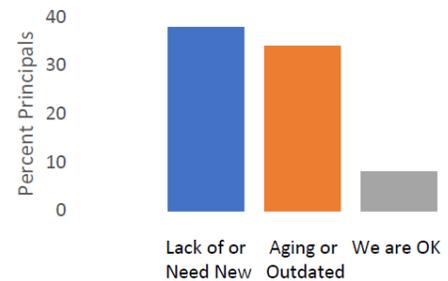


WSPTA recognizes that critical investments must be made in school facilities to ensure that children attend schools that are modern, safe, and provide sufficient space and include enough classrooms to comply with state-mandated class size reduction. The benefits for facility investments include increased attendance, improved student performance, and reduced truancy and suspension rates.¹ However, most school construction bonds fail to garner a 60% super-majority necessary for passage.²

Background

- In a December 2017 survey, principals in Washington schools noted they were providing education in aging, outdated, crowded, or even unsafe facilities. Less than 10% of principals noted that their facilities were good or adequate for their needs.³
- The 2017-19 capital budget did not ensure construction of classrooms to meet state policies of all-day kindergarten and smaller K-3 and Career and Technical Education (CTE) class sizes.⁴
- Fifty-two percent of school districts use portables to meet growth and class-size reductions, but portables are not eligible for School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) funding. Portables cost more/sq ft/year of use than permanent structures and may not meet safety, health or building code standards if they have not been decommissioned at the end of their useable life span.⁵
- The SCAP contributes only a small part of the cost to build safe and healthy schools that support learning. Eligibility for SCAP assistance is dependent on school districts securing local funds, usually through school construction bonds.⁶
- Washington's actual median space allocation in the SCAP formula is well below the national median for new school construction⁷ and has not been changed since 2006.⁸
- The burden of underfunding falls harder on property-poor districts, in the form of higher property tax rates on construction bonds.⁷
- Between 2006 – 2017, only 46% of all school construction bonds achieved the required 60% supermajority of voters, while 96% of capital levies, which only require a simple majority, passed.² In 2018, only 39% of all school bonds passed, while 85% had greater than 50% of voters voting to approve the bonds.^{9,10}

December 2017 Principal Survey on School Facilities



Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that equitably assist districts to fund their capital needs for the 21st century to lower K-3 and Career and Technical Education (CTE) class sizes; and address capacity, growth, modernization, and safety by:

- Changing school construction bonds from super-majority (60%) to **simple majority** vote;
- **Updating the School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP);**
- **Renewing the K-3 grant program** with capital funding to support class-size targets;
- **Documenting use of portables**, including but not limited to: age, quantity, condition, and purpose.

For More Information

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

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