

Escambia County Schools

Escambia County is a rural school district located in Alabama with an E-rate discount rate of 82%. We are 80 plus miles from any of the “big” cities in our state. We are a poor school district for many reasons, one of the most prominent is that most of the land in our county is timberland which provides a very low level of taxes to support any public agency. The access to E-rate funds is providing us a way to help bridge the gap between rural and urban educational opportunities and experiences. E-rate funds have allowed us to provide a broadband (54 MB wireless wide-area-network to all our sites) which has given us the bandwidth to utilize the distance learning equipment we obtained with a RUS Grant; to install a modern phone system to enhance our internal and external communications and to incorporate the resources of the internet into our classrooms.

Some of the specific benefits this has given our system are:

- Our libraries were not able to provide the students with the up-to-date resources students needed because of funds; however, with the bandwidth to liberally use Internet resources, specifically the Alabama Virtual Library and MarcoPolo, our students now have access to the latest knowledge on a host of subjects.
- Our students, because of our location, had very few school “enrichment” trips available to them. The distance to travel to these resources was too timely and cost prohibitive to make them a routine part of the curriculum that all students got to experience. Now, thanks to the bandwidth we have, our students can now utilize the interactive video distance learning equipment to participate in virtual field trips to museums, zoos, research institutions and a host of other type sites.
- The State of Alabama is making a big effort now to make distance learning available to all schools in the state. Without the E-rate funds we would not have the infrastructure within our district to participate in the new initiative.

E-rate funding has made it possible to bring the world into our classrooms.

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Escambia County Alabama School District