

Featured Article
**Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students
Statewide (ACCESS)**
June 2006

For the past 6 months, the ACCESS project, <http://accessdl.state.al.us/>, has been facilitating videoconferencing and distance learning throughout the state. ACCESS is a pilot project that is poised to become a major force in Alabama education. The Alabama Supercomputer Authority (ASA) is the networking technology partner for the ACCESS project. **ASA is working to upgrade the Internet connectivity to participating schools and school systems through the Alabama Research and Education Network (AREN).**

How Videoconferencing Works

Most modern videoconferencing systems utilize Internet Protocol (IP) to send video and audio over existing data networks. The H.323 standard is an umbrella standard that all vendors use to ensure compatibility of IP based videoconferencing systems. Since H.323 video calls use the same IP based network as data and standard Internet traffic, special provisioning is made so the video calls have prioritized use of the network infrastructure. This prioritization is accomplished through the use of Quality of Service (QoS) guarantees. **AREN has been QoS capable for several years and provides an ideal statewide infrastructure for the transport of integrated voice, video, and data traffic.**

ASA is Increasing Bandwidth

As the networking technology partner for ACCESS, ASA is provisioning a minimum connectivity of 10Mbps from each school system to AREN (and the Internet). In addition to the expanded bandwidth from each school system to the state network, ASA is provisioning 10Mbps from each participating high school to the corresponding school system core, in the cases where current connectivity is less than 10Mbps. **These enhanced connections will not only benefit the ACCESS project, but will be used to provide increased Internet access bandwidth to each school system.**

Communication with ASA

AREN engineers are currently contacting technology coordinators throughout the state in order to begin the design and implementation process. If you have any technical questions about the bandwidth provided to your school system via the ACCESS project, feel free to contact the AREN help desk at 1-800-338-8320. To learn more about the ACCESS project visit <http://accessdl.state.al.us/>.

Rick Bagwell, Cisco Certified Network Professional
Senior Network Engineer