



NJDOE News

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Approvals Granted for School Construction Plans

Education Commissioner David Hespe today approved comprehensive plans to renovate and rebuild schools in four more Abbott school districts as part of an accelerated effort to implement Governor Whitman's school construction and improvement initiatives.

In the six months since the Educational Facilities and Construction Financing Act was signed into law, the Department of Education has approved over \$2.5 billion in critically needed school construction projects involving more than 200 school districts across New Jersey.

"I am pleased to report that our school construction program - the most ambitious in the nation - is moving full speed ahead," Governor Christie Whitman said. "We are moving forward at an accelerated pace to provide every child in our state with a quality education in quality schools. The school construction plans approved to date will benefit tens of thousands of students in communities throughout New Jersey."

Commissioner Hespe said: "From expediting the approval process for urban school districts to authorizing funding for school projects that are ready to go to construction, our department is making every effort to meet the urgent demand for new and improved school facilities. We are committed to keeping the school construction program on the fast track so that children throughout New Jersey have a safe and productive learning environment."

The following long-term facilities plans, totaling more than \$672 million, were approved today:

- **Irvington:** The construction of a new middle school, an addition to the high school and additions or renovations to five elementary schools. Estimated cost: \$172 million.
- **Perth Amboy:** Construction of a new high school and elementary school; renovations to three elementary schools and two middle schools; and reconstruction of one elementary school. Estimated cost: \$112 million
- **Plainfield:** Construction of four new elementary schools, rebuilding two elementary schools, construction of a new middle school and an addition to the high school. Estimated cost: \$185 million.
- **Vineland:** Construction of three new elementary schools, two new middle schools and a new high school. Estimated cost: \$201 million.

To date, the Commissioner has approved facilities plans for 11 Abbott school districts, paving the way for these school districts to receive full state funding for their school construction programs. These plans, combined with health and safety school improvements already approved, represent an investment of over \$1.75 billion dollars in building safer schools in urban areas.

Hespe said: "The school construction program is aggressively moving forward on several fronts. Not only are we keeping our commitment to urban schools, we are providing financial support to suburban and rural districts for school improvement projects that are already being built or ready to go to construction."

The Department of Education has approved \$657 million in state funds to help finance more than 414 school construction projects in 172 school districts that have already been completed or under construction now. The total cost of these projects is estimated at \$1.9 billion. Under the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act, these projects are eligible for state funding covering at least 40 percent of eligible debt service or project costs.

In addition, Department of Education has given its approval to invest \$260 million in state funds to help finance 71 school improvement projects that are ready to proceed to construction. These projects, which total \$643 million and involve 71 school districts, have already won the approval of local voters in school construction referenda. Under the law, the state will pay for at least 40 percent of the eligible project costs.

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