

## Technology Department May 2018

### **E-Rate**

First the good news – in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of funding for the 2018-19 e-rate year, Browning was approved for our Category 1 services. This includes covering our internet and WAN connection costs at 90% reimbursement and for our telephones at the 10% reimbursement rate.

The bad news – 2018-19 is the last year of any reimbursements for traditional telephone services which we know in our current setup has been an increasing financial hit to the district these past 5 and now final years for telephones. Our 3 Rivers telephone bill runs in the \$4500-\$5000 per month range depending on the amount of long distance services utilized. We have long since cut out redundant and unused telephone lines or restructured how the lines are used. Example: 3 years ago we had a dedicated telephone line in the press box at Arrowhead Stadium for the sole purpose of the radio station(s) broadcasting 1 or 2 games a year at an annual cost \$552 per year (this line was never e-rate eligible as it was not for direct education of students). That telephone line was eliminated and rewired to our telephone switch. The only change, the radio station needs to dial '82' before their regular number. Other examples were old modem lines forgotten about as we transitioned managing boilers over the district network rather than dial in – 9 lines times \$552/year/line. Another modem line to dial out and program the display board at our sign as you come into town was eliminated and that sign is now managed via a wifi signal. While these 10 lines were e-rate eligible, by being aggressive and eliminating them when they were no longer needed and replaced by network technologies, we are already set to save over \$6,000 per year post e-rate reimbursements.

However, we are in the process of exploring alternate technologies for our telephone configurations that would prove to be more flexible, better disaster recovery alternatives and most importantly – has the potential to reduce our 3 Rivers bill by over 50% or more. In the coming months I hope to bring greetings of good cheer and money staying in our pocketbook in the range of \$25,000 to \$38,000 per year. That is how significant these potential cost savings are for the district. The experience to our phone users would remain the same or be better as there is rare occasion in our current configuration to encounter a busy signal calling in, the new technologies would handle these bursts of traffic and easily complete the calls coming in/out of the district.

**META News (Montana Educational Technologists Association)** I attended this month's executive board meeting in Helena and officially started my term as President-Elect for META. Several items were discussed including a discussion of priorities to bring to the next legislature including a statewide support system for districts modeled after what many other states already do in the country. While most districts feel they have a pretty good handle on ADA compliance which became a big topic for META this past year, everyone feels there is more we can do to insure safety and data security especially in light of last fall's Columbia Falls incident. So this upcoming year there will be a lot of committee work and discussion centered around the topic with the result guidance in best practices for districts as well as efforts to our state legislature to support all stakeholders in the security arena.

