



Randolph County Board of Education

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September 13, 2013

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington DC 20554

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to provide comments to the FCC on the E-Rate NPRM, proceeding 13-184. E-Rate has been very important to the Randolph County School System because it has helped our students and teachers gain access to a wealth of online resources, communicate and collaborate, and develop the 21st century skills necessary for college and career. However, E-Rate funding levels have not kept pace with my districts current and future bandwidth needs. I urge you to raise the E-Rate funding level to at least \$5 billion per year, which is close to the average demand level for each of the past two years.

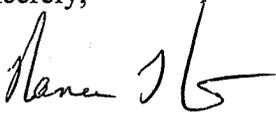
As Superintendent of Education of Randolph County Schools in Alabama, I know that seamlessly infusing digital learning throughout the curriculum is a prerequisite for students to graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's global economy. Access to high-speed broadband is the key to allowing modern teaching and learning to occur in all schools across the country.

In Randolph County Schools we use digital learning to personalize learning, provide online classes, meet Common Core State Standards, administer online assessments, make data-driven decisions, and provide professional development. An example of digital learning in my district is ACCESS Distance Learning courses provided to many of our students. We have distance learning equipment on all campuses. In addition to these ACCESS distance learning courses, we provide virtual field trips, professional development and virtual meetings using distance learning equipment. However, the district network is failing to keep up with demand, and the need for a reliable high-speed network is only going to increase in the near future. As high-stake assessments are moving toward online requirements, a reliable high-speed network is vital for the success of our students. Broadband access is necessary to meet school reform and improvement goals, provide equitable educational opportunities and improve learning for all students.

The E-Rate program needs to be simplified so that the paperwork burden does not distract from participation. Many man-hours are spent completing necessary forms to receive E-Rate discounts. Often these forms are filed in vain as the requests for vital equipment are not funded. The E-Rate program should better target school needs which have changed since E-Rate's inception in 1996.

The E-Rate program has been a phenomenal success in bringing internet access to almost every classroom in America. In the last funding cycle, applications from schools and libraries requested a total of more than \$5 billion—twice the amount of available funding. I respectfully urge the FCC to increase funding for the E-Rate program to at least \$5 billion to meet this demand. All students need access to high-speed broadband. Our nation's future depends on their success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rance Kirby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rance Kirby
Superintendent of Education

DBM