

ISSUE BRIEF



KENTUCKY SCHOOL FACILITIES

2011 Kentucky Grade: B-

Date: February 1, 2011

Kentucky has 174 school districts that serve approximately 673,000 students in public schools that include regular, special education, vocational and alternative educational facilities.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Enrollment in Kentucky's schools during the last decade increased 2.8 percent and from 2000 to 2010; state enrollment in elementary and secondary schools increased by 40,000 students, a 6.3 percent increase. In FY2010, average per-student revenues were approximately \$2,300 less than the national average of \$13,673, while average per-student expense spending of \$9,325 was approximately \$1,181 less than the national average, excluding debt service, facilities and fund transfers. Kentucky translates 94 percent of per-student revenue to per-student expenditures, compared to the national average of 86 percent.

Kentucky's 1,197 school facilities are evaluated every four years using a grading system that ranges from "like new" to "needs replacement." Based on this assessment, only 1.4% (or 17 facilities) are in need of replacement. An additional 10% need major renovation. The rest are in acceptable or better condition.

Technology

Although technology is typically not considered part of the infrastructure, the following facts coupled with the statistics noted above indicate increasing demands for adequate electrical wiring and power in Kentucky's schools:

- 100 percent of schools have Internet access
- 100 percent of schools use email
- Ratio of students to modern, high-performance computers is 2.73-1, exceeding the goal of 6-1
- Ratio of teachers to modern, high-performance computers is 0.91-1, with a goal of 1-1
- 76 percent of all classrooms are considered "intelligent," with interactive, collaborative learning environments.

Investment Needs

Current estimates indicate that Kentucky faces a \$3.1 billion cost for school modernization, which includes \$2.4 billion for infrastructure and \$686 million for technology needs. The average per-student expenditure of \$6,829 needs to increase to \$7,015 in order to match the national average.

Meeting Modernization Needs

The Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Facilities Management, in partnership with local school districts, implements approximately 500 construction projects each year at a value of \$300 to \$350 million. Since 1993, approximately two-thirds of all public school construction has been renovation or addition to existing school sites, while the remaining third is new construction for growth and replacement.

Kentucky's school-building program is a partnership between local and state government with shared funding, responsibility and authority. Kentucky has three state-supported funding mechanisms:

- Capital Outlay – \$100 per student each year based on student attendance. Capital outlay is part of Support Educational Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK).
- Facility Support Program of Kentucky (FSPK) – Provides authority for local 5-cent tax per \$100 of assessed property value to be matched by state equalization to the state's average assessment per student. Funding is provided through SEEK.
- School Facilities Construction Commission (SFCC) – Assistance is provided based on facility needs.

Long-range district facility plans, which establish organizational structure, facilities, capacity and capital construction priorities, are required from all schools and districts. Decisions on new construction, renovation, organizational structures and consolidation are made locally. Evaluation of facilities is consistent using standard criteria and design professionals. Feasibility for renovation is provided for each school. The determination is based on the residual value of the facility and its ability to support a modern educational program.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUPPORTED BY ASCE

As Kentucky continues to grow and develop, the demand on the public school system will increase. A continued and concerted effort must be made by the commonwealth to ensure that funding and support are available for an adequate school system. ASCE recommends the following:

- Conduct a comprehensive, quantitative evaluation of the public school systems at regular intervals
- Encourage school districts to adopt and implement comprehensive maintenance and construction programs to allow for proper planning and capital reserve funding
- Encourage continued support and funding of the building aid program

GRADE

Approximately 1.4% (or 17 facilities) are in need of replacement. An additional 10% need major renovation. The rest are in acceptable or better condition. Apart from state funding support, each school district is allowed to assess a local 5-cent tax per \$100 of assessed property value to support construction.

Thus, Kentucky's school infrastructure is assigned a grade of B-.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The School Sub-Committee wants to recognize the Kentucky Department of Education for resources in compiling the report card.

KENTUCKY SCHOOL FACILITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

Michael Mulheirn, FCIQB, REFP, Committee Chair, Jefferson County Public Schools

Tommy Knoy, Jefferson County Public Schools

SOURCES

1. Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). 2010.