E-RATE: Protecting Reliable Connectivity for Every School

The Reality: E-Rate is not simply a discount—it is a critical federal partnership that allows Santa Rosa County District Schools to maintain reliable Internet and WAN connectivity and continue modernizing the network infrastructure that supports classrooms, instructional technology, and district operations.

Program	Total Cost	Federal E-Rate (60%)	District (40%)
Category One – Annual Internet & WAN	$531,573.12	$318,943.87	$212,629.25
Category Two – FY2021–FY2025	$3,199,080.69	≈$1,919,448.41	≈$1,279,632.28
Combined Investment	**$3,730,653.81**	**≈$2,238,392.28**	**≈$1,492,261.53**

What E-Rate Makes Possible

- Approximately $318,944 annually toward Internet and WAN services.
- More than $3.2 million in Category Two network infrastructure improvements during FY2021–FY2025.
- A preliminary FY2026–FY2030 Category Two budget of nearly $5.9 million to continue replacing aging equipment and expanding capacity.
- Planned technology refresh cycles that support reliable, high-speed connectivity and reduce operational and cybersecurity risk.

What Potential E-Rate Cutbacks Mean

- Santa Rosa County would have to absorb the full cost of eligible Internet/WAN services or reduce services.
- The district anticipates having to reduce the bandwidth at both the Main and Disaster Recovery site.
- Possibly remove secondary internet connection and defer network replacements which would increase the risk of outages, testing, and cybersecurity concerns.
- Local funds would be diverted from classrooms and other district priorities to maintain essential connectivity.

THE DISTRICT IMPACT IS IMMEDIATE

A reduction in E-Rate funding would not simply slow future technology purchases. It would force difficult operational decisions today, including the potential loss of secondary WAN connectivity at five school sites we are testing to attempt a complete build out for the district. For a district serving approximately 28,100 students and 3,700 staff, reliable network connectivity is foundational to instruction, student devices, online systems, communications, cybersecurity, and daily school operations.

Category Two Funding Cycles

Cycle	Budget	Funded / Utilized	Remaining / Pending
FY2021–FY2025	$4,794,904.00	$3,199,080.69	$1,595,823.31
FY2026–FY2030 (Preliminary)	$5,875,967.07	$696,413.15 pending	$5,179,553.92

E-RATE HELPS KEEP SCHOOLS CONNECTED, MODERN, AND READY TO SUPPORT STUDENTS.

Protecting the program protects educational access and local resources.

Briefing for Congressional & State Policy Discussions