
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.

In This Issue

Public School Facilities Funding System in Need of Reform
State Investments in K-12 Facilities - California Districts Underspend on K-12 Facilities
Districts Have Enough Support for K-12 Facilities? - National School Facilities Headlines

New Report Finds K-12 Public School Facilities Funding System in Need of Reform

A newly released report found that states are unprepared to take care of the school facilities they have already built and that are currently in use. State of Our Schools: America’s K-12 Facilities 2016 was authored by the 21st Century School Fund, in partnership with the National Council on School Facilities and the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council. The report applied modern standards for facilities spending and investment and found that the system for funding public school infrastructure generates inadequate levels of support and allocates them inequitably.

$58 billion per year should be sufficient to operate and maintain our K-12 public school facilities, but based on the average annual M&O spending from 2011-2013, there will be a $8 billion a year shortfall. Applying industry and educational standards to capital investment, another $77 billion per year is needed to renew building systems and components, reduce accumulated deferred maintenance, and alter schools to support education and communities.

Additionally, with another 3.1 million more students projected to enter our public schools from 2014 to 2024, school districts will need to build new schools to support growth-estimated at $10 billion per year. The average capital construction outlay of states and districts over the 20 years from 1994 to 2013 (in 2014$) was $49 billion a year. The projected capital construction gap is $38 billion per year-for a total facilities shortfall of $46 billion per year.

The report recommends a public dialogue to find ways to:

- better understand K-12 public school facilities;
- engage a broad community of stakeholders in educational facilities planning;
- support new public funding of school facilities; and
- leverage public and private resources to get the highest value from the funding and facilities we already have.

State Investments in School Facilities

As part of this study, 21st Century School Fund and the National Council on School Facilities developed individual state profiles to provide the state-level analysis of what is needed to meet modern standards.
Each profile contains the history of maintenance and operations spending and capital investment by state; long term debt levels; state share of funding for facilities; and a comparison to modern standards. The National Council, Center for Green Schools at USGBC and the 21CSF hope that these profiles will encourage state-level problem solving for funding reforms. The state profiles can be found at www.StateofOurSchools.org.

Majority of California School Districts Underspend on School Facilities

After decades of dedicated investment, state funding to assist local California school districts in the construction, modernization, and maintenance of their school facilities has come to a halt. The Center for Cities and Schools, at the University of California Berkeley recently released, Going it Alone: Can California’s K-12 School Districts Adequately and Equitably Fund School Facilities?. Using a related approach, the district level data from the State of Schools study, and the assessed value of districts, the Center for Cities and Schools analyzed school facility spending and investments of California school districts. Their findings are consistent with those of the State of our Schools. They also found that, compared to industry standards, there is an ongoing, structural pattern of inadequate and inequitable spending in California school districts:

- Majority of school districts underspend on facilities
- Wealthy districts spend more on facilities, especially on the capital side
- Districts serving low-income students disproportionately spend more per student on M&O from their operating budgets to fund facilities

Overall, these findings suggest that many districts—particularly those serving high-need students—risk grossly underfunded facilities budgets, deteriorating schools, and declining educational outcomes if they are left on their own, without state support for capital needs. The report concludes by identifying policy reforms that will move California to a more coherent system of school facility finance that promotes adequacy, equity, public accountability, and affordability.

Does Your District Have Enough Support for School Facilities?

Ultimately, school facilities are managed at the district level and each community needs to ensure the school facilities are healthy, safe, educationally inspiring and environmentally sustainable. The Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council has developed a school district lookup tool so you can see how each district's average annual spending for M&O from FY2011-2013 and average annual capital investment from FY1994-2013 compares to the modern standards used in the report. The tool can be found at www.StateofOurSchools.org.

School Facilities News from Around the Country

- NAT - Report finds massive under-investment in nation's school buildings
- NAT - Report finds lead contamination in 350 water systems serving schools
- NAT - Report outlines disrepair at Native American schools
- RI - Aging school facilities slow technology upgrades in Rhode Island
- KS - Wichita schools close to having tornado shelters district-wide
- MT - Burden of funding school facilities increasingly falls to local taxpayer

Quick Links

DONATE NOW

About 21CSF

21CSF Programs