



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.

SUBJECT: Smart Schools Bond Act

DATE: May 11, 2015

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Staff will provide an update on the status of the Smart Schools Bond Act.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For Information.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the May Regents meeting.

Background Information

The Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014 was included in the 2014-15 Enacted State Budget and approved by the voters in a statewide referendum held on November 4, 2014. The Smart Schools Bond Act authorizes the issuance of \$2 billion of general obligation bonds to finance improved educational technology and infrastructure to improve learning and opportunity for students throughout the State. The 2014-15 Enacted State Budget also provided an additional \$5 million for state-supported schools for the blind and deaf and private special education schools. Individual public school district allocations may be found at www.smartschoolsnny.com.

The Smart Schools Bond Act will provide improved learning opportunities for public and nonpublic school students by funding capital projects to:

1. Install high-speed broadband or wireless internet connectivity for schools and communities;
2. Acquire learning technology equipment or facilities, including but not limited to interactive whiteboards, computer servers, and desktop, laptop, and tablet computers;
3. Construct, enhance, and modernize educational facilities to accommodate pre-kindergarten programs and to provide instructional space to replace classroom trailers; and/or
4. Install high-tech security features in school buildings and on school campuses, including but not limited to video surveillance, emergency notification systems, and physical access controls.

The Smart Schools Bond Act requires school districts to develop and receive approval of their Smart Schools Investment Plan from the Smart Schools Review Board, which is comprised of the Chancellor of the State University of New York, the Director of the Budget and the Commissioner of the State Education Department. School districts are also required to consult with parents, teachers, students, community members, and other stakeholders in developing their investment plan.

Any classroom technology purchased by a school district with Smart Schools funding must be made available on an equitable basis, upon request, to students attending non-public schools within the same school district. This requirement is consistent with the existing practice of loaning computer hardware purchased with State school aid to nonpublic students. This loan requirement is capped, in each district, at \$250 multiplied by total non-public school enrollment. The loan requirement does not apply to other categories of Smart Schools spending.

Department staff worked with the Smart Schools Review Board to develop guidelines regarding the Smart Schools Investment Plans. The guidelines, available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/smart_schools/, include required components of the Smart Schools Investment Plans, as well as details regarding the timeline for plan submission and any additional spending parameters.

Once the Smart Schools Investment Plan is approved, the school district will be eligible to begin receiving grant funds, up to the amount of its Smart Schools allocation amount, to reimburse costs of the approved projects. The State Education Department will administer the grant funds.

Timetable for Implementation

Districts will be able to begin submitting their investment plan via the Department Web Portal for review and approval on or before June 15. There is no specific deadline for the submission Smart Schools Investment Plans, as these funds do not expire.