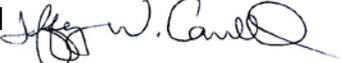
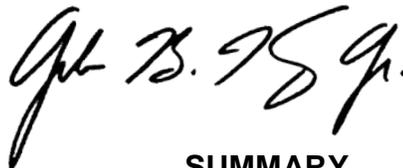




**TO:** Cultural Education  
**FROM:** Jeffrey Cannell   
**SUBJECT:** Broadband in Public Libraries  
**DATE:** November 13, 2012

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**



**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

Should the Board of Regents establish a goal for broadband connectivity in public libraries statewide, specifically that every public library building in the State will have adequate, affordable and sustainable connectivity capacity, with a minimum of 100Mbps to each library building by the year 2015.

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

The Regents Advisory Committee on Libraries made the following recommendation to the Board in April 2012:

*“Support state and national digital literacy learning initiatives providing this 21st century skill to people of all walks of life, not just those enrolled in schools and colleges.”*

This presentation will bring the Regents Cultural Education Committee up to date on numerous statewide and national policy initiatives related to broadband adoption, digital inclusion, digital literacy and public libraries. New York State’s public libraries need to be capable of delivering broadband-dependent services that enable public libraries to carry out their roles as community education centers and places for community engagement and lifelong learning.

**Proposed Handling**

For information and discussion.

## **Background Information**

Adequate broadband connectivity in public libraries is the essential tool that:

- Is necessary for delivering workforce development and digital literacy services;
- Provides a means for online testing capacity, such as GED testing;
- Supports schools to partner in helping students be successful in achieving Common Core goals;
- Provides community education centers and places for community engagement and lifelong learning.

Public libraries are at the center of community education and lifelong learning, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. In 2012, 67% of New York State public libraries reported that the library was the **ONLY FREE** public access to the Internet in their local communities.

Adequate broadband connectivity is defined as 100Mbps by:

- The Department's ***Statewide Learning Technology Plan***,
- the Federal Communication Commission's ***National Broadband Plan***
- The New York State Statewide Broadband Council.

Over the past five years, New York's public libraries have been working toward improving their broadband infrastructure. One-time public library broadband infrastructure grants from the Governor's New York State Broadband Program Office, Internet access grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and a \$9 million grant from the federal Broadband Technology Opportunity Program, have assisted 93 library buildings (out of 1074) in improving their broadband – dependent services.

All public library buildings in the state have some form of broadband connection. Data collected by the State Library indicate that 4 percent (38 of 1074) public library buildings had an Internet connection of 100Mbps.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Regents adopt 100Mbps as the definition of adequate broadband service for public libraries and continue to support efforts that increase broadband connectivity levels in public libraries.