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GUIDED BY PRINCIPLES: SHAPING THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA'S ROLE IN K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITY FUNDING

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### Publication Date

2015

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Policy Research Working Paper

January 2015

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Guided by Principles:

## *Shaping the State of California's Role in K-12 Public School Facility Funding*

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K-12 public school facilities need regular investment to ensure student health and safety and support educational programming. Yet, the future of K-12 school facility funding in California is uncertain. A strong state-local partnership has existed that funded new construction, modernization, and other investments in public school facilities across the state since the passage of *The Leroy F. Green School Facilities Act* (SB 50) in 1998, which established the School Facility Program (SFP). Since then, four statewide school construction bonds have generated \$35.4 billion and local school districts have leveraged these state funds, passing more than \$80 billion in local general obligation bonds.<sup>2</sup> Together with locally-generated developer fees, these sources formed the “three-legged stool” of financing for K-12 public school facilities under the SFP. Currently, there are no funds identified for the state’s “leg” in the partnership. The debate about the future of the state’s school facility funding will be taken up in the 2015-2016 legislative session.

The Governor, members of the legislature and other key stakeholders have identified concerns about the state’s school facility funding approach, but they have not yet formulated a consensus going forward on the state role and responsibilities for school district facilities.<sup>3</sup> Governor Brown would like to see significant changes to the state’s school facilities funding role.<sup>4</sup> Other policy leaders in Sacramento propose minor changes to the long-standing state local partnership to build, repair, and modernize classrooms.<sup>5</sup>

To inform the school facilities funding policy debate among the Governor, the state legislature and the public, this paper analyzes data on facilities spending by California school districts. We propose principles to guide decisions about the State of California’s role in funding K-12 school facilities and provide data-driven indicators that can be used to evaluate the application of the principles. Finally we offer approaches to a state and local partnership for K-12 facilities that would advance the principles of *equity, local district accountability, fiscal stability and predictability, facility adequacy, and program simplicity*.

The school facility funding debate comes on the heels of sweeping changes to California’s overall school funding framework, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which increases per-pupil general operating funding from the state, makes the funding more equitably distributed, and grants significant new local flexibility to school districts in determining how their state funds are spent.<sup>6</sup> Throughout this brief, we point to parallels with LCFF, mainly with an eye toward creating state policy coherency – *where appropriate* – between the state’s funding on the “program side” (i.e., LCFF) and the “capital side” (i.e., facilities) of public education.

The data used for these indicators and other analysis in our study come from the California Department of Education (CDE), National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (NCES CCD), Eastshore Consulting, and the California Office of Public School Construction (OPSC).<sup>7</sup> The database used includes 100% (77) of high school districts, 97% (331) of unified school districts and 97% (525) elementary school districts, representing 97% of total enrollment and 94% of schools in California in 2014. For a description of the data and methods of analysis, see Appendix 1.

## Principles to Guide the State Role in School Facilities Funding

The State of California's role in K-12 school facilities policy and funding should be based on shared principles that are research-informed. We propose five principles drawn from the literature and our study of California's school facility policies to guide the Governor and the State Legislature in debating the state's role.<sup>8</sup>

**Principle 1: Equity.** The state's role should ensure equity in K-12 public school facility conditions and state facility funding allocations should be equitably distributed, guided by student, staff, and school needs.

**Principle 2: Local District Effort and Accountability.** State K-12 facility allocations should incentivize responsible local planning and investment for K-12 facilities.

**Principle 3: Fiscal Stability and Predictability.** State K-12 facility allocations should be stable in nature to promote sound local planning and sound investments that prioritizes health, safety, and educational suitability of learning environments.

**Principle 4: Facilities Adequacy.** State policies and funding allocation on K-12 facilities should strive to achieve adequate levels of combined state and local investment that best promote health, safety, and educational suitability.

**Principle 5: Program Simplicity.** State K-12 facility allocations should be transparent and easily understood and accessed.

The principles aim to uphold the state responsibility for public education and state interests in ensuring good value in public spending.

The following section describes each principle and provides data-driven indicators that can be used to evaluate the application of each principle.

### *Principle 1: Equity*

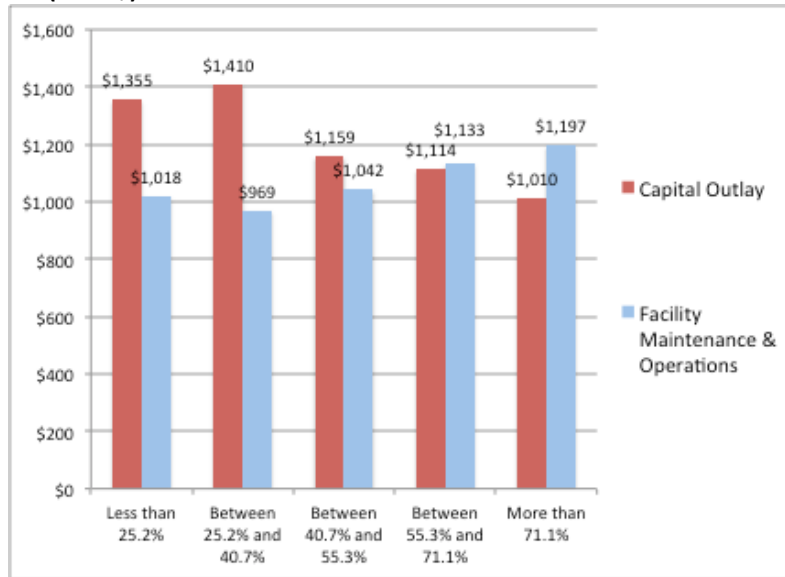
**The state’s role should ensure equity in K-12 public school facility conditions and state facility funding allocations should be equitably distributed, guided by student, staff, and school needs.** School facilities funding should be aligned with

the overarching goal of enabling all students to meet state standards for academic achievement. Some schools will need more capital and/or maintenance resources than others to provide safe, healthy, and educationally adequate school facilities because their facility-related “burdens” are unique to the local context. Not all schools serve students that come to school with the same individual, family, or neighborhood advantages; community demographics and economics vary over time and across districts; educational programs and requirements vary over time and across schools; and the quality of initial design and construction – as well as maintenance levels over time – varies greatly from school to school. Additionally, over time there may be significant regional construction cost differences across that state. Given these multiple burdens that are unique to local context, the demand on facilities will be different from one school to the next. Thus, in allocating educational facilities dollars, the state funding system should systematically account for *differing school needs*.

#### *Indicators of Equity*

Because funds for school construction and facility improvements come primarily from local sources, measures of local wealth are important. Local wealth shapes the ability of local school districts to raise and spend needed facility funds. Following the LCFF’s use of student poverty level as a central funding metric, we divide all school districts into quintiles based on the percentage of their students qualifying for **free and/or reduced priced meals (FRPM)**<sup>9</sup> and look at patterns of school facility investment for “capital outlay” and for “facilities maintenance and operations”<sup>10</sup> across the state for the years 2007-2011. Over the same time period we look at differences in long-term debt per student taken on by school districts. We also look at 2014 local **assessed value (AV)** to understand patterns of local school facilities investment potential.

**Figure 1: California K-12 School District Average Annual School Facilities Spending per Student by FRPM, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)**

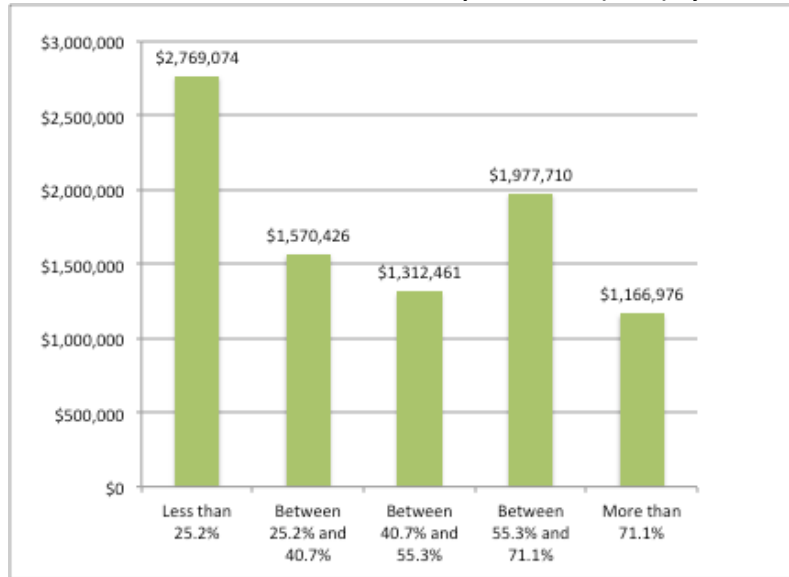


Data Source: California Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics

As Figure 1 shows, school districts serving the most FRPM students in 2014 spent less on capital outlay per student and more on facilities operations and maintenance on average each year between 2007 and 2011.<sup>11</sup> This trend may indicate that these school districts serving higher shares of FRPM students are spending more on minor and/or emergency repairs and not investing in the longer-lasting building systems upgrades or educational suitability modernizations. But without analysis of more detailed project-specific spending data and/or a statewide school facilities inventory and conditions assessments, it is not entirely clear. Conducting even a small random sample of districts' facility conditions would shed light on this issue.

Local property values play a role in the ability school districts have to raise facility funds. AV measures the property value within each school district, which defines its local bond revenue potential. Of concern is that if facilities backlogs grow in these districts, they have limited local ability to reduce long deferred maintenance lists. School districts with higher assessed property value per student are likely able to raise substantially more revenue from local general obligation (G.O.) bonds and consequently tend to be able to raise substantially more revenue per pupil for facilities.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 2: California K-12 School District Assessed Value per Student (2014) by FRPM**

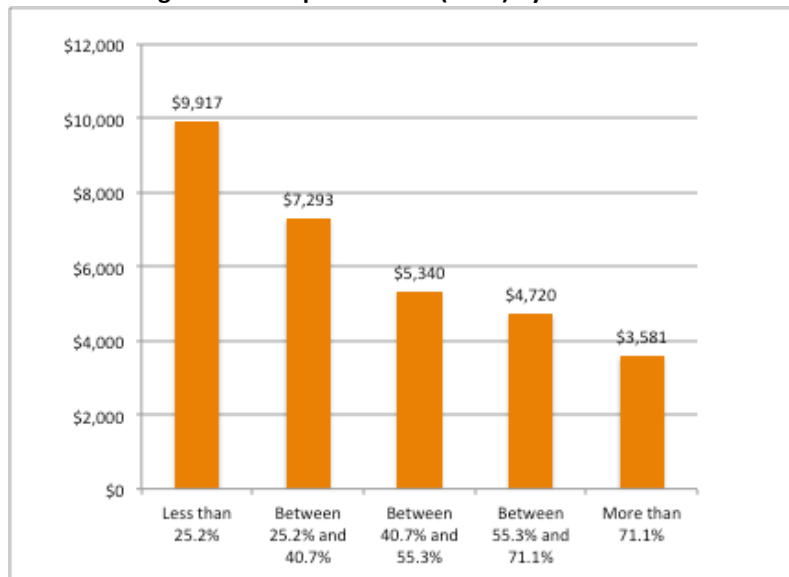


Data Source: California Department of Education; Eastshore Consulting

Figure 2 provides a window into school districts’ facility investment potential going forward and shows that school districts serving higher shares of FRPM students have substantially less AV than other school districts. The average AV per student in the poorest quintile is \$1.167 million, 42% of the average in the wealthiest quintile.<sup>13</sup>

Another way to understand local school facilities investment is to look at long-term debt (LTD) held by school districts. Figure 3 shows that the school districts serving the highest share of FRPM students have substantially less LTD – 36% of the school districts serving the smallest share of FRPM students.

**Figure 3: School District Long-Term Debt per Student (2011) by FRPM**



Data Source: California Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics

Together, the above indicators suggest that school districts serving more higher-poverty students and communities are likely spending less on their facilities *relative to their facility needs*. The ability of lower-wealth school districts to meet long-term investment needs independent of additional capital support is uneven.

## Principle 2: Local District Effort and Accountability

### State K-12 facility allocations should incentivize responsible local planning and investment for K-12 facilities.

In formulating the LCFF framework, Governor Brown, placed a heavy emphasis on “subsidiarity” – that educational decisions are best made as close to where they will be implemented as possible. The same concept can be applied to school facilities; local communities decide how best to spend resources, guided by up-to-date information and a transparent decision-making process. Funds should prioritize needs identified in local district-wide facilities master plans that comprehensively evaluate existing conditions and future needs. To promote statewide equity, the state role is to establish local planning guidelines/templates – granting local control but having strong accountability measures in place.

All local communities should also be expected to make significant and good-faith efforts to adequately and responsibly plan for, invest in, maintain and operate their local school facilities in proportion to their local revenue-generating capacity. The state’s school facility funding system should not incentivize local communities or school districts to inadequately invest in their school facilities in the hopes that the state will then step in to remedy any facilities problems.

### Indicators of Local Effort and Accountability

**Annual Capital Outlay by Local School Districts.** The average annual capital outlay across all districts was \$1,209 per student. As Figure 4 shows, the top 20% in spending spent more than \$1,632 per student per year, while the bottom 20% in spending spent less than \$192 per student per year.

**Figure 4: Characteristics of California K-12 School Districts by Average Annual Facilities Capital Outlay: Top and Bottom Quintiles**

	Number of Schools, 2014	Total Enrollment, 2014	Number of School Districts, 2014	Average School District FRPM Percent, 2014	Average AV per Student, 2014	Average Long-Term Debt per Student, 2011	Average Annual M&O Expenditure per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)	Average Annual Facilities Capital Outlay per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)
Highest 20%	2,646	1,636,020	186	45%	\$2,565,388	\$13,929	\$1,231	\$3,766
Middle	6,454	4,014,045	561	49%	\$1,533,890	\$4,976	\$1,013	\$736
Lowest 20%	894	387,061	186	45%	\$1,630,982	\$2,008	\$1,090	\$79
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9,994</b>	<b>6,037,126</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$1,758,882</b>	<b>\$6,169</b>	<b>\$1,072</b>	<b>\$1,209</b>



**Annual Facilities Maintenance & Operations Spending by Local School Districts.**

The average annual school district expenditure on facilities maintenance and operations was \$1,072 per student. As Figure 5 shows, the 20% of school districts with the highest average maintenance and operations spending spent more than \$1,217 per student. The 20% of districts with the lowest average maintenance and operations spending spent less than \$748 per student.

**Figure 5: Characteristics of California K-12 School Districts by Average Annual Facilities Maintenance & Operations Spending, 2007-2011: Top and Bottom Quintiles**

	Number of Schools, 2014	Total Enrollment, 2014	Number of School Districts, 2014	Average School District FRPM Percent, 2014	Average AV per Student, 2014	Average Long-Term Debt per Student, 2011	Average Annual M&O Expenditure per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)	Average Annual Facilities Capital Outlay per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)
Highest 20%	681	249,510	186	49%	\$4,415,055	\$9,075	\$1,989	\$2,072
Middle	7,947	4,983,029	561	50%	\$1,132,458	\$6,025	\$917	\$1,031
Lowest 20%	1,366	804,587	186	40%	\$992,084	\$3,698	\$621	\$886
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9,994</b>	<b>6,037,126</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$1,758,882</b>	<b>\$6,169</b>	<b>\$1,072</b>	<b>\$1,209</b>

**Long-Term Debt.** Long-term debt (LTD) held by school districts provides an additional indicator of local facilities investment. The statewide average LTD is \$6,169 per student, as shown in Figure 6. The top 20% of districts with the most LTD have more than \$9,914 per student. The average long-term debt per student in the poorest quintile was \$3,581, just 36% of the average in the richest quintile. Almost one third of school districts (297) report \$0 in long-term debt accumulated in 2011.

**Figure 6: Characteristics of School Districts by Long Term Debt, 2011: Top and Bottom Quintiles**

	Number of Schools, 2014	Total Enrollment, 2014	Number of School Districts, 2014	Average School District FRPM Percent, 2014	Average AV per Student, 2014	Average Long-Term Debt per Student, 2011	Average Annual M&O Expenditure per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)	Average Annual Facilities Capital Outlay per Student, 2007-2011 (2011 \$)
Highest 20%	3,379	2,010,560	186	37%	\$2,696,973	\$19,404	\$1,170	\$2,674
Middle	5,691	3,683,109	450	50%	\$913,753	\$4,770	\$892	\$839
Lowest 20%	924	343,457	297	51%	\$2,451,889	\$0	\$1,283	\$853
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9,994</b>	<b>6,037,126</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$1,758,882</b>	<b>\$6,169</b>	<b>\$1,072</b>	<b>\$1,209</b>

### *Principle 3: Fiscal Stability and Predictability*

**State K-12 facility allocations should be stable in nature to promote sound local planning and investment that prioritizes health, safety, and educational suitability of learning environments.** Predictable state facility funds leverage many

benefits for school construction: they enable accurate planning and budgeting by local school districts, lead to more confident local borrowing strategies, and will also likely bolster the confidence of local voters to support local bond measures. Predictable state funds decrease uncertainty and lower costs.

#### *Indicators of Fiscal Stability and Predictability*

In recent years, California’s School Facility Program (SFP) has had wide fluctuation in total funds allocated, as shown in Figure 7. This fluctuation creates uncertainty for local school districts and undermines short- and long-term facilities planning efforts. There has been a strong decline in state school facilities funds since 2011.

**Figure 7: Annual School Facility Program (SFP) Funds Approved by the California State Allocation Board, 1999-2014.**

Source: Office of Public School Construction (OPSC)

Year	Total State Apportionment
1999	\$2,577,819,401
2000	\$4,078,122,074
2001	\$893,334,085
2002	\$5,010,274,631
2003	\$2,096,978,109
2004	\$1,689,143,341
2005	\$2,295,291,711
2006	\$2,293,856,252
2007	\$2,175,691,928
2008	\$3,911,404,577
2009	\$140,133,407
2010	\$2,252,286,621
2011	\$1,073,777,540
2012	\$833,559,273
2013	\$648,847,647
2014	\$243,165,663

### **Principle 4: Facilities Adequacy**

**State policies and funding allocation on K-12 facilities should strive to achieve adequate levels of combined state and local investment that best promote health, safety, and educational suitability.** By not addressing the issue of adequate investment (whether they be state or local revenues) for K-12 facilities, the State of California takes on great risks: jeopardizing the health of occupants, accelerating depreciation of assets, deferring modernizations needed to support teachers and students in meeting high academic standards, and others. The persistence of inadequate school facility conditions in the absence of mechanisms to address systemic inequities means that some children will likely be disproportionately burdened, harming their health and/or educational achievement.<sup>14</sup> Inadequate regular facilities investment (especially on maintenance) may increase facilities costs overtime.

#### **Indicators of Adequacy**

California does not have a state-wide inventory or assessment of K-12 school facilities, but there is considerable other data that can be used to establish estimates of what is needed to ensure responsible stewardship of public school facilities. These estimates can be used to determine how much the people of California should expect to spend to maintain their elementary and secondary school facilities so they are healthy, safe, and provide the teaching and learning environments needed to meet state academic standards.

The basic factors affecting the estimate for facility adequacy are the size of the state's school facility inventory; the current cost of new school construction; the expected life expectancy and replacement value of cost of new school construction; and the level and quality of facility maintenance and repair.

**Industry Standard on Capital Maintenance of Buildings.** Using an industry benchmark for capital maintenance of existing facilities, it can be estimated how much should be spent on the facilities maintenance and capital renewals that are needed to maintain current facilities in good repair. The National Research Council, in its report *Committing to the Cost of Ownership: Maintenance and Repair of Public Buildings* recommends that building owners should spend between 2-4% of the current replacement value (CRV) of a building on maintenance, with maintenance including routine and preventive maintenance and repairs, as well as capital replacements and renewals of major systems as they reach their expected life [A 2% spend rate assumes the facility has a 50-year life expectancy and a 4% spend rate assumes the facility has a 25-year life expectancy].<sup>15</sup> We estimate California has **620 million square feet** of public school space (6.2 million students x 100 square feet average per student<sup>16</sup>). Using \$375 per square foot as current average new construction estimate for public schools, the CRV (including hard and soft project costs) for public school is **\$232.5 billion**. The amount, amortized over 30 years<sup>17</sup>

equals **\$7.75 billion per year**. A facility does not depreciate at an even rate; this method helps to set a standard, which if well managed, should support adequate facilities.

California Building Inventory in Gross Square Feet (GSF)	620,000,000
Current Replacement Value (CRV) of Inventory at \$375 per GSF	\$232,500,000,000
Annual funds needed to retain inventory in good repair (30 years)	\$ 7,750,000,000

These estimates do not include funds for new school construction needed to address enrollment growth, which will mostly likely be needed. They also do not include design or facility changes that may be required from program expansion or new design code revisions, such as for early childhood and special education inclusion; or for Field Act or ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) modifications to existing facilities. Annual spending of this amount is an estimate of what is needed to keep school facilities in “good repair” as defined in the *CA Education Code*.<sup>18</sup>

### **Principle 5: Program Simplicity**

#### **State K-12 facility allocations should involve transparent and easily understood formulas and processes within the context of the complexity of school facility needs.**

The system as a whole should be transparent and reasonably simple to aid understanding by legislators and the public. To foster public confidence and accountability, all stakeholders can readily understand its essential elements and underlying principles, and can see how and why each school district gets the funding it gets – and how those funds are spent at the local level to meet the facilities needs in each unique community. The basic characteristics of schools and school districts – their location and students they serve – vary greatly across the state. And these characteristics affect facility needs. As such, the state’s approach must account for this complexity, addressing the wide variation in school needs as best as possible.

#### **Indicators of Complexity and Simplicity**

**School District Size and Location.** School district sizes vary widely: Los Angeles Unified School District is the largest (653,826 students) and Panoche Elementary School District (San Benito County) is the smallest (3 students). Average school district size is 6,471 students, while the median size is 1,963 students. The top 20% of school districts have more than 9,133 students, while the bottom 20% of school districts have less than 253 students. The vast majority of students (70%) are enrolled in Unified School Districts.

**Figure 8: California K-12 School Districts by Organizational Type**

District Type	Number of School Districts, 2014	Number of Schools, 2014	Total Enrollment, 2014	Average District Enrollment, 2014
Elementary School District	527 (56%)	2,443 (24%)	1,231,571 (20%)	2,343
High School District	77 (8%)	600 (6%)	579,882 (10%)	12,770
Unified School District	343 (36%)	7,118 (70%)	4,316,461 (70%)	7,531
<b>Total/Average</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>10,161</b>	<b>6,127,914</b>	<b>6,471</b>

School districts serve different community types across California, from remote rural to dense urban. The vast majority of schools and students are in urban (48%) or suburban (40%) school districts.

**Figure 9: California K-12 School Districts by NCES Locale Type, 2014**

NCES Local Type	Share of School Districts	Share of Schools	Share of Students
Urban	16%	44%	48%
Suburban	29%	35%	40%
Town	15%	9%	6%
Rural	41%	12%	6%

### School Facility Age

School facilities of different ages have different investment needs – often reflecting the design and construction trends of the era it was built. The California Department of Education estimates that about 70% of classrooms in the state are more than 25 years old, about 30% of them are at least 50 years old, and about 10% are at least 70 years old.<sup>19</sup>

### School Facility Inventory and Conditions Information

An indicator of program simplicity and transparency is the availability of current data on school facility size, age, condition, utilization, design, and maintenance and operations. The State of California does not have statewide data on these metrics.

## Applying the Principles: *State Funding Framework Options*

There are multiple ways California can incorporate the principles of equity, accountability, stability, adequacy, and simplicity. Below we provide just a few *options* to illustrate how these principles could be embodied in a state facilities program.

### Allocate state funds to support equity

One option for a new state K-12 school facilities funding formula could be based on an *Adjusted Base Grant* formula that measures local revenue generating capacity and student wealth, promoting statewide equity in spending.

**Base Grant:** A Base Grant of state share per student (or per square foot) will be established each year.

**Equity Adjustment:** For each school district, the Base Grant amount can be adjusted by:

- **Local revenue capacity:** a measure of the school district's assessed value per student and/or bonding capacity per student

*Note: The state may choose to set a Minimum Adjusted Base Grant and/or a Maximum Adjusted Base Grant each year.*

### Establish incentives for local district effort and accountability

Further grant adjustment can be made to incentivize and reward responsible local investment in a community's school facilities. Some *options* for creating incentives for local effort:

- The state sets one or more funding cycles per year to which school districts can apply. State reviews all applicants and determines the most urgent/needed among them based on set program priorities. Projects are funded up to each year's funding amount total and depending upon the effort the district has made in raising local capital funds and in maintaining their facilities.
- Based on the state's total funding amount per year, and a measure of the school district's local school facilities investment effort over the previous 3-5 years looking at capital and operations spending in recent years every school district gets a reserved amount relative to their size of the total amount available. Then each district must apply to access the funding (see conditions of funding below). This approach was used in the previous Deferred Maintenance Program and currently in the Proposition 39 energy efficiency program.
- State sets metric(s) for effort and facilities need that define which districts (or schools) are allowed to apply. For example: only districts with less than two times the state average assessed value or bonding capacity are allowed to apply; only school districts serving more than 65% students qualifying for FRPM; only school districts with an average facilities maintenance and operations investment of more than 5% of total operating budget.

Proposed eligibility formula scenarios should be modeled to understand implications for equity and how they might affect local effort and accountability.<sup>20</sup>

### **Identify a dedicated revenue source for state facility capital funding to ensure fiscal stability and predictability**

Explore what revenue source(s) might be substantial enough to finance a state share of \$7.75 billion in school facilities needs annually. For example, the state share could be set at one-third, or \$2.6 billion per year, adjusted as the cost of construction and the size of the inventory change. Examples of dedicated school facilities revenue sources in other states include: 1% sales tax in Massachusetts and Iowa, state-wide property tax in South Carolina, and oil and gas revenues in New Mexico and Wyoming.<sup>21</sup> Of course, this exploration should occur within the broader debate on appropriate levels of state debt service.

### **Establish standards and estimates for facilities adequacy**

To incorporate adequacy into a state facilities funding framework option, use an industry benchmark for capital maintenance of existing facilities, to establish how much school districts should be spending in capital renewals and in maintenance and operations on a gross square foot basis each year to provide healthy, safe and educationally appropriate facilities that are environmentally sustainable and efficient to operate. As shown earlier, 3% of current replacement value is \$7.75 billion per year (\$12.50 per square foot) that should be minimally spent on existing school facilities each year to keep things in good repair.

Knowing this benchmark, a state/local share ratio can be established, based on local bonding capacity. The target should be that every school district in California has the ability to meet the 3% benchmark on its existing school facilities, through a combination of 1) LCFF funds, 2) locally-raised bond funds, and 3) a state contribution for capital projects including major renovation.

A similar method is needed to determine needs and the state share for new construction. New school construction will be needed over the coming decade. This demand will come both from enrollment growth as well as replacing older school facilities that are deemed obsolete. Deeper analysis of new construction needs and funding options is greatly needed.

### **Simplify the processes for state allocation of facilities funding to local districts**

To promote local autonomy and flexibility, state school facility funds should be allocated in accordance with a local facilities plan and aligned budget. To receive the funds, each school district should prepare a District-wide Facility Master Plan (FMP) following a template to be established by the State Board of Education and/or the California Department of Education. The template should reflect standard industry best practices, including assessing current facility conditions and educational suitability, the adoption of local educational specifications, and a capital plan that addresses deficiencies and local goals (including a

planned commitment of locally-sourced revenue) around locally prioritized projects. Overall, the FMP should reflect the outcomes of an asset management planning process that appropriately involved parents, community members and other stakeholders. The standards on school facility planning, siting, and design outlined in *California Code of Regulations, Title 5* should serve as a starting point.<sup>22</sup> Local school districts are responsible for spending in accordance with their board approved FMP.

There is strong precedent for tying funds to plan standards. The California State Board of Education's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) template<sup>23</sup> as the central accountability element of the new LCFF and the Energy Expenditure Plan (EEP)<sup>24</sup> local school districts must prepare and submit to the California Energy Commission to participate in the Proposition 39 funding program both serve as models from which to draw. Local Facility Master Plans will also enable the state to, overtime, obtain important inventory and conditions information on school facilities throughout the state that it now lacks. The state role should provide technical assistance and planning/budgeting tools for school districts to use for school facility planning – building efficiencies into the process.

## Conclusion

Determining the State of California's ongoing role in funding for K-12 public school facilities should receive thoughtful policy debate by lawmakers in Sacramento. The challenge at hand is how to best leverage state and local roles to ensure safe, healthy, and educational adequate school facilities. Our analysis sheds light on the trends and needs across the state. At a minimum, the state role in K-12 facilities should focus on ensuring minimum conditions for all students. Even in California's strong local control environment, statewide accountability is necessary to ensure fairness and equity. Only the state can play the role of looking out for the school facility-related interests of all public school children. Subsidiarity alone is unlikely to address statewide equity and adequacy in facility conditions.

More analysis on the issues raised in our paper is needed to guide California policymakers. We need further examination what mix of incentives, supports and accountability mechanisms will ensure that local communities and school districts appropriately raise and allocate local school facility funds alongside a responsible state funding approach. A better understanding of appropriate state debt levels for school facilities is needed. We also need further examination of ways to increase "value" in local school construction projects, ensuring they are well planned and efficiently delivered. The appropriate state role in funding County Offices of Education Facilities needs study. We plan to investigate these and other related issues in future studies.

Upholding basic principles of fairness, including both state and local accountability, will promote a streamlined K-12 capital investment approach that has the potential to bring added value to both schools and their communities. The principles and indicators presented in this paper should serve as guideposts.



## Appendix 1: Data and Methods

The analysis of school districts and local school facility investment indicators combines data from a number of sources. The original universe of school districts is based on the California Department of Education’s (CDE) public schools database and enrollment data for 2014 (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubschls.asp>; <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp>).

Our analysis looks at California’s K-12 school districts: elementary school districts, high school districts and unified school districts, which collectively enroll about 96% of public school students in California. We do not include other districts types recognized by the State of California: County Offices of Education, State Board of Education, Statewide Benefit Charter, State Special Schools, Non-school location, and Regional Occupation Center/Program, which together enroll about 6% of the state’s public school students. Our study includes 99% (933 of 947) of California’s K-12 school districts: 100% (77) of high school districts, 97% (331 of 343) of unified school districts and 97% (525 of 527) of elementary school districts. For the remaining 14 K-12 school districts, complete data were not available. Our 933 study school districts collectively have 94% of all schools and enroll 97% of all K-12 public school students in California.

### School Districts Included in Study (2014 information)

	Total Enrollment	Number of Schools	Number of School Districts
Elementary School District	1,230,254	2,433	525
Unified School District	4,226,990	6,961	331
High School District	579,882	600	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,037,126</b>	<b>9,994</b>	<b>933</b>

Our school district data were then augmented with information from a variety of sources:

**Free and reduced price meals (Source: California Department of Education, 2014):** The share of students eligible for the free and reduced price meals (FRPM) program is used here as an estimate of the income level of the district population. The FRPM share for the district is calculated by dividing the total number of students on the program in the district by the total enrollment. It is worth noting that this does not account for the concentration of poverty within individual schools, an issue that the LCFF emphasized.

**School district annual school facilities spending (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2007-2011 averages):** The Governments Division of the U.S. Census Bureau annually administers the Local Education Agency (School District) Finance Survey (F-33) Data to provide revenue and expenditure data for all school districts in the United States. Beginning with fiscal year 1990, detailed fiscal data on revenues and expenditures for all school districts providing public education to pre-kindergarten to grade

12 students have been collected. The survey collects data on “Support services, operation and maintenance of plant (Part II, Section A), Capital Outlay Expenditures (Part III), and Debt (Part VI). The 2013 F-33 survey instrument can be found here:

<http://www2.census.gov/govs/forms/2013/13f33.pdf>. The F-33 survey data are reported annually in the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/f33agency.asp>).

***Maintenance and operations spending per student (2007-2011 averages):***

Maintenance and operations (M&O) spending shows the amount that districts spend per year on upkeep of their facilities. F-33 survey definition: *Line 6. Operation and Maintenance of Plant (2600). Expenditure for buildings services (heating, electricity, air conditioning, property insurance), care and upkeep of grounds and equipment, nonstudent transportation vehicle operation and maintenance, and security services.* As with all facilities spending, the amount spent will vary from year to year, so we take a five-year, inflation-adjusted average to avoid unfairly classifying districts as high or low spending based on an anomalous year. This is then divided by total enrollment for comparability across districts of different sizes. The most recent available data is from 2011 and includes money raised at both the state and local level. The data were adjusted to 2011 dollars using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

***Facilities outlay per student (2007-2011 averages):*** Facilities outlay show the amount that districts spend in a given year on the construction, repair or modernization of new facilities, as well as the purchase of land. F-33 survey definition: *Include expenditures for construction of fixed assets (line 1); purchasing fixed assets including land and existing buildings and grounds (line 2); and equipment (lines 3 and 4). Instructional equipment (line 3) consists of all equipment (or capital outlay) recorded in general and operating funds under "instruction" – function code 1000.* Unlike M&O, this money comes from the district’s capital budget. The amount spent varies significantly from year to year, so we take a five-year, inflation-adjusted average to avoid unfairly classifying districts as high or low spending based on an anomalous year. This is then divided by total enrollment for comparability across districts of different sizes. The most recent available data is from 2011 and includes money raised at both the state and local level. The data were adjusted to 2011 dollars using the Turner Construction Index.

***Long-term debt per student (2011):*** Long-term debt shows that total amount of long-term debt (defined as debt with a life of more than one year) outstanding on the districts’ books. F-33 survey definition: *Report in section A bonded indebtedness and any other school district interest-bearing debt with a term of more than one year. Include general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, refunding bonds, and certificates of participation. Do not include lease purchase agreements, compensated absences, accounts payable, or any noninterest-bearing obligations.* This measure is cumulative, rather than annual, so does not need to be averaged over time. This is then divided by total enrollment for comparability across districts of different sizes.

The F-33 data are self-reported annually by school districts to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Assessed valuation per student (Source: Eastshore Consulting, 2014):** This measure looks to compare the ability to pay for long-term projects, or the overall taxable wealth, across districts. The assessed valuation (AV) is the total value of all property in the district, and serves as the basis of both potential property tax collections and ability to issue bonds. AV is divided by enrollment to allow for comparability between large and small districts. It is important to note, though, that not all assessed valuation is the same and poor districts may have high AV that they are not able to marshal for school facility investments. (“Preliminary Analysis of Assessed Value and Bonding Capacity per Enrolled Student,” October 29, 2014 <http://www.eastshoreconsulting.com/index.html>)

**School District Locale Type (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2014):** Local Education Agency (School District) Locale Codes includes geocoding information for public local education agencies (LEA's) reported on the annual Common Core of Data LEA Universe Survey. Locale code is a measure of an LEA's location relative to populous areas and is a composite of the school locale codes, weighted by school population, associated with the schools in the LEA's jurisdiction. The urban-centric locale categories are defined by a combination of their population and their distance from an urban area. There are a total of twelve urban-centric categories, organized in a two level hierarchy; the four categories of the upper level (city, suburban, town, rural) are each divided into three subcategories. (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/ccdLocaleCodeDistrict.asp>; [http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural\\_locales.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_locales.asp)).

## Appendix 2: Brief History of the State of California’s Funding for K-12 School Facilities

The State of California has a long history of providing state funding to local school districts for school facility construction, modernization, maintenance, and repair projects.<sup>25</sup> In 1927 the CDE began to assist school districts in capital planning; the Division of the State Architect (DSA) was charged with enforcing building code standards after the Long Beach earthquake of 1933 and in 1947 the state began limited state facility funding support for school districts and the legislature established the State Allocation Board (SAB) to oversee allocation. The state’s financial support to local school districts grew substantially in 1976 under the Lease-Purchase Program (LPP).<sup>26</sup>

The SFP set new eligibility and fiscal standards and provided grant funds on a project-level, per-pupil basis for constructing new facilities and modernizing existing facilities ones. The grants provided 50% and 80% of eligible costs (for new construction and modernization, respectively) set by code and regulation.<sup>27</sup> Supplemental grants for site development, site acquisition, and other project-specific costs were also awarded when warranted.

Local school districts across California leveraged the state SFP funds to raise local school facilities funding.<sup>28</sup> A 2012 UC

Berkeley study found that an estimated \$118 billion was spent on K-12 school capital expenditures between 1998 and 2012 across the state (including \$66.2 in local G.O. bonds, \$10 billion in local developer fees, and \$3.1 billion in local deferred maintenance spending).<sup>29</sup> On top of this, local school districts invested millions in additional dollars from their annual school operating budgets towards facilities operation, maintenance, and security. Together, these school facilities capital funds improved the health and safety of many school facilities, provided new schools for growing communities, enhanced

**Statewide K-12 School Construction Bonds,  
1998 to present  
Total = \$35.4 billion**

<b>Prop 1A, November 1998</b>		<b>\$6.7 Billion</b>
New Construction		\$2,900,000,000
Modernization		\$2,100,000,000
Hardship		\$1,000,000,000
Class Size Reduction		\$700,000,000
<b>Prop 47, November 2002</b>		<b>\$11.4 Billion</b>
New Construction		\$6,250,000,000
Modernization		\$3,300,000,000
Critically Overcrowded Schools		\$1,700,000,000
Charter Schools		\$100,000,000
Joint Use		\$50,000,000
<b>Prop 55, March 2004</b>		<b>\$10.0 Billion</b>
New Construction		\$4,960,000,000
Modernization		\$2,250,000,000
Critically Overcrowded Schools		\$2,440,000,000
Charter School		\$300,000,000
Joint Use		\$50,000,000
<b>Prop 1D, November 2006</b>		<b>\$7.33 Billion</b>
New Construction		\$1,900,000,000
Modernization		\$3,300,000,000
Career Technical Education		\$500,000,000
High Performance Schools		\$100,000,000
Overcrowding Relief		\$1,000,000,000
Charter Schools		\$500,000,000
Joint Use		\$29,000,000

educational program delivery in older buildings, relieved overcrowding through new classrooms, and contributed to community and environmental improvements in older neighborhoods – in addition to being significant sources of local job creation throughout the state.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 for recent state bond amounts and a brief history of the State of California’s funding for K-12 school facilities. See also: Vincent, Jeffrey M. (2012). *California’s K-12 Educational Infrastructure: Leveraging the State’s Role for Quality School Facilities in Sustainable Communities*. Berkeley: Center for Cities + Schools, University of California-Berkeley. <http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/CCS2012CAK12facilities.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this paper, we assume that the State of California has a constitutional responsibility for ensuring safe, healthy, and educational adequate school facilities – one that is largely delegated to local school districts. Relevant court cases on the matter include: *Butt v. State of California* (1992), *William’s v. State of California* (2000), and *Serrano v. Priest*. October 1, 2014, the US Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights sent a letter to states reaffirming states’ legal obligation to alleviate educational resource disparities – including those in school facilities conditions and qualities – that exist by race, color, or national origin. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Governor’s Budget Summary 2014-15: “As part of the 2014 Five-Year Infrastructure Plan, the Administration proposes to continue a dialogue on the future of school facilities funding, including consideration of what role, *if any*, the state should play in the future of school facilities funding. This infrastructure discussion should also include the growing debt service costs associated with the state’s increased reliance on debt financing (pg 25, emphasis added).” <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2014-15/pdf/BudgetSummary/Kthru12Education.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Assembly Bill 2235 Education facilities: Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2014 (Buchanan and Hagman). <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billAnalysisClient.xhtml>. See also: “\$9 billion school construction bond moves toward November ballot” May 28, 2014, *EdSource*. [http://edsources.org/2014/9-billion-school-construction-bond-moves-toward-november-ballot/62621#.VKx\\_V4rF87M](http://edsources.org/2014/9-billion-school-construction-bond-moves-toward-november-ballot/62621#.VKx_V4rF87M)

<sup>6</sup> In 2013, California made a fundamental shift in funding public education by ushering in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). [California State Board of Education’s Local Control Funding Formula Resource Site: <http://lcff.wested.org/>] Its key principles are that funding should address student needs and local control is paramount. Governor Jerry Brown, the LCFF’s chief proponent, placed a strong belief in “subsidiarity” – that educational decisions are best made as close to where they will be implemented as possible. Central to the LCFF is that the state sets educational standards and establishes more robust local accountability measures.

<sup>7</sup> CC+S thanks the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund ([www.21csf.org](http://www.21csf.org)) for assistance in compiling and analyzing the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (NCES CCD).

<sup>8</sup> Namely: Vincent, Jeffrey M. (2012). *California’s K-12 Educational Infrastructure: Leveraging the State’s Role for Quality School Facilities in Sustainable Communities*. Berkeley: Center for Cities + Schools, University of California-Berkeley; Dowall, David E. and Robin Reid. (2008). *Improving California’s Infrastructure Services: the California Infrastructure Initiative*. Working Paper 2008-06. University of California-Berkeley: Institute of Urban

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and Regional Development; U.S. General Accounting Office. (1998). *Leading Practices in Capital Decision-Making* (GAO/AIMD-99-32). Washington, DC: US GAO; 21st Century School Fund, Scientex Corporation, and the World Bank. (1999). *Basic Elements of a Well-Managed K-12 Capital Improvement Program*. Washington, DC: 21csf.

<sup>9</sup> California school districts vary immensely in the income levels of the students and families that they serve. The average school district has 47.7% of students qualifying for free and/or reduced priced meals (FRPM). The highest poverty school districts in the state have 100% of students qualifying for FRPM (Panoche Elementary, Bogus Elementary, Coffee Creek Elementary) and the lowest poverty school districts have 0% of students qualifying for FRPM (Willow Grove Union Elementary, Bitterwater-Tully Elementary, Cold Spring Elementary).

<sup>10</sup> Spending by school districts on their facilities is typically either on the “capital” side of the budget (i.e., new construction, additions, major renovations, planned capital renewals, etc.) or the “facilities operating” side of the budget (i.e., routine maintenance, repair, custodial, etc.). Capital funds typically come from special facilities-dedicated sources such as local general obligation bonds, local taxes, or state school facility allocations. Facilities operating funds usually come out of the overall educational general fund for the school district (e.g., each districts’ LCFF funding).

<sup>11</sup> As noted in Appendix 1, NCES uses the following category definitions: Facilities outlay F-33 survey definition: Include expenditures for construction of fixed assets (line 1); purchasing fixed assets including land and existing buildings and grounds (line 2); and equipment (lines 3 and 4). Instructional equipment (line 3) consists of all equipment (or capital outlay) recorded in general and operating funds under “instruction” – function code 1000. Maintenance and operations spending F-33 survey definition: Line 6. Operation and Maintenance of Plant (2600). Expenditure for buildings services (heating, electricity, air conditioning, property insurance), care and upkeep of grounds and equipment, nonstudent transportation vehicle operation and maintenance, and security services.

<sup>12</sup> Brunner, E.J. (2006). *Financing School Facilities in California* (Getting Down to Facts Series). Palo Alto, CA: Institute for Research on Education, Stanford University. Brunner’s 2006 study found wide variation in the amount of school facility funds that local school districts received from the state, which was in large part related to differences in a school district’s ability to pay its share for school facilities. According the author, this is “systematically related to the assessed value of property within districts. Districts with higher assessed value per pupil are able to raise substantially more revenue through local general obligation bond issues and consequently, tend to have substantially higher total revenue per pupil.”

<sup>13</sup> Like other local metrics, school district AV varies widely. Statewide average AV is \$6.08 billion or \$1.76 million per student (median is \$1.63 billion or \$852,037 per student). The highest in total AV is \$503.7 billion and the highest AV per student is \$167 million. The 20% of school districts with the lowest AV have less than \$415,406 per student, while the highest 20% have more than \$1,914,267.

<sup>14</sup> The research on school building conditions and student outcomes finds a consistent relationship between poor facilities and poor performance. When school facilities are clean, in good repair, and designed to support high academic standards, there is likely to be higher student achievement independent of student socioeconomic status. For reviews of the research, see: Schneider, M. (2002). *Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities; Higgins S., Hall, E., Wall, K., Woolner, P. and McCaughey, C. (2005). *The Impact of School Environments: A literature review*. The Centre for Learning and Teaching, School of Education, Communication and Language Science, University of Newcastle. Available online: <http://www.cfbt.com/PDF/91085.pdf>; Earthman, G.I. (2004). *Prioritization of 31 Criteria for School Building Adequacy*. American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Maryland. Available online: <http://www.aclu-md.org/aTop%20Issues/Education%20Reform/EarthmanFinal10504.pdf>; and Uline, C. (editor). (2009). *Special Issue: Building high quality schools for learners and communities*. *Journal of Educational Administration* 47(3).

<sup>15</sup> National Research Council. (1990). *Committing to the Cost of Ownership: Maintenance and Repair of Public Buildings*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/9807/committing-to-the-cost-of-ownership-maintenance-and-repair-of>

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<sup>16</sup> Average space per student based on data obtained from the California Department of Education, School Facilities and Transportation Services Division.

<sup>17</sup> We recommend that California school facilities infrastructure be planned on a 30-year replacement schedule (3% per year), per industry best practice.

<sup>18</sup> *Education Code* §17002(d), known as the “good repair standard,” came out of the 2005 *Williams* Settlement and established a legal foundation for aspects of minimal school facility conditions in California. Under LCFF, school districts are now required to show that they are meeting the good repair standard in their LCAP (Priority 1, Basic Necessities).

<sup>19</sup> California Department of Education, School Facilities and Transportation Planning Division. School Facilities Fingertip Facts. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/sf/facts.asp>. School facility age calculations were also estimated using: California State Department of Health Services. (1998). Lead Hazards in California’s Public Elementary Schools and Child Care Facilities. Report to the Legislature. Sacramento: DHS. Pg. 26. DHS reports that in 1959 California had 2,874 schools.

<sup>20</sup> To see how other states structure funding formulas and eligibility, see: Vincent, Jeffrey M. (2014). State Funding for K-12 School Facilities: A Survey of the States. Berkeley. Center for Cities + Schools, University of California-Berkeley. [http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/Vincent\\_2014\\_State\\_K12%20fac\\_funding\\_final.pdf](http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/Vincent_2014_State_K12%20fac_funding_final.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund. (2010.) State Capital Spending on PK-12 School Facilities. Washington, D.C.: 21csf. <http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/Documents/FederalStateSpendingNov2010/StateCapitalSpendingPK-12SchoolFacilitiesReportNov302010.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> See: Vincent, Jeffrey M. (2015, forthcoming). Building Accountability in California: A Study of State Standards and Requirements for K-12 School Facilities. Center for Cities + Schools, University of California-Berkeley.

<sup>23</sup> The LCAP is an important component of the LCFF. Under the LCFF, all LEAs are required to prepare an LCAP, which describes how they intend to meet annual goals for all pupils, with specific activities to address state and local priorities identified pursuant to *EC* Section 52060(d). See: <http://lcff.wested.org/developing-a-quality-local-control-and-accountability-plan-resources/>

<sup>24</sup> See: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/2013publications/CEC-400-2013-010/CEC-400-2013-010-CMF.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> For a more detailed overview of the history of state involvement in K-12 facilities, see: Cohen, Joel. 1999. School Facility Financing: A History of the Role of the State Board of Allocation and Options for the Distribution of Proposition 1A Funds. Sacramento: California Research Bureau; Gorsen, M.F. et al. (2006). *California School Facilities Planning: A Guide to Laws and Procedures for Funding, Siting, Design, and Construction*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press Books.

<sup>26</sup> Under the LPP state funds were distributed based on a per square foot allotment during various phases of construction until a project reached completion.

<sup>27</sup> The New Construction Program provided state funds on a 50/50 state-local sharing basis for eligible projects that add capacity to an LEA. Adding capacity can include the construction of a new school or the addition of classrooms to an existing school. New construction eligibility is determined at the district level (although there is an option to use high school attendance areas in some cases) and is based on an LEA’s projected need to house pupils, which is determined by the gap between an LEA’s projected enrollment and its existing classroom capacity. Eligibility translates directly into pupil grants. The pupil grant is a composite dollar figure that provides the state’s share for project costs including design, construction, testing, inspection, furniture and equipment, and other costs closely related to the actual construction of the school buildings. The pupil grant amount is set in law and adjusted annually by the State Allocation Board based on recent construction costs. Supplemental grants augment pupil grant funding, including those for site acquisition, utilities, off-site, general site development, and other excessive cost hardships. To participate in the New Construction Program, LEAs must first raise funds locally to be eligible for the state match. The Modernization Program had \$10.95 billion made available for allocation. The program provided state funds on a 60/40 state-local sharing basis (was an 80-20 split prior the enactment of AB 16 in 2002) for eligible improvements to educationally enhance existing school facilities (such as air conditioning, plumbing, lighting, and electrical systems). Eligibility

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for modernization funding was established separately for each school site (a fundamental difference from the New Construction Program, which is calculated at the district level). Eligibility translates directly into pupil grants, which vary by student grade level. To be eligible, a permanent building must be at least 25 years old and a relocatable building must be at least 20 years old. The facility must not have been previously modernized with state funding. The pupil grant is a composite dollar figure that provides the state's share for project costs including design, construction, educational technology, testing, inspection, furniture, and equipment. The pupil grant amount is set in law and adjusted annually by the SAB based on recent construction costs. Supplemental grants augment pupil grant funding. For example, excessive cost hardship grants are available for the costs associated with accessibility and fire code upgrades. To participate in the Modernization Program, LEAs must raise the additionally needed project funds locally. Descriptions of the SFP and its funding programs are adapted from Office of Public School Construction sources, including: "An Overview of the State School Facility Program," "School Facility Program Handbook (2008)," and the OPSC website. Available online: <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/opsc>.

<sup>28</sup> Between 2005 and 2008, the State of California contributed about 30% of total capital outlay, while local school districts contributed the remaining 70%. Source: 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund. 2011. State Capital Spending on PK-12 School Facilities. Washington, DC: 21csf. Available online: <http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/Documents/FederalStateSpendingNov2010/StateCapitalSpendingPK-12SchoolFacilitiesReportNov302010.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Vincent, Jeffrey M. (2012). California's K-12 Educational Infrastructure: Leveraging the State's Role for Quality School Facilities in Sustainable Communities. Berkeley: Center for Cities + Schools, University of California-Berkeley. <http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/CCS2012CAK12facilities.pdf>.