




OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The enclosed card is from a student at Collins Riverside Middle School in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama. This is one thank you from Mrs. Hindman's class where we were able to provide them with a new classroom data projector. While the funds to purchase this projector didn't come directly from Erate, it is important to note that our district was able to use other funds to purchase this type of equipment for the classroom. If the Erate program is eliminated or cut these funds would have to be used to pay for Internet and connectivity and therefore would directly reduce or eliminate other technologies that impact our students.

Mrs. Hindman, teaches 6th grade science and uses the Internet and technology integration in her lesson plans.



**TUSCALOOSA
COUNTY SCHOOLS**
A RICH HERITAGE SINCE 1871...A COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

September 20, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: USAC Schools and Library Division, Erate program

As Erate coordinator for the Tuscaloosa County School System I would like to express how important the Erate program has and will continue to be to our school district.

In 1997, our superintendent the late Dr. Joyce Sellers realized the need for technology improvements and Internet access for our students and employees. At that time, the Erate program was just evolving and as a skeptic of government assisted programs, she insisted that our district implement a data/telecommunications network that the district could afford without relying on federal funds. With this direction, the district's technology program was established. During the 2000 school term, it became apparent that all Alabama schools would be facing budget cuts. In order to maintain our current investment the district filed its first Erate claim for Internet and telecommunication services and which was approved for over \$100,000 of eligible services. This was indeed a boost for our technology programs and freed up local funds to be used for other critical needs that were cut. In 2003 Alabama schools were once again the subject of sever budget cuts. In this case, the Erate funding that was already in place allowed our district to continue our technology programs. Since 1997, our district has grown from 26-schools with 15,000 students and 750-Internet connected computers to 29-schools with plans for 5-new schools and over 16,000 students and 3400-Internet connected computers. The district has also implemented a fully managed network with Internet web sites for all schools. Our electronic communications between our parents and teachers has increased by 70%. Erate is responsible for providing 60% of the funds to continue our network and telecommunications operations. Within the next 24 months our plans include network connectivity improvements for high-speed fiber optics, video conferencing, distant learning, streaming video (Data Casting) on demand for instruction and professional development, improved Internet access and establish educational partnerships between other districts and higher learning institutes. Erate funding along with our local school board approval of \$500,000 in revenue will allow our students and faculty to finally experience technology in a manner that has never been seen in our schools. Therefore, it is extremely important to our district that the Erate program is allowed to continue enriching the lives of our students and community.

I would like to leave you with one final comment; I ask you to look at what the Erate program has done for K-12 schools and what it can continue to do. While there has been problems and abuse the good out weighs the bad and if you cut Erate you will indeed kill a large majority of all K-12 technology programs throughout the country and the American students and tax payers will once again suffer the consequences. If you really want to see how public K-12 schools function with aging technologies and low budgets visit your hometown school district and take a tour with the Technology Coordinator, I think you will be shocked and embarrassed and appreciate how these public servants are able to do what they have with so little and how Erate plays a huge role in their operations.

Sincerely,



Tom Perrymon
Director of Technology