



WSPTA recognizes that critical investments need to be made in school facilities, to ensure that children attend schools that are modern, safe, and provide sufficient space and classrooms to comply with state-mandated class size reduction. The benefits for facilities investments include increased attendance, improved student performance, and reduced truancy and suspension rates.¹

Background

- The School Construction Assistance Program contributes only part of the cost to build safe and healthy schools that support learning.²
- The burden of underfunding falls harder on property-poor districts, in the form of higher property tax rates on construction bonds. "Because local wealth is the primary source of capital construction funds, under investment disproportionately affects children from low-income families. The results affect both students' well-being and their educational opportunities."³
- The 2017-19 capital budget, which was not funded in 2017, does not ensure construction of classrooms to meet state policies of all-day kindergarten and smaller K-3 class sizes.⁴
- Washington's actual median space allocation for schools is well below the national median for new school construction for the past three years.⁵
- Many school districts are growing rapidly, yet the state construction programs haven't been modified to meet this growth.⁶
- The current Washington state framework for environmental health and safety in schools (WAC 246-366, Primary and Secondary Schools) has been in place since 1971, and has never undergone a comprehensive revision to the rules.⁷
- A national poll commissioned by the U.S. Green Building Council found that 92 percent of Americans believe that the quality of public school buildings should be improved.³

Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA supports legislation or policies that provide:

1. **Provide stable and timely financing for school construction, modernization, and safety needs;**
 - Fund capital costs to ensure construction of classrooms to meet state policies of all-day kindergarten and smaller K-3 class sizes.
 - Apply a uniform funding policy to meet modern and FEMA standards for current and future school buildings and portables.^{8,9,10}
2. **Update the square footage allocation formula**, which recognizes modern and inclusive educational needs for all students, and recognizes current actual construction costs.
3. Replaces the 60 percent super-majority with a **simple majority requirement for passage of school bonds**; and
4. **Extends the K-3 grant program.** More than 70 districts will require an anticipated \$230 million in additional costs to meet the ratio of 17:1 and all-day kindergarten.

For More Information

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Citations

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2. Bonds and K-12 Education House Committee Work Session 3/21/2017. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/CMD/Handler.ashx?MethodName=getdocumentcontent&documentId=j3se-E87IOY&att=false>
3. 2016 State of Our Schools, America's K-12 Facilities. <http://centerforgreenschools.org/state-our-schools>
4. ESHB 2261 (2009). <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2261&Year=2009>
5. Gross Square Feet per Student is calculated by dividing the total square footage of the school buildings with the actual total enrollment of the schools.
National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (2016). State of our Schools- America's K-12 Facilities. <http://www.ncef.org/content/2016-state-our-schools-k-12-facilities>
6. Report of the Legislative Task Force on School Siting (2014). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/CMD/Handler.ashx?MethodName=getdocumentcontent&documentId=IFp9y94ykO8&att=false>
7. http://sboh.wa.gov/Portals/7/Doc/Rules/SignificantAnalysis_SchoolRule.pdf
8. OSPI, School Facilities Pre-Disaster Mitigation Project. <http://www.k12.wa.us/SchFacilities/PDM/default.aspx>
9. OSPI (2014). Washington State K-12 Facilities Hazard Mitigation Plan. http://www.k12.wa.us/SchFacilities/PDM/pubdocs/PDM_Plan.pdf
10. See also: WSPTA Resolution 11.25 Mitigating Environmental Hazards and Contaminants in Schools.

**For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org)*