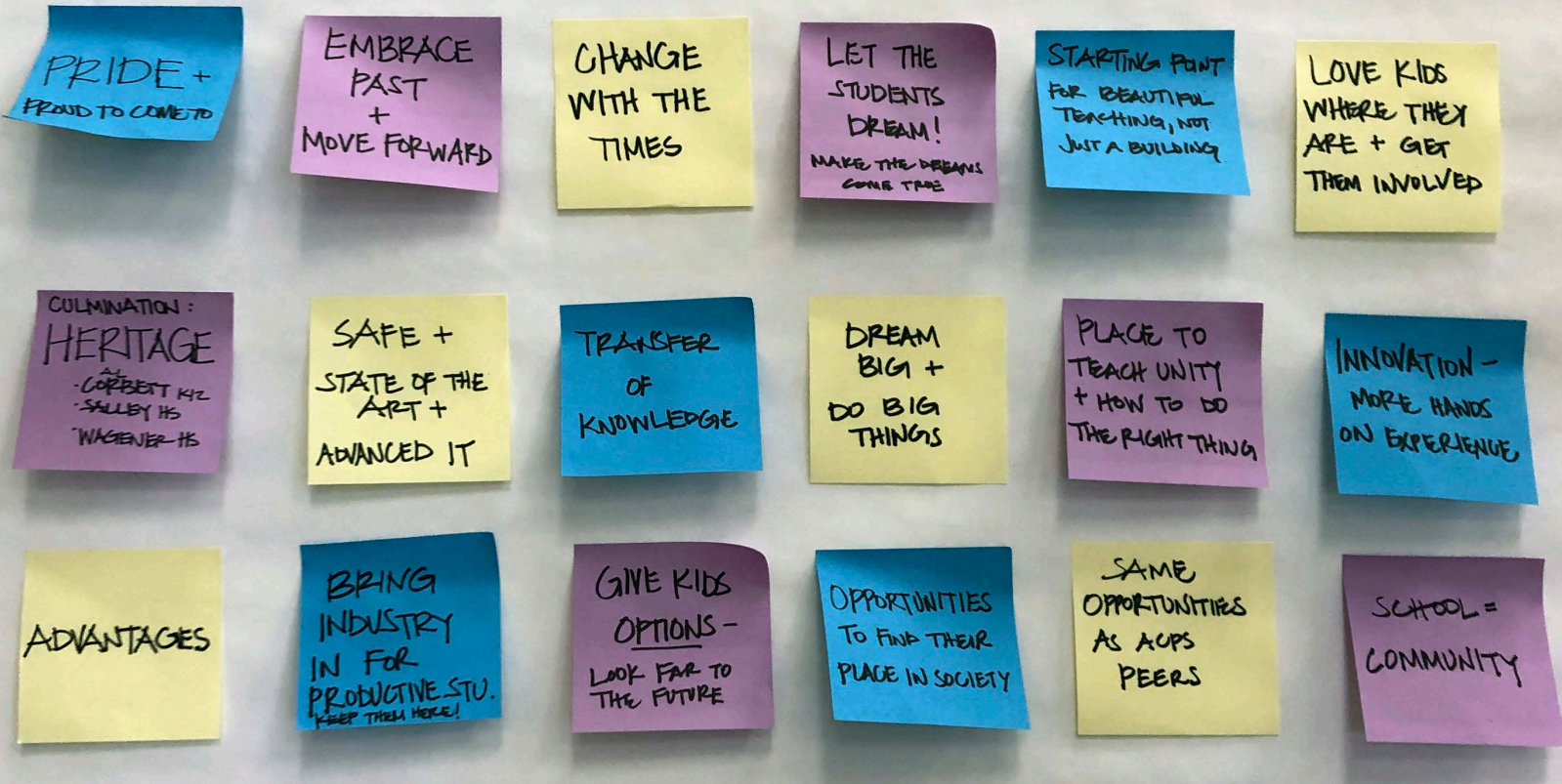


Financing K-12 School Improvements: How Strategic Planning Improves Bond & Grant Funding Success



Financing K-12 School Improvements: How Strategic Planning Improves Bond & Grant Funding Success

Over half of the 100,000 school facilities in the United States require significant upgrades.¹

Sophisticated and strategic planning can help school systems enhance aging facilities through:

- New school construction, in whole or in part
- Repurposing existing facilities and spaces for current and needed function
- Modifying student capacity or educational programs

When designed intentionally, school facilities have the potential to promote character, innovation, and learning. The physical environment has a profound impact on student behavior, truancy rates, teacher retention, and academic achievement. When building designs align with a school's purpose, the results benefit both students and the surrounding community.

The best school environment for student learning is not hard to imagine, but it is hard to fund! Education as a profession has made tremendous advances in brain research, personalized learning approaches, teaching tools, and more relevant programs of study for the next generation. Implementing better school environments as a result of those advances is more difficult. Public school funding is complex, and unique in our nation. It requires a mix of

local, state, and federal support. Approaching the “why, what, and when” to fund school improvements is also complex, and requires a sophisticated and strategic plan to solve it.

Insufficient funding for schools over the years has resulted in poor student performance and poor public sentiment towards education.² This situation has only been magnified by recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, rising energy costs, and supply chain backlogs, which have hindered much-needed improvements in our country's schools.

Federal and state leaders acknowledge that funding to improve learning outcomes is falling short. In response, Congress approved \$190 billion (about \$580 per person in the US) in COVID Relief funds,³ spread across three separate stimulus packages. While these funds can do a lot of good, school districts must take a long-term approach and have a plan for maintaining improvements once the stimulus runs out.

The basis of any sustainable and predictable plan for funding school improvements is knowing, in detail, what's needed and where the funds could come from. For a school district, that analysis is multi-dimensional and requires trusted partners who can help with assessment, public presentations, and fostering open and productive dialogues.

When larger capital project funding becomes available, school districts must be able to maximize the impact of approved school improvements. Today's capital planning decisions will impact students for decades to come. Therefore, it is critical that capital improvement planning is thorough and results in resilient and responsive buildings that:

- Support education pedagogy
- Reduce environmental impacts
- Fulfill community needs and expectations

Defining The Need

The need for responsibly funding schools is critical for several reasons:

- 1) **Many schools in the United States are aging, and their infrastructure is outdated, inefficient, and even unsafe.** The average age of a public school building in the US is over 50 years old,⁵ with many built before modern building codes and environmental standards were established. These buildings may have outdated electrical, plumbing, and heating / cooling systems, which can cause maintenance problems and increased operating costs.
- 2) **The physical conditions and arrangement of the campus impacts student learning and academic achievement.** Research shows that students who learn in well-designed, comfortable, and safe environments have better attendance, higher test scores, and fewer disciplinary problems.⁶
- 3) **Facilities can influence teacher retention rates and the overall quality of education in a district.** Teachers who work in clean, safe, and comfortable environments are more likely to stay in their positions and provide better instruction. Successful recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and support staff is an element of our nation’s top schools. One of several factors that aid in recruitment and retention efforts is enhancing the quality of the environment.
- 4) **School facilities play a crucial role in community development.** Schools are often the center of their communities, serving as venues for public events, recreational activities, community support programs, and emergency shelters during natural disasters. By upgrading and modernizing school facilities, districts can contribute to the economic growth of their communities and improve the quality of life for residents.
- 5) **The recent COVID-19 pandemic, and other tragic newsworthy events, have underscored the emergent need for safer, healthier schools.** When schools reopened, districts had to ensure that their facilities would meet new health and safety guidelines to protect students and staff.⁷ This may have involved upgrading ventilation systems, installing hand sanitizing stations, and implementing social distancing measures. Students feeling safe is vital for their positive development.

At its core, school funding is about ensuring that students have access to safe, healthy, and well-designed learning environments. By investing in school facilities, districts can improve student outcomes, support teacher retention, and contribute to healthy community development. The COVID-19 pandemic and current social climate should compel every school district to prioritize improving the health and safety measures in their facilities.

“Experts suggest that smarter facility planning could reduce the annual need for capital investment by nearly \$28 billion every year.”⁴

– International WELL Building Institute, *State of Our Schools, 2021*



Above: Dr. Phinnize J. Fisher Middle School was designed with an energy strategy that enhances indoor air quality and optimizes climate control, ensuring a healthy and efficient facility.

Planning Around the Need



Above: Community stakeholder meeting with the SC Governor's School for Science and Mathematics organized by our K-12 design team.

To effectively address the numerous challenges faced by schools, it is essential for school districts to develop sophisticated advanced capital planning strategies that are responsive to changing educational needs and community demographics. For example, the South Carolina State Department of Education's 2019 capital needs report highlights the severity of the situation, revealing a staggering \$4 billion budget shortfall while projecting the need for numerous new schools, renovations, additions, and relocatable units through the 2023-2024 school year.

School districts must prioritize improvements that address critical needs such as:

- Adapting to growth or changes in enrollment while considering contemporary educational methodologies
- Assessing risks and implementing safety and security measures accordingly
- Enhancing building resiliency and operational integrity
- Adapting to student health and comfort needs
- Optimizing the occupancy and use of existing facilities through thoughtful conversions, renovations, or additions
- Constructing new facilities or programs when a clear need is demonstrated

To achieve these goals, superintendents, school boards, and facility managers should collaborate with experienced education planners, K-12 school designers, and technical architects to adopt focused, strategic, and transparent approaches. In our experience, we've identified the five successful stages of preparing for school funding:

- 1) **RESEARCH:** Internally review best practices, educational performance and enrollment data, school data, polling data and community demographic trends.
- 2) **ASSESSMENT:** Analyze all existing building property conditions by gathering and addressing community, parent, and staff input to complete a comprehensive needs assessment.
- 3) **STUDIES:** Create or update facilities studies and programming studies.
- 4) **PLANNING:** Assemble an expert team of architects, builders, and education planners to form an overall facility plan and prioritized construction schedule.
- 5) **APPROVAL:** Take all the plans and data collected to help determine a total improvement budget and get it approved by the school board.

Effective and consistent communication with the community, school partners, and stakeholders is crucial in this process, particularly as districts are often legally restricted from promoting referendums but are responsible for objectively informing their constituents about them. Start by listening to the public through forums, surveys, and small group sessions.

"At the end of the day, you've got to be able to convince people who have no kids in school to invest in your facilities," says Will Anderson, COO of Richland School District Two in South Carolina.

By starting years early and following a phased approach, Richland School District Two passed the single largest property tax initiative in the state of South Carolina in 2018. Voters approved additions, renovations and rebuilding of elementary, middle, and high school facilities, and improving or constructing new facilities for athletics and the arts education program.

By engaging all stakeholders and adopting a comprehensive phased planning strategy, school districts can better prepare for necessary improvements and secure the funding required to create a positive impact on their communities.

Landmark Legislation

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA)⁹ is a landmark legislation that aims to curb inflation by reducing the deficit and invest in domestic energy production while promoting clean energy. One of the key provisions of the IRA is the expansion of tax credits and incentives for renewable energy sources, such as geothermal and photovoltaic (PV) systems. These incentives are expected to lower the costs of clean energy and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The IRA could offer significant benefits to public schools that learn how to leverage its provisions. By installing geothermal or PV systems on their premises, schools can reduce their energy bills and generate income by selling excess power to the grid.

Additionally, schools can use the IRA as an opportunity to educate students about the importance of clean energy and environmental stewardship. Identifying cost-effective ways to become sustainable and resilient should be a top priority for any school district.

Funding School Renewal

Public K-12 schools rely on a mix of federal, state, and local funding to support daily operations, with the vast majority coming from local taxes. Yearly local and/or state taxes will be affected by major school building improvements, replacements, or new construction, therefore, engaging and educating the public about why they are needed and all the ways they will benefit the community is paramount.

Normally, the combination of these sources is just enough to operate the school, leaving little to nothing left for building improvements. By far, a school system’s greatest budget contribution is to fund teacher salaries, benefits, and state or federal employment requirements.

Large capital projects like renovations, or school replacements generally require voter approval and in some states like North Carolina and South Carolina, utilize the sale of municipal bonds to fund improvements in the short term, while the long-term tax revenue generates the repayment of those bonds. In the best cases, the public agrees to a minimal tax burden and the district receives the funding it desperately needs.

“Public schools are expected to do more with less, so it’s important that capital funding is allocated to maximize its use. When a school can demonstrate that they are good stewards of community investments, it builds public trust for future projects,”

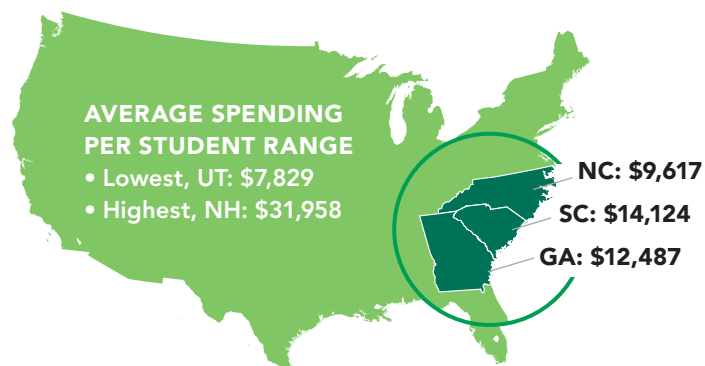
– Ben Thompson, K-12 Director
McMillan Pazdan Smith



Communicating the infrastructure needs and time frame for improvements is critical — especially since districts are often legally barred from promoting referendums but are tasked with objectively informing constituencies about them. Because navigating the funding process takes experienced planners and advisors working alongside school boards, administrators, and district leadership, a school’s advisory team should include:

- An experienced financial planner
- Educational facility planners
- Technical architects and designers
- Demographers, data analysts, and cost consultants

Leveraging the expertise of a deep and diverse team, a school system can determine the best way to create short-term and long-term plans for new schools, additions, renovations, and upgrades.



Map Source: Public School Review, www.publicschoolreview.com/average-spending-student-stats/national-data

Long-Term Planning

When it comes to long-term strategies for building improvements, there are a few options — each with their own considerations and restrictions.



Pay-As-You-Go Funding

This is the default method utilized by every school system. Funding for school system operations, including any normal maintenance and capital improvements, is derived from yearly tax revenue. If the funding is sufficient, this method works well to maintain, improve, and save for large capital improvements incrementally. In school systems with above average facilities from a physical condition standpoint and with predictable enrollment change, planning is focused, clear, and manageable. Positive public sentiment and agreement on the yearly tax revenue via property taxes, sales taxes, or both is the key.



Voter Approved Referendums

Pay-as-you-go funding is often not sufficient to meet the actual needs for maintaining and improving facilities. If significant improvements or new construction is needed that exceeds the fiscal budget or the bonding capacity of a school system, school districts will call on local citizens to increase their own taxes to fill the funding gap. These costs can be presented in the form of an added special, local sales tax request or a property tax request to voters. Demonstrating and communicating the need and the community benefit to voters is key. In school systems experiencing enrollment growth and with experienced, consistent leadership, this is an on-going and systematic approach. In districts where the need exists, but positive public sentiment towards school funding or leadership is mixed or low, extra work must be done to keep this from becoming a polarizing issue.



State Funded Improvements

In most cases, major funding initiatives are provided by voters for approved referendums at the local level of government. In some areas, this approach exists at the state level. It still requires voting at the state congressional level via an annual fiscal budgeting process or resolutions for specific efforts. When funding for improvements comes from the state, school construction can trend more traditional, institutional, and be less community

focused. State funded improvements are often based on a formula, rather than being aligned with a school's teaching methodologies, or program offerings. Some states have implemented "prototypical school" approaches. By using a prototype, the intent is to reduce design and engineering costs and accelerate construction. However, prototypical approaches can result in overbuilding or additional costs, defeating their purpose. Each school is unique in culture, location, and student needs. Designing a school environment tailored to each school's specific characteristics and operational requirements delivers the best results.



Public-Private-Partnerships

Public-Private-Partnerships (P3s) are used to fund projects that can be jointly used by school systems and other organizations that can contribute towards the initial building construction costs in exchange for its use. P3s may include agreements with municipalities, colleges and universities, athletic / wellness providers, and other industry partners. It does not eliminate the need for other funding sources but can decrease the school's financial burden. When more than one organization or entity is involved, defining roles and responsibilities are crucial for the partnership's success. Agreements between organizations on who owns, operates, and maintains the facility need to be finalized. P3s come in many forms and are flexible and scalable; however, state laws can put limits on their use and size.



Impact Fees

The ability for school districts to collect impact fees vary by state, however, where allowed, they provide another option. When enrollment grows rapidly, or is not properly managed, it leads to overcrowded schools, academic issues, and transportation and infrastructure problems. Temporary facilities have been used in cases where funding is not immediately available to answer enrollment demands. Because enrollment growth is predicated on population growth, impact fees offer a way to receive additional and on-going funding from new housing unit construction. In some communities experiencing residential development, an impact fee is added to the price of a new home and transferred to the school system upon purchase. These fees are intended to pay for new construction based purely on population growth. Impact fee improvements cannot be used to renovate existing facilities.

Elected school board members and elected county representatives must agree on the method and the amount of the fee. If the fee is not high enough, it may take years to receive enough capital from them to build new facilities. If the fee is too high, it may discourage residential development in a community.



Other Forms of Funding

The following funding methods are smaller in scale or limited by law but can assist to provide for facility improvements or offsetting operational expenses.

- GRANTS, DONATIONS, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES**

These are specific to the individual program or improvement requested but can include larger initiative through state or federal governments. In each case, competition for these funds or incentives is usually centered around proving, more than other applicants, that a serious and solvable need exists.

- REVENUE-GENERATING AMENITIES**

When a facility can be utilized by others through event or entry fees, those funds may be used for on-going maintenance and improvements for the facility and for the school system. Examples of revenue-generating facilities include performing arts centers, athletic arenas and fields, auditoriums, planetariums, daycares, and other specialized structures that can be used for students during school operating hours, and used for other groups during off-hours.

- ENERGY-NEUTRAL AND NET-POSITIVE OPERATIONS**

To curb the on-going operational costs of a school, on-site investment in renewable energy can decrease or eliminate utility costs. This can save the school system significant operational dollars in the long run but requires a high degree of sophistication in the building elements, systems, and site development. This is an excellent consideration for new construction or significant renovation projects. It's possible that we may see more federal incentives in the future for projects that increase the energy efficiency and sustainability of schools.

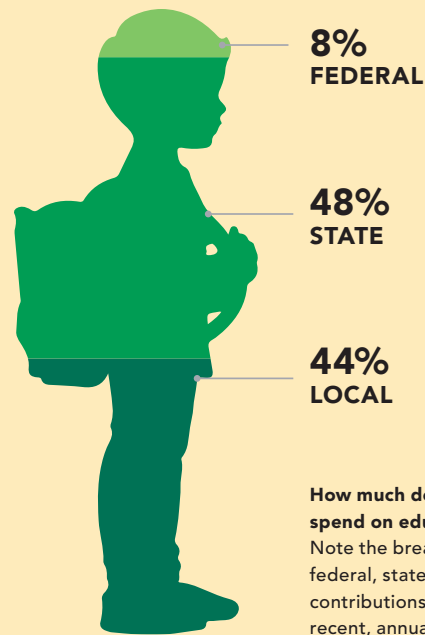
- TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL LOANS AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LOAN PROGRAMS**

Loans can be provided by banks or other financial institutions to school districts to finance capital improvement projects. These loans typically require collateral and have fixed interest rates and repayment terms. Federal government loan programs, such as the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program, offer loans and grants to rural areas for a variety of purposes, including building or improving schools.

- PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING**

Performance contracting is a financing method where energy service companies (ESCOs) invest in energy-efficient upgrades for school buildings in exchange for a share of the energy cost savings over time. This method allows schools to make energy-efficient upgrades without upfront capital costs and can result in significant long-term cost savings for the district. ESCOs typically guarantee a minimum level of savings, and any savings above that level are shared between the district and the ESCO.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?



MPS Project Experience and Funding Solutions

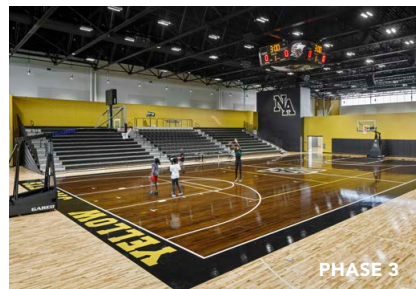
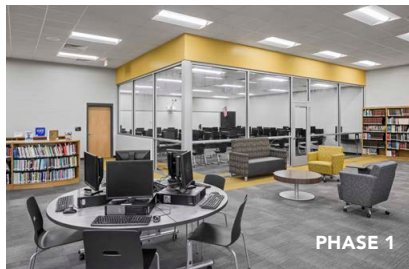
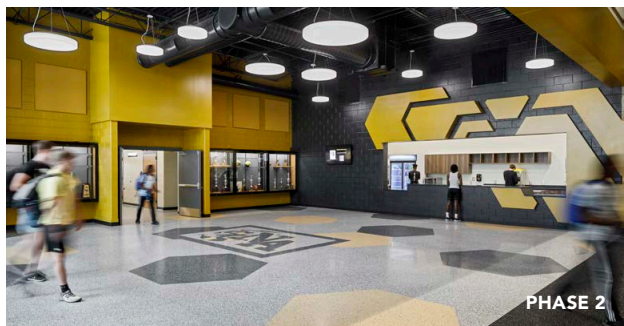
It takes a great team, innovation, good timing, and budget awareness to plan and fund the next generation of schools. Here are five recent success stories from our K-12 clients.

1 Aiken County School District, North Augusta High School

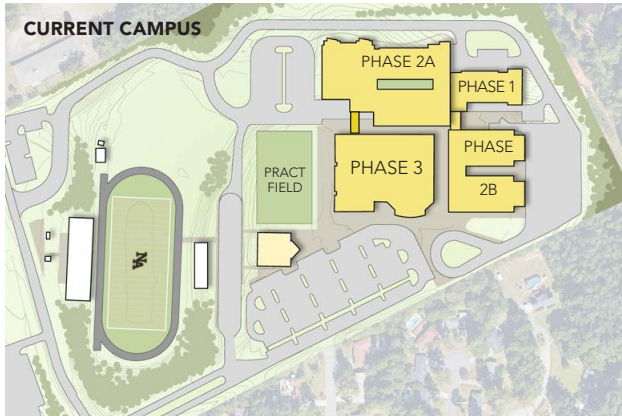
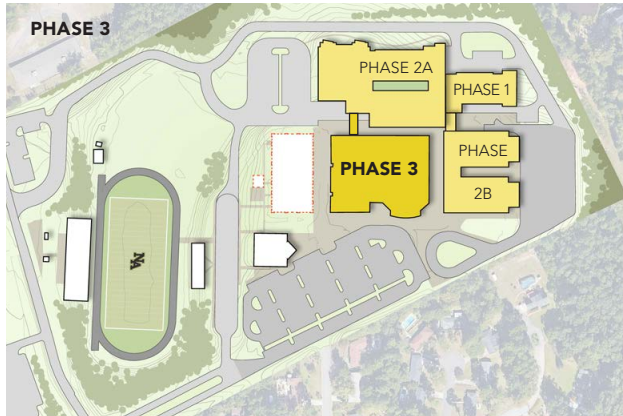
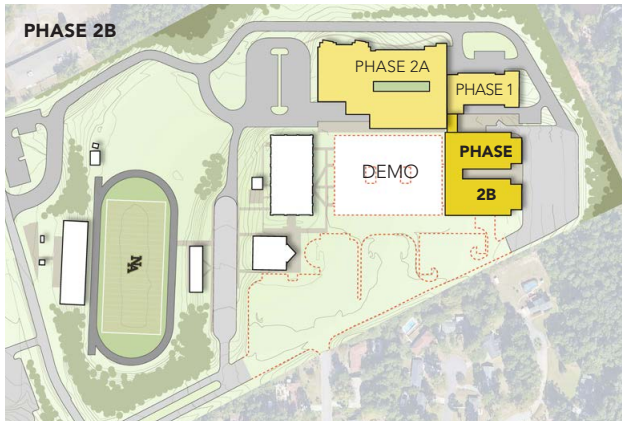
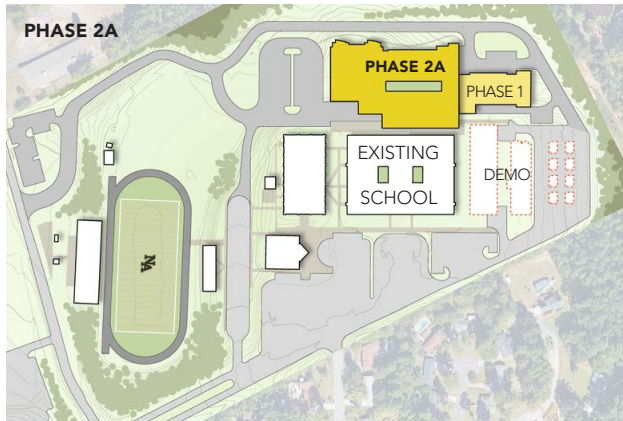
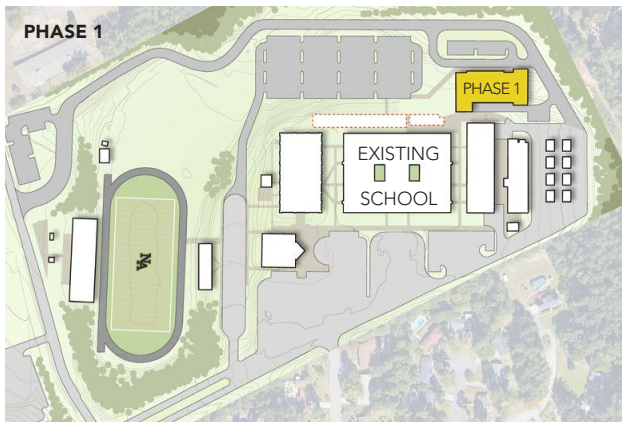
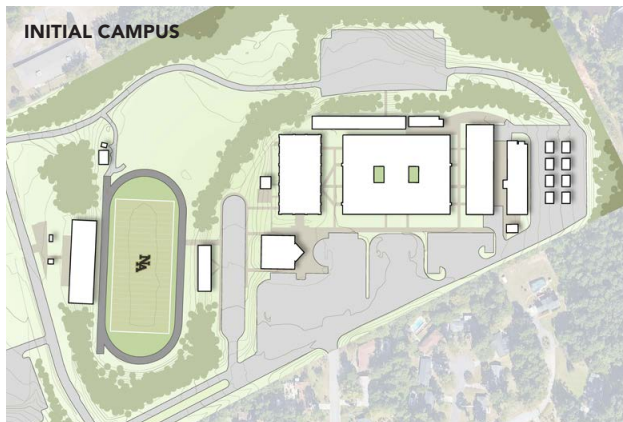
In 2010, Aiken County residents voted against a \$236 million bond referendum to pay for a new North Augusta High School, football stadium, and other school improvements. In response, the district kept the community engaged while working with McMillan Pazdan Smith on a phased master plan for North Augusta High School. A budget was established for each phase, and it was estimated to take over 30 years to complete.

In November 2014, Aiken County voters passed a 1% Education Capital Improvements Sales and Use Tax. The penny sales tax provided funds necessary to consolidate the work into four phases and complete the project ahead of schedule.

Phase 1 replaced portable classrooms with new classrooms and laboratory spaces. Phase 2 added two-story classroom wings, a freshman academy, exploratory classrooms, a media center, cafeteria, and a new front entrance with enhanced security. Phase 3 added 68,000 SF for indoor athletic spaces and music studios, complementing the academic improvements of the school. Phase 4 finalized the project with the completion of athletic fields and performing arts areas. Thanks to a successful funding strategy, smart planning, and community support, North Augusta High School has a unified school campus that students, educators, and the community are proud of.



North Augusta High School: Before photos and phasing diagrams



2 Clover School District 2, New High School

Clover School District’s 2021 bond referendum funding dollars went farther in this new High School with cost-effective design based on innovative programming from MPS.

In 2022, Clover County residents approved a \$156 million referendum for the construction of a new high school. In pursuit of transparency and community involvement, the Clover School District launched an informative campaign well in advance of the election day, addressing questions and concerns surrounding the bond referendum.

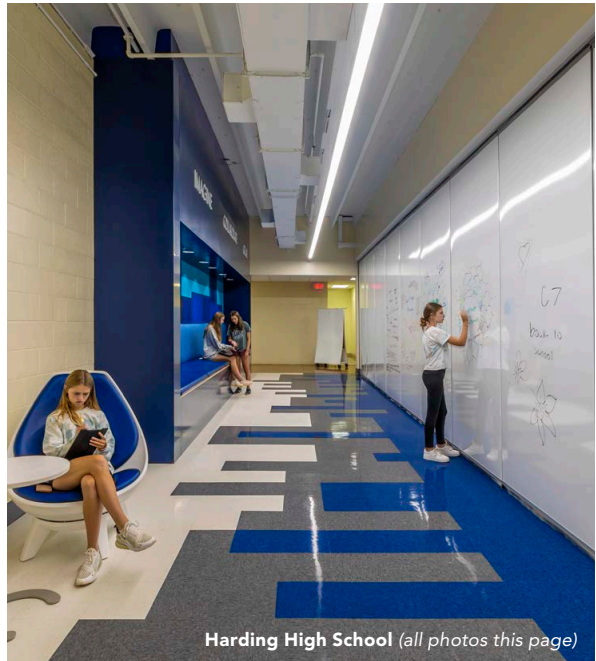
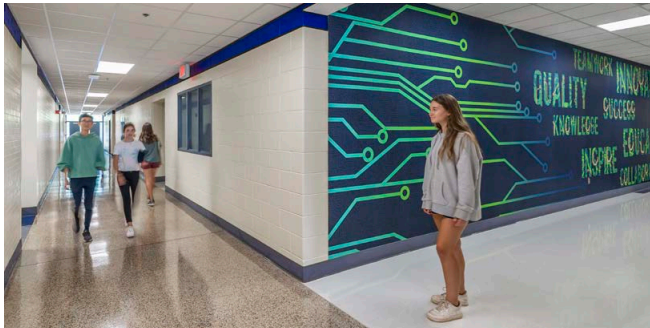
McMillan Pazdan Smith designed a high school campus that caters to the increased population and modern educational needs while being innovative and cost-effective. During the planning phase, MPS provided space utilization data to help school leaders make informed decisions about the school’s programming. Using hybrid-style scheduling in the program resulted in a design that was responsive to the site, minimizing construction and site work costs. The new high school is scheduled to open in 2026, accommodating 1,900 students with a design that allows for potential growth to maintain relevance and adaptability in the evolving educational landscape.



3 Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Schools

In North Carolina, MPS K-12 Lead, Hamilton Cort was a member of an advocacy committee led by the chamber of commerce that kept community members informed on bond support progress and helped develop further engagement and promotion strategies. McMillan Pazdan Smith collaborated with school leaders on projects that resulted from

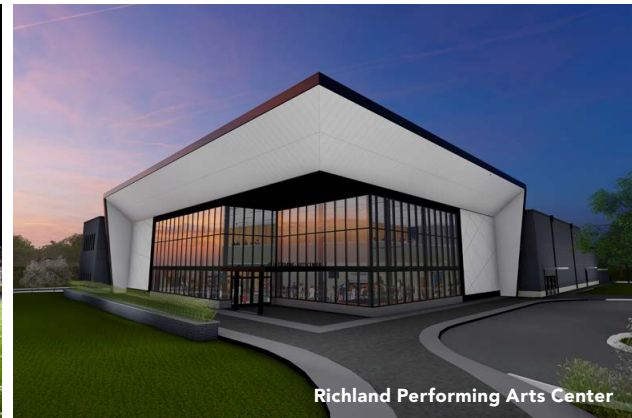
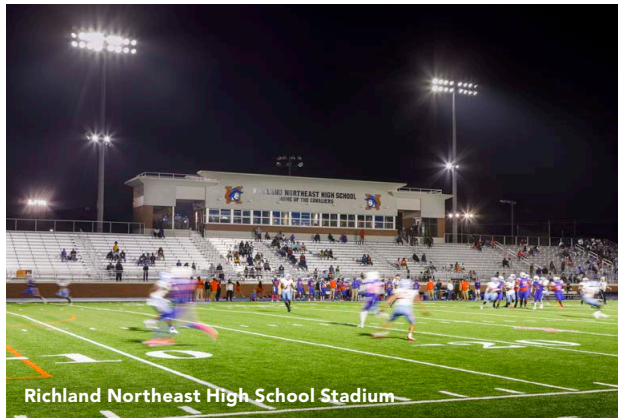
that bond including Career and Technical Education renovations and upgrades at Olympic, Harding, and South Mecklenburg High Schools. The most substantial project, at Harding High School, renovated a classroom wing into a new computer science program with a large collaborative technology classroom. These renovations foster partnerships with community and national industries and prepare students to enter the workforce.



4 Richland School District 2

On November 6, 2018, voters passed the bond referendum for Richland School District Two. Question One, which asked if the district could borrow up to \$381,952,000 for safety and security improvements, transportation needs, improvements to academic spaces and technology upgrades, passed with 31,152 “yes” votes or 64.9% of the total votes. Question Two, which asked if the district could borrow an additional

\$86,454,000 for improvements to arts and athletic facilities, passed with 30,900 “yes” votes or 59.66% of the total votes. The school’s groundbreaking \$468,406,000 improvement program was the largest property tax initiative in the state at the time. The transformative journey of Richland School District 2 offers valuable knowledge and inspiration for any district looking to make improvements that will serve students and teachers for years to come.



5 St. Stephen’s School – Rome, Italy

In 2023, McMillan Pazdan Smith helped St. Stephen’s, an American school based in Rome, Italy, create a master plan aligned with their strategic plan that will guide and support the school’s funding efforts for the next 5-10 years. St. Stephen’s serves day and boarding students from ages 14-19 in grades 9-12, plus an optional postgraduate year. Critical to their

recently-updated strategic plan is adjusting their student population to accommodate more boarders. Fundamental to the plan’s implementation was helping the school understand how much space will be needed going forward and how the school can update the physical space they currently occupy. The St. Stephen’s School Board of Trustees fully approved the master plan provided by MPS and is now working to fund and implement that plan.



6 Spartanburg County School District 7

Before asking voters to pass a \$185 million bond referendum, Spartanburg School District 7 recognized the importance of conducting a comprehensive facilities assessment. The district worked with McMillan Pazdan Smith to identify the current condition and needs of its 12 school facilities.

Armed with concrete data and a well-defined plan, the district communicated its needs to the community, establishing a foundation of trust and accountability. The facilities assessment allowed Spartanburg School District 7 to prioritize projects based on urgency and allocate resources to ensure that the proposed bond funding was wisely utilized. With community support, the bond funded a new high school, combined two elementary schools into a new school, and renovated a middle school.

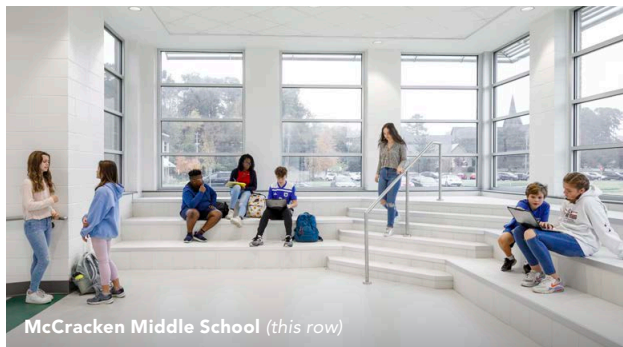
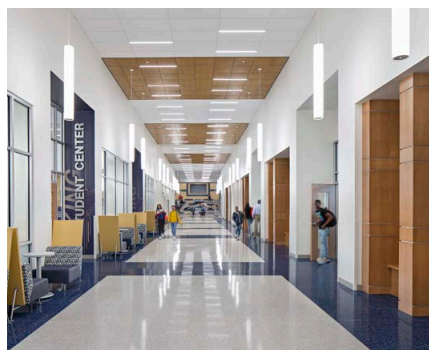
The new **Spartanburg High School** and performing arts center are designed with traditional classrooms and laboratories, gathering areas, outdoor courtyard, modern technology, and security features. An athletic facility is available to the public for community events.

Drayton Mills Elementary School replaces two schools that were built over 60 years ago and no longer meet modern school facility standards. The new design includes collaborative workspaces, a secure playground, and sustainability features to conserve energy and reduce water consumption. A wall of history to memorialize the importance of the older schools was also incorporated into the design.

McCracken Middle School renovation modernized an old high school building for middle school students. Collaboration areas, outdoor spaces, and upgraded HVAC, ADA, and security were part of the renovation.



Spartanburg High School (this row)



McCracken Middle School (this row)



Drayton Elementary School (this row)



Additional Considerations (Is There Another Way?)

To streamline and improve the process of school improvement or replacement projects, several factors should be considered. These include fostering collaborative decision-making between:

- School organizations
- Local governments
- Community member benefactors and non-profits
- Local and regional private industry partners

In the context of school funding, there are two main approaches to allocating resources: top-down and bottom-up models. The bottom-up approach involves giving greater decision-making power to local stakeholders, such as school boards or individual schools, who should be able to assess their own needs and allocate resources accordingly. This model can benefit from its flexibility and responsiveness to local needs but can also lead to inequalities if some districts or schools have access to more resources than others.

The top-down approach is typically implemented by a central authority, such as the federal or state government, and involves the distribution of funds based on predetermined criteria or formulas.

Most school funding systems incorporate elements of both top-down and bottom-up models. Striking the right balance between centralization and decentralization is a complex task that requires careful consideration of various factors, such as:

- Funding levels
- Local needs
- Political realities

A report by the Economic Policy Institute argues that the U.S. public education funding system is inadequate, inequitable, and unstable, and that it needs an overhaul to ensure a high-quality education for all students, especially those from low-income and minority backgrounds. The report also found what our previous graphic shows, that the current funding system relies too much on state and local resources, which vary widely across states and districts, and that federal funding plays a small and insufficient role in addressing the funding gaps and disparities in our schools.⁹

It is also important to note that simply throwing more money at schools without addressing needed policy and pedagogy reforms will not help the U.S. close the student achievement gap it currently has compared with other developed countries.¹⁰

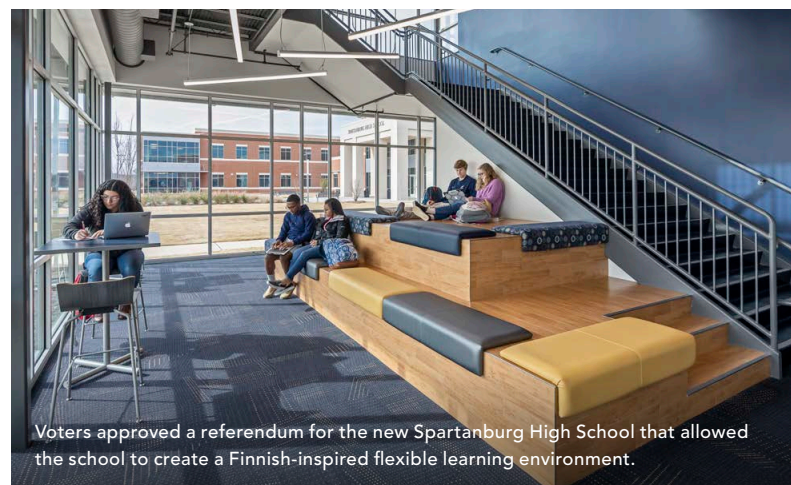
School Funding Outside the United States



As school funding evolves, it is helpful to learn from best practices and innovative funding models from other countries.

For instance, in Asia and Europe, school renewal projects often benefit from government-led initiatives and programs that focus on modernizing educational infrastructure, top-down. For example, in Singapore, the Programme for Rebuilding and Improving Existing Schools (PRIME)¹¹ provides funding for school refurbishment projects.

In Europe, countries like Finland and the Netherlands prioritize flexible learning spaces, allocating funds for flexible, school buildings that can easily adapt to changing educational needs. Our firm used the Finnish model as inspiration for the renewal of Spartanburg High School in Spartanburg, SC.



Voters approved a referendum for the new Spartanburg High School that allowed the school to create a Finnish-inspired flexible learning environment.



Multiple collaboration areas were added to Spartanburg High School's new facility that will help prepare students for entering the workforce.

Canada and Australia also provide valuable insights into effective school renewal policies. Both countries use a combination of federal, provincial, and territorial funding to support school infrastructure projects. In Canada, the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP)¹² sets aside funding for education infrastructure, while in Australia, the Building the Education Revolution (BER)¹³ initiative has resulted in numerous new or upgraded school facilities. These programs encourage collaboration between different levels of government, as well as input from local communities.

To make the process of securing funding for school improvements easier, policymakers could consider adopting a more flexible approach to funding allocation, such as providing multi-year budgets that allow schools to plan long-term projects more effectively. Mellanie Jinnette, Chief Financial Officer for the Chester County School District in South Carolina, said in an appearance on *The Future of K-12 Education Podcast* in 2022, "We'll take the flexibility, but we'll also give [back] accountability. We're not scared of accountability. We have a bunch of audits. We have a Fiscal Accountability Act we have to follow. Give the funds to us and let us spend it the way it's best for our district."

Additionally, taxpayers should encourage their local governments to offer incentives for the private sector to invest in educational infrastructure through public-private partnerships, thereby easing the taxpayer burden on future capital improvement projects.

Focusing on transparency and clear communication when it comes to funding models helps maintain public trust. School districts should be encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to responsible financial management, ensuring that any funds received are used effectively and efficiently. By learning from international best practices and fostering collaboration between all stakeholders, the process of funding school improvement or replacement projects can be made more efficient and ultimately, more successful.

The goal is to create a funding system that is fair, transparent, and effective at improving educational outcomes for all students. Any funding source a school receives will be highly scrutinized, so keeping accurate records of where every dollar comes from, and its specific use case is highly important. Even small building improvements require a high degree of communication, oversight, and transparency to all stakeholders and local constituents.

Ask anyone responsible for district finances, funding schools is a complex, ever-changing process. Engaging an experienced advisory services and planning team early can help identify the best sources of funds for a project, while providing the deliverables and messaging to make the request process as amiable, impactful and successful as possible.

Continuing The Conversation

LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST

If you are a school policymaker, teacher, or parent who cares about making schools better places for every student, listen to our podcast, The Future of K-12 Education. In this series, your host Ben Thompson, AIA, ALEP, and K-12 Studio Director at McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture, talks with experienced and insightful leaders in education. Join us for this exchange of ideas as we discuss some of the biggest issues facing students and schools today. Our latest episode 16 and past episode 4 are both about finances and school funding. Listen online or from your favorite podcast app: www.mcmillanpazdansmith.com/podcasts/k-12/.



Successful K-12 School Funding: Creating Better Outcomes by Managing Change

Driving positive change in education is never easy. The transformative journey of Richland School District 2 offers valuable knowledge and inspiration for any district looking to make improvements that will serve students and teachers for years to come. In our latest episode, we welcome Will Anderson, the Chief Operations Officer for Richland School District 2, who guides us through the complexities and strategy behind the school's groundbreaking \$468,406,000 improvement program — which included the passing of the largest property tax initiative in the state at the time.



What's Your Plan & Why? Creating Data-Driven Facility Plans That Work!

Minta Ferguson is the Director of Planning for McMillan Pazdan Smith Advisors, a division that creates customized, data-driven facility plans that guide construction and renovation projects.

How does a team create the best educational environments using data? Join us for this discussion on how data-driven planning can be a valuable resource for determining financial feasibility, optimizing a building's use, efficiency, and more.



Making Sense of School Funding

What's your reaction when talking about funding for K-12 public education? Every year Americans provide around 700 billion dollars in tax revenue to fund 56 million students in 84,000 public K-12 schools across this nation. Schools have multiple revenue sources from federal and state sources. Are we utilizing those dollars to their highest potential in education? In this episode, Ben talks with Mellanie Jinnette, CFO of the school district in Chester County. Mrs. Jinnette also served in the SC Department of Education for more than 24 years. Listen as she helps us all make sense of complicated school funding formulas and talks about her hopes for the future of revenue allocation in schools.



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