



## *Issues Related to Arkansas's System of Educational Technology*

- The state's current technological infrastructure for school districts is antiquated and does not provide the bandwidth necessary to service school districts' operations of increasingly bandwidth-intensive instructional software and applications. In a survey issued by AAEA to school administrators, 80% indicated their district experienced problems with bandwidth during the past year.
- School districts, especially in more urbanized areas of the state, can access additional bandwidth from outside service providers at a rate that is considerably less expensive than that charged by the state. One example is from Bryant who received two bids for an additional 100 Mbps in broadband. The bids were \$4,278 per month from AT&T and \$419.80 per month from Comcast. The district had one additional T-1 line for ADE for 1.54 Mbps for an approximate cost of \$900 per month. This indicates the frustration facing school districts when trying to provide educational opportunities for their students.
- A comprehensive review of the state's current technological infrastructure for school districts is needed, with particular emphasis on the rate structure, the pool of potential service providers, and the adequacy of services provided.
- The development of a comprehensive state plan to increase broadband availability to rural areas of Arkansas is a critical step toward upgrading the state's technological infrastructure for school districts.
- The security of the state's current technological infrastructure for school districts is a major concern, given the substantial amount of personally identifiable information compiled and retained by school districts.
- Increased communications is critical between the state's school districts and the state agencies (the Arkansas Department of Education and the Department of Information Systems) responsible for the technological infrastructure for school districts.
- Creation of a formalized on-going review process, conducted with the assistance of a third party that may be housed inside or outside of state government, is needed to identify and make recommendations regarding issues concerning the state's technological infrastructure for school districts.

*See recommendations and rationale on page 2.*



## ***RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:***

1. Educational applications (academic and administrative) are outpacing the current resource base, and will continue to increase in number and bandwidth requirements for the next 3-5 years. The AAEA survey indicated that 78.8% of those responding would like to implement technology initiatives in curriculum and/or instruction but can't due to bandwidth limitations. The survey also indicated that 84.4% restricted use of some educationally relevant or useful sites due to bandwidth concerns.
  2. Broadband services that are too costly to deploy and/or sustain outside metropolitan areas via subscriber adoption are not productive overall.
  3. Creative partnerships can result in shared resources that bring about return on investment for providers, and the user community.
  4. Arkansas has the resources and expertise to resolve the issues and create a scalable model, if collaboration and leveraging resources replaces silos as the standard operating procedure.
  5. The transition from “poor me” to “FOLLOW ME” is within our grasp.
- **RECOMMENDATION #1** –COURSE OF ACTION BASED UPON IMMENENT NEED--  
Convene an Action Team led by an SREB expert to determine the actual bandwidth needs of the K-20 community in Arkansas based upon applications requirements, not infrastructure constraints.
- **RECOMMENDATION #2** – PARALLEL COURSE OF ACTION DESIGNED TO  
CREATE AN ACTION AGENDA AS A RESULT OF OUTCOMES OF  
RECOMMENDATION #1 – Bring together all in-state broadband providers to design an affordable and deployable Broadband Strategy for K-20 in Arkansas. Leadership should be from the K20 community, not the broadband provider community (public or private). Focus should be on desired outcomes, not infrastructure. Core guidelines should be shared resources, cost effective rates, and scalability. All Arkansas resources should be leveraged for long-term student success. Access (proximity to a broadband source) should be replaced by empowering actual subscription to broadband as the focal point. Proximity to broadband does not further education.
- **RECOMMENDATION #3** - PARALLEL COURSE OF ACTION DESIGNED FOR  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT -Task the Legislative Cyberinfrastructure Task Force to lead the development of a State K-20 Broadband Strategy as an annex to the State Technology Plan and State Cyberinfrastructure Strategy. The Legislative Cyberinfrastructure task Force has representation from both public and private communities.