Agenda Topic: Improved Learning Environments

Materials:
- School Construction and Facility Services Division Overview Brochure (Under Separate Cover)
- School Construction Progress Report, Fiscal Years 1998-2000 (Under Separate Cover)
- Build Smart: School Construction in Illinois (Under Separate Cover)
- Chicago Public Schools: State of the Buildings (Under Separate Cover)
- The Impact: Improved Learning Environments (Under Separate Cover)

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Purpose of Agenda Item

- To report on the impact and progress of the state's multi-billion dollar program for school construction and other learning environment initiatives at the state and national levels.

- To document the continuing need for funding as a major element to improving the learning environment

- To give the Board an awareness and understanding of issues that impact on the improvement of learning environments throughout Illinois.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

Board awareness of learning environment initiatives and issues in Illinois and how they compare to other major states.

Background Information
The discussion of school buildings and school infrastructure in Illinois during the Board's Annual Work Conference in August of 1996 spurred a major priority and focus on improving the learning environment for our students. Since that time, the state's school construction program has been expanded through Illinois FIRST and other initiatives to impact on the deteriorating infrastructure of our schools. While these funding mechanisms are addressing immediate needs and problems confronting school districts, e.g., enrollment growth, aging buildings, reduction in class size, maintenance/repairs, etc., several issues remain. The primary issues include:

- The need for a state-level long-term capital plan for improving learning environments in Illinois,
- The lack of a school facilities data system to inform the public about the true status of learning environments, including infrastructure needs,
- The need to revise state statutes to increase flexible funding for health/life safety and operations/maintenance improvements in schools, and
- The need for additional collaboration across education, human services, public health, the State Fire Marshal, law enforcement, and other agencies that impact on the learning environment at the state and community levels.

**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

**Policy Implications:**

Staff will review and identify potential policy implications to share at a later date.

**Budget Implications:**

School Construction/Maintenance Program: Administrative allocation request was increased from $600,000 in FY01 to $800,000 in FY02.

Resources are needed for the development/implementation of the School Facilities Data System. If the increase for School Construction/Maintenance is approved, some of the increase can be designated for data system development.

**Legislative Implications:**

School facilities have been in the limelight of legislation at the federal and state levels. Following is a list of recent legislation and legislative proposals that are pending.

**Federal:**

HR 5656 - Urgent School Repair/Renovation Program
State:

- Senate Bill 22: Health/Life Safety legislation with several provisions to expand funding options for districts for necessary health/life safety improvements.
- House Bill 18: Expands authority for the School Construction Program to $1 billion.
- House Bill 125: Raises the grant index, eliminates the enrollment criteria and changes bidding procedures.
- House Bill 325: Reorganization.
- House Bill 139: Raises the grant index.
- House Bill 140: Adds renovation as an allowable expense under priority #2 (classroom shortage)
- House Bill 630: Adds air conditioning as an approvable item under the leasing and health/life safety levies.

Communications Implications:

This is an opportunity to create an awareness of accomplishments and highlight continuing needs that impact on the teaching and learning environment of Illinois schools.

Pros and Cons of Various Actions

No immediate board action is necessary.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to continue working on long-range planning efforts, data development and potential policy issues to address needs for consistent and accurate determination of school infrastructure capital planning. Initiatives can greatly assist the State Board to advance it’s system goal of making all Illinois schools safe and providing an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Next Steps

Staff will work with the Management Council and the Policy Council to identify and research potential policy implications for presentation to the Board at a later date.