

Advocating for Equity Across All Levels of Government

DIMENSION 9:

LEARNING-READY FACILITIES

**ALLIANCE FOR
RESOURCE
EQUITY**

Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student



DIMENSION 9:

LEARNING-READY FACILITIES



THE VISION: Each student — including students of color and students with higher needs — attends school in buildings that are structurally sound, provide a safe and appropriate physical environment for learning, and have effective equipment to meet student needs, so all students can reach high standards and thrive.

KEY QUESTION

9.1

Does each student have access to adequate facilities that are safe and well-maintained to foster student learning and meet student needs?

Federal

● Congress:

- Can fund and prioritize school infrastructure investments, including school construction and modernization projects, that reduce inequity in the health, safety, energy efficiency, resilience, and educational suitability of public school buildings and grounds
- Authorizes, oversees, and funds programs to support infrastructure that can be directed toward school facilities investments. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements, including through the State Energy Program administered by the U.S. Department of Energy
 - Funding that can be used for school infrastructure in rural areas, including through the Community Facilities programs, Electric programs, Energy programs, and Telecommunications programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - The Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate Program
 - FEMA grants that can be used to support school infrastructure repairs following disasters

- **Federal agencies** including the US Department of Education, US Department of Energy, US Department of Agriculture, the US Department of Treasury, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):
 - Distribute federal funding to states and school districts for particular school infrastructure projects and purposes
 - Issue guidance and provide technical assistance on effective practice and about how federal funds can and should be used to ensure adequate facilities
- **Federally funded data agencies and research labs** collect, analyze, and publicly report school facilities data

State

● State legislatures can:

- Work with state agencies to set standards for, and advise and state education and other state agencies provide technical assistance to districts on, building, operating, and maintaining public school facilities that are safe, healthy, energy efficient, resilient, and educationally suitable

- Establish a dedicated revenue stream to provide an ongoing source of funding for school facilities projects
- Determine permissible uses of state-provided and/or locally-raised facilities funding
- Require equitable distribution of dedicated capital funds
- Set rules for how local school boards levy taxes and raise funds for capital projects
- Create grants and other investments to provide reliable, high-speed internet to facilitate student learning while at school and at home
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Collect and publish data on the inventory, condition, design, and utilization of school district facilities
 - Plan for adequate and equitable public school facilities throughout the state
 - Mandate regular educational facilities plans for operations, maintenance, capital projects, and long-range educational facility master plans
- **State auditors and/or inspectors general** can audit the budgets, processes, and quality of capital projects to ensure fiscal responsibility, best practices, and compliance

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Engage school communities in facilities decision-making and solicit input from families to ensure that facilities meet student, family, and community needs
 - Write and approve long-range facilities budgets and plans that emphasize equitable access to learning-ready facilities and publish them online in accessible language to enable transparency and accountability
 - Levy taxes or issue bonds to fund capital projects or service capital bond debt (in some states, these measures require

voter approval)

- Create standards for facility operation, establish transparent metrics for determining adequacy, and publicly report on facility health, safety and utilization
- Work with district administrators to:
 - Audit the budgets and processes of capital projects and maintenance requests to ensure fiscal responsibility, best practice, and compliance
 - Conduct comprehensive surveys of students, staff, and community members to solicit input on existing facilities and proposed new facilities
 - Contract maintenance suppliers or partner with companies, community organizations, and other government entities to contract for maintenance work and shared service delivery, and publicly report outcomes of repairs
 - Establish joint-use agreements with other school districts, postsecondary and public institutions, and private organizations to provide students with greater access to high-quality facilities such as laboratories, libraries, art studios, and athletic fields, in a cost-effective way
- **School district administrators** can:
 - Conduct regular, thorough assessments of facilities and collect data about the conditions, repair needs, utilities costs, code compliance, safety standards, prior investments, and deferred maintenance for each property
 - Hire and oversee facilities and maintenance staff
 - Provide annual district-wide maintenance schedules and ensure staff have the expertise, training, and support needed to perform necessary preventative and corrective maintenance tasks
 - Provide facilities and maintenance staff with actionable and up-to-date data, plans, and/or schedules to inform efficient management and maintenance of facilities

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Provide support and planning assistance to the school's custodial staff, grounds keepers, and building engineers
 - Follow up with district administrators on work orders submitted for repairs or capital projects

- Work with boards of education to engage the school community in caring for school grounds to minimize wear and tear and ensure facilities are well-maintained
- Engage staff, students, and the community in regular facilities planning to help ensure the buildings and ground support education and the community

KEY QUESTION

9.2

Does each student have access to adequate equipment to facilitate student learning and meet student needs?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes and oversees funds that can be directed towards learning equipment. These include, but are not limited to:
 - The US Department of Agriculture's Distance Learning grants for technology equipment
 - The National Endowment for the Arts grants for arts education
 - The US Department of Education Perkins grants for career and technical education equipment
 - US Department of Education GEAR UP grants for high-need middle and high schools
- **Federal agencies** including the US Department of Education, US Department of Agriculture, and the National Endowment for the Arts:
 - Distribute federal funding to states and school districts for particular school equipment needs
 - Issue guidance and provide technical assistance to funding recipients about how federal funds can and should be used

State

- **State legislatures** can authorize and appropriate funding for state grants and investments in learning equipment and technology
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Apply, or support districts in applying, for discretionary federal grants that support the purchase or modernization of learning equipment and technology
 - Facilitate statewide cooperative purchasing, or multi-district regional cooperative purchasing, of learning equipment and technology to secure discounts

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Write or approve learning equipment budgets and plans that equitably meet the needs of students and staff
 - Create metrics for equipment use such as utilization, accessibility, safety and code standards, and operational and maintenance costs

● **Local school boards and school district administrators** can:

- Contract with suppliers and providers and obtain discounts by leveraging collective purchasing, subscriptions, or student memberships, or by developing relationships with suppliers of learning equipment and technology
- Partner with companies, nonprofit organizations, and others to purchase or secure donations of learning equipment or technology and distribute equipment equitably across schools within the district
- Establish joint-use agreements with other school districts, postsecondary and public institutions, and private organizations to provide students with greater access to high-quality equipment and technology for both academic and extracurricular activities
- Equitably allocate learning equipment and technology to schools
- Establish flexible school equipment budgets to give school leaders greater control over the equipment they purchase to meet unique student and staff needs
- Gather and publicly report disaggregated data on student, staff and community experiences with learning equipment and their needs and recommendations for future investments

● **School district administrators** can:

- Apply for discretionary federal grants that support the purchase or modernization of learning equipment and technology
- Set annual procurement and maintenance schedules for all schools and departments to replenish consumable supplies, update technology services and software, and repair aging equipment
- Employ an inventory management system that updates data and coordinates services
- Establish cross-functional positions and teams to coordinate best practices and share expertise for designing flexible,

practical, and inclusive learning environments, especially for students with disabilities

- Hire and oversee district-level technology staff who can support school leaders and teachers to make sure that technology is well maintained and serves its purpose
- Assess teachers' and school leaders' knowledge of the types of equipment that is available to them, including how to reserve, access, use, and maintain it
- Offer ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities to help all staff make best use of the available equipment to support students and their learning

School

● **School leaders** can:

- Allocate learning equipment and technology for student and program use in equitable ways
- Help implement joint-use agreements with other schools, postsecondary and public institutions, and private organizations
- In states and districts that employ flexible school equipment budgets, prioritize equity in making equipment purchases to address variable student and staff needs
- Standardize basic equipment within schools when possible so that students and staff can transfer skills across classrooms
- Assess teachers' knowledge of the types of equipment that is available to them, including how to reserve, access, use, and maintain it
- Offer ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities to help all staff make best use of the available equipment to support students and their learning
- Identify staff who demonstrate fluency with basic and specialized equipment and technology to serve as leaders and mentors for other staff