

# **Van Buren Board of Education Report**

April 2016

by Chris Kniss, Director of Technology

## **ERATE**

This month I am finalizing our Erate forms for participation in that program for the 2016-2017 school year. Erate is a federal program for schools and libraries in the US that provides discounts on telecommunications costs. The program has been in operation since 1998. A modernization order in 2014 shifted the emphasis of the program to focus on Internet connectivity, especially wireless infrastructure and internal connections that provide that connectivity.

An additional 2 billion federal dollars has been earmarked annually for the program at least for the next several (4-5?) years. Schools apply for this money based on the student free/reduced lunch count for the district. Currently, Van Buren's free/reduced numbers qualify us for a 40% discount on such things as Internet bandwidth and wireless infrastructure projects.

We took advantage of the additional federal money last year by rebuilding the backbone of our fiber network to handle data speeds of at least 10 Gigabits per second. The wiring vendor that we used was Findlay Telecom, Ltd. We also purchased some head-end switches from CDW-G.

In the fall of 2016, we plan to complete the project. We will again be using Erate funds to purchase internal connections (switches). We will work with CDW-G, because they have provided us with the most cost-effective solution during the bidding process.

## **INTERNET BANDWIDTH**

We are looking to purchase 200Mb/s of Internet bandwidth from the NOACSC in Lima. This is double the amount we purchased in 2015-2016. Because of increasing bandwidth needs here at school, and declining costs of providing Internet at the NOACSC, purchasing the additional bandwidth will only increase our Internet costs by \$2500 annually after applying the Erate discount.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

I have been facilitating the Communication and Community Relations committee of the Strategic Plan and we have made good progress on our goals. I have attended the technology committee, too, intermittently, and they are having similar success. I'm sure that many of the recommendations that the Board will receive from the Strategic Planning Process will have costs associated with them. Prioritizing the recommendations will be necessary to the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.