

Illinois Education Roundtable 2009 Policy Briefs

School Construction

The General Assembly must establish a continuous program for school construction and maintenance funding.

Statement of Problem:

Illinois school districts continue to be confronted with the issue of providing safe, appropriate instructional facilities for the students of Illinois. For some districts, this is manifested in ever-increasing enrollment that requires new construction on an annual basis. For others, enrollment may be stagnant and there is no need for additional facilities, but the condition of existing facilities requires extensive maintenance efforts or replacement of facilities that have exceeded their useful life. The ability to provide instructional technology enhancements in older school

buildings is often hampered by the inability of districts to afford necessary facility renovations.

The 2008 ISBE Capital Needs Assessment Survey identified \$7.8 billion in identified construction needs in 456 Illinois school districts. Due to lack of funding, there are 370 temporary classrooms reported in operation and a need for 1,106 additional classrooms for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Following are summary data from the study:

- \$1.7 billion to build 116 school buildings,
- \$1 billion to build 214 building additions
- \$5 billion for general repair and remodeling of aging schools
 - \$3.1 billion required for compliance under the Health/Life Safety codes

Currently, the entire cost of any new facility construction, existing facility renovation/maintenance or any facility upgrade currently falls entirely upon local district taxpayers.

Preferred Solution:

- General Assembly shall establish a continuous program for funding school construction and maintenance in Illinois public schools. Program should continue to include a process/formula by which districts are ranked based on need.
- Amend existing legislation to make the 1% County Sales Tax for school construction/maintenance binding if approved by voters.
- Amend school code to increase bonding limits for elementary, high school and unit districts.

Resources Required:

- \$7.8 billion in state and local funds for school construction and maintenance.
- The Education Roundtable recommends:
 - \$50 million in annual state funds dedicated to a maintenance matching fund for districts.
 - \$150 million in one-time funding for entitlements granted in 2002.
 - \$1.5 billion in annual state funds to support the School Construction Grant Program (Public Act 90-548)

Additional Implications, Resources or Issues

- Long-term dependence solely on local funding or the 1% county sales tax will result in growing inequity among school district facilities.

Illinois Education Roundtable Member Organizations:

IASB, IASA, IASBO, IPA, IEA-NEA, IFT-AFT, LUDA, ED-RED, LEND, SCOPE, IAASE, IARSS, EDO, HSDO, INSPIRA, IASPA, MPC, VOICE | Advisory Member Organizations: ISBE, ICPEA