
News and commentary on public-school facilities from the local and national perspectives of the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington, D.C. based nonprofit - working to build the public will and capacity to improve public-school facilities.

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We Need Your Help to Secure Better Buildings in Support of Better Schools

The 21st Century School Fund provides leadership and engagement to advance the policies and practices that build public capacity to deliver equitable and adequate school buildings and grounds for all public school children. Help us build equal access to healthy, safe, educationally appropriate school facilities for all children and communities. Make a tax deductible donation to the 21st Century School Fund. Thank you for your support!

Now Available: Training Videos on K-12 Public School Facilities Planning

The Education Facilities Clearinghouse, based at George Washington University in partnership with the 21st Century School Fund and the National Council on School Facilities released five best practice training videos for planning K-12 school facilities. Topics in the series include:

- Facilities Plans for Every K-12 School District
- The Educational Facilities Master Plan
- K-12 Safety & Emergency Operations Plan
- Educational Specifications
- The Maintenance Plan

Upcoming training videos include creating district capital improvement plans and energy and environmental management plans.

State K-12 School Facilities Officials Gather at 3rd Annual Meeting

State school-facilities officials from 22 states convened in Washington, D.C. in early December for the 3rd Annual Meeting of the National Council on School Facilities.

The directors and representatives of state facilities agencies met for two days in working sessions to discuss issues associated with facilities standards, operating and capital funding, educational facilities planning, and facilities data collection and management.
Carl Thurnau, 2015 President of the National Council and Director of Facilities for the New York State Education Department, handed off the gavel to Mike Rowland, President for 2016 and Director of the Facilities Services Unit at the Georgia Department of Education. Reflecting on 2015, Carl states, "The National Council has had a tremendous 2015. We know good facilities start with good planning. This year we helped create a best practice video series on K-12 school facilities planning to support our local districts in this important work." Looking forward, Mike says, "We will continue our momentum into 2016 with our support for a national dialogue on how states can meet industry standards for capital and maintenance stewardship."

Wyoming K-12 Capitalization and Facilities Asset Preservation

The Wyoming School Facilities Department engaged the 21st Century School Fund and JFW, Inc. to provide an independent analysis of the state's current building portfolio database; and professional opinions on facility management best practices for the preservation of Wyoming school buildings in the areas of facility operations, routine maintenance, major maintenance, and capital renewal; and information about pertinent practices of other states. Read "Now and for the Future: Adequate and Equitable K-12 Facilities in Wyoming."

21CSF also helped the School Facilities Department prepare a brochure that captures the history of the equity challenges and the stepping forward of the Wyoming legislature, as they created the most a statewide school construction program that appropriated over $3.5 billion for an enrollment of about 92,000 students—one of the most ambitious modernization programs in the U.S.

The Challenge of California's K-12 School Facilities

After a nearly 15 year state-level school facilities program in California, where the state contributed, on average, about 27% of the total district capital outlay, the state pulled back, not issuing a state bond since 2006. To help inform the public debate on this issue, the Center for Cities + Schools, University of California Berkeley recently released, "Going It Alone: Can California's K-12 School District Adequately + Equitably Fund School Facilities?" "Their analysis of school facilities spending by California school districts finds that many districts - particularly those serving high-need students - risk grossly under funding facilities budgets, deteriorating schools, and declining educational outcomes if they are left on their own, without state support for capital needs.

Exploring Sources for Funding Public Infrastructure
The Center for Effective Government and Institute for Policy Studies co-published, "Burning Our Bridges", a report that examines the 26 U.S. corporations with the largest offshore untaxed profits. It analyzes the impact of this lost revenue on our nation's infrastructure. It found that if these corporations were to actually pay taxes on these tax-sheltered earnings that major progress could be made in rebuilding our nation's infrastructure. For instance, if Apple paid U.S. taxes on its $158 billion in profits held offshore, these taxes would fund 17% of the low-estimated $271 billion needed for deferred maintenance and repairs on U.S. K-12 public school facilities.

Auditing K-12 School Construction Programs

The District of Columbia Auditor undertook a literature review of school construction audit programs across the country, as part of an audit of the District of Columbia's School Modernization Program. The literature review provides examples of audits and reviews of school capital projects performed in other school systems. According to D.C. auditor, some overall conclusions drawn include:

- The importance of the "tone at the top" ... Every aspect of a program's control environment depends on leaders demanding accountability.
- The importance of planning and adhering to planning guidelines.
- Lack of controls and/or failure to adhere to controls outlined in policies and contracts...
- Over-customization ... If customization is necessary, efforts should be made not to over-customize.
- The importance of avoiding conflicts of interest with regard to procuring goods and services.

School Facilities News from Around the Country

- CA - Cupertino: School district wants to build housing for teachers
- IA - Shuttered schools: Rural America's SOS
- IL - State's new construction bond program of no use to many school districts
- NAT - How Washington created some of the worst schools in America
- NY - 5 Ways School Segregation Can Be Tackled by New York City
- TX - Students Walk Out of South Oak Cliff High School To Protest Crumbling Building
- WA - Schools get tested on their seismic safety - with kids' help

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