **Jennifer Lopez**, KAPPA Student

"Remote learning has caused me to feel less motivated to do anything."
— **Alexa Cruz Gonzalez**, KAPPA Student

"Remote learning is more challenging!"
— **Yesenia Saavedra**, KAPPA Student

"Remote learning has helped me focus better than in real life."
— **April Vázquez**, KAPPA Student

"It has made me unmotivated. I'm barely learning anything and I can hardly memorize much either."
— **Praisa Ortiz**, KAPPA Student

Limits to Education Technology
"As far as tech tools and software, I think that there are good learning resources. But the digital literacy barrier and the Internet access barrier for many educators and students still create disadvantages for students."
— **Monique Tate**

Demands for Affordable Internet
"When the pandemic first hit, different Internet providers offered low cost programs for people who are low-income. [But] these programs gave very low speeds and substandard Internet."
— **Monique Tate**

How has COVID-19 impacted the digital divide?
"During the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole world really got a reality check on the importance of digital equity. It's been over a year and we still have students who don't have Internet devices, even though 70% of New York City public school students are remote. That's unconscionable."
— **Tajh Sutton**

Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (KAPPA) International High School
Principal: Panorea Panagiosoulis
Assistant Principal: Samantha Heiderscheid
Students: Abdulaziz Abdulrub, Angela Aca Cuahuizo, Mariam Aliyu, Alexa Cruz Gonzalez, Litsi Engrade, Jennifer Lopez, Cellany Martinez, Yisnelly Morales, Carlos Ortiz, Praisia Ortiz, Yesenia Saavedra, Jilovanna Sanchez, Anali Taveras, Heriberto Vasquez, Abril Vázquez, Queenie Wu
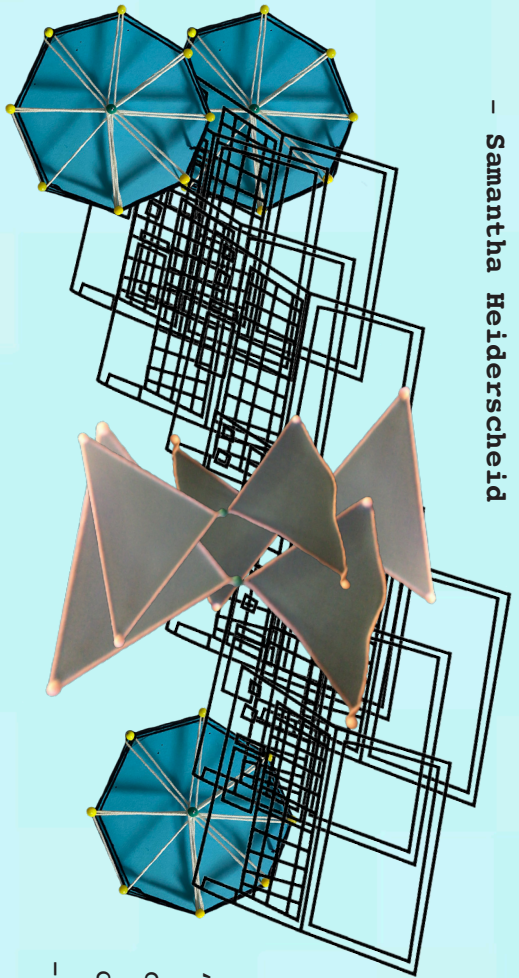
The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

This project is one of CUP's **Urban Investigations** project based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and Teaching Artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and Social Justice. To learn more about CUP, visit **welcometocup.org**.

CUP
Teaching Artist: Stephanie Eche
Project Lead: Fielding Hong
Project Support: Elijah Thomas

Digital Equity is Education Equity

"Make Internet access the same high speed levels and same high quality available to everybody. We should treat the Internet like a public utility, such as electricity and water."
— **Monique Tate**

"Digital equity is resource equity. We know who doesn't have a device. We know who doesn't have wifi access. Pay for it and give it to them."
— **Tajh Sutton**
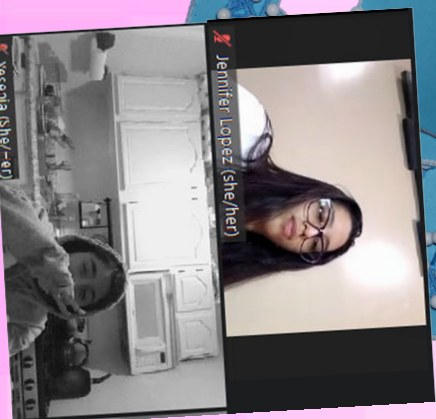
"Students should be able to access good functional computers that are able to run all the apps they need for school, as well as fast Internet because that is the main part of remote learning."
— **Jennifer Lopez**, KAPPA Student

"Wifi should be free for everyone!"
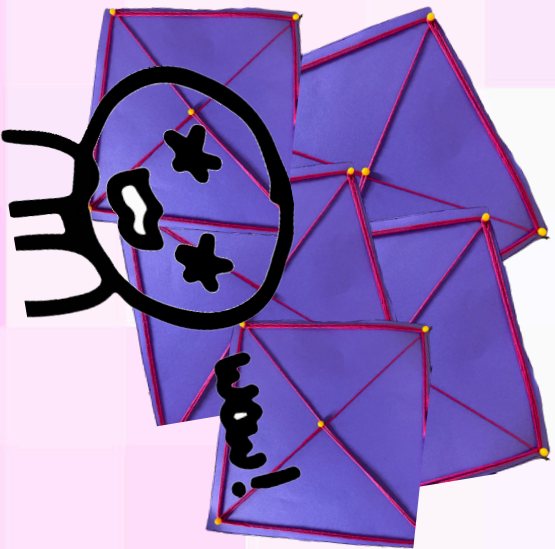— **Yesenia Saavedra**, KAPPA Student

"We need less screen time. We also need to make sure that all students have access to the devices they need for school. We could protest to make change!"
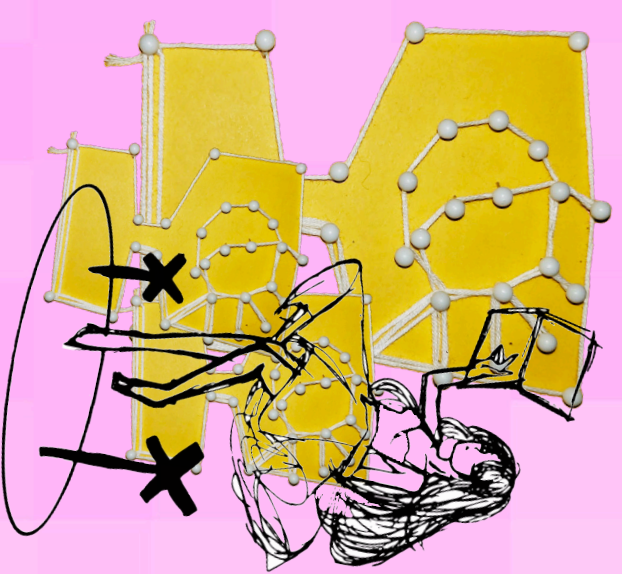— **Mariam Aliyu**, KAPPA Student

"Creating greater digital equity is schools reopening. It's our government investing in our digital infrastructure, and believing that free Internet is a fundamental right, such as free public school."
— **Samantha Heiderscheid**

"We should show [our elected officials] the quality of our devices and teach them about digital equity to make them understand more."
— **Angela Aca Cuahuizo**, KAPPA Student

"We can create digital equity for all NYC students if the adults politically in charge of our education took into consideration how their choices affect us students and how they can create a better future for all."
— **Abdulaziz Abdulrub**, KAPPA Student