

## Wireless Goes Beyond School Boundaries

*School District with Few Choices Steps into Uncharted Territory to Improve Internet Service and Cut Costs*

**Warrensburg, IL** – November, 18, 2011 – Warrensburg-Latham CUSD #11 recently completed the design and installation of a carrier grade wireless backhaul that will provide low cost high-speed Internet service to the Districts' 1,300 students and staff. Faced with slowing Internet service caused by increased demand and having few telecommunications options, the District with the help of Entré Computer Solutions, constructed two seven-plus mile wireless links across three school districts territories to connect to the Illinois Century Network (ICN) at Richland Community College.

Kristen Kendrick, Superintendent at the District said, "Internet demand to support curriculum needs has grown significantly over the past eighteen months and is expected to continue to grow exponentially." Interactive white boards, web based educational software rich in digital and multi-media content, and the conversion by vendors to web based applications that are used to support school operations have all increased demand for Internet resources - well beyond the school district's ability to provide an appropriate level of service to staff and students with their two leased data circuits.

"We just hit a wall almost overnight. So we began exploring our options." said Chris Reed, Technology Director for the school district. "Only to find out we did not have many telecommunications options, especially compared to the more populated or metropolitan areas nearby." The only reasonable option available to the District, located in the small rural community of Warrensburg, was to add costly long-term monthly leases for more data circuits that would hit their educational fund hard. Already seeking to reduce expenses due to the revenue shortfall from the state, the District administration and Board did not want to add more expenses to their budget.

"Rural school districts have the same educational and instructional needs as urban districts and technology is a key component of that." Reed said, "However, rural schools often cannot financially or technically support these needs with the very limited telecommunications choices available to us in our areas."

The District needed to find a low cost source of high-speed internet bandwidth and be able to get radio signals above natural and manmade obstacles to that source. Reed developed a map identifying where local telecomm companies did provide high speed Internet service and then set out to locate towers and their owners in those areas. After a great deal of research and with the assistance of Entré Computer Solutions and another area school district, they landed at Richland Community College.

RCC provided an abandoned radio tower and most importantly a direct inexpensive connection to the ICN (Internet). Entré Computer Solutions built one seven mile link from the district's main office to a 165 ft high grain tower located in the middle of undeveloped farmland and a second eight mile link from the grain tower to RCC. These wireless links now provide the District's high-speed Internet service and have replaced their two T1 data circuits. When asked about the amount of bandwidth the new wireless links could provide, Reed would only say that,

“It is several times more than what is being supplied to RCC. It is a very significant amount of bandwidth.”

Reed continued, “We’ve been operational for almost sixty days now. If it were not for Richland Community College, this project would not have gotten off the ground. Their technical staff has been so accommodating and easy to work with. We are appreciative of their efforts and for making their facilities available to us.”

The project took less than twenty days to complete and is currently providing the District with enough Internet capacity for well into the future. The cost of the project was funded through a one-time capital expense. Comparing the money the District would have spent on monthly data circuit leases to the one-time capital expense, the project will be paid for in under a year and a half. Most importantly, they have avoided adding more expenses against their educational fund, which are dollars directed towards students and staff. The District owns the wireless equipment and their Internet needs can continue to grow without the worry of ever adding more costs.

Tom Blumenshine, General Manager of Entré Computer Solutions said, “Our objective has always been to help rural district’s provide the same instructional opportunities as their urban neighbors. Every student, and the teachers who educate them, should have the same resources available to learn and educate respectively. We build the infrastructure that makes this possible. In the case of Warrensburg-Latham, we helped fill a real need – something we are very proud of.”

Reed said, “There is so much attention given to being on the bleeding edge of technology that we lose sight of all of the bleeding on the trailing edge.”, he continued, “When we can’t keep up, our students miss out on opportunities. This does not put us out front, but where we need to be...thanks to our Superintendent, Board of Education, Entré, and RCC.”

Entré Computer Solutions is recognized regionally as a trusted network integration leader. Entré Computer Solutions has a team of over 60 professionals dedicated to cultivating a positive attitude and taking pride in providing superior service and support in the areas of Network LAN/WAN Integration, Infrastructure, SANs, Security, Video Surveillance, Digital Signage, Wireless PTP, and IP Telephony.

The Warrensburg-Latham Community Unit School District #11, located several miles west of Decatur, Illinois, comprises three schools on one campus, and serves more than 1,100 students across 92 square miles. It is dedicated to academic excellence through the cultivation of individual strengths and talents in a supportive environment, so that each student may be prepared to meet the challenges of a changing world. Warrensburg-Latham CUSD #11 takes advantage of its small town setting, small class sizes, and talented teaching staff to help students reach their full potential.

For more information, please visit the Warrensburg-Latham CUSD #11 website at <http://www.wl.k12.il.us>.

###