

CASE STUDY

Getting Fiber To a Rural Illinois School District



Massac Unit School District #1 is located in rural Illinois. This district has seven schools and 2,200 students altogether. Though four of the schools had sufficient bandwidth for digital learning, there were three elementary schools that did not.



The Problem

The district's goal was to implement a 1:1 device program for all students in its schools, but, as is the case for many rural districts, budget constraints and limited service provider options proved to be a significant obstacle. The three elementary schools in need were constrained by low-bandwidth DSL and microwave connections. In search of an affordable solution, Massac USD reached out to EducationSuperHighway through the Illinois Classroom Connectivity Initiative.



Solution

At Massac's request, EducationSuperHighway researched and proposed solutions to provide fiber-optic connections to the three elementary schools that needed to be upgraded.

Located in outlying areas, each of the schools received Internet service from different providers. However, even on their best days, download speeds (less than 25 Mbps) were not fast enough to support each class's digital programs.

After reviewing our proposed solutions, Massac's Technology Director reached out to Clearwave, a service provider that, coincidentally, was already working on a fiber build project nearby with a large local bank and community college. Because of the existing project, Clearwave agreed not to charge Massac any upfront construction costs to extend fiber to its elementary schools. Between these savings and their 80% E-rate discount, Massac fully expects the upgrade to be well within their budget.



Results

All seven Massac campuses are now fully connected to fiber with a new provider and a new network architecture. The elementary schools all have a fiber line receiving 1 Gbps of service, which greatly expands opportunities for digital learning. The Junior High School is piloting their 1:1 device policy in some classrooms without having to worry about district bandwidth consumption and reliability like they did in years past. They have added over 300 Chromebooks this school year and are excited for more to come.

"I thought [ESH's technical assistance] was super smooth. You were all able to provide us with exactly what we needed; having 1 Gbps service to every area in our district says a lot."