

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 988

(Senator Pugh)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

State Department of Education - Assessment Report for Broadband Capabilities
in Public Schools

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2014, on existing broadband speeds and connections in all public schools in the State, including capabilities from the main building to classrooms and on each local school system's plan to (1) reach a broadband throughput of 1 gigabit per 1,000 students for each public school by fiscal 2020 through public and private efforts; and (2) offer support and training programs in the use of education technology tools for classroom teachers.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014, and terminates December 31, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can gather required information from local school systems and provide the required report using existing resources.

Local Effect: Local school systems can provide required information to MSDE using existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: There is no required report equivalent to the one required by the bill.

Background: A 2012 report by the State Educational Technology Directors Association recommends, by the 2017-2018 school year, an external Internet connection to the Internet service provider of at least one gigabit per second per 1,000 students/teachers and internal wide area network connections from the district to each school and among schools within the district of at least 10 gigabits per second per 1,000 students/teachers.

The new State curriculum known as the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS), which is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), is intended to reflect college and workplace expectations and is being fully implemented statewide in the 2013-2014 school year. The MCCRS frameworks were accepted by the Maryland State Board of Education in June 2011. In addition, the new assessments aligned with the CCSS, called Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), will be field tested in spring 2014 as the State prepares to replace most of the Maryland School Assessments with PARCC in the 2014-2015 school year and most High School Assessments soon thereafter. The PARCC assessments must be administered fully online by the 2017-2018 school year, although MSDE has set a goal to give PARCC fully online by the 2016-2017 school year.

In the 2013 session, the budget committees requested a report on the preparedness of local school systems to implement the new computer-based assessments. MSDE has surveyed all local school systems regarding their technology needs that must be met to be able to administer the PARCC assessments. The total costs reported by local school systems are in the \$100 million range for all systems to be prepared with devices, wireless networks, and other IT infrastructure upgrades (though Baltimore City did not contribute to this estimate). In its report to the budget committees, MSDE notes, “While some of the needs assessment items are warranted, MSDE does not support the full list of requests as reported by individual [school districts].” The report indicates a PARCC recommended bandwidth for assessment, instruction, and other school operations of at least 100 kilobits per second per student and that based on a sample of 11 local school systems, 14% are ready for assessment and instruction. (There are approximately 1.05 million kilobits in a gigabit.) MSDE has contracted with Education Superhighway to compile a technology needs assessment for all local school systems, but the report is not yet complete.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1388 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 10, 2014
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