Smart Schools Q and A

Q: What is the Smart Schools Bond Act?

A: The Smart Schools Bond Act was passed as part of the 2014-15 Enacted Budget. (L. 2014, ch. 56, Parts B and C). 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 Smart Schools Bond Act must be approved by a state-wide vote before it becomes effective.

Q: When will the Smart Schools Bond Act go to the voters?

A: The Smart Schools Bond Act will go to the voters at the 2014 General Election to be held Tuesday, November 4, 2014.

Q: What will the ballot question say?

A: The ballot question will read:

The SMART SCHOOLS BOND ACT OF 2014, as set forth in section one of part B of chapter 56 of the laws of 2014, authorizes the sale of state bonds of up to two billion dollars ($2,000,000,000) to provide access to classroom technology and high-speed internet connectivity to equalize opportunities for children to learn, to add classroom space to expand high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, to replace classroom trailers with permanent instructional space, and to install high-

tech smart security features in schools. Shall the SMART SCHOOLS BOND ACT OF 2014 be approved?

Q: How much funding would my school district be eligible for?

**A: ** The 2014-15 Enacted Budget included a methodology to calculate the Smart Schools allocation amount for each school district in the State. Each school district will receive an allocation of the $2 billion Smart Schools that is proportionate to the district's share of total formula based school aid in the 2013-14 school year, excluding Building Aid, Universal Prekindergarten Aid, and the Gap Elimination Adjustment. For example, if a district receives 2.0% of total State school aid, the school district's Smart Schools allocation would be $40 million (.02 * $2,000,000,000).

These amounts have already been calculated. You can determine the amount your school district is eligible to receive if the Smart Schools Bond Act is approved at http://www.governor.ny.gov/smart-schools-ny.

Q: What types of projects would be eligible for funding?

**A: ** Bond proceeds may be used for capital projects to:

- Acquire learning technology equipment or facilities, including but not limited to interactive whiteboards, computer servers, and desktop, laptop, and tablet computers;

- Install high-speed broadband or wireless internet connectivity for schools and communities;

- Construct, enhance, and modernize educational facilities to accommodate pre-kindergarten programs and to provide instructional space to replace classroom trailers; and

- 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.

Q: What is the Smart Schools Review Board?

A: The Smart Schools Review Board is a statutorily-created panel comprised of the Chancellor of the State University of New York, the Director of the Budget, and the Commissioner of Education, or their respective designees.

If the Smart Schools Bond Act is approved by voters, the Smart Schools Review Board is tasked with issuing guidelines regarding the Smart Schools Investment Plans that districts will be required to submit for approval. These guidelines will include any required components of the Smart Schools Investment Plans, as well as more details regarding the timeline for plan submission and any additional spending parameters.

Q: How will a school district apply for and receive the Smart Schools funding?

A: As outlined above, each district must submit a Smart Schools Investment Plan to the Smart Schools Review Board for approval. The Smart Schools Review Board may approve the plan, reject the plan, or return the plan to the school district for modifications.

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.

Q: Is there any requirement for public input into a school district's proposed use of the Smart School funds?

A: Yes. School districts are required to consult with parents, teachers, students, community members, and other stakeholders.

Q: Can a school district amend or update its Smart Schools Investment Plan after it has been approved?

A: Yes, a school district may amend or update its Smart Schools Investment Plan. However, any such amendments must first be submitted to the Smart Schools Review Board for approval, and will not take effect unless and until approval is granted.

Q: Will a school district's Smart Schools allocation expire if it is not used within a certain period?

A: No, a district's Smart Schools allocation does not need to be used by a certain date. If the allocation is not used in one school year, it can be carried over to the next school year.

Q: Can a school district use spending from its Smart Schools allocation as the local share to generate other State School Aids, such as Building Aid?

A: No, expenditures from the Smart Schools allocation may not be used to generate other types of State School Aid.

Q: How will the process for loaning Smart Schools technology to non-public school students work?

A: Any classroom technology purchased by a school district with Smart Schools funding must be made available, 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 does not apply to other categories of Smart Schools spending.

Districts are required to make these loans on an equitable basis to non-public students within the district. This loan requirement is capped, in each district, at $250 multiplied by total non-public school enrollment.