CONNECTICUT
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COMPARING CONNECTICUT'S SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

An examination of the costs, processes, and state funding associated with school construction in Connecticut and its peer states

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Background

Nationwide, expenditures on school construction increased between 2011 and 2016. The total cost of educational construction work in the United States (including at institutions of higher education), comprised of projects scheduled, completed, and projects underway, was $83.5 billion in 2015 and is estimated to have exceeded $88.9 billion in 2016.[1] Spending on completed public school facilities totaled roughly $12.9 billion in 2015[2] and $14.1 billion in 2014.[3] In 2015, the median cost per square foot for new construction of school facilities was $250, and the median cost per student was $43,243; although these costs differ when grouped separately as elementary, middle, and high schools.[4]

In New England, approximately $935 million in school construction projects were completed in 2015. Of the completed building projects, 34 percent were new construction, while the remaining projects were related to expanding, retrofitting, and improving existing facilities.[5] School construction costs in New England are the highest in the country. In 2014, the median cost per square foot was $400.36 and the median cost per-student was $86,619. These numbers are nearly double the national medians.[6]

Connecticut's Current Practices

In Connecticut, the cost per square foot for school construction, adjusted for inflation, increased 64 percent between 2000 and 2012.[7] A comprehensive analysis of new school construction costs per gross square foot (GSF) in each state lists Connecticut's average cost per GSF at $360 between 2011-2013.[8] This analysis is the only uniform calculation for each state that is publicly available and therefore will be used for comparison in this report.[A]

It is important to note, however, the Connecticut School Building Projects Advisory Council (SBPAC) placed the 2013 average cost per square foot for new school construction at nearly $457.56, based on an analysis of data collected by Connecticut's Department of Administrative Services (DAS).[9] For projects closed in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, the median cost per square foot for new construction in Connecticut was $392, which indicates that new construction costs may be beginning to decrease.[10] In 2016, the SBPAC approved a cap of $365 per square foot for new school construction, which went into effect July 1, 2017.[11] Although this new regulation should mitigate the costs to the state for school construction, an average cost of $365 per GSF is still among the highest in the nation, but is more closely aligned with new school construction costs in other New England states.[12]

Connecticut funds school construction through General Obligation (GO) bonds. The state treasurer is directed by the comptroller to sell GO bonds to support all school building projects approved by the General Assembly.[B] In 2016, the legislature approved approximately $382 million in new state grant commitments for school construction projects. The Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) estimates over the 20-year life of the bonds, the interest on school building projects approved in fiscal year 2016 will amount to over

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[A] *Cost per gross square foot data is taken from the following report, which calculates cost per GSF by multiplying "the average regional cost for new-school construction (or average state cost, when state officials provided data for their states) by the total gross square footage of school buildings in their state, either reported by the state or estimated based on comparable states." This means the cost per GSF figure is an estimate and individual state costs may vary, as seen in Connecticut and Delaware.*

Source: Filardo, M. (2016). *State of Our Schools: America's K–12 Facilities 2016*. Washington, DC: 21st Century School Fund. Retrieved from https://kapost-files-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/published/56f02c3d626415b792000008/2016-state-of-our-schools-report.pdf?kui=wo7vkgV0wW0LGSjxek0N5A.

[B] *In 2017, the Connecticut General Assembly passed into law a cap on General Obligation bond allocations. This new cap will likely impact the amount of bonds issued in support of school construction projects on an annual basis. The cap limits bond allocations to $2 billion dollars per year (beginning in calendar year 2017). It also limits issuances and bond spending to $1.9 billion, beginning in fiscal year 2019, with some exemptions. All limits will be adjusted based on a consumer price index. The Office of Fiscal Analysis notes that, "[I]t is expected that the costs of debt repayment will be lesser in future years. . . the overall costs, and any associated savings, will be dependent on actual use of bond funds, changes in market conditions, and changes in factors that impact the state's own costs of borrowing."*

Source: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. (2017). *OFA Fiscal Note: S.B. 1502 (May Special Session), An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2019, Making Appropriations Therefor, Authorizing and Adjusting the Bonds of the State and Implementing the Provisions of the Budget.* Retrieved from https://www.cga.ct.gov/2017/FN/2017SB-01502-R00-FN.htm.

$180 million. It is also important to note the General Assembly, in the same bill that authorized the GO bonds described above, reduced the approved state bonding projects by approximately $1.1 billion.[13]

Historically, the State of Connecticut's annual cost of approved school building projects has been substantially higher,[14] and in the 2018-19 biennial budget, the General Assembly approved new grant commitments for school construction projects of approximately $506 million.[15]

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

Connecticut allows any town or regional school district to apply for and accept grants for school building projects. The town's legislative body must vote to allow the board of education to apply to the commissioner of the DAS for school building project grants, and the town's legislative body also has the authority to accept or reject any grant offered. The superintendent of the district is responsible for making the application to the DAS. State statute specifically requires the application consider natural light, wireless connectivity, and school safety and infrastructure standards. The DAS then reviews each grant application for compliance with educational requirements and categories of special types of schools. The commissioner of the State Department of Education (SDE) is responsible for evaluating whether the project qualifies as assisting the state with meeting the goals under the *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulated agreements.[C] State universities and community colleges, cooperative arrangements, and nonprofits may apply for school construction grants if they are operating a school under the *Sheff* agreement.[16]

Due to legislative changes made in the biennial budget for fiscal years 2018-19, the DAS, rather than the SDE. is now responsible for assigning each project to one of three categories:

1) To create new facilities, or alter existing facilities, to provide mandatory instructional programs, such as physical education programs under Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA);
2) To create new, or alter existing facilities, to enhance mandatory instructional programs, or to provide comparable facilities among schools at the same grade level within the district; or,

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[C] In 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in *Milo Sheff, et. al. vs. William O'Neill* — a case elated to the racial segregation of Hartford Public Schools — the State had an affirmative obligation to provide Connecticut's school children with a substantially equal educational opportunity; not substantially and materially impaired by racial and ethnic isolation. As a result of the decision, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation in 1997 encouraging voluntary actions toward racial integration, such as the creation of magnet schools and other choice programs. The case continues to be under court supervision, and until it concludes, the State's obligation to continue its efforts to provide desegregated schools for Hartford's students is determined through stipulated agreements with the plaintiffs in the case.

Sources: *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1, 678 A.2d 1267 (1996).
Stipulation and Order, *Sheff v. O'Neill*, Superior Court, judicial district of Hartford, Docket No. HHD-X07-CV89-4026240-S (June 10, 2016). Retrieved from http://www.naacpldf.org/files/case_issue/Sheff%20v.%20O%27Neill%202016%20Stipulation%20and%20Order.pdf.

3) To create new, or alter existing facilities, to provide supportive services, excluding a variety of athletic and recreational facilities.[17]

Applications must be submitted by June 30, except for *Sheff* schools, which are due December 1. The DAS then reviews and estimates the grant amount for each project. The commissioner of the DAS then prepares a list of projects, sorted by the three above categories,[18] known as the "School Building Priority List,"[19] and submits it — by December 15 — to the governor, the secretary of Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management (OPM), and the General Assembly. In order to be added to the priority list, the town must already have authorized funding for its share of the cost of the project.[20] The commissioner of the DAS must also certify to the state comptroller the amount of the grant for which the town or district is eligible and the time of the payment. The comptroller is then authorized, and directed, to draw his order on the state treasurer in the certified amount.[21]

Per statute, the commissioner of the DAS is only able to disapprove applications to the priority list in certain cases, which are as follow:

- If the project does not comply with the requirements of the State Fire Marshal or the Connecticut Department of Public Health;
- If the application is not accompanied by a life-cycle cost analysis;
- If the project does not comply with air space regulations;
- If the expense of the project exceeds the amount a town or district may appropriate;
- If the application does not include an environmental site assessment;
- If the project does not comply with the regulations of the State Board of Education or DAS;
- If the project does not meet the three priority categories described previously;
- If the project does not comply with school safety infrastructure standards;[22] or
- If the school district does not commence construction within two years of being authorized by the General Assembly to receive the grant[23]

The secretary of the OPM then submits comments and recommendations on each project on the priority list to the General Assembly's School Construction Project Priority List Review Committee. The commissioner of the DAS submits a report on enrollment projections for each eligible project. The General Assembly then annually authorizes the commissioner of the DAS to enter into grant commitments on behalf of the State in accordance with the priority list. Importantly, the General Assembly has the authority to determine which projects are ultimately approved. No projects can move forward through the DAS without express legislative authorization.[24] The commissioners of the DAS and SDE may approve, without legislative approval, grants to assist school building projects to remedy catastrophe or to correct health and safety violations, within available appropriations.[25]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

Connecticut supports school construction in local and regional school districts on a reimbursement scale between 10 and 70 percent for new construction and between 20

and 80 percent for renovations, based on ranking the 169 municipalities in Connecticut by their Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List per Capita (AENGLPC).[26,27] School building projects under regional boards of education and cooperative arrangements are determined by weighting the calculated rate for each participating municipality by the proportion of resident students in the school from each municipality, with a 10-percentage point regional school bonus. Projects under regional boards are not to exceed 85 percent, while cooperative arrangements do not have a reimbursement percentage cap.[28] Reimbursement rates for Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) are calculated in the same manner but do not receive a regional bonus.[29]

Some school types receive higher state reimbursement rates. Lighthouse Schools are reimbursed at a rate of 10 percentage points higher than the district's calculated reimbursement rate.[30] Elementary school building projects that include space for school readiness programs are reimbursed at a rate five percentage points higher than the district's calculated rate, not to exceed 100 percent.[31] Elementary school building projects in priority school districts, which are necessary in order to offer full-day kindergarten or preschool, receive a 10 percent reimbursement bonus for the associated portion of the building.[32] Construction for "diversity schools," which are intended to address issues of racial segregation in districts, are eligible for 80 percent reimbursement.[33] Also, schools that reserve seats for out-of-district students participating in the statewide interdistrict public school choice program (known as Open Choice) receive a percent reimbursement bonus equal to the percent of total projected enrollment of the school attributable to Open Choice seats.[34]

A separate section of statute concerns capital expenditures related to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* lawsuit, independent from other magnet school or regional education service center reimbursement rates.[35] Until 2012, schools built to meet the requirements of the *Sheff* settlement agreements were reimbursed "up to the full reasonable cost" of both new construction and renovations. In 2012, Public Act 12-120 reduced the state reimbursement amount to up to 80 percent.[36] It appears these same projects could also be eligible for the diversity school bonus, as described above.

Findings of the School Building Projects Advisory Council

In 2013, Governor Dannel Malloy convened the SBPAC, which was tasked with developing model blueprints for new school building projects; conducting studies, research, and analysis; and making recommendations for improvements to the school building process to the governor and the Connecticut General Assembly.[37] The SBPAC made seven findings and 11 recommendations related to Connecticut's school construction practices. The findings were:

1) School construction costs are high in Connecticut;
2) The cost of renovation is generally less than new construction;
3) Construction costs vary widely across projects;
4) The State is not adequately empowered to oversee school construction and budgeting;
5) School districts are not motivated to complete projects on-time or on-budget ;
6) A lack of standardization in procedures across state-funded projects may be increasing costs; and

7) Data collection for school construction should be expanded. [38]

The report also made a large number of recommendations associated with each finding, and included a suggested implementation schedule, as some administrative changes would not require additional funding or action by the legislature. The recommendations are listed below.[39]

Number	Recommendation	Implementation Status
1.	The commissioner of the DAS use his/her existing statutory authority to establish a cap on the maximum reimbursable project costs, whether cost per square foot or cost-per-student	**Completed.** In fiscal year 2018, the maximum reimbursable cost per square foot for new construction is $365.
2.	Require districts to justify the need for new facilities	**Completed.** Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session) includes new statutory requirements, discussed in greater detail below.
3.	Develop and implement design and construction standards for public schools	**In Progress.** New design and construction standards were released in 2016,[40] and continue to be updated and refined by the DAS.
4.	Provide school districts with project planning, design standards, and construction services either through the DAS' Office of School Construction or a newly created school construction authority	**In Progress.** Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session) directs the SBPAC to conduct a study regarding the development and implementation of prototype school designs and blueprints for districts to use.[41] In addition, the DAS has been becoming more involved in the planning phases at the district-level to offer technical assistance and regulatory oversight before the project moves to approval.[42] There are no current plans to create a separate school construction authority.[43]
5.	Require districts to provide a formal evaluation of site conditions before completing the grant application	**Completed.** Public Act 13-3 required all school building projects receiving state funds to be compliant with the School Safety Infrastructure Council (SSIC) standards beginning in 2014.[44] Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session) requires all school districts to submit proof of the

		readiness for the project to begin completion.
6.	Require or encourage standardized procedures in school districts' contracting, procurement, and construction management processes	**Incomplete.** Although state statute requires school districts to adhere to general state procurement procedures, there have been no updates to this process since the SPBAC report was released in 2013.
7.	Link payments to a district's completion of audits and inspections	**Completed.** Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session) allows the commissioner of the DAS to withhold 11 percent of the final payment to a district, pending an audit.
8.	Create a process for consistent construction-related data collection, in addition to current grant data collection	**In Progress.** The DAS reports it is currently working on a data collection and reports system, slated to be available for public use in 2018.[45]
9.	Require districts to implement an enhanced life-cycle cost study, relating to structure, infrastructure, and finishes, using a standardized statewide reporting format	**In Progress.** The Life Cycle Cost Analysis (LCCA) requirement for school construction projects was eliminated in 2016.[46] Districts are required to report on the condition of their facilities, and the implementation of their long-term school building program, every five years.[47]
10.	Require a non-reimbursable application fee to offset state staff costs	**Incomplete.** There is currently no fee to apply for a school construction grant.
11.	Increase the membership of the Council by two	**Completed.** The membership of the SBPAC was increased by two in 2014. [48]

School construction costs in Connecticut continue vary greatly from project to project. Of the new construction projects on the DAS' 2017 priority list, projected per-pupil construction costs ranged from $215,520.92 for the Shepaug Valley Regional Agriscience STEM Academy (Shepaug Vo-ag) in Region 12, to $61,025.64 for the West Woods Elementary School in Hamden. The per square foot costs ranged from $643 for the New Lebanon School in Greenwich to $450.62 for the Shepaug Vo-ag program.[49] The director of the Office of School Construction Grants and Review at DAS notes the final amount approved for the Shepaug Vo-ag school was lower than the original grant commitment. In addition, school construction included an outdoor horseback riding facility and other outbuildings, as well as a partial renovation that increased the cost of

the project.[50] Although certain projects are in alignment with state and regional costs, depending on the metric used, some costs appear to be extremely high.

In a December 2016 letter to the General Assembly's School Construction Project Priority List Review Committee, OPM Secretary Ben Barnes recommended the legislature remove the New Lebanon School and the Shepaug Vo-ag school from the school building project priority list.[51] In a similar letter in January 2017, DAS Commissioner Melody Currey also recommended these two projects be removed from the priority list.[52] However, all projects on the 2017 Priority List were included by the General Assembly in Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session), which implements the 2018-19 biennial budget.

Also included was a $68 million project for the Martin Luther King School in Hartford (with an estimate grant cost of $54.4 million), which was not on the original priority list and would convert the school from a neighborhood school to an interdistrict magnet school. Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session) also makes Cutler Middle School in Groton and the New London Magnet School for the Visual and Performing Arts eligible for higher, diversity school reimbursement rates. Additionally, the budget bill approves the commencement or modification of a variety of other school construction projects in Brookfield, Region 8, Norwich, Colchester, and New London, and increases the allowable project cost for the Side by Side Charter School in Norwalk from $2.5 million to $4.2 million. The budget also authorizes $30 million in bonding for construction projects in Alliance Districts and $30 million in bonding for school construction projects in other districts.[53]

Actions to Improve the School Construction Process

The DAS is engaged in an iterative process of updating its School Construction Standards and Guidelines to adhere to the recommendations of the SBPAC, where the statutory authority already exists.[54] The DAS has become more active in assisting districts with planning school building projects before they are approved to be on the priority list.[55] As of February 2017, the DAS began reviewing projects at both the conceptual design phase and the schematic design phase of a project proposal.[56] In addition, the DAS has begun to require that proposed projects be approved for grant commitment, and then later for planning approval. If a project does not receive plan approval, the grant commitment will be revoked.[57]

The DAS has made several additional changes, within its existing statutory authority, including reviewing enrollment projections earlier in the planning phase and ensuring the proposed project will be utilized to at least 85 percent capacity, and that the proposed school is not in competition with nearby schools that offer similar educational programs.[58] While 85 percent capacity utilization is the minimum requirement, DAS reports that in most cases, schools are being renovated to at least 90 percent capacity, and 100 percent capacity for new construction, while allowing flexibility for student migration.[59] In addition, staff from the DAS visit each proposed site and review whether renovations could be utilized rather than new construction.[60] Other planning factors the DAS considers before adding projects to the priority list are: the number of square feet per student; the grade configuration of the school; the number of students per

instructional area; the quantity, size, and types of spaces; the recommended site size;[61] and whether the district has adequate funds budgeted for facility maintenance.[62] As these changes are relatively new, with some regulatory requirements going into effect in fiscal year 2018, results are yet to be determined.

If the updated standards and guidelines, in combination with a stronger exertion of existing regulatory authority, are successful in reducing the state's costs related to school construction debt, it may be prudent to codify portions of the updated guidelines into statute to ensure progress made is not lost as leadership changes.

2017 Legislative Changes to the School Construction Grant Program

During the 2017 regular legislative session, the Education Committee of the General Assembly introduced House Bill 7034, *An Act Transforming the School Construction Program*, which was a bill containing technical revisions proposed by DAS and Governor Malloy, to improve the statutory process for school building project approval. The bill would have required districts to provide more information to DAS in school construction applications before projects are added to the priority list, and would have removed the State Board of Education from participating in the approval process, among other adjustments. The bill was substantively amended by the Education Committee, and failed to be taken up for a vote by either chamber of the Connecticut General Assembly.[63]

However, a number of these changes were included in Public Act 17-2 (June Special Session), which was signed into law at the end of October 2017, along with other changes to the school construction grant program. These are summarized below.[64]

- Clarifies the roles of the State Board of Education, the commissioner of the SDE, and the Commissioner of the DAS in the school building project approval process.
    - Consolidates the authority to make or withhold grant payments with the commissioner of the DAS.
- Increases the types of emergency renovation projects allowed for reimbursement to include: roof replacement, skylights, insulation, limited-use elevators, windows, solar panels, wind generation systems, building management systems, or a public school administrative or service facility.
    - Requires the superintendent of a district to notify the commissioner the DAS within seven days of learning of the need for an emergency renovation project.
- Increases the percentage of a school construction grant withheld pending an audit of costs from five to 11 percent.
- Requires towns that withdraw from regional school districts to remain responsible for their portion of the cost of school building projects initiated while the town was a member of the regional school district.
- Requires all school building projects to comply with all statutory provisions to be considered for a state school construction grant.
- Redefines renovation as a project in a facility where at least 75 percent of the facility is at least 20 years old, that results in at least 55 percent of the square

footage being renovated, and the entire completed project having a useful life comparable to new construction, and for which the costs are lower than for new construction. Previously, renovation was defined as a renovation project where at least 75 percent of the facility was at least thirty years old.

- Limits the reimbursement percentages for emergency projects, initiated in or after fiscal year 2018, to be calculated on a ranked scale based on town wealth, using the same scales as for other types of new construction and renovation projects.
- Changes the required facilities reporting schedule to the DAS from districts, and from the DAS to the General Assembly, from every three years to every five years.
- Directs the SBPAC to conduct a study regarding the development and implementation of prototype school designs and blueprints, and to submit the study to the General Assembly by January 1, 2019.
- Requires for each project on the School Building Projects Priority List:
    - An enrollment projection and the capacity of the school;
    - Substantiation of the total project costs;
    - The readiness of an eligible project to begin construction;
    - Efforts made by local or regional boards of education to redistrict, reconfigure, merge, or close schools in the district prior to submitting a grant application;
    - Enrollment and capacity information for all schools in the district for the five years prior to the application;
    - An enrollment projection for all schools in the district for the eight years following the submission of the application; and
    - The state's priorities for the reduction of racial and economic isolation in the district.
- Increases the cap on total school construction-related bonding from $11.2 billion to $12.1 billion.

Delaware

Delaware spends less than Connecticut on school construction. In 2013, the cost per GSF for new construction for school building projects in Delaware was approximately $338.[65] However, this cost is higher than other states in the mid-Atlantic region where the median cost per square foot for new school construction was $237 in 2014.[66] Delaware funds school construction through a combination of state bonds and notes, local tax dollars, and local bonds.[67]

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

The legislature authorizes school building projects in what is known as a school construction bond authorization act.[68] The Delaware Department of Education (DDE) determines the present necessity for any school construction program as authorized by a school construction bond authorization act.[69] When determining the present necessity for a school building project, the DDE must consider: enrollment and enrollment projections as prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC), the feasibility and possibility of consolidation of school districts, the present or future possibility of overcrowding of school facilities within the applicant district, and the condition and quality of existing school facilities. In addition, the DDE may include any other considerations it deems pertinent, including the future development or dissolution of the district.[70] The DDE has the authority to authorize a school construction program at a total lesser cost than the cost proposed in the bond authorization act.[71] The Delaware secretary of education then proposes the annual major capital improvement budget by certifying the necessity of each project the DDE approves — along with the total cost, state, and local shares — to the state treasurer, state auditor of accounts, and the director of the Delaware Office of Management and Budget. Thus, the DDE has the final authority to authorize, prioritize, and amend school building project proposals.[72] In addition, after projects are approved, the Delaware secretary of education is authorized, and directed, to approve or modify all preliminary and final plans, estimates, and specifications, and to amend certificates of necessity. The secretary of education may not approve an increase in the cost of a school building project above the original amount set in the bond authorization act.[73]

All new school construction must also be approved by a local referendum,[74] which approves a one-time mill rate increase to support the local share of specific school building projects.[75] School districts may issue local bonds, funded by mill rate increases, to support the local share of school building projects. Local bonds must be sold to the State.[76] After the bond referendum, the school district may authorize the sale of notes at private or public sale, and the interest rate on these notes may not exceed five percent.[77] Construction must commence,[78] and the local share be deposited with the state treasurer, no later than two years after the effective date of the bond authorization act.[79] The local board of education is responsible for the supervision of all school construction within its district,[80] as well as the hiring of employees necessary to complete the project.[81]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

A formula determines the state share and local share ratio of the costs associated with school building projects.[82] The formula is determined by first calculating the local share

ratio, as determined by the school district ability index (SDAI). In the cases of vocational and other special schools, the local share ratio is determined using the countywide ability index (CWAI).[83] The State reimburses districts between 60 and 80 percent of school construction costs, depending on the district's ability to pay. For minor capital improvements, the State reimburses 60 percent, which must be matched by 40 percent local funds.[84] If costs of the project increase, the local contribution can be increased by up to15 percent of the calculated local share; provided the increase in costs is approved by local referendum, and the increase may then be matched by state funds.[85] The State funds 100 percent of construction costs for the statewide autistic program, the Delaware School for the Deaf, the John G. Leach School, the Kent County Community School, the John, S. Charlton School, the Sussex Consortium, the Sussex County Orthopedic School, and the Howard T. Ennis School.[86]

In addition to the state and local share ratio, the DDE has regulations related to space allowances for high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. A district may exceed the regulated square footage thresholds, but it is then solely responsible for the costs incurred for additional square footage in excess of the guidelines.[87] The construction guidelines allocate a square footage threshold for a variety of school building spaces, such as classrooms, pupil work areas, restrooms, storage, libraries, cafeterias, etc. Each school type has separate square footage guidelines.[88]

Maryland

Maryland spends substantially less per square foot on new school construction than Connecticut. Between 2014-16, Maryland's average cost per square foot for new school construction was $286,[89] while the median cost per square foot for new school construction in its region (mid-Atlantic) in 2014 was $237.[90] Although these numbers do not provide a one-to-one comparison, it appears Maryland's costs per square foot are not outside the norm of other mid-Atlantic states.[91] In fiscal year 2016, Maryland spent $338.2 million on school construction, $300 million of which was in the form of GO bond funds.[92]

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

Maryland has provided equalization aid to school districts for school construction since 1971 through the Maryland Public School Construction Program (PSCP). The PSCP oversees school planning, design, construction, and financing.[93] There are a number of public agencies in Maryland that have some level of oversight of school construction projects:

- The Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) oversees the PSCP and includes representatives from the executive and legislative branches of state government.
- The Board of Public Works oversees school construction funding, standards, and building procedures.
- The State Board of Education adopts standards and guidelines for districts related to school building projects and approves local school construction plans.
- The State Superintendent of Schools approves construction sites and building purchases, change orders, and locally funded projects in excess of $350,000.
- The Maryland State Department of Education reviews building designs, educational specifications, scope, and capacity.
- The Department of Planning reviews applications for capital improvement projects and determines eligibility for state funds.
- The Department of General Services reviews design and construction plans for compliance with industry and state standards.[94]

School building projects normally span a four-year period from application to completion. In year one, the district must complete a feasibility study and an Educational Facilities Master Plan, and submit them to the State for review.[95] Each year, districts submit an annual and a five-year capital improvements program (CIP) to the IAC, which recommends approval, deferral, or modification of each proposed project.[96] The IAC then submits a consolidated statewide capital improvement plan to the Board of Public Works. In year two, the Board of Public Works approves the plan after a public hearing each January. The Maryland General Assembly allocates funds to the approved projects during the state budgeting process, which is signed by the governor. After appropriations have been finalized, the Board of Public Works approves final recommendations for local project planning and funding.[97] After local school building projects are approved, the district develops educational specifications and selects an architect. All schematic design plans are submitted to the IAC for approval or revision. Any comments from IAC must be addressed before moving forward. The

district then submits a request for state funding. In year three, the Board of Public Works approves state funding for district CIP projects. The district submits permits, cost estimates, and other required construction documents to the IAC for review and comment. If the IAC approves the plans, the project can be presented to bid by the district. Construction normally takes between 12 and 15 months to complete.[98] The General Assembly has convened a commission to study the process by which school construction projects are approved and to identify cost-savings opportunities.[99]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

Districts are reimbursed by the State for school construction based on a cost share formula that is intended to equitably distribute available state aid for school construction among Maryland's 24 school districts. The formula takes into account the percentage of students in the district who qualify for free and reduced price meals, unemployment rates, enrollment growth rates, and the district's ability to raise funds.[100] In 2017, the calculated state share ratios ranged from 50 percent in Garrett, Kent, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Worcester to 93 percent in Baltimore and 100 percent in Somerset.[101]

However, state funding is only available for certain eligible costs, as delineated in statute. Eligible costs include new construction, renovations, temporary facilities, built-in equipment and furnishings, emergency repairs, and required off-site development costs. Ineligible costs include site acquisition, architectural and engineering consultant fees, plans, feasibility studies, ancillary construction costs, leasing or purchasing facilities, inspections, staff salaries, construction of administration buildings, moveable equipment and furnishings, or maintenance and temporary storage costs.[102]

For each approved project, the IAC defines a maximum budget. Costs eligible for state reimbursement are limited to a certain cost per square foot and per student. The cost per square foot is based on the average cost per square foot in the year the application is made. The state cost share percentage is only applied to the portion of the construction budget eligible for reimbursement, and the county is responsible for any costs outside these guidelines.[103] In the 2017 CIP applications, 79 percent of requested funds were considered eligible for state reimbursement by the IAC.[104] In addition, the legislature may cap appropriations for the total capital expenditure budget, limiting the amount of funds available for reimbursement. In 2017, the IAC recommended the statutorily required 90 percent of funds appropriated by the legislature, or $252 million in state aid. This amounted to 53 percent of the eligible project requests.[105] This means in some school districts, such as Montgomery County, state revenues fund approximately 15 percent of capital expenditures while county revenues fund the remainder of capital expenditures.[106]

School Construction Proposals in 2017

There are a number of proposed changes to Maryland's school construction program currently under discussion. The IAC recently entertained a motion to approve changes to the district reimbursement percentages defined in Maryland's Code of Regulations, however, the motion failed by one vote, and the reimbursements have remained unchanged.[107] The Board of Public Works has changed its schedule to begin meeting

with school districts to discuss plans for school construction in October, rather than January, at the direction of Governor Larry Hogan.[108] Additionally, the General Assembly convened the 21st Century Schools Facilities Commission in April 2016. This commission is in the process of reviewing educational specifications, construction industry best practices, innovative financing mechanisms, and potential cost savings. The Commission will also form long-term plans for school jurisdictions with growing enrollment and maintenance plans for jurisdictions with declining enrollment.[109] The findings of the Commission are due in December 2017.[110]

Massachusetts

Between 2011-13, the price per GSF for new school construction in Massachusetts in 2011-2013 was approximately $369 — slightly higher than the approximate GSF for Connecticut in the same year, making school construction costs in Massachusetts among the highest in the nation.[111] Massachusetts funds school construction through a small portion of the state sales tax.[112]

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

In 2004, the Massachusetts state legislature created the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MBSA) to replace the former school building assistance program,[113] and to streamline the process for funding capital improvement projects in school districts.[114] The MBSA is a quasi-public agency that is overseen by a seven-member board of directors, which is chaired by the state treasurer.[115] The MBSA has authority and responsibility to "achieve the effective planning, management and financial sustainability of a program to provide partial funding for the construction, renovation or repair of municipally or regionally owned school facilities."[116] The MBSA may only approve projects within its projected revenues,[117] however, it has the authority to approve a lesser amount than the district's request.[118]

The MBSA approves projects based on priorities set in statute. Priority is granted to projects needed to replace unsafe buildings, then to projects designed to eliminate severe overcrowding, then to projects needed to prevent the loss of accreditation, then to projects needed to modernize the heating system or to decrease energy-related costs, then to projects needed to account for short-term enrollment growth, then to projects needed to replace buildings in order to provide a full range of programs, and then to projects needed to transition from court-ordered approved racial balance school districts to walk-to districts.[119]

The MBSA has considerable authority to approve or deny applications from districts for state support for school building projects, and there are multiple points at which a project can be denied. After the project commences, all requests for reimbursement from the district are reviewed by the MBSA, based on strict eligibility guidelines.[120] The steps in the school building process are as follow:

1) The district completes a statement of interest and submits it to the MBSA board of directors.

2) The MBSA board votes to invite the district to the *Eligibility Period*, which is a 270-day period for the district to complete the following requirements, to the satisfaction of the MBSA:
    - Initial Compliance Certification;
    - Form a School Building Committee;
    - Complete an Educational Profile Questionnaire;
    - Summarize existing maintenance practices;
    - Certify enrollment for the proposed project;
    - Confirm local authorization and funding to proceed; and

- Execute a Feasibility Study Agreement, which establishes the process for the district to be reimbursed for eligible expenses.[121]

3) The MBSA board invites the district to participate in the *Scope Definition* phase where the following steps are completed:
    - The district must procure a team of professionals using the MBSA procurement procedures and standard Request for Services (RFS) templates and contracts.[122]
    - The district team and the MBSA collaborate to perform a feasibility study, which includes an initial space summary, documentation of existing conditions, establishment of design parameters, development and evaluation of preliminary and final alternatives, and recommendations for the most cost-effective and educationally appropriate solution.
    - The MBSA board approves the preferred solution identified in the feasibility study and invites the district to enter the Schematic Design step.[123]
    - The district team, in collaboration with the MBSA, develops a schematic design, which establishes the scope, budget, and schedule for the proposed project.
    - The MBSA generates a Project Scope and Budget Agreement, which documents the scope, budget, and schedule in the schematic design
    - The MBSA board approves the Project Scope and Budget Agreement[124]
    - The MBSA and the district enter into and execute a Project Funding Agreement, after which the district can begin submitting requests for reimbursement to the MBSA for project costs beyond the feasibility study[125]

4) The district then moves in the *Scope Monitoring Phase*, which includes the following steps:
    - The district team advances the project and the MBSA monitors its progress, and ensures the project adheres to required standards.
    - The MBSA assigns a commissioning agent to the project who facilitates an intensive quality assurance process.[126]
    - During construction, the district team continues to report on the progress of the project to the MBSA and confirm it remains on-schedule and within budget.
    - The district submits reimbursement requests to the MBSA through the online Pro-Pay system.
    - The MBSA processes reimbursement requests as funds are expended by the district.
    - The district reconciles its total project budget in an amendment to the Project Funding Agreement to account for actual costs based on executed bids and the Guaranteed Maximum Price, and submits change orders and contingency expenditures for eligibility consideration by the MBSA.
    - When the project is 50 percent completed, the district team submits a Standard Contractor Evaluation Form. Other notifications are also required to be submitted by the district.[127]
    - As the project nears completion, the district must complete a variety of closeout forms, including a Final Request for Payment Reimbursement.

- The MBSA initiates the Draft Audit Report and delivers it to the district for consideration.
- The MBSA completes a Final Closeout Audit to determine total final grant amounts.
- The MBSA board approves the Final Closeout Audit and the MBSA makes the final payment.[128]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

The MBSA is required to issue maximum eligible cost standards and size standards for school projects, which define prototype school designs and space recommendations for each specified program activity eligible for state financial assistance.[129] When calculating the total construction grant, the estimated approved and final approved costs for construction cannot exceed the cost of the prototype schools.[130]

The grant percentage for approved school construction projects is calculated based on a formula, which is capped at 80 percent reimbursement.[131] Grant percentages are determined by adding together the Base Percentage (currently 31 percent), the Community Income Factor, the Community Wealth Factor, the Community Poverty Factor, and the Incentive Percentage.[132] The Community Income Factor is the per capita income as a percent of the statewide average per capita income.[133] The Community Property Wealth Factor is the equalized property valuation per capita as percent of the statewide average equalized property valuation per capita.[134] The Community Poverty Factor is the proportion of low-income students, as determined by eligibility for the federal free and reduced price lunch program, as a percent of the statewide average proportion of low-income students.[135] Incentive Percentage points may be granted by the MBRA, up to six additional points in each category. Incentive Percentages may be awarded for a district's use of efficient construction methods, regionalization with other districts, superior maintenance practices, sustainable design, utilizing major renovation rather than new construction, the use of MBRA model schools or other methods to encourage cost-effectiveness, and quality construction.[136]

Grants are made through the School Modernization and Reconstruction Trust Fund (SMART), which is administered by the state treasurer, to be expended by the MBRA. The trust fund is funded through a dedicated sales tax revenue of one percent.[137] In fiscal year 2017, this tax transfer was approximately $854 million.[138]

New York

The price per GSF for new school construction in New York in 2014 was approximately $411, which is higher than the approximate GSF for states in the New England region, making school construction costs in New York the highest in the nation.[139]

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Facilities Planning is responsible for overseeing school construction projects in most school districts. It both offers services, such as assigning a project manager to each approved school construction project,[140] and also has regulatory authority to review, approve, and issue building permits for projects undertaken by school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).[141] There are five primary steps in the school construction process, as managed by NYSED:

1) Preliminary Planning
    - The superintendent of the school district submits a Letter of Intent, which advises the coordinator of NYSED's Office of Facilities Planning that a school building project is being considered by the school district.
    - NYSED assigns a project manager to guide the school district through the school construction process.
    - The project manager advises the school district in writing as to the proper procedures for applying for project approval, and supplies all necessary forms.

2) Approval of Preliminary Plans
    - The district completes a description of the project for the purposes of environmental review.
    - The district submits schematic plans for new buildings and additions to NYSED.
    - The district submits a proposed budget and revenue sources to NYSED
    - The district submits an inventory of work items to NYSED, using a specific, approved format.
    - The NYSED approves the preliminary plans to move forward into the next planning phase.[142]

3) Approval of Final Plans and Specifications
    - Proper local authorization is sought by the local board of education to incur debt, normally through a local vote or public meeting.[143]
    - NYSED authorizes the district to prepare final building plans and specifications.
    - The district completes final plans and specifications and submits them to the commissioner of NYSED for approval.
    - NYSED issues a certificate of approval.
    - NYSED issues a bond certificate, where bonds are used to fund the project.
    - NYSED issues a building permit.

4) Construction and Occupancy
    - Construction commences.
    - District submits change orders to NYSED, where appropriate.
    - When the work is substantially completed, meaning that the building is ready for occupancy, the architect or engineer submits a certification of substantial completion to the NYSED.
    - The district requests a fire inspection from the appropriate authorities and submits a fire/safety report to NYSED.
    - NYSED issues a certificate of occupancy.

5) Final cost accounting
    - After all costs have been paid, the district submits a Final Building Project Report to NYSED.
    - NYSED determines total building aid based on the Final Building Project Report and makes adjustments to the estimated aid that has already been supplied to the district during the course of the project.[144]

However, there is a separate entity that oversees school construction in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Formed by the New York State Legislature in 1988, the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) manages the design, construction, and renovation of capital projects for NYCPS. In 2002, all functions that are normally overseen by NYSED in other school districts in the state were transferred to the SCA for NYCPS. The SCA is now solely responsible for school construction planning, budgeting, scope, design, and construction of all NYCPS' capital projects.[145] The SCA is responsible for completing the district's five-year capital plan,[146] which is a document required of all school districts under New York state law. In fiscal year 2016, the SCA reports that it managed $2.6 billion in state, local, and federal funds to support all school construction and maintenance projects for NYCPS.[147] It should be noted that in 2017, the SCA was reported to be over budget on more than half of its current major projects, totaling at least $300 million in unplanned costs.[148]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

In order to be eligible for Building Aid from the State, the building involved in the capital project must be used for the instruction or transportation of students, must not be maintenance or repairs, must cost over $10,000, must have received a building permit by approval of the commissioner of NYSED, and must have received proper local authorization.[149] Districts are subject to limits on the amount of debt they can incur. Debt limits range from five to 10 percent of the value of local tax rolls.[150] In fiscal year 2016, New York appropriated $2.9 billion from the state's general fund to school Building Aid.[151]

Building Aid in New York is determined through a formula. Aid percentages are determined by multiplying the Building Aid Units (BAU, also known as state-rated capacity) by the Construction Project Cost Index to determine a Maximum Cost Allowance. Maximum Cost Allowances are determined for each project and are adjusted by the applicable Regional Cost Factor. Then, actual expenditures are multiplied by the district's Building Aid Ratio for each project. If the actual expenditures

are less than the Adjusted Maximum Cost Allowance, the Building Aid Ratio is applied to the actual expenditures. If actual expenditures exceed the adjusted maximum cost allowance, the Building Aid Ratio is applied to the Adjusted Maximum Cost Allowance.[152]

In this formula, the state-rated capacity, or BAU, is the total number of students assigned to a building by NYSED for the purpose of determining the Maximum Cost Allowance. The BAU is determined by assigning a certain number of BAU to each classroom. BAU varies by grade-level and/or teaching station.[153] The Construction Project Cost Index is an index released monthly by New York State Labor Department, which represents the cost of labor and materials. The Maximum Cost Allowance is the maximum amount of actual expenditures eligible for Building Aid reimbursement.[154] The Regional Cost Factor is calculated by dividing the county composite labor rate by the median statewide composite labor rate.[155] The Building Aid Ratio is a fixed percentage, on a scale of zero to 90 percent, determined annually, for each school district. The Building Aid Ratio is based on the full value of all property in the district and the number of students in a district.[156]

Rhode Island

Rhode Island's average price per GSF for new school construction is approximately $360, which is the same as Connecticut's average cost per GSF.[157] However, Rhode Island is the midst of major changes to its school construction program, and was under a school construction moratorium for four years, which ended in July 2015.

Process for Applying for State Reimbursement for School Building Projects

In the 2015 legislative session, the Rhode Island General Assembly ended a four-year moratorium on new school construction[158] and created a new entity, under the auspices of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), called the Rhode Island School Building Authority (RSBA).[159] The General Assembly also created a SBA Capital Fund, to provide payments for school construction projects on a progress payment basis. The newly formed RSBA advisory board advises the RSBA on the best use of the Capital Fund through the creation of statewide priorities, criteria for approval, and recommendations for project approval and prioritization.[160] Additionally, the General Assembly required that each local education agency (LEA) develop, implement, and maintain an asset protection plan for each of its school buildings in order to become eligible for Capital Fund support.[161] The RSBA's roles and responsibilities under statute include:

- The management of a school construction system with a goal of ensuring equitable and adequate school housing for all public school children;[162]
- To prevent the cost of school housing from interfering with the effective operation of schools;[163]
- The management of school housing aid;[164]
- Reviewing and making recommendations to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (CESE) on school construction applications for state school housing and Capital Fund aid, based on the recommendations of the RSBA advisory board;[165]
- Managing and maintaining school construction regulations, standards, and guidelines, based on the recommendations of the RSBA advisory board;[166]
- Providing technical assistance, training, and education related to school construction for towns and districts;[167]
- Developing a school construction project priority system, based on recommendations from the RSBA advisory board, and in accordance with school construction regulations, under the following order of priorities:
    - Projects to renovate or replace a building that is unsafe;
    - Projects to prevent the loss of accreditation;
    - Projects needed for the replacement, renovation, or modernization of HVAC systems and to decrease energy-related costs;
    - Projects needed to replace or create additions to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of educational programs; and
    - Project needed to comply with mandatory instructional programs;[168]
- Collecting and maintaining data all public school facilities in the state;[169]
- Recommending policies and procedures designed to reduce borrowing by state and local governments to support school construction;[170]

- Conducting a needs survey every five years to assess the capital needs for schools in each district in the state;[171]
- Developing or adopting a formal enrollment projection model;[172]
- Encouraging LEAs to investigate opportunities for the maximum utilization of space;[173]
- Collecting and maintaining a clearinghouse of school plan prototypes;[174] and
- Offering additional incentive points to the school housing aid ratio, based on the recommendation of the advisory board. Incentive points may be offered by the RSBA for:
    - The use of highly efficient construction delivery methods;
    - Regionalization with other districts;
    - Superior maintenance practices;
    - Energy efficient and sustainable design and construction;
    - The use of model schools, as adopted by the RSBA; and
    - Oher incentives recommended by the RSBA advisory board determined by the RSBA to encourage the most cost-effective and quality construction.[175]

The statutes governing the role of the RSBA are very similar to those in Massachusetts; the primary difference being the RSBA is a division of RIDE and the MSBA is a quasi-public agency, separate from any existing state agency. In Massachusetts there are multiple points at which the MSBA can halt a school building project by declining to invite the district to participate in the next step of the school construction process. The "Necessity of School Construction Application" delineates a new process for applying to the RSBA for state school housing aid that looks very similar to the MSBA process. The steps for major projects are as follow:

1) Letter of Intent
    - Superintendent of schools of the LEA submits a statement of interest, and project justification to the RSBA by October 1. The statement of interest must include a proposed schedule, priorities, an existing space analysis, anticipated financing mechanism, district asset protection plan, and an Initial Compliance Certification Form.
    - LEA forms a school building committee, composed of school and city representatives.
    - RSBA invites the LEA to participate in Stage I.
    - School building committee meets with an RSBA representative.[176]

2) Stage I
    - LEA submits approvals from the school building committee and city council.
    - Other state agencies review the plan for adherence to health and safety codes.
    - RSBA advisory board considers application for preliminary approval.
    - RSBA invites LEA to participate in Stage II.[177]

3) Stage II
    - LEA submits a project summary and prioritization justification.

- LEA completes and submits an architectural feasibility study.
- LEA submits high performance and green status and goals.
- LEA submits an analysis of the option of school or district consolidation.
- LEA completes and submits a traffic and transportation impact plan.
- LEA completes and submits an energy analysis.
- LEA completes and submits schematic design documents and cost projections.
- LEA submits a financing plan.
- LEA procures an independent commissioning agent to oversee the project's compliance with state regulations, etc.
- RSBA issues a preliminary approval of the construction project plans
- RSBA advisory board recommends the project advance to CESE approval.[178]

4) Council Approval
    - RIDE commissioner recommends the project to CESE for approval.
    - CESE approves construction project.
    - Memorandum of agreement between the LEA and RSBA is signed by the school building committee, the superintendent, and the RIDE commissioner.[179]

5) Stage III
    - RIDE reviews design plans.
    - Enabling legislation is passed for projects that require the use of bonds or other forms of indebtedness.
    - LEA obtains voter approval for municipal bonds.[180]

State Reimbursement Percentages for School Building Projects

In fiscal year 2017, Rhode Island dedicated $70.9 million for school housing aid and $9.1 million for the RSBA Capital Fund.

The Capital Fund is designed to provide process payments to districts with limited financial capabilities. Capital Funds were awarded to districts based on the level of urgency, number of students impacted and community wealth. The rubric to score district applications for capital funds was developed by the RSBA[181] and it awards points to projects as follows:

- 10 points for a signed certification from an architect or engineer that identifies high priority health and safety issues;
- 10 points for a project that corrects a health or fire code violation;
- 1-10 points, self-assigned by the LEA as to the in-district level of urgency of the particular project;
- Up to 25 points for health and safety violations that have been given a deadline to be repaired by the issuing agency;
- Up to 30 points for the Housing Aid Share Ratio; and
- Up to 15 points for number of students impacted by the project as determined by building capacity.

School housing aid eligibility is determined by a formula set in statute. In each fiscal year the state pays to each community a grant to be applied to the cost of school housing, using the following formula: the cost of each new school construction project is divided by the actual number of years of the bond (issued by the State or municipality in support of the project) and is multiplied by the Housing Aid Ratio. The amount of aid payable may not exceed the cost of principal and interest on the bonds, multiplied by the Housing Aid Ratio, and may not exceed the cost of the project as certified by the RIDE commissioner. Aid is provided for the life of the bonds in support of the project.[182] For the purposes of calculating this formula, the Housing Aid Ratio is the ratio of 1) the adjusted equalized weighted assessed valuation for the district, divided by the resident average daily membership for the district, and 2) the adjusted equalized weighted assessed valuation for the State divided by the resident average daily membership for the state. The resulting ratio is multiplied by a factor of 62 percent, which represents the approximate average district share of school support, subtracted from 100 percent. Rhode Island has a minimum Housing Aid Ratio of 35 percent.[183]

School Building Task Force

In September 2017, the RSBA completed a report entitled *The State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses*, which identified more than $2.2 billion in facility deficiency costs, and $627 million in high-priority deficiency costs. It also found enrollment was down 10 percent over the past 20 years and the average age of public school campuses in Rhode Island was 56 years.[184] In response, Governor Gina Raimondo created the Rhode Island School Buildings Task Force, which is to develop an action plan, including potential funding streams and recommendations, on how to effectively maximize resources. The task force is to report its recommendations to the governor in December 2017.[185]

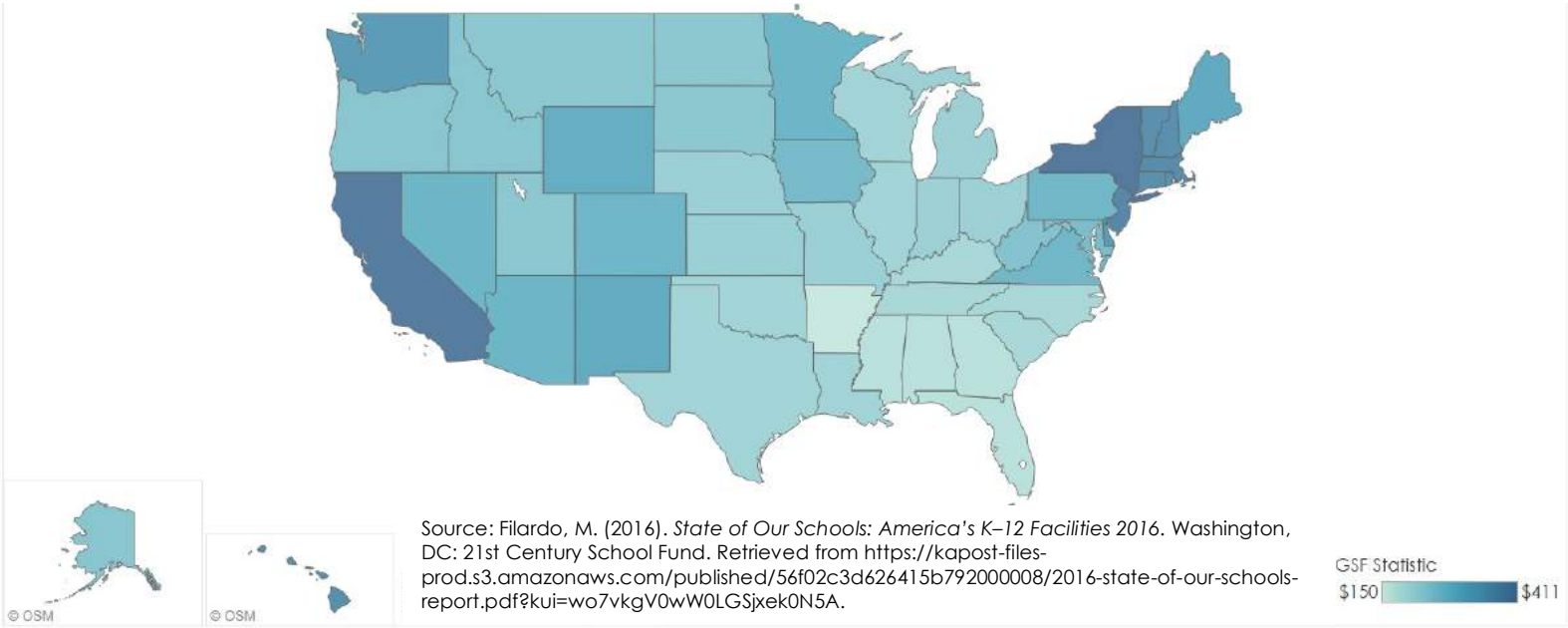
Appendices

Appendix A: Comparison of School Construction Finance Practices by State

	Connecticut	Delaware	Maryland	Massachusetts	New York	Rhode Island
Cost Per GSF 2011-2013	• $360	• $338	• $258	• $369	• $411	• $360
Authority	• Department of Administrative Services • State Department of Education • Legislature approves projects	• Department of Education, in consultation with a variety of other state agencies • Legislature approves projects	• Interagency Committee on School Construction (Multiple state agencies participating)	• School Building Authority (quasi-public)	• NY State Education Department	• Rhode Island School Building Authority (a division of the Rhode Island Department of Education)
Calculation Type	• Ranking of all towns based on community wealth	• Formula based on school district wealth	• Cost share formula based on multiple measures of district wealth and enrollment	• Formula based on community wealth and high building standards	• Formula based on per-pupil space allowances, regional cost of construction, student enrollment, and district wealth	• Capital funding for low-wealth districts to use for progress payments • Formula based on the term of bond funding and district wealth
Wealth Measure	• Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List per Capita	• School district ability index (SDAI)	• Percent of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch • Unemployment rate • District's ability to raise funds	• Equalized Property Valuation per Capita • Proportion of low-income students, as determined by eligibility for free and reduced price lunch	• Full value of all property in a district • Regional cost factor based on cost of labor and materials	• Adjusted equalized weighted assessed valuation for the district as compared to the state average
Minimum/ Maximum Percentages	• Minimum: 10 Percent, new construction; 20 percent, renovations • Maximum: 70 Percent, new construction; 80 percent renovations • Regional school boards: 85 percent (including regional bonus) • *Sheff* Schools: 80 percent (not including racial desegregation bonus)	• Minimum: 60 Percent • Maximum: 80 percent • State schools for special populations: 100 percent	• Minimum: 50 percent • Maximum: None • Appropriations capped at $252 million in state aid reduces the actual minimum percentage to 15 percent	• Base percentage: 31 percent	• Minimum: 0 Percent • Maximum: 90 Percent	• Minimum: 35 percent • Maximum: Annual cost of premium and interest on bond obligations
Regional Bonus	• 10 Percent	• Not applicable	• Not Applicable	• Used in determining project priority but not funding	• Not applicable	• Used in determining project priority but not funding

Student Enrollment	• Bonus available equal to the percent of total projected enrollment of the school attributable to reserved Open Choice seats	• Not applicable	• Enrollment growth rate included in the state share calculation	• Used in determining project priority but not funding	• Used in calculating Building Aid Units (state-rated capacity and in the state aid ratio)	• Resident average daily membership for the district as compared to the state average • For Capital Funds, up to 15 points awarded in priority rubric for the number of students impacted by the building project
Other	• Lighthouse Schools: 10 percent bonus • School readiness: 5 percent bonus • Racial desegregation: 10 Percent bonus • Creation of full-day kindergarten: 80 Percent total reimbursement rate	• State only reimburses for eligible expenses within certain square footage guidelines	• Costs limited to a maximum budget set by the state • Costs limited by per square foot and per student maximums	• Incentive points available for: use of efficient construction methods, regionalization with other districts, superior maintenance practices, sustainable design, utilizing major renovation rather than new construction, the use of MBRA model schools or other methods to encourage cost-effective and quality construction	• Debt limits from five to 10 percent of local tax rolls	• Capital Fund eligibility and priority set by a rubric that includes: health and safety issues, code violations, level of urgency, state share ratio, and school enrollment projections

Appendix B: Average Cost per Gross Square Foot of School Construction, 2014



Source: Filardo, M. (2016). *State of Our Schools: America's K–12 Facilities 2016*. Washington, DC: 21st Century School Fund. Retrieved from https://kapost-files-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/published/56f02c3d626415b792000008/2016-state-of-our-schools-report.pdf?kui=wo7vkgV0wW0LGSjxek0N5A.

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