

Attachment E

St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for VOICE OVER IP (VOIP)

February 2007

What is VOIP?

Answer: VOIP is an acronym for Voice Over Internet Protocol. This simply means that phone calls are transmitted over a data network (generally the same network that your computers use). Schools in the St. Lawrence BOCES have an internal data network, a regional data network (DANC), and the internet.

What's the difference between VOIP at school and VOIP at home?

Answer: Schools generally have multiple phone lines provided by the local telephone company and multiple telephone extensions within the district. These phone lines and extensions are usually connected together with a phone system, called a PBX. At home, most people have one (1), sometimes two (2) phone lines connected to multiple phones in the home. This is an important difference because your phones at school involve both the phone company and a PBX system, where, at home, only the phone company is involved. Almost all VOIP systems being installed in schools today are done so to replace a PBX system. VOIP at home is done to replace the phone company (with companies like Time Warner Digital Phone, Vonage, etc. Although the technology is similar, the implementation and associated costs are very different.

Can our school save money using VOIP?

Answer: In general, schools that have multiple buildings, have a robust internal data network, and pay relatively high maintenance for a PBX, are good candidates for VOIP within their district. Each district has a different set of circumstances and, as such, the business case for VOIP varies. A template Return-on-Investment (ROI) spreadsheet is provided in the BOCES February 2007 VOIP report.

Our school is planning to replace an existing phone system, should we consider a VOIP system?

Answer: Yes. It is estimated that by the year 2010, 90% of all PBX systems will be based on VOIP technology. If you have a capital project or are considering replacing an old system, contact BOCES for planning assistance.

If our school uses VOIP, do we still need phone lines?

Answer: Yes (for the near future). Implementing VOIP within a school district does not eliminate the need for local phone lines. However, as the technology progresses, it is likely that phone traffic will move to an internet service as opposed to a local phone company service.

Can our school use the DANC network for VOIP?

Answer: If your school has multiple buildings and they are connected together via the DANC network, then yes. If you want to be able to call other schools using VOIP over the DANC backbone, then a regional VOIP design is required and you will need at least one (1) other school to participate.