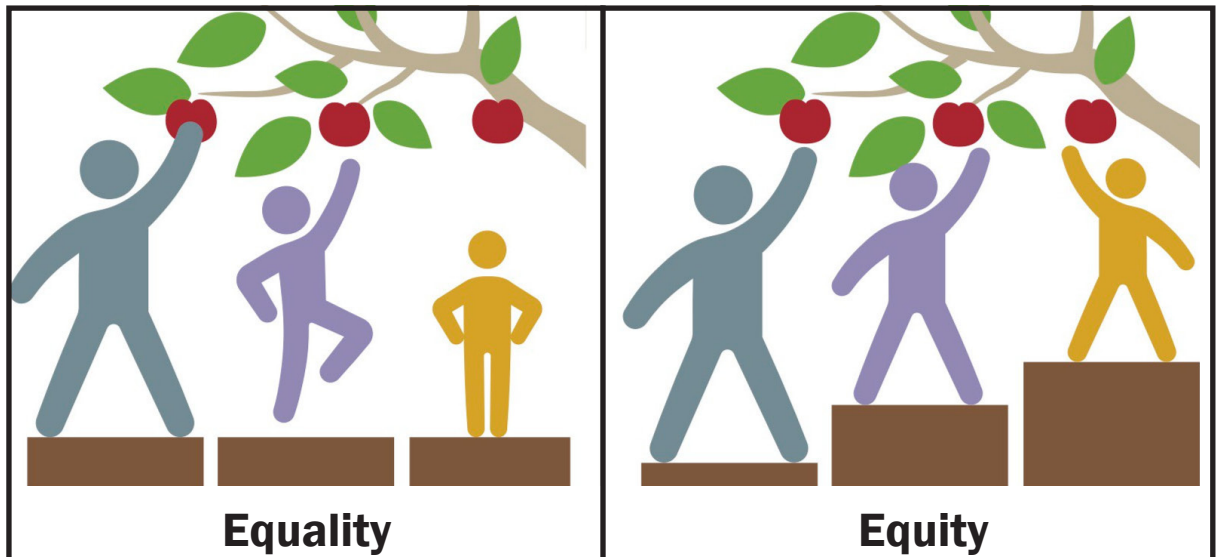


# The ~~Future~~ Present is Digital\*

## A New Law Makes Access More Equitable

Judy Mortrude



### BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does the title mean? Why is the word “future” crossed out?
2. List some things in your life that are now digital.
3. Study this vocabulary: *digital, equity, eligible*
4. Look at the image above. What is the difference between *equality* and *equity*?



Photo from [Broadband-Social/Street\\_Lab/CC BY-NC 4.0](https://www.flickr.com/photos/broadband-social-street-lab/)

### We Need to Be Connected

The pandemic changed everything. We see our doctor online. Our children go to school online. We fill out important forms online.

We all need high speed internet. We need a good tablet or computer. We need to learn how to use these tools.

But not all of us have these tools. Some of us can't get on the internet. We don't have good computers.

There is a new law that could help us get what we need. The law includes a program that gives you a discount of \$30 per month for internet service. The program also gives you \$100 off a new laptop.

Who can use this program? Who is *eligible* for it? Your household is *eligible* if at least one person:

- Has an income that is at or below 200% of the poverty line;

\*This article is Level 5. You can find a Level 12 version on pp. 22-24.

- Uses SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline;
- Participates in Tribal programs;
- Receives free or reduced-price school lunch or breakfast.

Which internet providers are providing this benefit? You can find out and sign up at:

<https://www.fcc.gov/acp>.

The new law also gives money to each state. The state will use the money to create a plan for digital equity.

Adult education leaders should get involved in the planning process. Teachers and students should say what they need. Do you need better internet at your school? Do you need more computers? Do you need more classes to learn about technology? This is a great chance to make your voice heard.

**AFTER YOU READ:**

- 1.** If you were telling a friend about the new law, what would you say? What are the key points you would want to communicate? Write a short script of what you would say and practice saying it.
- 2.** As a class, discuss what adult learners need to gain digital equity. For example, does your program need access to better internet? Does your program need more funding for digital literacy classes and devices for students? Write down your ideas and share them with your program director. (See box on the right for more information.)
- 3.** What are some of the things in your life that are going digital—for example, keeping in touch with your child’s teacher, updating your timesheet at work, using GPS to find your way around? Which digital tools do you use with ease? Which ones do you need more practice with? How would digital equity help you be more digitally resilient?
- 4.** Consider submitting your writing to *The Change Agent*. See our current Call for Articles [here](#) and in the next section of this magazine.

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*Judy Mortrude is a senior Technical Advisor at World Education, and she is the president of the National Coalition for Literacy.*



## **Make Your Voice Heard!**

States will start making a digital equity plan in the spring of 2022. How can you get involved?

- 1.** Ask your program director about the state level process for creating a plan to distribute funds from the Digital Equity Act. Or reach out to the director of adult education in your state. Ask how you can contribute your comments verbally or in writing.
- 2.** Compile your comments (alone or with your classmates). When the public comment period begins, share your comments.
- 3.** Get published! Submit your writing to [The Change Agent!](#) See pp. 34-36 for more information.