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Our Students. Their Moment.

# Smart Schools Bond Act

## Improving Learning Opportunities for Students

New York State Board of Regents  
May 2015



# Overview

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- The Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014 was included in the 2014-15 Enacted State Budget.
- Borrowing \$2 billion of general obligation bonds to finance improved educational technology and infrastructure to improve learning opportunities was approved by the voters in a statewide referendum held on November 4, 2014.
- The 2014-15 State Budget also provided \$5 million for state-supported schools for the blind and deaf, Special Act School Districts and private special education schools to purchase technology.
- Individual school district allocations are publicly available at [www.smartschoolsny.com](http://www.smartschoolsny.com)
- These funds do not have an expiration date

# **Allowable Uses of Bond Funds**

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Projects may include:

1. Instructional space for Pre-K and replacing transportable classroom units
2. Expansion of broadband or wireless connectivity including community connectivity projects
3. School safety and security technology
4. Classroom technology projects including acquiring learning technology hardware such as whiteboards, computer servers, computers and tablets

**Note: All projects must have a period of probable usefulness in order to be bondable**

# Smart School Investment Plans

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School districts are required to:

- Develop and receive approval of a 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.
- Consult with parents, teachers, students, community members, nonpublic schools and other stakeholders in developing their investment plan.

# Key Requirements

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- Link district technology plan to long-range educational plan
- Ensure there is adequate infrastructure to support technology and networked devices before using bond funds to purchase devices
- Address the needs of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- Professional development for teachers and administrators (Note this is not bondable)
- Department approval of capital projects

# Payment

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- Smart Schools Review Board will meet quarterly to review plans
- The State Education Department will administer the grant funds
- Once the Smart Schools Investment Plan is approved, a school district will be eligible to begin receiving grant funds to reimburse costs of the approved projects and purchases
- Payment will be authorized within 90 days of plan approval in most cases
- Districts need not expend their entire allocation before receiving reimbursement

# Equitable Sharing with Nonpublic Schools

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- Any classroom technology purchased by a 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 loan requirement is capped, in each district, at \$250 multiplied by total non-public school enrollment.
- This loan requirement does not apply to other categories of Smart Schools spending.

# Next Steps for School Districts

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- Review guidance developed in collaboration with SUNY, Governor's Office and the Division of Budget is posted on the Department web site at:  
[http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/smart\\_schools/](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/smart_schools/)
- Districts review the template for Smart School Investment Plans to prepare for future electronic submission via the Department's business portal (Portal opens on or before June 15)
- Allow adequate time to consult with stakeholders and plan for the best use of the funds – where are the district's greatest needs
- Consider how to best leverage bond act funds
- Are you funding a sustainable improvement?



# **Next Steps for the Department**

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- **Develop Smart Schools Investment Plan template for school districts**
- **Web portal for submitting plans for approval will open on or before June 15**
- **Webinar for school districts and nonpublic schools**
- **Identify and publicize best practices with assistance from the Regional Information Centers and the Regents Technology Policy and Practices Council**