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# NEWS RELEASE



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**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY • 1348 GRIFFIN MILL ROAD • EASLEY, SC 29640-6997**

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## **NEW NETWORK, 100X FASTER INTERNET SPEEDS PLANNED FOR PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOLS**

Pickens County schools are looking at internet service that is up to 100 times faster, thanks to a partnership between the school district and Conterra Networks. The School District of Pickens County has entered into a multi-year agreement with Conterra Networks to deploy an all fiber optical network to support the data, video, and voice requirements of its schools.

“We are thrilled we are able to give our students a network that is up to 100 times faster than our existing network without spending additional dollars,” said Dr. Danny Merck, SDPC Superintendent. “By rethinking how we spend existing funds and taking advantage of E-rate, we are bringing money Pickens’ residents pay in their phone bills back to the county’s students.”

In technical terms, the fiber optical network will provide 10 gigabit connectivity to each SDPC location when completed and is scalable to 100 gigabits with no additional construction. Conterra monitors, manages, and supports its networks on a 24x7x365 basis and guarantees network performance and reliability. Currently the district has 100 megabits at most elementary schools, 500 megabits at most middle schools, and 1 gigabit at most high schools.

The network is set for completion in the summer of 2019.

The project is funded in large part by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) E-rate program through telephone fees. The primary goal of E-rate is to ensure affordable access to high-speed broadband in schools and libraries. The remaining funds will come from existing district dollars. According to Merck, the district is allocating money spent on the existing network toward this project.

According to Dr. Barbara Nesbitt, the Executive Director of Technology for SDPC, “Emerging educational and video applications are increasingly moving to cloud-based environments. With our

one-to-one Tech It Home initiative and other innovative practices like project-based and personalized learning, it is critical we provide our teachers and students with a high-speed, secure, and reliable network.” There are many immediate benefits to increased bandwidth. Andy Coleman, Director of Technology Services for SDPC, noted, “With the new network, we will be able to administer state-mandated tests in one week instead of spreading testing out over several weeks. This means all students will have more instructional days prior to testing, not just those who are lucky enough to be scheduled at the end of the testing window.”

Ray Farley, executive director of Alliance Pickens, is also pleased with the infrastructure advantage this fiber brings to Pickens County. “Conterra Networks is building over 100 miles of fiber in the county. While the fiber network will primarily serve the county’s schools, local businesses can also benefit from the new fiber optical network.” Conterra’s EVP Van Snowdon notes, “We continue to offer school districts aggressive network solutions at affordable rates, while bringing fiber to rural areas that traditionally cannot access high-speed broadband for local business needs.”

The district worked with Polly and Ed Gifford of Education Partners Solution, Inc. to design and procure the fiber network. Education Partners Solution, Inc. is a technology consulting firm specializing in K–12 infrastructure design. “We’ve worked with schools in states like Texas for over 20 years to construct and lease fiber for wide area network and Internet connectivity such as the one Pickens is building. The availability of high capacity Internet has increased and cost of services in the entire state has dropped dramatically. We’re excited that Pickens is leading the way to competitive fiber and Internet pricing for their area and as a model for other schools in South Carolina,” says Polly Gifford, owner and principal consultant.

### **About Conterra Networks**

Conterra Networks is a national provider of managed fiber-based, carrier-grade telecommunications solutions for schools, healthcare providers, telecom carriers, municipalities and enterprises that require bandwidth intensive, network connectivity and Internet services. Conterra Networks, and its subsidiaries, currently provide these services to over 3,000 locations throughout the United States. For more information about Conterra, visit [www.Conterra.com](http://www.Conterra.com) or call 877-365-6701.

### **About Education Partner Services, Inc.**

Education Partners Solution (EPS) was founded in 1996 with the goal of providing vendor independent technology consulting and technology architectural services; strategic and tactical systems planning based on technology alignment with K-12 district goals; E-Rate planning, procurement filing and support; and technical project procurement with contract fulfillment and quality assurance management. For more information about EPS, visit [www.eps4.com/about](http://www.eps4.com/about).