

Happy New Year - or so it is for E-Rate 2020

Yes it's that time to start our filings for the 2020-21 fiscal e-rate year and will be an area of focus during the filing windows over the next few months. A reminder that E-Rate no longer funds any telephone service or phone systems so the district is now entering its second year for 100% of our telephone costs including any future phone system needs, local service and long distance.

There are two major categories of E-Rate funding that we will be pursuing funds from both. The first is aptly named "Category 1" and will include our internet for the district including all Browning area schools and Babb as well as a separate filing for the colonies and their internet service. As we are a 100% free and reduced lunch community E-rate will subsidize 90% of our internet and WAN costs. In "Category 2" we will be pursuing some replacement network switches as well as new switches for the middle school addition. With the middle school addition and high school sports complex will require us to expand our wireless network and we will be pursuing those needs in our e-rate filing. Our estimate of expansion and upgrade needs for the wireless and additional switches are currently estimated to be around \$70,000 to \$80,000. The monies we pursue in Category 2 are reimbursed/subsidized at the maximum level of 85% so benefit greatly benefit the district in reducing our costs for the upgrades/expansion.

As of this writing of the board report, the full rules for 2020-21 are actually still not finalized by the FCC so along with all districts across the country, we are moving forward with what appears to be the final rules for 2020-21 that will hopefully be finalized the first weeks of December. There is still some speculation that some monies may be made available for safety needs in the district. If the rules are modified to allow for safety technology needs, we will visit how the district can best take advantage of those dollars.