

Dear School Board,

Hello! My name is Patty McCasland and I am a secondary teacher at Newhalen school. This is my second year teaching in the district. Prior to that, I was a tutor in Newhalen. I wanted to reach out today to address a concern I have had since the beginning of the school year. This year, Newhalen has faced a multitude of challenges in regards to Wi-Fi access at our school. From outages, to slow internet speeds, to broken equipment, these issues have significantly impacted our student's learning this year. I am writing this letter in hopes that we can come together and determine a course of action for this issue, to make sure that our students are getting the best education that they deserve.

Currently, we have 35% of our secondary students utilizing the internet on a daily basis for online courses. I feel so lucky for my students to be able to engage in these opportunities. This year, we have seven students participating in the Alaska Advantage Program through the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. One of our students is taking a ground school course to make strides to become a pilot after graduation. These students need Wi-Fi to be able to complete their coursework and this year it has proven difficult for many.

As the Tech Liaison at Newhalen, I have been at the forefront of these challenges.

I went back through my emails with my coworkers and so far this year we have had:

- WiFi down 10/6
- WiFi down 12/3
- WiFi down 12/6-12/8
- WiFi down 12/13
- WiFi down 2/15-2/16
- WiFi 2/23-2/26
- WiFi down/slow due to weather 3/9
- WiFi maintenance 3/14, turned dish off at 3:30pm
- WiFi down due to broken equipment 3/15-3/16

During these days, our students taking college courses had to stay home and complete their work at home. Since last year, George Hornberger has graciously allowed us to work at the INNEC when there are outages. We are lucky to have this relationship with George as a backup when there are WiFi issues. On Monday, my student was taking a midterm and the WiFi was shut off for maintenance. She had to go sit on the front steps of my house to finish her assignment. We have to find creative ways to support our students when the WiFi is not working or is being fixed.

As the site liaison, I have learned that each school gets the same amount of bandwidth, no matter their school size. In this regard, every student and every site in our district has equality. However, every student and every site in our district does not have equity when it comes to access to internet. According to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development,