

Looking Back

For many years we've been getting funding (based on our telephone system recurring costs) from the Federal eRate program. This program has undergone a major and important overhaul. While giving a clear picture of how the program works would be a challenge for anyone, it is probably sufficient to say that the new rules are very much to our favor. The eRate funding from this point forward is intended to help offset schools' costs associated with providing Internet connectivity down to the classroom level. That means we are able to apply for funds to support larger, more instructionally relevant projects. There is also a lot more money being distributed than has been in the past.

We are, as most other school districts are, using a good chunk of those funds to install desperately needed wiring/cabling solutions in the classroom to host a Wireless Access Point (WAP). When our schools were remodeled, the thought of installing the cabling necessary to support a WAP was unheard of. Things have changed districts all over the country are rushing to address the infrastructure issues that are so important but so unglamorous. Because it's a federal program, these cabling projects are cropping up like wildfire all around the nation. I think it will be very interesting to see how this faux "gold rush" is going to play out. Suffice it to say, this is a great opportunity for us and has been occupying a great deal of my time.

Contractors have already been here for a walk-through of our facilities and I expect final proposals to be in hand within the next few days.

What's Current

Over the past few weeks, we've put some long standing issues to rest. There are any number of projects ranging from "big deal" things down to annoyingly small and/or frustratingly enigmatic problems that may not affect a lot of people, but the people they do affect will attest to the intensity of their frustration. While these persnickety issues may neither trivial nor urgent, they do tend to accumulate over time. If one is always focused on forest fires, one may not see the smouldering problem in their own backyard. Especially gratifying has been the installation of a dedicated FAX line for the HS Counselling Center's use, but we also re-established our Comcast Television Cable connection so that classrooms that are interested in using those type resources are now able to do so.

Looking Forward

I am writing this report during a break at the Northwest Council for Computers in Education Conference (NCCE) in Portland. This Conference is one of the most robust in the country and I look forward to the years when I can attend. And this is just such a year. The sessions available are an interesting dipstick as to the various trends and technology solutions that other schools are using. The sessions are presented in threads (collaboration, authentic learning, hybrid/blended classrooms, SpEd topics, etc) and the vast majority of the presenters are classroom teachers showing what it looks like when the rubber meets the road for technology integration.

While not surprising, the top trends I picked up on day one of the conference were:

- Google services
- management of ChromeOS devices (like Chromebooks),

- online service providers/content delivery systems