K–12 school buildings and grounds have an impact on our children’s educational success, the health and economic vitality of our communities, and the environment. Local school districts and many states have been working hard to support the ongoing maintenance, operations, new construction, and capital improvements of public school facilities.

Without a standards framework to inform spending levels, however, communities cannot plan or advocate for what their schools need. And communities with the least wealth are often the ones least able to meet the need. This fact sheet provides facilities spending and investment data within a standards framework to encourage a solutions-oriented public dialogue on how Montana can provide healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate schools for all students.


20 Years of Facilities Spending and Investment

Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Spending

Responsible maintenance and operations result in healthy and safe environments and help to secure the full life of school-construction investments already made. From 1994 through 2013, Montana public school districts reported to the U.S. Census of Governments that they spent an inflation-adjusted total of $3.0 billion from their annual operating budgets on “Maintenance and Operation of Plant,” which includes cleaning, routine and preventive maintenance, minor repairs, utilities, and school security. From 2011 through 2013, Montana spent 80% of this standard. Meeting the standard would require spending an additional $40 million statewide or about $280 more per student.

Capital Construction Investments

Changes in enrollments; updated standards for education, health, and safety; and normal deterioration of building systems and components require capital investments over the lifespan of every school facility. From 1994 through 2013, Montana K–12 school districts reported spending an inflation-adjusted $1.5 billion on school-construction capital outlay. An estimated 36% of Montana’s construction spending in these years went to new school construction, either as replacement schools or to serve growing enrollments. On average, Montana school district enrollments decreased by 14.2% between 1993-94 and 2012-13 as compared with an increase at the national level of 11.3%.

Montana’s school districts paid 99% of the costs for K–12 capital projects with local funds, and Montana’s local school districts’ long-term debt at the end of fiscal year 2013 totaled $0.5 billion or $3,428 per student, as compared with the national average of $8,465. The state provided 1% of the cost of capital construction as compared with the national average of 18%.

Using Standards to Plan for the Future

M&O Spending Standards

For Montana school districts to operate healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate school facilities, they should plan to spend from annual operating budgets an amount equal to at least 3% of the facilities’ current replacement value (CRV) on maintenance and operations—an estimated $198 million per year. From 2011 through 2013, Montana spent 80% of this standard. Meeting the standard would require spending an additional $40 million statewide or about $280 more per student.
Montana K–12 Public School Facilities

Capital Construction Investment Standards

Montana should plan to spend an amount equal to at least 4% of its facilities’ CRV annually in capital funds on building system and component renewals, reducing accumulated deferred maintenance, and making alterations to ensure that its existing facilities support the educational programs and modern health and safety requirements—an estimated total of $264 million per year. On average, from 1994 through 2013, Montana districts spent 28% of the standard. Meeting the standard for its existing facilities would require an increase in annual average capital construction investments of about $191 million statewide or $1,338 per student.

New Construction to Meet Enrollment Growth

The National Center for Education Statistics projects that, between 2012 and 2024, Montana will experience a statewide total enrollment increase of 11,192 students or 7.8 percent. Montana should accordingly plan to spend an average of an additional $41 million per year for new facilities to accommodate the additional students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Seats¹</th>
<th>GSF per New Seat</th>
<th>Cost per GSF</th>
<th>Estimated 10-Year Cost</th>
<th>Estimated Annual Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8,954</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>$ 235</td>
<td>$413 M</td>
<td>$41 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) 80% of the projected increase in enrollment.

Projected Annual Gap in Facilities Spending and Investment

Including the costs of any new construction required to accommodate enrollment growth, Montana should plan to spend an average annual total of $502 million on its K–12 facilities. Based on historic rates of spending, meeting this standard would require spending an additional $272 million statewide or about $1,905 per student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K–12 Facilities Responsibilities</th>
<th>Modern Standards</th>
<th>Historic Spending</th>
<th>% of Standard</th>
<th>Projected Annual Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance &amp; Operations at 3% of CRV</td>
<td>$198 M</td>
<td>$158 M²</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>$40 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Construction Existing Facilities at 4% of CRV</td>
<td>$264 M</td>
<td>$73 M³</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>$232 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Facilities</td>
<td>$41 M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$503 M</td>
<td>$231 M</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$272 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) FY2011-13 average; (3) 20-year (FY1994–2013) average, including NEW construction.

Data Sources

- Basic state data are from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (2012-13) with charter school enrollment and number of schools included, when included in NCES state totals.
- Area of K-12 district building gross square footage (GSF) was calculated using 2012-13 enrollment and comparable state averages for gross square feet per student.
- Facilities maintenance and operation spending, capital investment, debt, and state capital revenue data are district reported on fiscal surveys (F-33) to the U.S. Census of Governments, published by NCES for fiscal years 1994-2013.
- Maintenance and operations spending and capital construction are adjusted to 2014 dollars, using the education adjusted Consumer Price Index, and the Turner Construction Index, respectively.
- The Percentage of new construction is based on Dodge Data & Analytics costs at contract start of public school districts’ school construction projects by project type and state and year (1995-2013).
- For purposes of clarity, the figures in this profile have been rounded.