

September 16, 2013

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Acting Chairwoman
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
The Honorable Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 13-184; Comments on Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Modernizing the E-rate Program

Dear Commissioners:

We write to offer our strong support for modernizing the E-rate Program to ensure that, within five years, 99% of American students have high-speed Internet access in school. As a national nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in public education, we know from firsthand experience that building a robust digital infrastructure is critical to unlocking new approaches to instruction and driving continuous improvement in our education system.

At present, we believe the E-rate program has succeeded in bringing the Internet to U.S. classrooms and creating the foundation for supporting digital learning. For example, as part of her research to support her recent book *The Smartest Kids in the World*, journalist Amanda Ripley surveyed hundreds of foreign-exchange students who had attended schools here in the U.S. and found that seven out of 10 reported seeing more technology in their U.S. classrooms than in the schools in their home nations. The E-rate program is surely responsible for helping create these conditions and we should take pride in its success to date.

And yet, going forward, we cannot let our accomplishments interfere with taking the necessary steps to ensure America remains a leader in digital learning. There is a global movement already underway to promote digital infrastructure in schools that the U.S. is in danger of lagging behind. Consider:

? In both South Korea and Singapore, every single school is already wired with high-speed Internet access. (http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-13-100A3.doc)

? Every secondary school in Ireland will have 100 Mbps broadband access by the end of 2014. (<http://www.siliconrepublic.com/comms/item/25654-digsch2010>)

? New Zealand's Ultra-fast Broadband in Schools project is part of a \$1.3bn project to ensure that 99.9 per cent of students will receive ultra-fast broadband capability by 2016. (<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theministry/educationinitiatives/ufbinschools.aspx>)

? Although more than 50% of its schools are rural, Uruguay?s CEIBAL program ensures that ?virtually all schools have Internet access? (and more than 570,000 laptops have been distributed).

(<http://www.ceibal.org.uy/docs/FULLAN-Ceibal-English.pdf>)

? As of 2011, more than 85% of schools in Jordan had access to high-speed broadband Internet.

(<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Communication/Documents/ICT-arab-states-en.pdf>)

It would be easy to look at these international efforts and conclude the U.S. must press forward with E-rate reform simply to ensure our students obtain the education and skills they need to compete in the global economy. While this competitive pressure exists and must spur national action, we here at NewSchools Venture Fund are equally excited by the potential for international collaboration among educators, students, and entrepreneurs.

Imagine just for a moment the possibilities unleashed by creating a global network of schools wired with reliable, high-speed Internet. Imagine a student in Mississippi working with a student in Morocco to develop a joint report on the history of the sugar trade and slavery between our countries. Imagine a math teacher in Brooklyn creating a new algebra lesson using the ?Japanese lesson planning? method with a math teacher actually from Japan. Imagine an entrepreneur in California developing an online speech-therapy platform for students in the U.S. who later tailors this service to provide similar support to students in non-English speaking countries.

These imagined possibilities, and literally thousands like them, will be made real only if the U.S. education system is connected to the emerging international broadband network. Modernizing E-rate to ensure that 99% of our schools have high-speed Internet within the next five years is the best path forward to achieving this goal. We look forward to working with the FCC on this issue and thank you for your attention to these comments.

/s/

Benjamin Riley

Director of Policy

NewSchools Venture Fund