

E-Rate 2020-21

Just a quick update that USAC/FCC have extended deadlines to submit our additional filings for the 2020-21 e-rate year and we should have everything submitted by May 1.

Extraordinary times

The past few weeks have been chaotic, successful, challenging, easy, difficult all due to making the transition from our traditional classrooms to online learning and the technology to support it.

In some cases we were well prepared. We had the goal of making our teachers mobile so that they could teach from anywhere at any time. At the time of the Apple ConnectED grant and our MacBook rollouts the thought had been to walk into any classroom, turn on the projector or TV and teach. Who would have thought the COVID-19 situation would change our educational approach measured in days and weeks just a few months ago. In this regard BPS teachers were ready to abandon their classrooms and start their homebound teaching journey with the tools they already use every day. This is one of our successes in this unexpected journey as other districts still using traditional desktops have been tasked with getting their staff equipped with mobile technology.

Additionally, our middle and high school students were able to get the students 1:1 iPads into the their hands to start their remote learning journey. It was an interesting site at the middle school on distribution day seeing all of their charging carts at curbside so families could simply drive up and pick up their iPad.

We have identified some areas for training needs such as our TA's who have been tasked with calling our special services students and recording calls/contacts in Infinite Campus so we will work on that when we are able to return to our buildings.

Getting connected-

This has been one of our largest hurdles where we are seeing mostly success getting our students connected but in some cases failing. Success in that 3 Rivers Coop stepped up and has been connecting as many of our students' families as they can reach with DSL internet connections. We of course have students who live where 3 Rivers cannot reach their homes with internet service. For those families we have been supplying the family with a Verizon Jet Pack at no cost to the family. We also have staff that are in the same situation and Jet Packs have been made available to them at district cost.

We have also opened our wireless network to our students and the community in general. We actually started it before our E-Rate friends made an emergency ruling allowing us to do so. There are several

places around our buildings where the WiFi signal spills out to the parking lots and people are of course encouraged to remain in their vehicles and practice social distancing. This is how one of our border patrol families gets their iPads connected by driving to the Babb parking lot and connecting from there as Verizon is not available at the border and it would have been cost prohibitive to allow roaming on the Canada cell towers.

A success in getting students connected was having the foresight of what was coming and ordering 200 Jet Packs to support connecting our families before the rest of the country was also ordering and they have become scarcer than toilet paper as additional Jet Packs might ship by the 1st of June. However we still have 31 Jet Packs remaining that can still be issued to students for those we find need connectivity. Unfortunately all this connectivity comes at a cost as our next Verizon bill will be substantial. While the district has yet to consider how to allocate the CARES money, covering the connectivity costs would seem to be an appropriate use of those funds.

Voice Connectivity -

As you may have briefly heard in Principal Wagner's report at our last board meeting, we have been issuing high and middle school counselors with cell phones so that they have numbers that can be published out to students who need their assistance or just want to talk. We're doing this with basic flip phones as the need is for voice and text while relying on their personal smartphones for data needs. This allows us to avoid contract commitments with Verizon as we will simply let the plans expire on the flip phones when they are no longer required.