



NJDOE News

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Commissioner of Education Approves Second Round of Abbott Facilities Improvements Bringing Estimated Total to \$347 million

Commissioner of Education David Hespe has approved 375 health and safety related improvements in 6 Abbott school districts. This second round of approvals for work that school districts estimated at \$165.7 million brings the total estimated amount of approved repairs and renovations to \$347 million. Health and safety improvements will be moving forward in the following districts: Elizabeth, Jersey City, Newark, Pemberton, Pleasantville, and Trenton.

Health and safety repairs and renovations in 23 Abbott districts have now been approved for entry into the construction pipeline. The Commissioner said he expects more approvals to be announced in the coming weeks.

"There is no more important issue in our Abbott districts than the health and safety of the children who learn in those schools," said Hespe. "These approvals will allow us to provide the best learning environment possible for those children. Once the design work is completed actual construction can begin when the Legislature approves Governor Whitman's school construction initiative.

"It is vitally important that we provide our children with the safest, healthiest and most secure learning environment possible."

The planned school improvements would mostly involve fire alarms, electrical systems, emergency signs, security systems, sprinkler and standpipe systems, window replacement, and roofing and repairs to the exterior of school buildings. The funds for the design work necessary for these projects are already included in the state budget. Now that the Commissioner has approved the need for each of these improvements a joint Department of Education/Treasury Department field team will examine the scope of work for each of them.

Commissioner Hespe announced in September that while the department was reviewing the five-year facilities plans of the Abbott districts, the state would move ahead with the design work on the repairs and renovations that were necessary to provide a healthy and safe learning environment for our school children. The Commissioner indicated that approval would be granted only if the improvements were made to existing buildings that would remain in use. The Abbott districts participating in this program have agreed that these repairs and renovations should be moved outside of their five-year facilities plan.