

# Pennsylvania

## State Roles and Responsibilities for PK-12 Public School Facilities



**2025 State Profile**



**National Center on  
School Infrastructure**



## Authors & Acknowledgements

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## Disclaimers

*This state profile represents our best understanding of state policies, standards, and laws governing public PK-12 educational facilities. Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the authors. This document should not be considered an officially approved statement of state policy.*

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**National Center on  
School Infrastructure**

The National Center on School Infrastructure is a national resource hub that supports states and school districts in the stewardship of America's elementary and secondary public school facilities.



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## PENNSYLVANIA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides an overview of the state of Pennsylvania's roles and responsibilities regarding public elementary and secondary (PK12) school facilities. It is part of a National Center on School Infrastructure technical assistance project to document public school facility policy and practice across all U.S. states and territories to help build state capacity for aiding districts in their efforts to provide students and staff with healthy, safe, resilient, and educationally adequate public school buildings and grounds.

In Pennsylvania, the governance and management of PK-12 public school facilities are primarily managed by school districts at the local level. Pennsylvania school districts have the authority and responsibility for the day-to-day operations and maintenance of public school facilities, as well as for their long-term planning, design, financing, and construction.

However, also assume a range of roles and responsibilities regarding the governance and management of school facilities. These include establishing and implementing state policies and practices to support local PK-12 public school facilities planning, facility data collection, capital and maintenance funding for buildings and grounds, facilities management, and facility standards and implementing systems for accountability.



Governance &  
Decision Making



Management



Data & Information



Planning



Funding



Accountability

State agencies may additionally offer technical assistance and training to help districts meet modern facility standards, mitigate risks, and enhance the overall quality of local stewardship for public school buildings and grounds. The extent of state involvement in public school facilities varies widely across states.



**Governance** The Pennsylvania General Assembly establishes education policy and appropriates the state share of funding for public schools. House and Senate Education and Appropriations Committees review and develop legislation and budget proposals, but final appropriations and policy decisions are made by the full House and Senate. The Governor submits an annual education budget and appoints the Secretary of Education and State Board of Education members pursuant to [24 P.S. § 26-2602-B](#) and [71 P.S. § 61](#). The State Board of Education, reconstituted by Act 299 of 1963, adopts statewide educational standards and issues a Master Plan for Basic Education every ten years under [24 P.S. § 26-2603-B\(i\)](#). The Secretary of Education oversees the administration of construction reimbursement programs, environmental grant initiatives and aligned programs at other state agencies, and statutory compliance through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Judicial decisions have reinforced the state's constitutional obligation under [Article III, § 14](#) to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities, including the condition of school facilities ([William Penn School District v. Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2023](#)). Regulatory oversight related to school construction involves the Pennsylvania Departments of Labor and Industry, General Services, and Environmental Protection. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) coordinates with these agencies to facilitate necessary approvals and timelines.

**Management** Day-to-day management of public school facilities is conducted by local education agencies (LEAs). School districts are responsible for maintenance, operations, capital planning, financing, construction, and renovation. State-level involvement is primarily tied to programs administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE reviews project documentation submitted through the Planning and Construction Workbook (PlanCon) process to verify eligibility for reimbursement under [24 P.S. § 25-2574](#) and [24 P.S. § 7-733](#), and to confirm that districts and career and technical centers (CTCs) have obtained necessary approvals from relevant regulatory authorities. The Secretary's Facilities Advisory Committee, established by [22 Pa. Code § 349.33](#), is authorized to advise PDE on school building standards and cost guidelines. In practice, input on these matters is often provided through other ad hoc committees and stakeholder engagement processes.



**Planning** School facility planning is primarily local in Pennsylvania. Districts develop capital plans and enrollment projections independently. While there is no general statutory requirement for districts to maintain or submit long-range master facility plans, project-specific planning studies are required when pursuing new construction. Under [22 Pa. Code §§ 21.21](#) and [21.24](#), proposals for new buildings must be supported by educational specifications and a substantiated demonstration of need. When seeking reimbursement through the [Planning and Construction Workbook](#) (PlanCon) process, districts must also submit district-wide planning documentation, including long-range capital planning, to establish project eligibility. When districts pursue PlanCon assistance, they must submit supporting documentation, including need justifications, educational specifications, and cost estimates. The State Board of Education's Master Plan for Basic Education, required every ten years under [24 P.S. § 26-2603-B\(i\)](#), identifies strategic priorities for the Commonwealth's public education system but does not establish binding facility planning requirements for school districts. Separately, under [22 Pa. Code Chapter 4](#), districts are required to submit rolling Comprehensive Plans to PDE that focus on curriculum and instructional goals; while not facilities-specific, these plans may inform local planning decisions. When the PlanCon process is available, PDE conducts and extrapolates enrollment projections to support project reviews. Districts may also submit enrollment analyses from independent sources as part of their applications.

**Data** Pennsylvania does not maintain statewide public school facility data. There is some historical project specific facility data collected through PlanCon. There was a one-time statewide school facilities cost study was conducted in 2014 pursuant to [Act 59 of 2013](#), but no recurring condition assessments or facilities collections are mandated by law. The Public School Building Construction and Reconstruction Advisory Committee recommended a web-based statewide data system in 2016, but this was not implemented. In 2023, PDE received a federal SASI grant to build internal capacity for facilities-related data collection, technical assistance, and planning support to high-need districts.

**Funding** School facility funding in Pennsylvania is primarily the responsibility of local school districts, which finance capital projects largely through locally raised revenue. The state provides supplemental support through limited reimbursement and competitive grant programs. Although new project approvals under the [Planning and](#)



[Construction Workbook](#) (PlanCon) system were suspended in FY2016 under [Act 25 of 2016](#), the state continues to make annual payments of approximately \$200 million on existing amortization schedules. [Act 70 of 2019](#) authorized a revised school construction reimbursement framework—commonly referred to as “[PlanCon 2.0](#)”—which included the creation of a new Maintenance Project Grant Program. However, no funding has been appropriated for these components as of 2025. In the absence of ongoing capital project approvals, the state has supported targeted investment through competitive programs such as the [Public School Environmental Repairs Program](#) and the [Public School Facility Improvement Grant Program](#). School districts generally issue bonds to finance capital improvements. The [State Public School Building Authority](#) (SPSBA) offers a low-interest, tax-exempt financing option for eligible projects, though it is used infrequently as private market rates are often comparable.

**Accountability** School facilities must comply with state and local codes governing construction, safety, health, and maintenance. All new construction and major renovations are subject to the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code ([Act 45 of 1999](#)), which incorporates the International Building Code and related standards. PDE reviews project plans for instructional adequacy and compliance with space and design standards under [22 Pa. Code §§ 349.1–349.44](#). Maintenance and operations standards are set forth in [24 P.S. § 7-701](#) and [25 Pa. Code Chapter 171](#), requiring districts to maintain safe, clean, and properly functioning facilities. Specific requirements govern pest management ([24 P.S. § 7-772.1](#)), lead testing in drinking water ([24 P.S. § 7-742](#)), and hazardous chemical management. Environmental and security-related improvements funded by state grants must meet program-specific criteria but are not mandated statewide unless tied to grant conditions.



# PENNSYLVANIA ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

## CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

Public education is a state responsibility established in the Pennsylvania State Constitution.

### Pa. Const. Art. 3, § 14

*“The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth.”*

This provision establishes the General Assembly’s constitutional obligation to maintain a statewide system of public education. While the Pennsylvania Constitution does not explicitly address school facilities, the General Assembly has implemented this responsibility through statutory provisions in the Public School Code of 1949. The Code requires each school district to provide and maintain “suitable school buildings” that offer “proper and healthful accommodations” for students ([24 P.S. § 7-701](#)).

## SCALE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL HOUSING

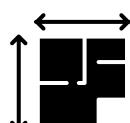
Pennsylvania’s 795 local education agencies (LEAs) reported to the U.S. Census of Governments that they operated 2,943 PK through 12th grade (and adult education) schools in fiscal year 2022. These districts enroll about 1,676,171 students and are the workplace for about 250,521 staff. These schools encompass about 302,964,800 million gross square feet of building space statewide. (1)



2,943  
Schools



795  
Districts



302,964,800  
Sq. Ft.



250,521  
Staff



1,676,171  
Students

*\*Estimated*

(1) Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey", FY2022; "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey", Fiscal Year 2022. State gross square feet of



building space, provided by National Council on School Facilities state officials, or estimated by the 21st Century School Fund based on estimates of gross square feet by student, multiplied by 2021-2022 enrollments. **Data includes charter students, schools, and districts.**

The following sections describe Pennsylvania's state-level roles and responsibilities for public school facilities.

## PENNSYLVANIA PK-12 PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES GOVERNANCE

*State-level engagement in PK-12 public school facilities is firmly embedded in state systems. State boards of education, state education agencies, state legislatures, governors, and in some cases, independent commissions and facilities authorities make decisions about state roles and responsibilities associated with the quality and delivery of public school facilities. These bodies govern through state codes, regulations, standards, and budgets, which direct and influence local policies and practices regarding public school buildings and grounds. In some states, education finance equity and adequacy court cases have also played a role in defining state responsibilities for public school facilities.*

### LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES AFFECTING FACILITIES

Several standing committees of the Pennsylvania General Assembly have jurisdiction over matters related to public school facilities:

- [House](#) and [Senate](#) Education Committees review legislation related to school construction, intermediate unit facility ownership, school safety infrastructure, and facility-related provisions of the Public School Code.
- [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations **Committees** review and recommend funding proposals for capital and environmental improvements to school facilities. Final appropriations are enacted by the full House and Senate.
- [House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee](#) may consider legislation relevant to environmental conditions in schools, such as air and water quality, asbestos, and lead exposure.



These committees exercise legislative authority over education policy, appropriations, and environmental legislation that affect public school facility construction, renovation, and maintenance, subject to approval by the full General Assembly.

## **STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Pennsylvania [State Board of Education](#) was reconstituted by Act 299 of 1963 and currently operates under [Article XXVI-B](#) of the Public School Code of 1949 ([24 P.S. § 26-2602-B – 26-2606-B](#)). The Board consists of 21 members: 17 citizen members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and 4 legislative members (two from the Senate and two from the House of Representatives). Appointed members serve six-year terms; legislative members serve terms concurrent with their elected office (24 P.S. § 26-2602-B(a)–(b)).

The Board is divided into two councils: the Council of Basic Education and the Council of Higher Education. The Council of Basic Education is responsible for regulations pertaining to pre-kindergarten through grade 12, which may include matters affecting school facilities (24 P.S. § 26-2602-B(f)(1)).

Under 24 P.S. § 26-2603-B(a), the Board is authorized to "adopt broad policies and principles and establish standards governing the educational program of the Commonwealth." While this authority does not explicitly name physical school facilities, it has been interpreted to allow the Board to adopt regulations that relate to the physical environment where education occurs, particularly through curriculum requirements that influence space and design (e.g., science labs or technology education areas).

The Board's regulatory authority is subject to the Commonwealth's regulatory review process under the Regulatory Review Act ([71 P.S. §§ 745.1–745.15](#)), which includes review by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Office of Attorney General, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC), and standing committees of the General Assembly.

Pursuant to 24 P.S. § 26-2603-B(d), the Board is responsible for studying and evaluating the educational program of the Commonwealth and making



recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. While not facility-specific, these evaluations occasionally include discussion of infrastructure challenges as they relate to educational quality.

In its most recent *Master Plan for Basic Education* (2018), the Board noted the significance of school facilities in supporting educational programming, including the need for spaces that accommodate STEM education and technological integration. The plan also acknowledged disparities in local capacity to modernize facilities and suggested the need for broader state support.

### **SECRETARY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The [Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education](#) is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, as established by [71 P.S. § 61](#) (Administrative Code of 1929, § 201). As the chief executive officer of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the Secretary is responsible for executing education laws and administering programs established by statute. The Secretary also serves as a member of the State Board of Education pursuant to [24 P.S. § 26-2603-B\(a\)](#).

Under [24 P.S. § 25-2574](#), the Secretary has administrative responsibilities related to the reimbursement of approved school construction projects. This includes certifying reimbursable costs and overseeing the approval process for plans and specifications submitted by school districts. When the [Planning and Construction Workbook](#) (PlanCon) process is active, the Secretary approves each applicable phase, including planning, design, bidding, and occupancy stages.

According to [24 P.S. § 7-733](#), the Secretary of Education is responsible for determining whether school construction projects are eligible for reimbursement under the Public School Code. As part of this review, PDE evaluates whether submitted plans align with educational program requirements and applicable facility guidelines. While regulations adopted by the State Board and administered by PDE must be reviewed and approved by the Secretary, districts are responsible for securing and attesting to compliance with all applicable requirements from other regulatory agencies.



The Secretary may also administer facility-related grant programs when authorized by statute or through annual appropriations. For example, the [2023-24 General Appropriations Act](#) allocated funds for the [School Environmental Repairs Program](#), which PDE administers under the Secretary's authority. In such cases, the Secretary may issue administrative guidance, application procedures, and final funding determinations. However, not all facility-related grants are administered through PDE. Some programs, such as those operated by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), accept applications from districts but are awarded based on legislative direction, with funding decisions made by legislative committees and included in the state budget.

## **GUBERNATORIAL ROLE IN SCHOOL FACILITIES**

The [Governor of Pennsylvania](#) has formal responsibilities related to school facilities through budgetary authority, appointments, and emergency management powers. Under [Pa. Const. art. VIII, § 12](#), the Governor is required to submit an annual budget to the General Assembly. This includes proposed appropriations for the Department of Education and facility-related funding programs such as capital project reimbursements or environmental remediation grants.

The Governor appoints the Secretary of Education, who is responsible for the administration of school facility-related programs ([71 P.S. § 61](#)), and nominates members of the State Board of Education, subject to Senate confirmation, under [24 P.S. § 26-2602-B](#). These appointments directly affect the leadership responsible for adopting and implementing school construction standards and facility-related regulations.

In a declared disaster emergency, the Governor has broad powers under the [Emergency Management Services Code](#) to coordinate the Commonwealth's response, including actions affecting public school facilities. Under [35 Pa. Stat. § 7301\(f\)\(5\) and \(7\)](#), the Governor may authorize the use of state funds and commandeer property or equipment as necessary to protect public safety. This authority allows for emergency repairs to damaged school buildings, the deployment of temporary educational structures, or the relocation of students



and staff if facilities are deemed hazardous or uninhabitable. The Governor may also direct the Pennsylvania Department of Education or other state agencies to support affected districts through expedited approvals, waivers, or emergency funding.

### **SECRETARY'S FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Secretary's Facilities Advisory Committee is a standing body established under [22 Pa. Code § 349.33](#) to assist the Pennsylvania Department of Education with the review and implementation of school building standards. The committee is convened by the Secretary of Education and is composed of individuals with expertise in school facilities and construction, including architects, engineers, teachers, school administrators, school board members, medical professionals, and members of the public.

Under the regulation, the committee is responsible for reviewing the Department's school building standards and cost guidelines at least once every three years. It also prepares an annual report to the Secretary that evaluates current guidance and may include recommendations for changes to construction standards, cost control measures, or design practices. While these reports are required by regulation, they are not publicly available through the Department's website or other standard public sources.

### **AD HOC COMMITTEES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS**

#### *PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (2016-2018)*

The [Pennsylvania Public School Building Construction and Reconstruction Advisory Committee](#) was established under [Act 25 of 2016](#) to review and evaluate the state's Planning and Construction Workbook (PlanCon) program. The 16-member committee included the chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations and Education Committees, the Secretary of Education, and appointed representatives from statewide education organizations and state agencies. The committee conducted hearings across the state and released its [final report](#) in May 2018..



The committee recommended reducing the number of PlanCon steps from 11 to 4 to streamline administrative procedures and reduce project delays. It also proposed revising the reimbursement formula to account for factors such as district wealth and project cost and recommended creating a small project grant program to support school maintenance and emergency repairs.

#### *THE BASIC EDUCATION FUNDING COMMISSION (BEFC)*

##### **First Commission (2014–2015)**

The [Basic Education Funding Commission](#) was established under [Act 51 of 2014](#) to develop a formula for distributing basic education funding based on student and community characteristics. The 15-member bipartisan commission included the chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees, appointees from each of the four legislative caucuses, and three representatives from the executive branch.

The commission held public hearings and issued a final report in [June 2015](#), recommending a weighted student formula incorporating factors such as student poverty, English learner status, district sparsity and density, and local tax effort and capacity. The General Assembly adopted the formula in 2016, and it has been used to guide the distribution of new basic education funding since the 2015–16 fiscal year.

##### **Second Commission (2023–2024)**

Following the Commonwealth Court's decision in [William Penn School District v. Pennsylvania Department of Education](#), the BEFC was reconvened in 2023 by agreement of legislative leaders and the Governor, although no new statute was enacted to authorize its reestablishment. The reconvened commission retained its previous structure and membership.

The commission conducted a second round of hearings and released its final report in [January 2024](#). The report recommended a revised funding formula that included adequacy targets for each district, a proposed state share of funding based on local fiscal capacity, and increased investment for historically underfunded districts. The report also addressed infrastructure disparities, recommending increased state support for school facility improvements in low-wealth communities.



## JUDICIAL DECISIONS AFFECTING FACILITIES

Pennsylvania's system for funding public education has been the subject of several constitutional challenges. Plaintiffs in these cases have raised concerns about the adequacy and equity of education funding, and school facility conditions were frequently presented as evidence of disparities. Until recently, Pennsylvania courts consistently declined to intervene in school finance matters, treating them as legislative questions.

In *Danson v. Casey*, 484 Pa. 415 (1979), the Pennsylvania Supreme Court reviewed a claim brought on behalf of students in the School District of Philadelphia. The plaintiffs alleged that the state's education funding system violated Article III, § 14 of the Pennsylvania Constitution by creating significant disparities that resulted in inadequate educational opportunities and facility conditions. The Court rejected the claim, ruling that the Constitution does not require equal per-pupil funding and holding that education funding decisions were within the exclusive authority of the legislature.

In *Marrero v. Commonwealth*, 709 A.2d 956 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1998), aff'd, 739 A.2d 110 (Pa. 1999), the plaintiffs again challenged the state funding system on behalf of students in under-resourced schools. They argued that the system violated both the Pennsylvania Constitution's education clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Commonwealth Court dismissed the case, and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court affirmed the dismissal, reaffirming *Danson* and holding that judicial review of education funding adequacy was not authorized under the state constitution.

A similar challenge was brought in *Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARRS) v. Ridge*, No. 11 M.D. 1991 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1998), on behalf of small and rural school districts. The plaintiffs argued that the state's funding structure resulted in substandard educational conditions, including inadequate facilities. The Commonwealth Court dismissed the case, again finding that such matters were nonjusticiable and reserved for the General Assembly.

The Pennsylvania courts' treatment of education funding claims changed with *William Penn School District v. Pennsylvania Department of Education*, No. 587 M.D. 2014 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2023). On February 7, 2023, the Commonwealth



Court issued a decision holding that the state's education funding system violated Article III, § 14 of the Pennsylvania Constitution. The court found that the system did not provide all students with access to a "thorough and efficient" education and cited disparities in school resources between wealthier and lower-wealth districts. The court considered multiple factors in its analysis, including testimony related to school facilities. Evidence presented at trial included examples of building deterioration, HVAC failures, and infrastructure deficiencies that, along with other educational inputs, contributed to a finding that the constitutional standard was not being met.

Following the *William Penn* decision, the Commonwealth began taking steps to respond to the court's findings. In 2023, Governor Josh Shapiro's administration proposed an increase of approximately \$1.1 billion in basic education funding as part of the state budget, with the stated intent of addressing funding disparities identified in the ruling. In addition, a legislative commission—referred to as the Basic Education Funding Commission—was reconvened to hold hearings and develop recommendations for a revised funding formula that aligns with constitutional requirements.

## **PENNSYLVANIA PK-12 PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

*Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have authority and responsibility for the day-to-day operations and maintenance of public school facilities, as well as for long-term facilities planning, design, financing, and construction. Although PK-12 public school facilities are managed locally, there are state facilities management roles and responsibilities that may involve strategic planning, data collection, state funding programs, standards and systems for accountability. State agencies may also include programs for technical assistance and training that help districts meet standards, mitigate risk, and increase the quality of local district stewardship of public school buildings and grounds. State roles and responsibilities related to elementary and secondary public school facilities vary widely across the U.S. states, with unitary districts in Hawaii and U.S. Territories, where the state agency and the local agency are combined.*



## PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#) (PDE) has responsibilities related to public school facilities under the Public School Code of 1949 and corresponding state regulations. PDE administers the Planning and Construction Workbook process for school districts seeking state reimbursement for eligible construction and renovation costs. Under [24 P.S. § 25-2574](#), the Department calculated reimbursements using a formula based on enrollment and approved building costs, including statutory cost allowances and square footage limits. Districts were required to demonstrate that local due diligence had occurred regarding project necessity, financial responsibility, and compliance with applicable building codes and construction standards.

Through its review process, PDE evaluated documentation submitted by districts at multiple stages of project development. These reviews included planning justification, schematic design, bidding results, and final cost certification. PDE verified that the project complied with regulatory requirements before certifying reimbursement eligibility under [24 P.S. § 7-733](#).

PDE conducted these reviews in accordance with [22 Pa. Code Chapter 349.32](#), which sets minimum requirements for public school buildings. These regulations address topics such as site planning, classroom design, building accessibility, and safety. While these standards are adopted by the State Board of Education, PDE is responsible for reviewing project submissions for regulatory compliance when construction reimbursement programs are active.

In addition to its responsibilities under PlanCon, PDE administers facility-related initiatives as directed by the General Assembly. For example, under Act 33 of 2023, PDE was charged with implementing the [Public School Environmental Repairs Program](#), which provides grant funding for the remediation of environmental hazards in public school buildings, including—but not limited to—lead, asbestos, and mold. In this capacity, PDE is responsible for issuing application guidance, evaluating project proposals, and overseeing grant implementation in accordance with the terms of the enabling legislation and appropriations.



PDE continues to maintain administrative procedures for construction reimbursements, environmental grant management, and oversight of public school facility standards, consistent with its statutory and regulatory responsibilities.

#### *SUPPORTING AMERICA'S SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE (SASI) INITIATIVE*

The [Supporting America's School Infrastructure](#) (SASI) grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to help state education agencies build internal capacity to support high-need school districts in addressing deficiencies in public school buildings and grounds. Funds awarded through the SASI program may not be used for direct construction or renovation. Instead, they are intended to strengthen state-level administrative infrastructure, including data systems, technical assistance networks, and cross-agency coordination to support local efforts.

In 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Education was awarded a five-year, \$2.64 million SASI grant to improve its ability to assist districts with school infrastructure needs. Without a legislative mandate to collect facilities data and without dedicated personnel for infrastructure support, the Department previously lacked the internal capacity to provide ongoing technical assistance to districts in partnership with Penn State University. The SASI grant will support the establishment of a dedicated team and the development of a statewide learning network to provide technical assistance, peer collaboration, and training on facility planning, environmental health, and capital management. The grant also supports improved collection, management, and use of school facility data to inform future policy and funding decisions.

## **PENNSYLVANIA PK — 12 SCHOOL FACILITIES DATA MANAGEMENT**

*Extensive data and information are needed for educational facility planning, decision making, and oversight. Relevant data helps stakeholders understand the broad impacts of their PK -12 infrastructure spending and investments on health, education, community and beyond. Facilities data falls into five major categories: ([NCES Forum Guide to Facilities Information Management](#)).*



**Inventory:** Data include addresses, geo-codes, building areas, site acreage, and year of construction.

**Design:** Data include space descriptions, number of stories, designed-for purposes (i.e., elementary school, performance center).

**Utilization:** Data includes school capacity for enrollment based on the educational programs provided, spaces that are shared, and the gross square footage per enrolled student.

**Condition:** Data includes facility condition assessment data on the age and condition of major components, systems, and finishes.

**Budget and Finance:** Data elements include the district expenditures for maintenance, operations, and capital improvements.

Beyond these standard data sets, an increasing amount of data is also being collected and analyzed on building performance. This includes data on building performance metrics for energy efficiency, indoor air quality, lead levels in water, and the presence of hazardous materials like asbestos, mold, or PCBs.

## ENROLLMENT DATA

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) collects student enrollment counts from school districts through the [Pennsylvania Information Management System](#) (PIMS). Districts are required to submit an October 1 “Student Snapshot,” which serves as the official record of enrollment for state reporting. These data are maintained and published by the PDE in annual enrollment reports.

For the purposes of calculating state subsidies, the School Code requires computation of Average Daily Membership (ADM). The statutory authority for ADM is established in [24 Pa. Stat. § 25-2501](#), with further detail provided in [22 Pa. Code §§ 329.2–329.3](#), which define and govern the computation of both ADM and Weighted ADM (WADM). The PDE calculates and publishes these measures annually as part of its financial data reporting. Student admission, residency, and attendance requirements are set forth in [22 Pa. Code Chapter 11](#). These regulations establish the framework districts must follow when maintaining enrollment records.

## INVENTORY DATA

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) maintains the [Official Public School File](#), also referred to as EdNA, as the administrative directory of schools



in the Commonwealth. The directory includes information such as school name, address, grade span, principal, and school category. The authority for collecting this information derives from [24 Pa. Stat. § 10-1006](#) which authorizes the Secretary of Education to require district superintendents to furnish reports and information upon request. The statute provides general authority but does not prescribe specific data elements for the directory.

There is no statutory or regulatory requirement for school entities to submit a facility-level inventory that includes building age, square footage, acreage, or condition. The PDE does not maintain a statewide facilities inventory.

#### DESIGN DATA

Design information is submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education only when school entities pursue projects that require Department approval or are eligible for reimbursement. Under [22 Pa. Code § 21.31](#), districts must submit site plans, maps, and supporting data when seeking approval of a new school building project. [22 Pa. Code § 21.32](#), reserved in code but currently inactive, further requires submission of preliminary architectural drawings and related information for Department review.

When state reimbursement is available, further design-related information must be submitted through the Planning and Construction Workbook (PlanCon), as authorized in [24 Pa. Stat. §§ 26-2602-J](#) and [26-2606-J](#). PlanCon forms require data such as building layouts, space documentation, and cost details to determine eligibility for reimbursement. These design data submissions occur only when projects are subject to PDE approval or reimbursement review and are not compiled into a statewide dataset of facility design characteristics.

#### CONDITION DATA

The Pennsylvania Department of Education does not operate a recurring statewide collection of facility condition data. Information on existing building conditions is required only when districts seek reimbursement for school construction or reconstruction projects. Under the Planning and Construction Workbook (PlanCon), districts must provide documentation on the status of current facilities as part of the application process.



[Act 59 of 2013](#) (HB 2, 2013) directed PDE to contract for a one-time school facilities cost study. In 2014, the Department published the resulting report prepared by Public Financial Management (PFM), which included data from 1,194 buildings across 498 school districts. The study collected limited information on factors such as building age, enrollment, and rated capacity, and was not designed as a comprehensive assessment of facility conditions statewide.

In 2016, the [Pennsylvania Public School Building Construction and Reconstruction Advisory Committee](#) established under [Act 70 of 2013](#), released a [final report](#) recommending the development of a web-based facility data system to support future planning and oversight.

#### BUDGET AND FINANCE DATA

School entities are required to submit annual financial reports to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Under [24 Pa. Stat. § 2-218](#), each school district, charter school, and area vocational-technical school must file an annual report of receipts, expenditures, and indebtedness. Intermediate units are subject to a similar requirement under [24 Pa. Stat. § 9-921-A](#).

The PDE prescribes the format of these submissions through the Manual of Accounting and Financial Reporting and the Chart of Accounts, which specify standard account codes for recording expenditures. The annual financial report (AFR) includes data on current expenditures, such as operations and maintenance, as well as capital outlay and debt service. The PDE compiles and publishes [AFR Data Files](#) in summary and detailed form for all school entities each fiscal year.

## PENNSYLVANIA PK — 12 SCHOOL FACILITIES PLANNING

*School facilities require planning at many different levels to meet educational and community purposes. Educational facilities planning is needed for facilities operations, maintenance, and capital projects. Planning PK- 12 public school facilities enables states, districts, and communities to align their resources to their needs, ensure that priorities are met fairly, and that facilities are operated, managed, and built to modern health, safety, educational, and environmental standards.*



School facility planning in Pennsylvania is primarily conducted at the local level. School districts are responsible for assessing existing building needs, projecting future enrollment, and developing capital investment plans. There is no statutory requirement for districts to prepare or submit long-range facility master plans or capital improvement plans to the state for review. However, several state-level processes and entities provide oversight or guidance when state reimbursement or discretionary grant funding is sought.

#### OPERATIONS PLANNING

Pennsylvania does not require school entities to prepare or submit operations plans to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. General authority over the management and control of school property and operations is vested in local boards of school directors under [24 Pa. Stat. §§ 5-510](#) and [7-701](#).

State law includes planning requirements in the area of school safety. Under [24 Pa. Stat. § 13-1309-B](#), each school entity must appoint a school safety and security coordinator responsible for reviewing policies and procedures and coordinating safety functions. [Article XIII-E](#) further requires each school entity to establish at least one threat assessment team and adopt procedures for assessing and responding to threats ([24 Pa. Stat. §§ 13-1302-E](#), [13-1303-E](#)).

#### CAPITAL PLANNING

Pennsylvania requires capital planning submissions only when school entities seek state reimbursement for construction or renovation projects. Under [24 Pa. Stat. §§ 26-2602-J](#) and [26-2606-J](#), districts applying for reimbursement must provide documentation through the [Planning and Construction Workbook](#) (PlanCon). The PlanCon process requires information on project justification, facility condition, educational program need, enrollment projections, and cost estimates.

The original PlanCon framework included eleven parts and served as the basis for project approval and reimbursement until it was suspended in the 2015–2016 fiscal year. In 2019, the General Assembly enacted [Act 70](#), which authorized development of a revised reimbursement program. The Public School Building Construction and Reconstruction Advisory Committee, established under Act 70, recommended a four-phase process, commonly



referred to as PlanCon 2.0, consisting of planning, design, construction, and completion. Although authorized, the revised process has not been funded or implemented as of 2025.

Capital planning requirements, therefore, apply only when state reimbursement is available. There is no statutory requirement for districts to submit capital plans to the Department of Education outside the reimbursement process.

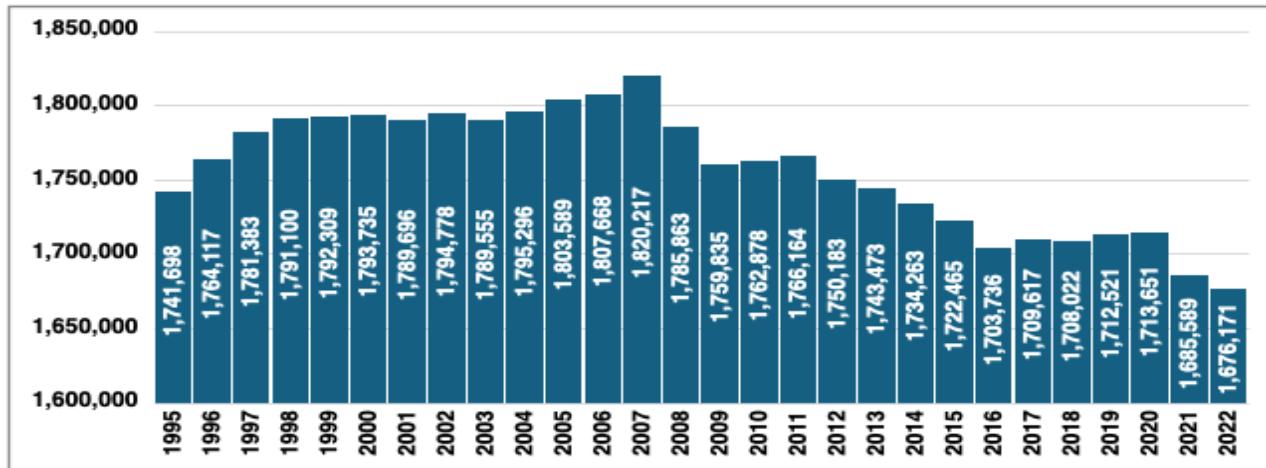
#### EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES MASTER PLANNING

At the state level, the only long-range planning requirement that may address facilities is the [Master Plan for Basic Education](#), which the State Board of Education must adopt at least every ten years under [24 Pa. Stat. § 26-2603-B\(i\)](#). The plan is intended to guide the Governor, General Assembly, and public education institutions on long-term educational priorities. While the statute does not prescribe facility-specific requirements, the plan may include references to school infrastructure as part of broader educational policy.

PDE conducts enrollment studies and projections which inform educational facility planning at the state and local levels. However, the long-range school facility planning which uses enrollment projections is done locally. Key factors considered in facility planning include enrollment trends, building condition, educational programs and services, and community use. Historical patterns in enrollment, birth rates, and family migration are commonly used to develop enrollment projections. School districts are responsible for generating their own projections—often with assistance from regional intermediate units or third-party consultants—for use in local decision-making. These locally developed projections are submitted to PDE only when part of a capital project application.



## CHART 1: STUDENT ENROLLMENT SCHOOL YEARS 1994-1995 THRU 2021-2022



Source: Data from the U.S. Census of Governments Fiscal Survey; [www.school-infrastructure.org](http://www.school-infrastructure.org) Data Dashboard, of the National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI).

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The [Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency](#) (PEMA) provides planning tools and technical support to help school districts develop emergency operations plans, as required under [35 Pa. Stat. § 7701](#) and related regulations. While PEMA's support primarily addresses emergency preparedness and continuity of operations, these efforts may intersect with school facility planning, particularly where structural safety, evacuation capacity, or sheltering requirements are involved.

### PENNSYLVANIA PK-12 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES FUNDING

*School facilities are funded with annually budgeted operating funds for utilities, cleaning, groundskeeping, maintenance and repairs; and periodically budgeted, and usually bond financed, capital funds, for school design, construction, renovation and major repair projects. State laws define how districts get access to local financing for school construction capital projects and whether or how states distribute state school construction funding. Federal funding for school construction is minimal—before pandemic funding—it was less than 2% of what districts paid for school construction capital outlay, with a major share of federal funding for rebuilding schools post weather related disasters.*

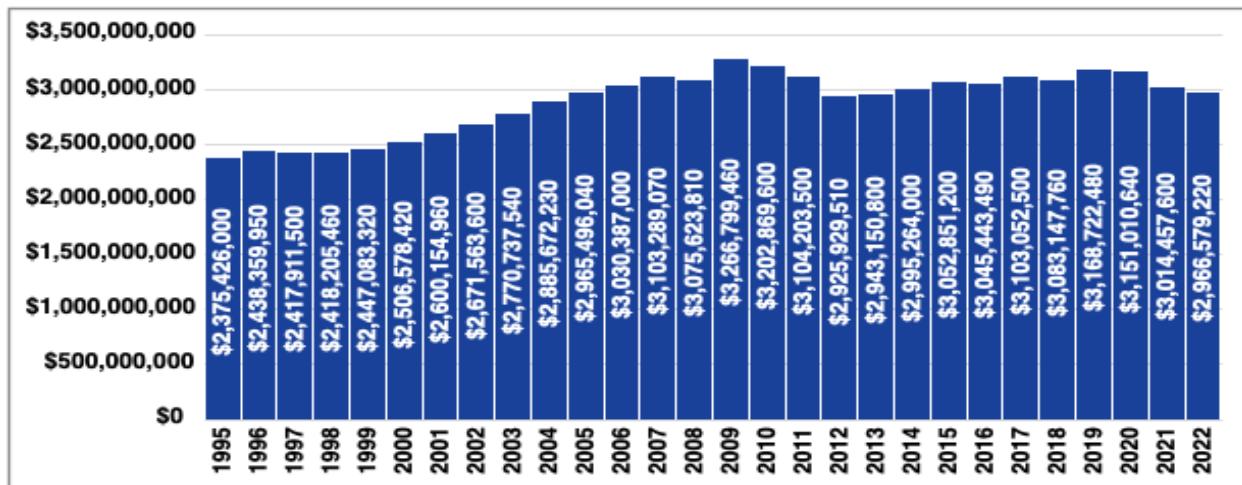


## MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS FUNDING

Maintenance and Operations expenditures include payment for utilities, custodial staff and services, groundskeeping, related custodial and repair materials, equipment, and maintenance contracts, as well as spending for security personnel, materials, and services.

Chart 2 displays local education agencies annual facilities maintenance and operations expenditures for fiscal years 1995-2022 adjusted to 2024\$ with the Consumer Price Index. They are inflation-adjusted to better inform comparisons over the 27 years. In fiscal year 2022 local education agencies reported to the U.S. Census of Governments and the National Center for Education Statistics that they spent nearly \$3 billion for M&O—an average of \$1,770 per 2021-2022 student.

**CHART 2: M&O SPENDING, FY1995-FY2022 (INFLATION-ADJUSTED 2024 DOLLARS)**



Source: Data from the U.S. Census of Governments Fiscal Survey; actual M&O spending data available at [www.school-infrastructure.org](http://www.school-infrastructure.org) Data Dashboard, of the National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI).

In Pennsylvania, state-level funding for the maintenance and operations of public K-12 school facilities is limited. The primary state program specifically targeting maintenance needs is the Maintenance Project Grant Program (MPGP), established under Act 70 of 2019.



#### *THE MAINTENANCE PROJECT GRANT PROGRAM*

The [Maintenance Grant Program](#) (MPGP) was established under [Act 70 of 2019](#) as a standalone program intended to support smaller-scale school repair and maintenance projects that fall outside the scope of the Planning and Construction Workbook (PlanCon) process. The statute specified that 25% of any PlanCon appropriation would be allocated to the MPGP. However, no funds were appropriated for PlanCon or the MPGP, and the program was never implemented. It was intended to launch in 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of budget action left the program unfunded and effectively shelved.

The MPGP, if funded, would have provided support for projects such as roof repairs and replacements, HVAC systems, boilers and controls, plumbing upgrades, energy-saving measures, and health and safety improvements. The program also included provisions for emergency repairs and other projects approved by the Secretary of Education. Each project award would have been capped at \$1 million, with a 50% local match required unless the project qualified as an emergency. At least 20% of program funds were to be directed toward projects enhancing school building safety. Awards were to be made on a competitive basis using criteria such as district wealth, prior receipt of awards, building conditions, emergency needs, and safety considerations.

Although Act 70 remains the authorizing statute for the MPGP, the program has not received any funding and remains inactive as of 2025.

#### *SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL REPAIRS PROGRAM*

The [Public School Environmental Repairs Program](#) was established under [Article XXVI - L](#) of the Public School Code and funded by a one-time appropriation of \$75 million in the 2023–2024 state budget. This program supports voluntary compliance with environmental health goals by offering financial support for corrective measures. Administered by PDE, the program provides competitive grants for the abatement or remediation of environmental hazards in school facilities, including lead in drinking water or paint, asbestos, and mold.

Eligible applicants include school districts, area career and technical schools, and charter schools. PDE is required to prioritize projects that present the greatest risk of exposure, based on criteria established in statute. Grants may not exceed \$10 million per award, and applicants are required to provide a 50%



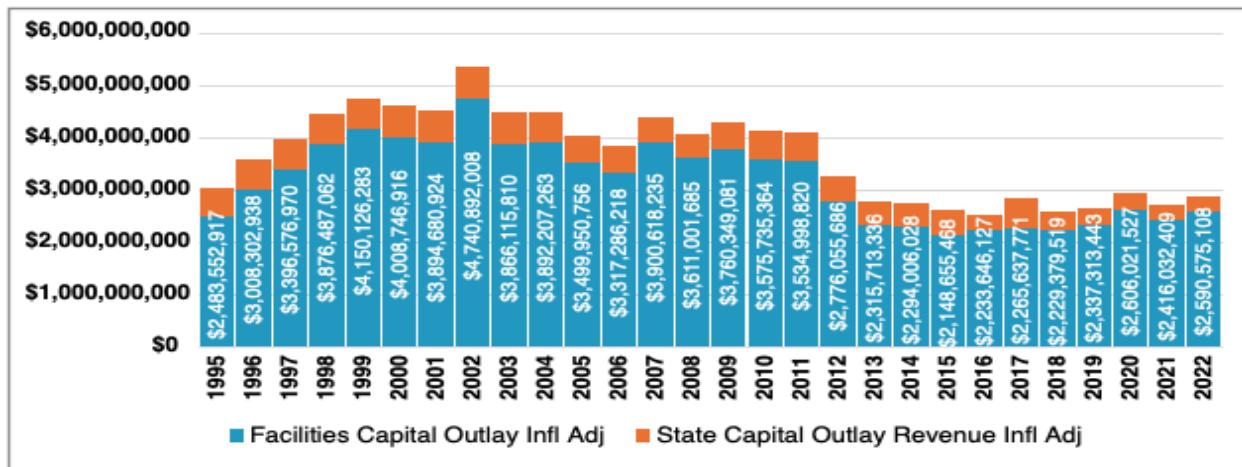
non-state match. The appropriation, received in December 2023, is available for eligible expenditures incurred on or after July 1, 2023, and may be used through fiscal years 2023–24, 2024–25, and 2025–26. PDE is responsible for issuing guidelines and administering the competitive application process.

## **FACILITIES CAPITAL FUNDING**

In addition to annual operating funds for facilities, school districts are responsible for the long-range planning, design, financing, construction, and major renovation and systems renewals of public school buildings and grounds. These capital outlay expenditures are used for new school construction, as well as for such items as roof replacements and upgrades to mechanical systems. Chart 3 shows school construction and other equipment capital expenditures from 1995 through fiscal year 2022 (inflated to 2024\$ with the Turner Construction Cost Index) and the share of these expenditures paid for with state revenue for capital outlay and debt service. In 2022, the facilities capital outlay for school construction and other equipment expended by Pennsylvania local school districts was nearly \$2.6 billion (inflation-adjusted dollars). This excludes the cost of land, existing structures, and instructional equipment reported as part of the total capital outlay by school districts to the U.S. Census of Governments.



### CHART 3: CAPITAL OUTLAY FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER EQUIPMENT FY 1995 – FY 2002 (IN 2024\$)



Source: Data from the U.S. Census of Governments Fiscal Survey; actual Capital Outlay spending data available at [www.school-infrastructure.org](http://www.school-infrastructure.org) Data Dashboard, of the National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI).

Pennsylvania provides limited state-level funding for public school facility capital improvements. Most public school construction is financed through local revenue and debt issuance, however, the state has historically supplemented local efforts through a combination of reimbursement programs and competitive grant initiatives. Up until 2016, PlanCon was the primary state capital funding program. It was a formula-based reimbursement program that provided partial state funding for eligible school construction and renovation projects. However, in 2016 pursuant to Act 25 of 2016 the state now only continues to pay reimbursements on existing debt service amortization schedules and has funded no new PlanCon projects since 2016. Competitive grant programs have since provided targeted support for specific facility needs, but these programs are not funded on a continuous basis and remain subject to annual legislative appropriation.

#### *PLANCON REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM*

The PlanCon (Planning and Construction Workbook) program in Pennsylvania serves primarily as a debt reimbursement program for school construction projects. Under this system, school districts finance construction through debt mechanisms, typically issuing bonds. The state reimburses a portion of the district's debt service costs related to principal and interest payments on these



bonds with reimbursement amounts determined by factors such as project eligibility, rated enrollment capacity, and the district's wealth, among other calculations, as outlined in [24 P.S. § 25-2574](#). While the state provides financial relief, districts remain responsible for managing their debt obligations, with reimbursement occurring over time based on their eligibility and debt payments.

Established under [Act 34 of 1973](#) and overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), PlanCon was established to enable school districts to obtain reimbursement for construction and renovation projects through a detailed, multi-part process. School districts seeking state reimbursement for major construction projects must follow the PlanCon process ([24 P.S. § 26-2606-J](#)). Local education agencies (LEAs) must submit documentation to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) demonstrating project necessity, regulatory compliance, and eligibility for reimbursement based on the state's formula. Approved projects receive the lower of the calculated formula amount or less than 65% of the total structural cost ([24 P.S. § 26-2606-J](#); [24 P.S. § 7-732.1](#)). A wealth factor is included in the reimbursement formula to adjust funding based on local economic conditions ([24 P.S. § 26-2606-J](#)). The state also provides a financial incentive for school district consolidation. If two or more districts merge and at least one was previously eligible for small district assistance payments, the new district continues receiving such payments for the first five years ([24 P.S. § 2-233](#)).

Due to budget constraints, new PlanCon applications were halted in 2015–2016 through a legislative moratorium enacted under [Act 25 of 2016](#), although PDE has continued processing reimbursements for previously approved projects. In response to stakeholder feedback on the program's complexity and the growing backlog of applications, the General Assembly enacted [Act 70 of 2019](#), which authorized a revised school construction reimbursement process—commonly referred to as PlanCon 2.0. The revised framework was intended to streamline application stages, improve reimbursement calculations, and expand eligibility through the creation of a new Maintenance Project Grant Program for critical infrastructure repairs. However, neither the restructured PlanCon process nor the [Maintenance Program](#) was funded or implemented, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent budgetary constraints.



#### *PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM*

The [Public School Facility Improvement Grant Program](#) was created under Section 1753.2-E of Subarticle E of Act 34 of 2023 ([72 P.S. §1753.2-E](#)) and is administered by the [Commonwealth Financing Authority](#) (CFA) in collaboration with the [Department of Community and Economic Development](#) (DCED). The program provides competitive grants to public school districts and area career and technical schools for capital improvements that promote health, safety, accessibility, and educational adequacy.

Eligible projects include HVAC and roof replacement, plumbing and electrical upgrades, lead and asbestos remediation, accessibility improvements, internet infrastructure, emergency repairs, and demolition of unsafe structures. The program caps individual awards at \$5 million per project, and no school entity may receive more than 20% of total available funds in a given fiscal year. A 25% local match is generally required, though this may be waived for financially distressed districts or emergency projects. Applications must include supporting documentation such as condition assessments and project funding plans and are submitted through DCED's online portal.

Across the 2023–24 and 2024–25 fiscal years, a total of \$175 million was appropriated for facility improvement programs. Of this, \$100 million was allocated to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for the Public School Facility Improvement Grant Program, and \$75 million was appropriated to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the School Environmental Repairs Program. These programs support remediation of environmental hazards and other critical school facility needs.

#### *SOLAR FOR SCHOOLS GRANT PROGRAM*

The [Solar for Schools Grant Program](#), established by the Solar for Schools Act in July 2024, is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and provides financial support for K–12 public schools to install solar energy systems. The program prioritizes schools located near decommissioned coal-fired power plants and those eligible for federal low-income energy tax credits.

Grants may be used for feasibility studies, system design, and installation. Awards may cover up to 50% of total project costs and may be combined with



federal funding sources such as the Inflation Reduction Act. Projects must comply with prevailing wage requirements and other applicable state procurement laws. Public reporting of awarded projects, including total project costs and incentives received, is available through state agency platforms.

## **FACILITIES FINANCING**

School districts often finance their school construction and major capital projects through long-term debt, as the useful life of school buildings and improvements typically spans several decades. The state does not have a dedicated revenue source for school construction beyond general fund appropriations. When the PlanCon program was active, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provided partial reimbursement for eligible projects, typically covering approximately 20% of principal and interest over the life of a district's bond amortization schedule. Reimbursement levels varied based on district aid ratios and project characteristics.

### *LOCAL DISTRICT FACILITIES FINANCING*

Pennsylvania school districts support school construction financing through bond issuance. The level of debt, and how districts can access the bond markets is defined in the [Local Government Unit Debt Act](#). The State Public School Building Authority is authorized to issue tax exempt municipal bonds to fund school facility construction and improvements ([24 P.S. § 791.1 et seq.](#)). However, these bonds do not carry the full faith and credit of the state government ([24 P.S. § 791.4](#)). They are secured with local credit obligations. At the local level, school districts must obtain voter approval to issue debt for school construction projects through a simple majority vote ([24 P.S. § 6-632](#); [24 P.S. § 523](#)). School entities seeking reimbursement must submit applications to PDE, which if funded by the legislature, approves projects that meet state standards and have the necessary local and regional approvals (24 P.S. § 26-2602-J; 22 Pa. Code §§ 21.71, 21.81).

The level of school district long term debt varies widely across states and districts. Pennsylvania local education agencies reported nearly \$27 billion of long-term debt outstanding at the end of FY2022, \$15,969 per 2021-2022



student. Local education agencies paid \$988 million for interest payments from their annual operating budgets in FY2022 for this debt.

#### *PENNSYLVANIA GUARANTEED ENERGY SAVINGS PROGRAM*

Under the [Pennsylvania Guaranteed Energy Savings Act](#), codified at 62 Pa.C.S. § 3751 et seq., school districts are authorized to enter into energy savings contracts with qualified energy service companies. These contracts allow districts to finance improvements such as HVAC upgrades, lighting retrofits, and weatherization, provided that the energy cost savings are guaranteed to offset the investment over time. While some energy efficiency upgrades may be included in broader construction projects eligible for PlanCon reimbursement, PDE does not oversee or enforce procurement compliance under GESA. Procurement adherence—including compliance with GESA or similar programs—is the responsibility of the school district.

## **PENNSYLVANIA PK — 12 SCHOOL FACILITIES STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

*Accountability systems for facilities involve facility standards, assessments, and reporting on the health, safety, education, and other factors associated with PK – 12 public school buildings and grounds. It involves systems for measuring and communicating conditions, and the authority to encourage or enforce changes in school design, construction, operations and maintenance.*

### **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS STANDARDS**

State-level standards for the maintenance and operation of public school facilities in Pennsylvania are established primarily through the Public School Code of 1949 and implementing regulations in the Pennsylvania Code. Under [24 P.S. § 7-701](#), each school district is required to provide and maintain suitable and properly equipped school buildings. This includes the duty to maintain facilities in a “proper manner,” defined to include adequate heating, lighting, ventilation, sanitation, and safe water supply.

Additional operational requirements are set forth in [25 Pa. Code Chapter 171](#), which prescribes minimum standards for the condition and upkeep of school



buildings and grounds. These regulations require that all structural, mechanical, and sanitary systems—including plumbing, heating, lighting, and ventilation—be maintained in working order. Buildings must be kept clean and free from conditions that may pose health or safety hazards. Under [25 Pa. Code § 171.13](#), buildings, grounds, and associated equipment must be “constructed and maintained to minimize health and accident hazards.”

Pest management is governed by statutory requirements under [24 P.S. § 7-772.1](#), which mandates that all public school buildings implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan consistent with guidance from the [Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#). Under [24 P.S. § 7-772.2](#), districts must also provide written notification to staff and parents at least 72 hours before any pesticide application on school property.

Districts receiving reimbursement through the PlanCon process are subject to additional planning requirements related to maintenance. Under [24 P.S. § 7-733](#) and associated PDE administrative guidance, districts applying for construction reimbursement must submit a district-wide facility study completed within the past five years. This requirement is intended to ensure that project proposals are informed by a current assessment of existing building conditions and maintenance needs.

Although Pennsylvania does not mandate a statewide preventive maintenance schedule, the above requirements establish a set of minimum standards that all districts must meet in operating and maintaining school facilities. State oversight can be exercised through plan reviews during capital reimbursement (PlanCon) requests, programmatic audits, and agency enforcement of specific maintenance-related statutes and regulations.

## **BUILDING STANDARDS**

Pennsylvania public school construction and renovation projects must comply with both education-specific design standards and public building codes. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) reviews projects seeking state reimbursement to determine whether they meet applicable construction and instructional adequacy requirements. Under [24 P.S. § 7-733](#) and [22 Pa. Code § 21.71](#), districts must demonstrate compliance with building code requirements



and Department standards when submitting school construction projects for review.

All school buildings must comply with the Pennsylvania [Uniform Construction Code \(UCC\)](#), established by [Act 45 of 1999](#). The UCC adopts the International Building Code (IBC) and other referenced codes, including accessibility standards. These requirements apply to all new construction and major renovations. Local governments enforce the UCC where certified code officials are in place; otherwise, enforcement is provided by the [Department of Labor and Industry](#) (L&I). L&I is also responsible for accessibility reviews, fire and elevator safety, and other code enforcement for school buildings where local enforcement is not available.

The [Department of General Services](#) (DGS) does not oversee local school construction but maintains technical design standards for large-scale construction, which may be referenced in PDE reviews when relevant.

## **EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY STANDARDS**

Pennsylvania does not enforce comprehensive educational adequacy standards for facilities, however, the state does require that LEAs meet certain criteria for specific projects under PlanCon. Educational adequacy under PlanCon includes verifying that a proposed project aligns with the LEA's educational specifications and is justified by current or projected student enrollment, as per [24 P.S. § 25-2574](#). However, there is no requirement for regular, system-wide assessments of educational adequacy across all facilities.

PDE reviews architectural designs to ensure instructional adequacy and efficiency; building layouts must meet circulation, accessibility, and programmatic requirements. Gross square footage (architectural area) must be proportional to scheduled instructional space, with projects exceeding a 1.58:1 ratio subject to additional review.

Security-related considerations are addressed through a combination of grant programs and advisory criteria but are not embedded in building code or PDE regulation. [Act 44 of 2018](#) amended the Public School Code to establish the [School Safety and Security Committee](#) within the Pennsylvania Commission on



Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), codified at [24 P.S. § 13-1302-B](#) et seq. This Committee is responsible for issuing criteria for physical security assessments and eligible improvements under state school safety grants. While PCCD guidance encourages features such as secure vestibules, controlled access, reinforced glazing, and exterior lighting, these elements are not mandatory unless required as a condition of specific grant funding. Projects incorporating grant-funded safety upgrades must demonstrate alignment with applicable PCCD criteria.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS**

Pennsylvania's Public School Code imposes a broad duty on school districts to provide safe and healthy facilities. [24 Pa. Stat. § 7-701](#) requires each school board to supply "suitable school buildings" that are constructed, equipped, and maintained to ensure "proper and healthful accommodations" for all students. Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) regulations reinforce these obligations during school construction reviews – PDE will not approve new building plans if any aspect would pose a danger to health or safety upon completion. Beyond construction, the general standard of 24 P.S. § 7-701 serves as a catch-all legal requirement that school buildings be maintained in a condition that protects student health and safety. However, the law is broad and does not spell out detailed building codes – instead it relies on local building codes and the school officials' duty to keep facilities safe and sanitary.

## *AIR QUALITY STANDARDS*

Pennsylvania does not require school districts to routinely monitor indoor air quality (IAQ) in occupied school buildings. There are no state statutes or regulations that mandate the testing of air for specific pollutants such as carbon dioxide, mold, or radon. However, the general obligation to maintain safe and healthful school environments under [24 Pa. Stat. § 7-701](#) includes adequate ventilation, and schools must comply with applicable ventilation requirements under the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) when constructing or renovating facilities.

While there is no state-mandated IAQ testing schedule, the [Department of Health](#) (DOH) provides guidance on best practices for maintaining indoor air



quality, including temperature, humidity, and ventilation management, particularly through its school [IAQ recommendations](#). These voluntary guidelines reference EPA's Tools for Schools and ASHRAE standards. Districts are expected to address IAQ issues through local operations and maintenance, and may be subject to investigation by local code officials or DOH in response to complaints or observed health risks. Where local enforcement is in place, code officials may review ventilation as part of structural inspections. In municipalities without local enforcement, the [Department of Labor and Industry](#) (L&I) may conduct inspections as part of its role under the UCC.

#### *CHEMICAL HAZARDS STANDARDS*

Chemical safety in Pennsylvania public schools is governed in part by the [Pennsylvania Worker and Community Right-to-Know Act](#) (Act 159 of 1984). This statute applies to public-sector employees, including school personnel, and requires districts to maintain a hazardous substance inventory, ensure proper labeling, and provide access to Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS/SDS) for any hazardous materials stored or used in school facilities. Employees must receive annual training on handling hazardous substances, including cleaning agents, lab chemicals, and maintenance products.

Pesticide use in schools is governed by [24 P.S. §§ 7-772.1](#) and [7-772.2](#), which require every school district to implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan and to notify staff and parents at least 72 hours before the application of pesticides inside or on school grounds, except in emergencies. Notification must also include posting signs at the treatment site before and after the application. Oversight of IPM compliance is the responsibility of the [Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#).

Pennsylvania does not impose additional chemical hazard standards beyond these statutory requirements. Hazardous building materials such as PCBs are regulated federally, and schools must comply with EPA regulations where applicable.

#### *EXTREME HEAT STANDARDS*

There is no Pennsylvania statute or regulation that sets maximum allowable indoor temperatures or requires schools to have air conditioning. The general



requirement under [24 P.S. § 7-701](#) for “healthful accommodations” applies, and schools must meet temperature and ventilation requirements under the UCC when constructing or renovating facilities. However, once operational, districts manage building temperature through local policies and infrastructure.

The Department of Health and PDE have issued guidance encouraging schools to maintain thermal comfort, including [recommendations](#) for managing indoor temperature and humidity during warm weather. These materials are advisory and do not carry the force of law.

#### *WATER QUALITY STANDARDS*

Pennsylvania addresses lead in drinking water in schools through [24 P.S. § 7-742](#), enacted by Act 39 of 2018. This provision does not mandate annual testing, but it requires that each district either conduct testing for lead in drinking water outlets or discuss lead-related issues at a public school board meeting annually. If a district chooses to test and detects lead levels above the EPA’s action level of 15 parts per billion, the law requires the district to develop and implement a remediation plan.

The [Department of Environmental Protection](#) (DEP) administers a voluntary lead testing [assistance program](#), including sampling and grant funding for remediation in schools with recent elevated lead results. PDE provides informational guidance and references EPA’s 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program but does not collect or verify test results unless they are connected to grant funding or public health inquiries.

Beyond lead, Pennsylvania does not mandate routine testing of school water systems for other contaminants such as copper or legionella unless a school operates its own water system regulated by DEP under drinking water system rules. Most districts purchase water from municipal suppliers, who are responsible for system-level compliance with federal and state water quality standards.