SYNOPSIS: Under existing law, the Alabama Ahead Act authorizes the Alabama Public School and College Authority to sell and issue up to $100,000,000 in bonds to fund the purchase of digital textbooks for public high school students, but the authorization is contingent upon separate legislative enactment.

This bill would amend the Alabama Ahead Act to require local school systems to establish a high quality, standards-based, broadband Wi-Fi infrastructure and mobile digital computing devices in all public classrooms, subject to available funding.

This bill would specify priorities and standards for wireless infrastructure and a cost model.

This bill would provide an implementation plan consisting of a technology plan, an infrastructure readiness report, and accountability reporting.
This bill would establish a peer review committee to consist of members of the Alabama Educational Technology Association (AETA) and members of the Educational Technology Division of the State Department of Education to review and verify the installation of a standards-based, wireless network infrastructure and, where possible, other approved purchases, by a school system.

This bill would also establish an oversight committee.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the Alabama Ahead Act; to designate as Article 1 Sections 16-16B-1 to 16-16B-12, inclusive, Code of Alabama 1975; to add a new Article 2, consisting of Sections 16-16B-20 to 16-16B-24, inclusive, to Title 16, Chapter 16B of the Code of Alabama 1975; to require local school systems to establish a high quality standards-based broadband Wi-Fi infrastructure and mobile digital computing devices in all public classrooms, subject to available funding; to provide an implementation plan consisting of a technology plan, infrastructure readiness report, and accountability reporting; to establish a peer review committee to consist of members of
the Alabama Educational Technology Association (AETA) and members of the Educational Technology Division of the State Department of Education to review and verify the installation of a standards-based, wireless network infrastructure and, where possible, other approved purchases, by a school system; and to establish an oversight committee.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. An article heading is added before Section 16-16B-1 of the Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

Article 1.

Section 2. A new Article 2, consisting of Sections 16-16B-20 to 16-16B-24, inclusive, is added to Title 16, Chapter 16B of the Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

Article 2. Wireless Network Infrastructures.

§16-16B-20.

For the purposes of this article, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(1) AETA. The Alabama Educational Technology Association.

(2) E-RATE. A Federal Communications Commission program that provides discounts of 20 percent to 90 percent to eligible K-12 public schools for approved telecommunications, Internet access, and internal connections costs.

(3) INFRASTRUCTURE. The hardware and software resources that enable network connectivity, communication, operations, and management.
(4) MOBILE DIGITAL COMPUTING DEVICES. Wireless mobile devices for storing, reading, accessing, exploring, and interacting with digital textbooks and other instructional resources.

(5) WI-FI. A wireless networking technology that allows computers and other devices to communicate over a wireless signal.

(6) WIRED PLAN. The Wireless Infrastructure Renovation for Education Plan, developed by the Alabama Educational Technology Association and endorsed by the State Board of Education, which establishes the standards for school WLANs, funding distributions, and procedures for implementation.

(7) WLAN. A wireless local area network.

§16-16B-21.

(a) The State Department of Education shall lead and administer this article in accordance with WIRED and shall establish the Alabama Ahead Peer Review Committee to assist in the implementation of this article. The membership of the committee shall consist of, but not be limited to, board members of the Alabama Educational Technology Association (AETA) and members of the Educational Technology Department of the State Department of Education.

(b) (1) There is created the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee to oversee progress of this project. The committee shall consist of the following members:
a. The Chair of the House Ways and Means Education Committee or his or her designee.

b. The Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee or his or her designee.

c. The Secretary of Information Technology or his or her designee.

d. An appointee of the State Superintendant of Education.

e. An appointee of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

f. An appointee of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

g. An appointee of the Lieutenant Governor.

h. A superintendent recommended by the School Superintendents of Alabama.

i. A school system technology coordinator recommended by the Alabama Education Technology Association.

(2) With the exception of those members serving on the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee by virtue of their respective offices, each member shall have proven experience in the areas of instructional technology, network design, public school or private industry business practices, or public school or private industry administration, or have similar experience and knowledge of the WIRED plan, as hereunder provided.

(3) Appointed members of the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee shall not be entitled to receive any direct or
indirect personal gain from this assignment. The members shall serve without compensation for their services.

(c) The membership of the Alabama Ahead Peer Review Committee and the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee shall be inclusive and shall reflect the racial, gender, geographic, urban/rural, and economic diversity of the state.

§16-16B-22.

(a) In accordance with this section and contingent on the availability of funding, commencing with the 2015-2016 school year, local school systems may establish a high quality, wireless local area network (WLAN) infrastructure, capable of providing all teachers and students with sufficient Wi-Fi broadband access in all classrooms and common areas of schools. A WLAN shall meet the following standards:

(1) Each regular classroom and gymnasium shall be equipped with high quality wireless access for 30 to 40 devices simultaneously. Each specialty classroom, that routinely serves groups of less than 20 people, may satisfy a lesser standard.

(2) Each cafeteria shall have sufficient wireless access for one-third of the then current enrollment of the school.

(3) Each administrative and noninstructional area of a school shall have coverage; however, high density coverage is not required in these areas.

(b) Upon verification by the State Department of Education and the Alabama Ahead Peer Review Committee of the
installation or existence of a WLAN infrastructure that meets the standards set forth in subdivision (1), a local school system may submit an application to the State Department of Education to use remaining funds in the following areas:

(1) Upgrades: Existing WLAN infrastructures shall be augmented in accordance with the WIRED Plan.

(2) Other network technology: Funds may be spent to further enhance digital learning environments within the schools of that school system and may include technologies such as:

   a. Support, licensing, and warranty services.

   b. Hardware, including, but not limited to, mobile digital computing devices, or software to manage or enhance the digital learning environment.

(3) Network debt: Funds may be used for retiring debt for a network brought into compliance with the standards or for networks previously installed that satisfy the standards in this section.

§16-16B-23.

(a) School systems shall apply for their portion of the funding to comply with Section 16-16B-22 through the Educational Technology Office in the State Department of Education. Any application for funds shall be submitted and signed by the technology coordinator, the superintendent, and the chief school financial officer of the local school system. Applications for funding shall include all of the following:
An approved technology plan as required of all
school systems as part of the Foundation Program.

An infrastructure readiness report describing
each school's WLAN as well as the systems used to manage these
networks.

Funds shall be distributed to each school system
based on the distribution formula in the WIRED Plan that
allows funds to be used for any of the components of the WLAN
but does not dictate the architecture. If the distribution
formula changes, it must be approved by the State Department
of Education and the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee.

Schools qualifying for E-rate discounts may use
these state funds as a match for the requested services.

Each application shall be reviewed and approved
by the State Department of Education and the Alabama Ahead
Peer Review Committee.

§16-16B-24.

Every six months until the project is complete,
the State Department of Education shall provide a report to
the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee detailing the progress
of local school systems in meeting the 24-month goal of a
statewide implementation. Progress in completion of the plan
shall be posted on the State Department of Education website.
In addition, the State Board of Education and the public shall
also be apprised of the progress twice a year as part of the
State Board of Education agenda.
(b) As part of the ongoing accountability of this investment, the State Department of Education shall include WLAN infrastructure functionality per school as part of the annual technology plan.

Section 3. This act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.