

Archived Information

U.S. Department of Education – Planning and Evaluation Service

THE FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE E-RATE

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Purpose

The purpose of this study (which is part of the Integrated Studies of Educational Technology, ISET) is to analyze the extent to which the E-rate is equalizing access to educational technology and the extent to which educational technology is integrated with systemic reform efforts to improve teaching and learning in schools and districts utilizing the E-rate.

Research Questions

- **To What Extent does the E-Rate Equalize Access to Educational Technology?**
Issues to be examined focus on differences in access to, and use of educational technology, in different states and in different types of districts, schools and libraries. This includes an examination of the degree of variation by indicators such as the concentration of poor or minority students, urban/rural location and region/state, as well as by the level of technology sophistication (e.g., access to cutting edge digital technology).
- **What is the Role of the E-Rate in the Broader Context of Student Learning?**
Issues to be examined focus on the extent to which E-Rate participants have the necessary tools and infrastructure to make effective use of the technology provided through the program and how participants combine different resources (particularly different federal sources of technology funds) to create effective educational technology systems designed to foster higher student achievement.

General Evaluation Design and Data Collection Activities

Answers to the research questions will be obtained through the implementation of three linked study components:

- **Analysis of E-Rate Administrative Data.** This initial component uses available data, both from administrative program records and relevant research studies, to answer questions primarily related to the distribution of E-Rate funds (who gets it? who does not? how much do they get?), how the E-Rate funds are used to acquire technology (what do the recipients do with the E-Rate subsidies?) and some information about interactions with other funding sources (what is the relationship between E-Rate and other sources of public and private funding for technology?) The results of this analysis were reported in Puma, M., D. Chaplin and A. Pape (2000). E-Rate and the Digital Divide: A Preliminary Analysis from the Integrated Studies of Educational Technology. This study's interim report is based on

administrative data for the program and is available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/ed_reform.html. Supplemental analyses of the participation of BIA and Indian-serving schools and Empowerment Zone schools in the E-Rate program are being completed.

- **Nationally Representative Surveys of Districts, Schools, and Teachers.** Because available data cannot answer all of the relevant questions for this study, primary data collection is also being conducted with technology directors in all 50 states, technology coordinators in a national sample of districts, principals and/or technology coordinators in a sample of schools within those districts and a sample of teachers from a subsample of the selected schools. These data will, in part, be used to describe how the E-Rate has affected access to and use of technology, barriers to the effective use of the E-Rate and the program's role in the broader context of school reform.
- **Analysis of Educational Technology Plans.** This final component will examine technology planning and how E-Rate subsidies have been incorporated into a broader vision for educational technology, especially the degree of alignment and coordination with other existing programs and policies. To meet this objective, the national survey will be used to collect technology plans from a representative sample of 200 of the sampled school districts that are participating in the E-Rate program.

A final report for the entire ISET project will be available by late 2001.

