



New Orleans Public Schools

Working Together, We Can, We Must, We Will Succeed!

Division of Information Technology

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May 24, 2001

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MAY 25 2001

FCC MAIL ROOM

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 - 12th Street, S. W.
Room TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Appeal of Administrator's Decision on Appeal
Funding Year 2000-2001
SLD Decision Letter Dated: April 27, 2001
Reference: CC Docket Nos. 96-45 and 97-21

To Whom It May Concern:

We understand that this appeal does not conform to the strict guidelines set forth in the directions for appealing to the FCC found on the SLD's web site. Also, we acknowledge the fact that the information contained in the Year 3 application, and subsequent appeal, that were previously denied by the SLD essentially left the District with no choice but to appeal to the SPIRIT of E-Rate. Our desire is to do whatever it takes to ensure that the 75,000 inner city, mostly underprivileged school children will have the same access to technology as other students in our state and nation.

Sincerely,

Alonzo (Lonnie) R. Luce, Ph. D.
Chief Information Officer



NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Working Together, We Can, We Must, We Will Succeed!

3510 GENERAL DEGAULLE DRIVE • NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70114

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Re: Appeal of Administrator's Decision on Appeal
Funding Year 2000-2001
SLD Decision Letter Dated: April 27, 2001
Reference: CC Docket Nos. 96-45 and 97-21

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is intended to put forward the New Orleans Public School's final request for financial support of its (now incomplete) 3-year technology plan – which was first began in 1998 with the successful acquisition of over \$10 Million in grant proceeds during E-Rate Funding Year-1. We request that we be awarded the amount shown on Attachment A. Obviously, we have been remiss in our attention to detail and must take full responsibility for our past failures. We offer only the evidence of having dealt swiftly and firmly to correct the problem – and with having endeavored to establish an environment (with the appointment of our newest CIO) where such an act of irresponsibility might never impact (to such a significant degree) the over 75,000 inner-city school children entrusted to our care. Attachment B shows the historical impact of E-rate funding for our district.

Our approach with this appeal has been to simplify the information-tracking process by returning to the time immediately following the end of our second successful year utilizing E-Rate grants to accomplish our technology plan. At that time, our Year-3 application (including the SPIN and Form 471 information contained on the attachment) was near completion. We had followed the same careful steps in preparing our Year-3 application as had been utilized successfully in Year's 1 & 2.

Unfortunately (as has been noted in our appeal to the SLD), we lost the district's most knowledgeable E-Rate employee to a medical condition – immediately prior to the Year-3 submission deadline. To add to the problem, the district's then-CIO was unfamiliar with the critical procedures of E-Rate – and was simply unable to execute on the careful planning and preparation of our E-Rate expert. Therefore, our Year-3 application was mismanaged and – ultimately – denied by the SLD.

Final Letter of Appeal
May 24, 2001
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Our hope is that the FCC will have compassion – given these extraordinary circumstances – and will grant the request set forth in this letter. Our goal as educators has always been to do all we can to provide the tools and opportunity to the children of our district – who, through no fault of their own – have been made the ultimate victims of this debacle. Finally, it is important that the FCC understand that the Board does indeed understand the responsibilities it has with regard to the financial commitments (“matching dollars”) and hardware and software components not adequately articulated in our earlier attempts. In short, we are all committed to doing our part to fulfill our responsibility under the terms of the E-Rate program.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration and are standing by to receive your decision. If there are questions or if you need any further information, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,



A. G. Davis (Colonel, USMC, Retired)
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Hon. W. J. “Billy” Tauzin
U.S. Representative, Louisiana 3rd District

Attachment A

Summary of Original Orleans Parish School Board Year-3 E-Rate Application

OPSB #471	Service Provider	SPIN	SLD 471 #	FRN	Funding Required	Purpose
BS001	BellSouth	143004824	201463	447686	\$ 996,912.00	Telephone Services
BS002	BellSouth	143004824	201456	445988	\$ 1,095,739.00	T1 Data Lines to Schools
E001	Exodus	143004386	201493	473899	\$ 5,487,360.00	Network Maintenance & Cabling
G001	Global Data	143007389	201440	473471	\$ 15,831,763.00	Network System Upgrades
T002	Time Trend	143006232	201449	445810	\$ 1,146,316.00	Server System Upgrades
V001	Verio Gulf South	143005451	201409	456103	\$ 1,586,750.00	Internet Service Provider (ISP)
Total Year-3 Funding Required					\$ 26,144,840.00	
District Matching Funds					\$ 4,706,071.20	

Introduction

The New Orleans Public Schools is committed to providing equity and excellence in academics to all students enrolled in its public school system. The integration of technology into the student learning experience has become critical to the ongoing progress of students in our environment. Recognizing that equal access to technology for all students is an important component of the learning process, the district has undertaken to provide such access through the leadership of its Information Technology Division. We have discovered that students who become active learners – using technology in research, planning, writing, problem solving, and in creative and/or artistic endeavors, achieve at higher levels. Access to technology facilitates this accelerated achievement and creates a change in not only the learning environment, but the instructional environment as well. The commitment of the New Orleans Public Schools is to provide equal access to new technology resources and learning tools so that all students in our system can learn and achieve.

Historical Perspective

In 1994, district personnel & teachers with an interest in technology began making plans to deliver some form of Internet connectivity to the (128) public school locations in the district. Recognizing the enormity of the effort involved (and the cost associated with such an undertaking), the district formed its first Technology Steering Committee in early 1995. The committee included teachers, parents, administrative personnel, business & community leaders, and people from higher education. The goal of the Technology Steering Committee was to craft a Technology Plan that could be implemented quickly and cost-effectively by as many of the school locations in the district as possible. A copy of the original plan has been included in this information package. The plan outlined the district's vision for technology usage in the classroom, connectivity, security, and learning objectives – and called for 100% of the classrooms to be connected to the world-wide web via a frame relay network design utilizing the latest in voice, data, and video technology.

As a byproduct of the meetings and conferences held by the Technology Steering Committee was a decision that led to the establishment of the school library as the place of contact for Internet connectivity within each school. The choice of the school library was due to several factors:

- Librarians were considered the technology leaders in their schools.
- All students would be able to gain access to the Internet from within the library.
- Management and control of Internet usage would be easier in the library.

The plan to connect all school libraries with dial-up access was completed in 1997. Each library was equipped with a personal computer, modem, printer, and telephone line – that was dedicated to Internet access. Internet access to classrooms was limited due to budget restraints, unavailability of classroom computers, and insufficient Internet accounts.

E-Rate – The Success Achieved During Funding Year No. 1:

In late 1997, the district was thrilled to learn of the new E-Rate program and immediately began the application process to secure funding for high-speed data lines, Internet access, and the requisite “internal connections” components required to build a state-of-the-art network infrastructure in the district. The result was that the New Orleans Public Schools were awarded approximately \$10 million to establish this connectivity and successfully completed the following tasks at the end of Year-1:

- Connectivity of 100% of all (128) schools in the district to the Internet and the establishment of a district-wide backbone network infrastructure – utilizing BellSouth high-speed frame relay data connections.
- High-speed Internet connectivity was achieved by all schools by way of the Verio Gulf South connection to the world-wide web.
- Approximately 25% of all classrooms in the district were cabled and made Internet ready – to accept connections of PC computers utilizing Category-5 and fiber optic network plant technologies
- All schools were equipped with servers, routers, and primary wiring closet switches – thus establishing the primary infrastructure that has been enhanced and upgraded to support more and more classrooms / students.
- Network security and events monitoring systems were enabled – thus establishing the New Orleans Public Schools technology platform for the future.

To support the Funding Year-1 E-Rate initiative, the district provided the following tools, services, and/or facilities:

- Electrical wiring to the primary closets,
- PC Workstations in targeted classrooms,
- Professional development for teachers in the use of the Internet with their students, faculty, and administrators.
- Content filtering for all workstations connected to the Internet,
- Internet projects for teachers, focusing on inquiry-based teaching in mathematics and science.
- Online courses for university credit for school site administrators.
- A \$75 million bond issue to address the non E-Rate funded infrastructure needs such as electrical wiring in classrooms, climate control, and security.
- A formal Board policy requiring that all staff and students accept and sign an Authorized Use Policy.

E-Rate – The Success Achieved During Funding Year No. 2:

Following the success achieved during Year-1, the district followed up with a Year-2 application and was fortunate to receive approximately \$12 million in additional funding. With this massive new infusion of funding, the district immediately began where it had left off in Funding Year-1 ... that being, the continuance of working toward

the completion of its Technology Plan. To wit, in Funding Year-2, the following objectives were achieved:

- Connectivity and computer cabling was added to 50% of the remaining classrooms – that had not received computer connections in Funding Year-1. This equated to approximately (1900) new classroom Category-5 wiring connections – thus totaling 67% of all district classrooms by the end of Year-2
- The establishments of “secondary” wiring closets that were connected via high-speed fiber optic cabling – and thus able to connect classrooms that were longer distances (in terms of feet) away from the primary router, server, and switch.
- The continuance of network management, monitoring, and security – with a focus on sealing the network from outside attacks, or from allowing unfiltered materials from entering the educational environment.
- The maintenance and support of the 100’s of new-technology devices that had been installed during Year’s 1 & 2 of the E-Rate program. Such maintenance activities ensured reliable operation and trouble-free access to the Internet for the 1000’s of New Orleans Public Schools children who had begun learning online.

To support the Year-2 E-Rate initiative, the district funded non E-Rate eligible services such as the following:

- Professional development for school teams from 100% of the schools provided through the North Central Regional Educational Library (NCREL) Engaged Learning project. This project focused on student-centered instruction where the student actively used technology in the learning process.
- The use by school teams of the CEO’s Forum to identify the level of technology integration at 100% of all school sites
- Participation in the Africa Quest and Galapagos Quest initiatives – resulting in the delivery of the nationally acclaimed Internet-based cross-curricula virtual field trip – which was delivered to 100% of all schools in the district.

E-Rate – The Plans For Funding Year No. 3:

From the outset, the district’s long-term E-Rate plan called for a phased approach whereby all (5,000) classrooms would eventually be connected to the Internet. This phased approach was built on a 3-year implementation plan – where the primary backbone infrastructure (and 25% of all classrooms) were connected in Year-1, additional infrastructure was installed (along with 50% of the remaining classrooms) in Year-2, and the project would be completed in Funding Year-3. Therefore, the district looked toward Funding Year-3 with eager anticipation – and intended to accomplish the following objectives:

- Completion of the wiring jobs began in Year’s 1 & 2 – thus providing Internet connectivity to all (5,000) classrooms in the district.
- Perform normal system upgrades to those infrastructure (“internal connections”) components that had begun to approach their expected “end of life” cycle.

- Increase the connection speeds for all schools by enhancing the switching plant and infrastructure components via upgrades and/or enhancements.
- Continue to deliver superior network management, monitoring, and maintenance of the in-place technology resources.
- Add web servers at all schools to assist in the ongoing technology instruction aspects of the 3-Year plan.

To support the completion duties and/or planned enhancements of the Year-3 rollout plan, the district intended to provide additional operational, professional development, and/or financial support through the following activities:

- Professional development in Integrating Technology Across The Curriculum (INTECH) project which trains teachers to use technology, including the Internet and exemplary software, to enhance student achievement,
- Access to World Book Online and Gale Group online provided by the Louisiana State Department of Education,
- Identification of Internet resources for teachers and students in district's curriculum guides, and
- Addition of (2,500) new PC workstations – targeted at grades 3, 4, 7, and 8 ... so as to meet the district's goal of having at least (5) workstations in every classroom.

Unfortunately, the Year-3 application was not approved. This has left the district with the burden of supporting its network financially as well as physically. The district has paid 100% of the telecommunications services and 100% of the system integration charges for network management. In addition, the district will pay 100% of the Internet service provider charges. **The ability of the district to pay these total charges demonstrates that funds are available for the required match by the Schools and Libraries Division.**

While the district has been able to pay 100% of these charges, it has not enabled the district to expand the network as outlined in the district's technology plan. The plan calls for the district to have 100% of the classrooms to be connected to the Internet and to have a minimum of five workstations in every classroom. The diversion of the technology funds to pay 100% of the telecommunications charges, system integration charges, and Internet service provider charges has prohibited the district from meeting the goals stated in the technology plan.

It is our hope that this 3rd and final appeal to the Federal Communications Commission will result in the release of the badly needed financial resources – as outlined in the accompanying materials. Clearly, as was recently sited in the local newspaper, it is the children of the district who have paid the ultimate price for this unfortunate sequence of events. The spirit of E-Rate suggests that the correct answer is to fund the New Orleans Public Schools – so that the children of our city will (indeed) have equal access to the technology resources so badly needed to improve their lives.