



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Fact Sheet: Technology Bond

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Technology Infrastructure Bond Will Support Teachers, Students

Students, teachers, and other friends of education across Rhode Island are enthusiastic about the possibilities that technology offers for improving instruction and advancing student achievement. We have a great opportunity to move forward with these innovations in Rhode Island, and the Technology Infrastructure Capital Bond will ensure that all students have access to 21st-century learning technology.

– Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Technology Bond: Why we need it.

Last year, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) conducted a preliminary survey of access to technology in schools across the state. Our findings were:

- only 23.8 percent of classrooms have 100-percent wireless access;
- Although most classrooms have wired access to the Internet, this access is usually limited to one computer – the teacher's; and
- student access to computers through labs and laptops covers less than 7 percent of classrooms at any given time.

In short, Rhode Island schools and classrooms do not have the infrastructure to allow students and teachers to access the Internet and other on-line resources that they will need to advance teaching and learning.

What will the technology bond provide?

The \$20-million Technology Infrastructure Capital Bond will expand wireless access to classrooms across the state over the next three to five years.

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The bond will fund a complete site survey of all Rhode Island schools and classrooms to determine the specific needs of each community. The bond will fund wireless access points for each classroom, as well as the necessary switches, wiring, and network controllers to bring wireless access to every school and every classroom in Rhode Island.

How will teachers and students use wireless technology?

With wireless technology in every classroom, *all* Rhode Island students will have access to opportunities for digital learning, including virtual classrooms, online instruction and communication, interactive instruction, instructional gaming, blended learning, on-line assessments (such as the PARCC assessment that Rhode Island will implement statewide in 2014), and many other facets of 21st-century learning that will prepare our students for success in the global economy.

Teachers will have access to the data platforms that RIDE is creating. One such platform is the Instructional Management System, which will provide teachers with instant access to assessment and demographic data on all of their students and with a vast array of resources on instruction, curriculum, assessments, and professional development. RIDE is developing this system using Race to the Top funds – precisely the kind of up-front investment that will entail no long-term costs and will benefit our teachers and students for years to come.

Will all communities benefit from this initiative?

Yes. This investment in technology will benefit all Rhode Island schools, regardless of their current condition or their current level of access to technology. The process will begin with a building survey, which will lead to a detailed statewide work plan to bring wireless access to every classroom.

It is important to note that this \$20-million investment can also leverage federal funds from the E-Rate program. Based on the number of enrolled students living in poverty (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), schools are eligible to receive up to 90 percent in matching federal funds for investments in technology. Most schools in Central Falls and Providence would be eligible for these matching funds; many schools in Pawtucket and Woonsocket would be eligible as well.

Who will make sure that this project succeeds?

With input from the Budget Office, the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, and the Rhode Island Society of Technology Educators, RIDE will manage this grant. RIDE will continue to work closely with all school districts to assess the needs of each school, to invest these funds wisely, and to provide students and teachers with the resources and support they need to make our schools America's best.

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