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This pitch is based on my 3-minute presentation, which was part of the Digital Inclusion in the 21st Century panel at the #Solutions2020 Policy Forum Hosted by FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn on October 19, 2016.

In an effort to empower communities with broadband service, research should be used to determine the best approaches and implementation strategy. The findings from my research study, Digital Lives of African American Tweens, Teens and Parents (<https://cgest.asu.edu/digitallives/>), point toward assuring that proper broadband/digital literacy accompanies access to broadband service.

This research shows that African American youth in particular do not appear to lack interest in, enjoyment of, or confidence about using technology, but in fact they enjoy learning about new technologies. The first step in this solution is to provide access to advanced technology education in low-income communities. Access to this advanced technology education would be in addition to providing basic technology training opportunities. There are far too many young people who want to have access to advanced technology learning opportunities such as creating digital music to starting an online business. We should nurture and respond to this healthy desire, instead of letting it wither on the vine.

The second step in this solution is to help youth and their families develop an understanding of the unique capabilities and affordances of technology and broadband. Too many parents and caregivers do not fully understand the capabilities of broadband, nor how it can be used to develop workforce skills and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. Development of these understandings should start when the child is young, so that both children and parents learn to grow as technology grows, while applying broadband to their ever-changing lives. According to my research, among all African American youth, interest in technology is highest among 11- to 12-year olds, and that is also the time when the interest level between boys and girls is the most equal. Capturing the imaginations of tween girls is critical, and empowering parents and caregivers with the understanding, tools, and strategies to do so is critical. While the vast majority of parents use technology/broadband extensively and feel confident of their tech-related skills, there is still a need for more training among a subset of the population. Children whose parents use technology more frequently and value it more highly will also develop positive attitudes toward technology and broadband usage.