



The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

www.marylandeducationcoalition.org

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Attached, you will find a just released article in Education Week, entitled "[Investment in Nation's School Buildings Falls Woefully Short, Report Finds - District Dossier](#)" By Denisa R. Superville. Also, you will find a copy of a report on the state of Maryland Schools.

The members of the Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) urge each member of the House Appropriations Committee to review the article and attachments before making final decisions on the Capital Budget for Public School Construction. We believe the contents of these resources could help the committee with their decisions.

As many are aware, MEC has been working with the Maryland General Assembly, others in state and local leadership along with other Public Education Professionals, Advocates, Parents and Community members for over two (2) decades to adequately and equitably fund public school facilities statewide. However, there is significant evidence, that we are not moving forward quick enough.

During the 2014 General Assembly session, the Executive Director of Public School Construction reported to the members that there were an estimated \$15 billion in public school construction needs in order to address rapidly growing enrollment needs and to ensure all public school facilities meet 21st Century standards.

These needs are significant and greatly needed if we are going to ensure all staff and students are in facilities that encourage positive learning, safety and health required to allow all students to successfully meet their academic, social and emotional potential.

In addition, to new public school facilities, classroom and support facility expansion for the over 870,000 students statewide, the needs include, but are not restricted to:

- Major upgrades of HVAC systems
- Abatement of lead, asbestos, mold, etc.
- Upgrades or expansion of cafeteria and kitchen facilities
- Energy, sound and safety effective roofs, windows and doors
- Improvements of Special needs and ADA based on need and best practices
- Accessible physical education and recess facilities indoor and out

We realize that time is short and the Senate has already acted, but have some suggestions for the committee to consider regarding funding sources.

- [HB0722](#) proposes \$40 million to address enrollment growth and the elimination of relocatable classrooms. MEC supports the increased funding, that is distributed adequately and equitable based on local system priorities based on need
- HB 151, Nonpublic Aging Schools Program, page 7 - \$3.5 million

MEC also realizes that this is a small amount based on the reported need, but it is a start. If the state, working with each local jurisdiction does not develop a plan soon, the majority of our students and staff will be in school facilities that are below 21st Century standards as described in the report.



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Investment in Nation's School Buildings Falls Woefully Short, Report Finds

By Denisa R. Superville on March 23, 2016 9:45 AM

The nation's investment in public school facilities falls short by a whopping \$46 billion annually, [according to a new report out today on the state of America's K-12 infrastructure](#).

American school districts should be spending at least \$145 billion each year to keep their buildings in good working order and to upgrade their existing building stock, according to the report titled **"2016 State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities."** It was written by the 21st Century School Fund, the National Council on School Facilities, and the Center for Green Schools.

While the physical conditions of the schools are known to have some effects on how students do in the classrooms, the issue has not garnered as much attention as other factors that affect student learning.

But that may be changing.

Since last year, Detroit teachers have been staging a series of sickouts, in part, to draw attention to the dilapidated conditions of some of the city's school buildings. And with [concern over lead-tainted water in some schools, more attention is being paid to the age of school buildings and the plumbing in those buildings](#).

The last in-depth federal-level examination of the conditions of America's school facilities was released more than 20 years ago in 1995 by the Government Accountability Office. According to the GAO then, schools needed to spend \$112 billion to repair or upgrade their facilities to "good condition." About 14 million students were attending schools in need of extensive repairs, the GAO said.

The National Center for Educational Statistics also conducted a limited survey on public school infrastructure in the 2012-13 school year. According to that report, the average age of the main school building was 44 years old.

"One out of every six people in the U.S. spends each day in a K-12 public school classroom, yet there is very little oversight over America's public school buildings," Rick Fedrizzi, the CEO and the founding chairman of the U.S. Green Business Council.

"It is totally unacceptable that there are millions of students across the country who are learning in dilapidated, obsolete and unhealthy facilities that pose obstacles to their learning and overall wellbeing. U.S. public school infrastructure is funded through a system that is inequitably affecting our nation's students and this has to change."

With projected enrollment growth, school districts would need to spend another \$10 billion a year on new construction over the next decade to accommodate those students, according to the report.

The groups also found that spending on school infrastructure varied from state to state. And the information on school facilities spending was also not easily available.

In some states, including Hawaii, Massachusetts, Wyoming, and Connecticut, the state pays for all or the majority of the capital costs for school facilities. In a dozen states, including Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota, there is no direct state support for capital facilities expenditures. In the other states, the share of contributions toward K-12 facilities varies.

In areas where districts rely heavily or completely on local investments (primarily bond measures), the wealth of the community plays a factor. Schools in wealthier zip codes tended to make capital investments in their schools, while those in less affluent zip codes tended to spend more of their operational money—the same bucket of money used for teacher salaries, instructional materials, and day-to-day expenses,—for repairs and maintenance than did wealthier zip codes, the report notes.

In an interview with *Education Week*, Mary Filardo, the executive director of the Washington-based 21 Century School Fund, said that strategic planning was necessary to ensure equity.

"We have to be able to plan; we have to set priorities to make sure we are doing what's most important first," Filardo said last week. "And what we know is that you don't get equity without planning. The people who have access and power will get things for their communities that they need, and those without access to power will not."



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In addition, she said, more money was needed.

"We do need new public dollars; there aren't enough public dollars out there," she said, adding that it was not just a matter of shifting things around. "The pie itself needs to be bigger."

Districts are also carrying heavy debt loads incurred from capital projects. At the end of 2013, districts were saddled with \$409 billion in long-term debt that was primarily due to capital facilities projects, and they were paying \$17 billion in interest, the report said. The debt amounted to about \$8,465, on average, per school child.

The report uses two decades worth of state and federal data on public facilities spending for fiscal years 1994 through 2013, and it used data from the U.S. Census, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and school districts. It also noted that capital construction investment data in 18 states might have been underreported.

From 1994-2013, only three states met or exceeded the minimum industry standard for capital construction investment, the report said. Those states were Texas, Florida, and Georgia. Vermont, Montana, and Rhode Island, were among the states that, on average, spent the least on capital construction during those years.

States and districts spent \$925 billion in 2014 dollars on maintenance and operations, which includes cleaning, grounds, security, and utilities—an average of about \$46 billion annually over 20 years.

The states with the lowest share of spending on maintenance and operation were Georgia, Minnesota, and North Carolina. The highest were in Oklahoma, Arizona, and Alaska.

The report calls for better, more accurate, and accessible data on school infrastructure spending to help both citizens and local officials; strategic planning that encompasses both maintenance and operations and capital outlays; and new public funding to support school facilities.

You can find the report [here](#), along with state-by-state spending breakdowns.

Image source: 2016 State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities

America's K-12 Facilities

School facilities have a direct impact on student learning, student and staff health, and school finances. But too many students attend school facilities that fall short of providing 21st century learning environments because essential maintenance and capital improvements are underfunded.

In 2016's State of Our Schools report, we compile and analyze the best available school district data about U.S. K-12 public school facilities funding. In fact, the report projects that going forward our nation will under-invest in school buildings by \$46 billion annually. [View our infographic to learn more.](#)

[Download the report](#)

State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities is a joint publication of the 21st Century School Fund, the National Council on School Facilities and the U.S. Green Building Council.

See attached for copy of the report for Maryland