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CITIES+SCHOOLS**
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Gauging Good Stewardship

Is California Adequately and Equitably Investing in Its Public School Facilities?

Executive Summary

Public school districts across California struggle to upkeep and modernize their school facilities. For many districts, aging inventory, coupled with limited capital funding opportunities, has led to school facilities with ballooning deferred maintenance problems and classrooms that do not appropriately support modern instructional practices. These realities also work against California's priorities for high quality, equitable education, childhood health, racial justice, and climate resiliency.

In this paper, we investigate adequacy and equity of investment in California's public school facilities. By using a standards-based framework to understand patterns of investment levels, we gauge the likely "good stewardship" of these physical school assets. We look at both "maintenance & operations" (M&O) spending and capital investment by local K-12 public school districts across the state for the years 2009-2019.

WHAT LEVEL OF INVESTMENT IS NEEDED FOR CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES?

- California's K-12 school facility inventory totals at least 730 million square feet.
- California's K-12 school facility inventory has an estimated current replacement value of \$378 billion (2020\$).
- California's public K-12 school facility inventory needs at least \$11 billion in maintenance and operations investment each year.
- California's public K-12 school facility inventory needs at least \$15 billion in capital renewal investment each year.

IS CALIFORNIA ADEQUATELY AND EQUITABLY INVESTING IN ITS PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES?

- Only 14% of California school districts are meeting annual facility M&O spending standards.
- Only 15% of California school districts are meeting annual facility capital renewal spending standards.
- Only 4% of California public school districts are meeting both facility investment standards.
- California's Annual School Facilities Investment Gap is nearly \$2,000 per student.
- Schools in Districts with Higher Assessed Property Value Invest More in their Facilities.
- School Facility Needs Place Higher Budget Burdens on Districts Serving More Low-Income Students.
- 38% of California School Districts Do Not Have Enough Taxable Property Wealth to Meet Basic School Facility Capital Needs.

MOVING FORWARD: KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS TO PROMOTE ADEQUACY AND EQUITY IN CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

All students should have the ability to attend school in a healthy, efficient, high-quality facility that supports the schools' education program. As policy leaders in California consider the state's role in funding K-12 school facilities, our findings of inadequate and inequitable statewide school facility spending trends across the state should raise flags for educators, parents, and state lawmakers. We recommend the following:

1. Increase funding for California's public school facility infrastructure to ensure that all school districts can reasonably meet both facilities maintenance and capital investment needs through an appropriate combination of local and state funding/financing sources.
2. Address inequities by ensuring that low wealth districts have adequate funds to upkeep and modernize their facilities.
3. Reform and improve funding standards for facilities planning and budgeting.

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