



2017 INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD



Schools 

53% of schools need improvements to reach “good” condition

OVERVIEW

Every school day, nearly 50 million K-12 students and six million adults occupy close to 100,000 public school buildings on an estimated two million acres of land. The nation continues to underinvest in school facilities, leaving an estimated \$38 billion annual gap. As a result, 24% of public school buildings were rated as being in fair or poor condition. While there have been a number of insightful reports in recent years, state and local governments are plagued by a lack of comprehensive data on public school infrastructure as they seek to fund, plan, construct, and maintain quality school facilities.

CAPACITY & CONDITION

Every school day, nearly 50 million K-12 students and 6 million adults occupy close to 100,000 public school buildings on an estimated two million acres of land. The student population increased by nearly five million between 1994 and 2013, requiring an additional 13,000 K-12 schools. Enrollment is projected to increase by 3% between the 2013-2014 and 2025-26 academic years – rising from 50 million to 51.4 million students. State and local governments face a constant challenge to keep up with operations and maintenance and the need for new construction, in addition to accommodating improved health and safety standards, stronger accessibility requirements, and new technology.

Recent government statistics show that a significant numbers of public school facilities are not in acceptable condition. Among public schools with permanent buildings – 99% of public schools – almost a quarter (24%) were rated as being in “fair” or “poor” condition. But 31 percent of schools have temporary buildings, either in addition to or instead of permanent buildings, and the number of these schools in “fair” or “poor” condition rises to 45%. In more than 30% of public school facilities, windows, plumbing, and HVAC systems are considered in “fair” or “poor” condition. Outdoor facilities such as parking lots, bus lanes, drop-off areas, fencing, athletic fields, and sidewalks are also problematic. 36%



RECOMMENDATIONS TO RAISE THE GRADE

- Governments at every level should regularly assess the needs of their public school facilities and publish this data.
- Maximize flexibility for states to use funds for a variety of projects that should include greening and energy efficiency upgrades, asbestos abatement and removal, improvements to after-school facilities and community spaces, and modifications to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Continue to encourage school districts to adopt regular, comprehensive major maintenance, renewal, and construction programs, and implement preventative maintenance programs to extend the life of school facilities.
- Expand federal and state tax credits and matching funds to support increased use of school construction bonds and simplify the process for local school districts to obtain facility construction financing for improvements and modernizations.
- Explore alternative financing, including lease financing, as well as ownership and use arrangements, to facilitate school construction projects.
- Develop capital planning frameworks that can be nimble and responsive to changing technologies and changing demographics, to optimize learning environments and consider the holistic needs of the community.

SOURCES

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Council of the Great City Schools, [Reversing the Cycle of Deterioration in the Nation's Public School Buildings](#), Oct. 2014

National Center on Education Statistics, [Condition of America's Public School Facilities 2012-2013](#), March 2014

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 21st Century School Fund