

On February 10, 1999, Eagle Hill School received an unexpected phone call that would forever change the course of school history. "Hello, this is Congressman Jim McGovern's Office," the voicemail message stated, "we would like to inform you that you have been awarded the largest grant of any school in Massachusetts." Then the voice became more animated, "I really can't *believe* how much money you have been awarded. Please contact me for more details." Even though I didn't know any of the particulars at that point, I knew exactly what the call was about. Our long-since filed application to the Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC), an entity charged with the administration of a \$2 billion federal government initiative aimed at bringing telecommunications and Internet access to schools and libraries across the country through varying subsidies, had finally been approved.

In March of 1998 we submitted a formal request to the SLC to subsidize 90% of the cost to interconnect all of Eagle Hill's buildings in a campus-wide local area network (LAN). Essentially, we asked them to provide us with the means to create a high-speed wire infrastructure that would support our technology platform. Almost a year later, a follow-up conversation with Congressman McGovern's Office revealed that we had been given \$577,000 to make that happen. In specific terms, the total amount requested for the LAN project was approximately \$630,000. For its part, in the coming months the federal government will reimburse Eagle Hill School 90% of that amount. The remaining 10%, or just over \$60,000, will be Eagle Hill's obligation.

After my initial excitement subsided, I contemplated all of the possibilities and pitfalls that now confronted us. In the past, I reasoned, Eagle Hill had enjoyed tremendous success by combining traditional methodologies with cutting edge educational tools and strategies. With each new technique, careful planning, gradual implementation and ongoing evaluation were paramount. This approach enabled us to simultaneously enhance our program and to preserve the integrity of our mission. Technology, I thought, would not become the exception to that rule.

I then refocused my attention to the more specific. While this grant provided many opportunities, it created even more responsibilities. For example, because it did not pertain to computer hardware, software and professional development for staff, we would have many associated financial costs to bear in order to effectively implement technology as it became available. Most important, however, we would have to completely and thoughtfully integrate technology into our existing curriculum.

Since that day, we have fashioned a comprehensive written plan that clearly develops our technological philosophy and goals. The plan furnishes a three-year touchstone for curriculum enhancement, staff development, and communication improvement. For example, we hope to eliminate duplicative administrative tasks and to create more comprehensive and effective channels of communication between faculty, students, and families. In addition, we will use technology to facilitate access to the resources of the Internet and state of the art software programs. Most important, by emulating higher education and workplace environments, we hope technology will better prepare our students for the challenges of their futures.

At Eagle Hill, we realize that the dynamic nature of technology demands responsiveness to emerging trends. Appropriately, frequent evaluations and revisions that focus on achieving our larger goals will become the cornerstones of our institutional strategy. As a result, we must continue to be informed, vigilant, and open-minded. Meanwhile, I will be exploring ways in which we can outfit each student and faculty member with a new computer powerful enough to capitalize on the advantages of our newfound resources. In my opinion, if we are truly going to change the course of school history, we must ensure that every student, teacher, and administrator is equipped with the necessary tools for success.