



Public Schools

A Toolkit for REALTORS®



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of
REALTORS®



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National Association of REALTORS®

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“How are the schools?” may be the most common question fielded by REALTORS® throughout the United States—and the answer plays a role in just about every residential real estate decision. By familiarizing themselves with issues that affect public education, REALTORS® can be better prepared to make a difference in their schools and communities.

ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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School Building and Siting

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Teachers need affordable housing options in the communities where they work. To address the issue, some schools and communities are developing programs that help them find and finance local housing.

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Charter schools emerged in the 1990s as a promising alternative to traditional public schools. So far, it’s an experiment that has yielded mixed results—and some compelling insights.

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Federal education policy hinges on certain fundamental goals—promoting student achievement, ensuring U.S. competitiveness, and providing equal access to educational opportunities. But how to achieve those goals has been the subject of great debate.

How Schools Are Funded

It costs more than \$500 billion a year to fund the nation’s public school system. The debate over how to improve public education is inextricably tied to the issue of funding—and the adequacy and equity of the school system itself.

REALTORS®

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Participate in the School of the Future Design Competition

The most important thing REALTORS® can do is to visit schools in their communities and get them to register for the competition.

Serve on a School Board

School boards make decisions that have an enormous impact on schools and communities—and there's no greater commitment a REALTOR® can make than serving on one of them.

Provide Scholarships for Local Students

By funding scholarship programs for college-bound students, REALTOR® associations are investing in the future of their communities.

Read, Teach, and Mentor in Your Community

In classrooms around the country, REALTORS® and REALTOR® association staff members give of their time to work with local students—and to promote better schools and better communities.

Explore Housing Programs that Support Teachers

The community of REALTORS® can play an important role in helping teachers find and finance affordable housing in their communities—and raising teacher retention rates.

Organize a Walk/Bike to School

Every fall, millions of school-age kids walk or bike to school on International Walk to School Day—it builds communities, and it doesn't cost a cent.

Support Innovative Projects That Improve Schools

REALTOR® associations provide much-needed financial support to the schools and students in their communities through a variety of innovative programs—all funded largely through association fundraisers and REALTOR® donations.

Volunteer in Schools—and for Schools

REALTORS® can play an integral role in improving the nation's education system—by donating their time to community-based and school-centered efforts.

Advocate for a Local School Issue

Through advocacy, REALTOR® associations can serve as strong voices that help inspire improvements in public schools—and address issues related to education funding.

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INTRODUCTION: Public Schools and the REALTOR®

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"How are the schools?" is one of the most common questions fielded by real estate agents throughout the United States. By familiarizing themselves with issues that affect public education, real estate agents can be better prepared to make a difference in their schools and communities.
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Every real estate agent knows what surveys and studies confirm: The quality of public schools influences where people buy a home and what they pay for it. Regardless of whether they have children, buyers care about the reputation of the schools because they know that schools directly affect a community's vitality as well as its property values. "The demand for homes is simply greater in neighborhoods with high quality public schools, and higher demand translates into higher home prices," says REALTOR® Chris Wilson of Laurel, Mississippi. According to Wilson, it's no surprise that when prospective homebuyers are interested in a house one of their first questions is, "How are the schools?" "Every REALTOR® has been there. And the reason is obvious," he says. "People want the best schools for their children, or they want a home in a neighborhood with high demand for resale purposes."

School quality depends on a variety of factors, some of which are addressed in this toolkit. The most basic definition of a quality school is one that provides a clean, safe environment with up-to-date facilities and equipment—an environment that is conducive to learning and brings out the best in both teachers and students. Such schools enhance the overall quality of life, strengthen communities, and attract new life to the neighborhoods that surround them. Quality schools require public involvement—including the involvement of REALTORS®. "It makes sense for REALTORS® to familiarize themselves with issues that affect local schools and to take steps to improve the quality of public schools," says Wilson. "Because better schools benefit students, neighborhoods, and REALTORS®."

Public Schools and Property Values

While studies confirm the link between real estate values and school quality, it's difficult to "disentangle the value of school quality from other neighborhood amenities," as Thomas J. Kane and his colleagues note in a 2005 paper on the subject. Nonetheless, empirical studies have attempted to tease out the specifics of the relationship between home values and school quality. One widely cited 1997

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study by UCLA economist Sandra E. Black removed variations in neighborhoods, taxes, and school spending to isolate the value parents place on school quality. According to her calculations, parents are willing to pay 2.5 percent more for housing for a 5 percent increase in test scores. David M. Brasington, while at Tulane University, explored the impact on housing market values of a variety of measures of school quality. He found proficiency tests, expenditure per pupil, and pupil-to-teacher ratio to be “consistently capitalized” into housing prices, while measures such as graduation rates, teacher experience levels, and teacher education levels are not consistently positively related to housing prices.

Without splitting hairs over precisely what school attributes relate most directly to housing prices, it’s safe to say that there is a relationship between schools and property values—and that schools play an important role in many residential housing decisions. Based on the 2011 National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Community Preference Survey, school quality was among the four top community-related factors influencing homebuyer decisions. In fact, 75 percent of those surveyed cited high quality public schools as either very important or somewhat important in their decision-making process. Says Mike Theo, senior vice president for legal and public affairs for the Wisconsin REALTORS® Association, “The ripple effects between public education and housing necessitates that the real estate community take a direct interest in improving America’s primary and secondary schools.”

Public Schools: A Toolkit for REALTORS®

NAR has produced this toolkit to help REALTORS® enhance their knowledge and understanding of the public school system so they can become involved in improving their schools and communities. The opening section of the toolkit—*Issues in Public Education*—is designed to provide insights into current debates related to public education and emerging trends that are reshaping the nation’s public schools. These articles focus on topics such as the following:

- Federal education policy, school funding systems, and the persistent gap in performance between some groups of children and between states, school districts, and schools.



- Building and siting new schools—and preserving old ones—in ways that conserve resources and enhance walkability.
- Federal, state, and local programs that enable teachers to live near the schools where they work and programs that are making it possible for more kids to walk and bike to school.

Section two of the toolkit—*REALTORS® Making A Difference*—shares examples of REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations around the country that are playing an active role in engaging local students and improving local schools by serving on school boards, volunteering at local schools, donating their time to community-wide efforts to improve schools, and advocating for local school-related initiatives. REALTOR® associations and affiliated foundations donate thousands of dollars each year to fund local scholarships and school-centered projects. They spearhead special projects, support local teachers, and supply much-needed efforts and funds to school-based projects and programs. These REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations are making a real difference in their schools and communities—and serve as guides for those interested in implementing similar projects and programs in other communities.

Finally, all of the articles in the toolkit include NAR tools and web-based resources that can help REALTORS® learn more and implement programs that support public schools.

Addressing the Issues

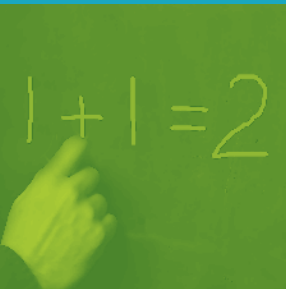
Whether it means mentoring a local student or advocating for a local ballot initiative supporting schools, engaging is a step worth taking. For one thing, REALTORS® bring a unique set of insights to the table. For example, in Reno/Sparks, Nevada, REALTORS® Daryl Drake and Kris Layman are of the members of the Council for Excellence in Education, a group of business leaders committed to improving K–12 education and to addressing public perceptions of local schools. They also serve on the legislative committee of the Reno/Sparks Association of REALTORS®. “We bring the REALTOR® perspective to the Council for Excellence in Education,” says Drake. “And, on occasion, we bring issues to the REALTOR®

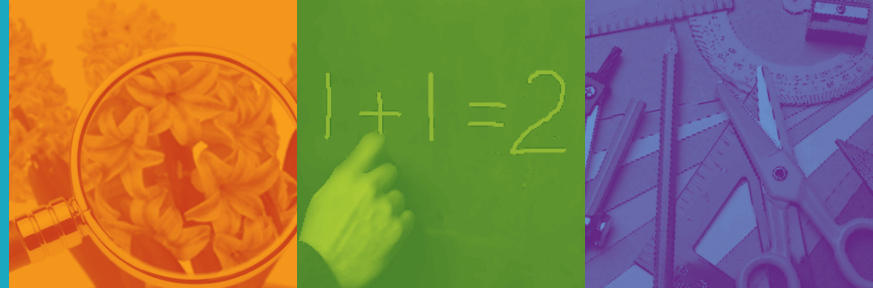
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legislative committee.” REALTORS® have a vested interest in improving schools. “I would encourage REALTORS® to get involved,” says REALTOR® Donald G. Warner, who has played a leadership role on the school board in Upper Moreland Township, Pennsylvania, for many years. “The school board needs to know how the decisions made in the school affect the real estate market in the area.” These efforts—and this toolkit—are all about strengthening schools and communities and building the relationship between REALTORS® and the communities they serve.

**ISSUES
IN PUBLIC EDUCATION**





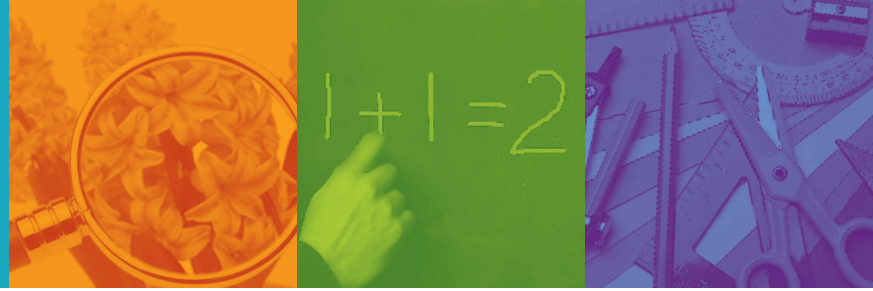
Cultural Issues: The Achievement Gap

Education has long been considered the great equalizer in American society and is viewed by many as the cornerstone of American meritocracy. Our country has long believed that providing free public education will help level the playing field for K–12 students—creating opportunities across income, racial, and ethnic groups.

The Coleman Report

The debate over the influence of cultural factors such as income level, race, and ethnicity on educational achievement has a long history, beginning with the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954. Plaintiffs in the case argued that segregation inevitably led black students to achieve less than their white counterparts, which in turn led to the Supreme Court ruling that “separate but equal” was unconstitutional. Ten years after that ruling, Congress ordered a study to determine whether African-Americans still attended inferior schools and whether that kept achievement levels low. Advocates for the disadvantaged hoped the study would prove a causal relationship between inferior schools and lower academic achievement—and lead to additional funding for those schools. It was one of the first studies to examine inequities in the education system, and the results were not so straightforward. James S. Coleman, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University who conducted the study, found that differences between schools had little impact on achievement relative to other factors, including a family’s socioeconomic background and the social composition of the schools. The 1966 Coleman Report was the first significant study to link educational achievement with socioeconomic and cultural factors. Since then, a growing body of research has demonstrated that achievement is a result of a complex combination of factors—and that the achievement gap can only be addressed through a variety of strategies.

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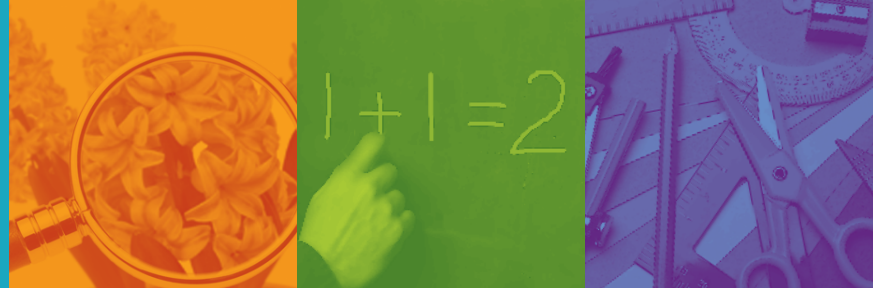
Cultural and Environmental Factors

Differences in School Readiness

To take full advantage of school between kindergarten and 12th grade, children must be well prepared to enter school. Income and social class significantly influence school readiness, and parental involvement and engagement plays a critical role in student success at every step of the education process. Studies have shown that higher-income, more-educated parents encourage their children to read more and read to their children more frequently. According to one study, higher-income children are exposed to more words between birth and age five. The researchers found that professional parents spoke over 2,000 words per hour to their children, while working-class parents spoke about 1,300, and welfare recipients spoke 600. As a result, the children of professionals had a vocabulary 50 percent higher than middle-class children and twice that of children on public assistance. Higher-income parents also speak to their children differently—asking probing questions when they talk or read to them. Overall, higher-income parents encourage their children more frequently, have higher expectations of their children’s school performance, are more comfortable challenging teachers and school personnel, and are more able to help their kids with homework. The combination of all these factors results in dramatically different levels of school readiness by children of different economic backgrounds and can affect achievement at every grade level.

Health and Environmental Factors

Poor health is another major issue that can affect school performance among low-income students. They have vision impairments at twice the rate of the general population—about half of low-income children have vision problems that interfere with their academic work—and they have more ear infections, which can be associated with temporary and permanent hearing loss. Because they tend to live in older buildings and go to older schools, low-income children are more likely to be exposed to lead from water pipes and to lead-based paint. Lead exposure negatively affects cognitive functioning and behavior. In fact, low-income children have dangerously high blood-lead levels at five times the rate of their middle-class counterparts. They are also more likely to breathe dangerous fumes from



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low-grade heating systems and to inhale dangerous fumes from diesel trucks and factories. So it's not surprising that asthma rates among low-income students far exceed those of the general population. And there are other critical health factors that affect achievement and school absences: children from low-income families are more likely to suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome, have mothers who smoked during their pregnancies, have worse nutrition, and suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies at much higher rates.

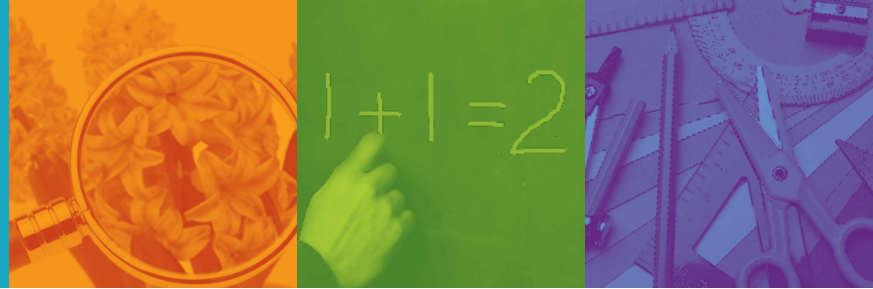
School absences are substantially higher among lower-income students. In fact, they miss 30 percent more school days than their middle-income classmates—primarily due to health problems. Asthma has become the single biggest cause of chronic school absence—and low-income students with asthma are nearly twice as likely as middle-class students to miss seven or more days of school a year due to asthma. To make matters worse, these students have less access to health care and services, and they have the lowest levels of health insurance coverage. In combination, all these factors put low-income students at a disadvantage coming out of the gate.

Student Mobility

Moving—and changing schools in the process—can disrupt any child's education. Having to adjust to new school surroundings can be difficult in itself, but changing schools can mean adjusting to new curricula, teaching strategies, and educational approaches. Low-income families are forced to move for economic reasons far more often than other families. The numbers are dramatic. Mobility rates are above 100 percent in many low-income schools, meaning that two students may sit in every classroom chair in a given year. One study found that 30 percent of low-income children had attended at least three different schools by the third grade, as compared to only 10 percent among the middle-class students.

Addressing the Education "Ecosystem"

Given the complexity of factors contributing to the achievement gap, a variety of strategies has emerged in an effort to close the gap, including high-quality early childhood education and before- and after-school programs and parental outreach programs. There is growing recognition that what goes on outside



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the classroom may be just as important as what goes on inside the classroom. Commenting in the May/June 2010 issue of *American Teacher*, Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) says, "Closing the gap requires solutions that target the entire educational ecosystem. For too long, our fixes have targeted the classroom or school, while failing to fully address the remaining 17 hours of the day when the child is not in school." In 2009, Rep. Honda helped create the Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission, which aims to further engage teachers, parents, schools, and communities in a dialogue at the local, state, and federal level to address the issue on all fronts.

Early Childhood Programs

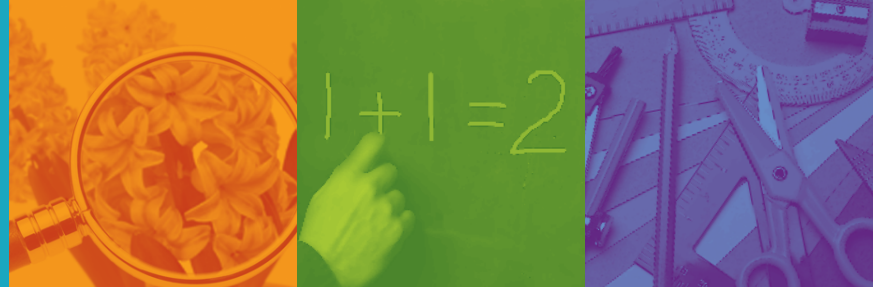
Given the importance of school readiness, many states are funding early education programs or "pre-K" programs at higher levels than in the past. State courts in North Carolina and New Jersey found the importance of pre-K education to be so great that they mandated the states to provide pre-K funding and services for all at-risk students. At the start of the 2009 school year, when a record 51,100 students were enrolled in the state's preschool programs, Gov. Jon Corzine (D-NJ) described the state's investment in preschool programs as one of the most important measures of his administration.

Summer and After-School Programs

Research suggests that the differing experiences that children have during the summer months contributes to the gap in school achievement. Low-income parents may not buy as many books for their children or have computers at home or expand their exposure to new learning experiences by visiting museums and libraries. Along similar lines, low-income students may not have as many after-school options. In response, schools and districts across the country have created summer and after-school programs that provide low-income students with a wide variety of learning opportunities.

School-Based Health Care

To help overcome deficiencies in health services, some school systems around the country have created health clinics and/or services at school sites. There, students and their families may be provided with oral and vision services and have access



to certified nurses to support a variety of other medical services. The Portland, Maine school system has developed an innovative approach that uses Medicaid funds to provide a wide variety of services at the school level. In Milwaukee, where high-poverty students represent 77 percent of the public school population, the city has introduced school-based health care programs in 14 schools through a community partnership with a private provider, Aurora Health Care. Other states such as Minnesota are examining ways to coordinate health and human services programs with their K–12 education systems. Minneapolis, for example, has introduced school-based clinics. The pooling of resources from different state and local programs shows great potential in helping school systems provide a variety of needed health services efficiently and effectively.

Parent Engagement

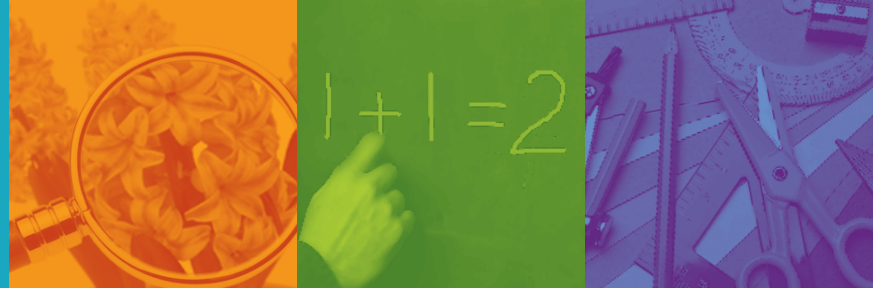
Study after study confirms the link between parental involvement and both student achievement and school quality. In order to increase parental involvement, the federal No Child Left Behind education act, passed in 2001, requires school systems to communicate with and engage parents. Schools around the country have responded with programs ranging from the establishment of parent engagement committees to new policies promoting parent-teacher conferences for at-risk students.

The Role of Schools and Communities

Increasingly, policymakers, educators, and communities are taking it to the next level—with community-based programs that engage schools, families, and communities, and with innovative academic programs focused on changing the culture of individual schools. These include academic programs tailored to the needs of specific groups of at-risk students—such as “English-language learners” or low-income students who fall through the cracks in large schools with a diverse student mix or high-poverty students in high-poverty schools.

The Education Trust has made a practice of identifying schools that defy the patterns of achievement that separate one income, ethnic, or racial group from another. Take the example of Morningside Elementary School, located in Brownsville, Texas, a few miles from the Mexican border. Many Morningside

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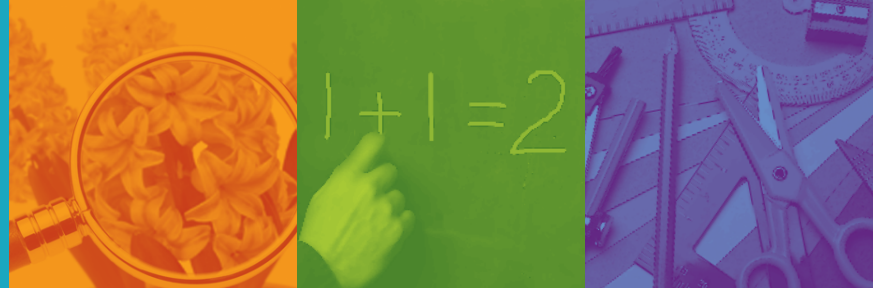
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students start school without knowing any English—59 percent are “English-language learners.” Even so, in 2009, 99 percent of the school’s low-income fifth graders met state math and science standards—compared to 78 percent across Texas. And the school was designated “exemplary,” which means at least 90 percent of the students met or exceeded state standards. Another example is Jack Britt High School in Fayetteville, North Carolina, which has a diverse student body and a massive number of students—1,800. One-fourth of those are low-income and about 40 percent are African-American. Yet, overall, the school’s four-year graduation rate exceeds the state average. According to the Education Trust, African-American students at Jack Britt “graduate at higher rates than its white students (92 percent, compared to 83 percent) and at rates that are much higher than the rest of the state’s African-American students (who graduate on average at a rate of 67 percent).” Such examples suggest that individual schools can make a huge difference in narrowing the achievement gap.

It is particularly difficult to break the patterns of low academic achievement associated with poverty. *The Condition of Education 2010*, a report released by the National Center for Education Statistics, features a special section on high-poverty schools—defined as schools where more than 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches. According to that report, over the past decade, the number of students attending high-poverty schools has grown. In 1999, 15 percent of the nation’s elementary school students were enrolled in high-poverty schools; by 2007 that number had grown to 20 percent. During that same period, the percentage of U.S. high school students enrolled in high-poverty schools rose from 5 percent to 9 percent. Consider the glaring gap between *high-poverty* and *low-poverty schools*—and what it bodes for the future of these students: in 2007–2008, only 28 percent of graduates from high-poverty schools went on to four-year institutions—compared to 52 percent of students graduating from low-poverty schools.

When high-poverty students are concentrated in large, low-performing schools with other at-risk students, it fosters a culture of low expectations and low achievement. Students in high-poverty elementary and middle schools are on track toward so-called “dropout factories”—U.S. high schools with chronically high dropout rates. “The nation’s dropout problem is concentrated



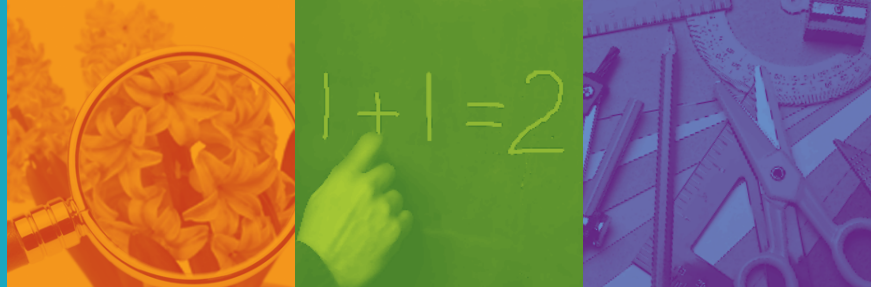
in segregated high poverty schools,” wrote Harvard University researchers in 2005 in *Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Education Inequality*. Innovative new schools, including urban charter schools developed to meet the needs of specific at-risk groups, and targeted efforts by other public schools, are showing success in reversing these trends. (See related article, “Charter Schools: Are They Achieving Results?”)

But progress is slow. Between 2001 and 2008, the U.S. graduation rate improved—from 72 percent to 75 percent, according to a report published by America’s Promise Alliance in 2009. And, based on an analysis by Johns Hopkins University researchers in that same report, the number of schools that qualify as dropout factories—high schools that graduate fewer than 60 percent of their students—declined from 2,000 schools in 2002 to 1,750 schools in 2008. More heartening than the data from the study is this item that appeared in a *New York Times* analysis on November 30, 2010: “In 2005, researchers at Johns Hopkins University identified Richmond High School in Indiana as a dropout factory. But from 2006 to 2009, teachers, community leaders and professors joined in an effort to help students stay in school, raising the graduation rate to 80 percent from 53 percent, the report says.”

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Closing the Gap

In fact, efforts by educators and advocates over the past 10 years to understand and address the achievement gap appear to be yielding results. There has been tremendous progress in closing the gap between white and African-American students at the elementary school level. According to the Education Trust, in 1996 nearly 75 percent—or nearly three out of every four African-American fourth graders—could not perform at a basic level in mathematics. By 2007, that number was down to 30 percent. That’s a significant shift. Yet, an achievement gap persists. According to *Gauging the Gaps: A Deeper Look at Student Achievement*, published in January 2010 by the Education Trust, “Nationwide, low-income students and students of color perform, on average, below their peers...and in every state, low-income students trail their higher income peers in reading performance.”

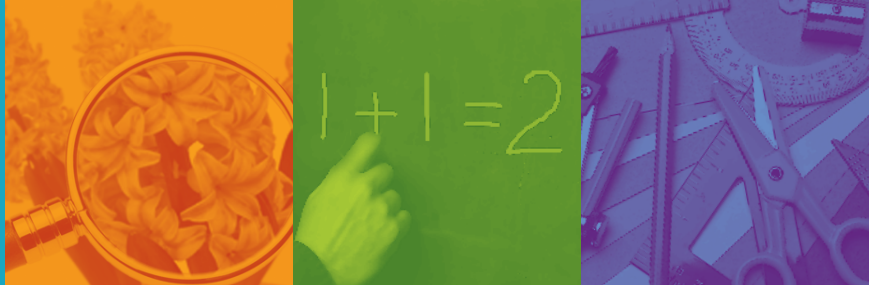


In *Gauging the Gaps*, researchers looked at the issue in new ways, focusing not just on nationwide and state data but on comparing the progress different states, school districts, and even individual schools within the same jurisdiction are making in narrowing the gaps. And it identifies programs that are working. Says the report, “Some schools focus every day on providing all students with access to a rich, engaging curriculum and the support necessary to successfully meet expectations.”

Gauging the Gaps provides valuable insights into what schools can do to make a difference—and a more complex and accurate picture of what’s really going on. The researchers report “dramatic variations in the achievement of similar groups of children” across states and even from one district to the next—and identify schools that are doing substantially better than others, even in the same jurisdiction. Some of the results are surprising. For example, in Fairfax, Virginia, one of the state’s wealthiest and highest performing school districts, white fourth graders performed much better than white students in most other Virginia school districts. In fact, they’re tied for third in performance among 48 other districts. But, says the report, “That commendable performance for Fairfax’s fourth graders masks glaring differences in group performance.” African-American fourth graders in Fairfax are performing not just below their white counterparts but below other African-American students in 20 other Virginia districts, including those with far higher poverty rates.

This kind of analysis provides policymakers and educators with an important new tool. They can use state assessment results “to examine which districts are narrowing gaps and which are widening disparities.” District leaders can use the results “to look at gap-closing progress across their schools.” According to the report, “Leaders of the Godwin Heights school district in the down-on-its-heels industrial town of Wyoming, Michigan, did just that and learned that one school, North Godwin Elementary, was doing a much better job of erasing the academic disparities that separate some students, including English-language learners, from their peers. Based on the school’s success, district leaders tapped the North Godwin principal to lead gap-closing efforts districtwide.”

That can happen with other schools and in other school districts that are looking for ways to improve their educational systems—and their communities.



Web Resources

Public School Graduates and Dropouts From the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007–08¹

This report presents findings associated with public high school graduation and dropout counts for the 2007–2008 school year. These data were collected as part of the Common Core of Data Survey Collection, National Center for Education Statistics.

Gauging the Gaps²

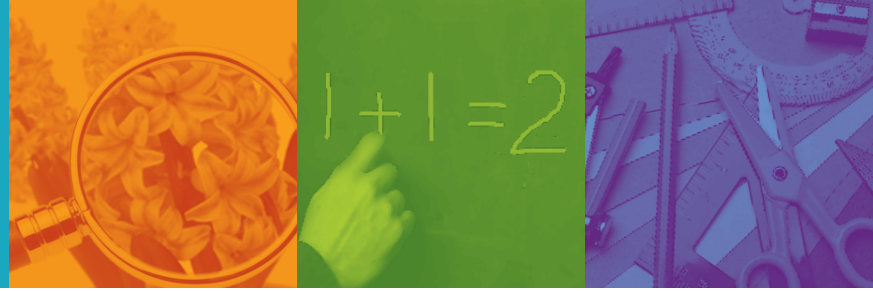
This 2010 report from The Education Trust explores new ways to understand the progress different states, districts, and individual schools are making toward closing achievement gaps.

¹ nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010341

² www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/gauging-the-gaps-a-deeper-look-at-student-achievement



See related articles in *REALTORS® Making a Difference*, “Read, Teach, and Mentor in Your Community,” “Support Innovative Projects that Improve Schools,” and “Volunteering to Improve Schools.”



The Benefits of Green Schools

In 2009, NJN Public Television and Radio produced a documentary, *Green Builders*, spotlighting four pioneering green building projects. One was a school—the Willow School in Gladstone, New Jersey. Built in 2003 according to sustainable practices, the school sits on a 34-acre site. It is an idyllic environment, with natural meadows, butterfly gardens, and hedgerows as well as a constructed wetlands that provides a natural filtration system for wastewater. The school

building, which has a traditional but rustic quality, is filled with natural light. A sign in the bathroom reads, “Recycled Tile,” creating a split-second learning opportunity. In fact, the building and its environment serve as tools for teaching students about sustainable practices from wastewater management to recycling. “If you look back at when we built this first building, in 2002–2003, pretty much we were alone,” Mark Biedron, cofounder of the Willow School, says in the documentary. “And everyone looked at us like we had three heads. Now, you cannot go to an architectural firm that doesn’t have a LEED-accredited professional on their staff or who doesn’t have some idea what sustainable, green building design is.”

The Willow School is just the kind of place that comes to mind when you hear the words “green school”—a small, private school in an idyllic setting serving communities that can afford the luxury of sustainability. But, given what’s occurred over the past

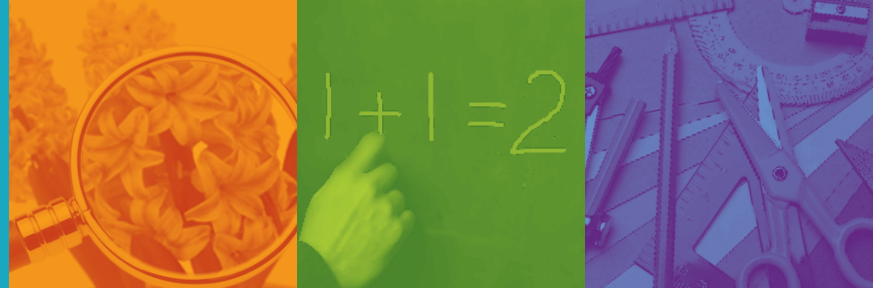
five years, such assumptions no longer apply. Since the Willow School was first built, the green schools movement has gone mainstream—extending well beyond a few leading-edge projects and deep into the nation’s public school system. As of March 2011, the number of public schools that are either LEED registered or

What is LEED Certification?

LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] is a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings’ performance. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

—U.S. Green Building Council

ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION



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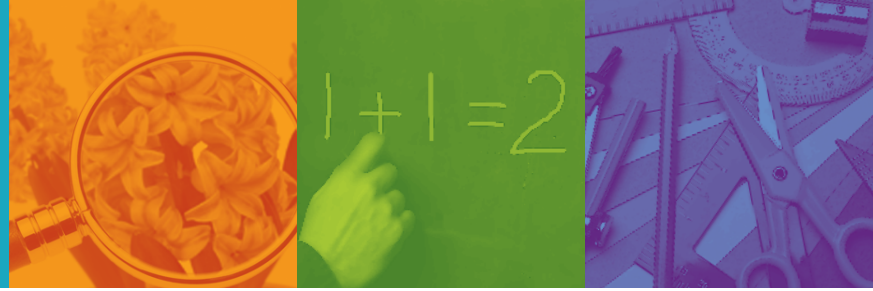
Green schools are catching on—not only because they’re healthier, more productive learning environments but also because they’re becoming more cost efficient to build and operate than anyone ever imagined.

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LEED certified by the U.S. Green Building Council—the internationally recognized standard for green building certification—is on the rise. As of July 2010, there were just over 300 K–12 LEED-certified projects—and more than 1,700 K–12 school and school-related building projects registered for future certification.

“Nationally, I’d say, at first it was a gradual shift. Then, three or four years ago it just kind of exploded,” says Lisa Laney, green schools program director for the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC). Laney should know. The state of Ohio has become a leader in green school construction, and today she travels around the country sharing the Ohio experience. As of January 2011, there were 281 LEED-registered projects in Ohio school districts—255 through the OSFC—and 22 LEED-registered schools in Cincinnati alone. That puts Cincinnati in a head-to-head race with Chicago and Albuquerque as the top cities for green public schools. “The catalyst for the LEED movement in Ohio was the securitization of tobacco funds,” says Laney. “We had \$4.1 billion dropped in our laps in 2007 to invest in our schools. That was right around the time the U.S. Green Building Council was gearing up to focus on schools, and the movement was catching on.” In September 2007, Ohio’s School Facilities Commission passed a resolution that all new schools meet certain LEED standards, and building green has since become standard practice for Ohio public schools. “Communities are getting excited about the opportunities. These schools have better indoor air quality and create healthier environments,” says Laney. “There’s less sickness, lower absenteeism, and they retain staff better.”

A number of trends are driving the shift nationwide. For one thing, public awareness about the importance of conserving energy and the impact of climate change has risen substantially over the past five years. By 2009, surveys indicated that more than three-quarters of American consumers describe themselves as “green.” There has been an explosion in green products, corporate sustainability programs, and community-based recycling programs. “When you’re looking at building schools—to paraphrase Rick Fedrizzi of the U.S. Green Building Council—why not build green? It just makes sense for the children,” says Laney. Certainly, from a health and environmental standpoint, the benefits of building greener schools have been clear for some time. What was unclear to local



governments and school districts back in 2002 or 2003 was how much money green initiatives could save school districts.

The Benefits to Kids and Communities

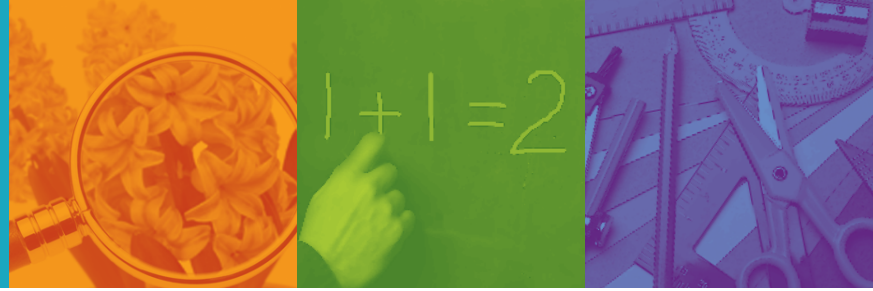
LEED schools—those built according to criteria established by the U.S. Green Building Council—and high-performance schools built according to the recommendations and standards of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) program create healthier, more productive learning environments by incorporating the following key features.

Better Indoor Air Quality

“Do you know what a new car smells like?” asks Lisa Laney. “When you go into a LEED school, you don’t have any of those new building smells. They’ve taken steps to flush the building out. They’ve used low-emitting carpet, paints, and adhesive. The indoor air quality is a lot better.” This is no small issue. According to the Coalition for Healthier Schools, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that as many as half of U.S. schools face environmental problems—including polluted indoor air, toxic chemicals and pesticide use, growing molds, lead in paint and drinking water, and asbestos. Studies link poor indoor air quality to an increase in asthma rates, childhood cancer rates, and the incidence of learning disabilities in children. As an example, in January 2011, the National Association of School Nurses released a survey of 350 school nurses. Forty percent of those surveyed reported that they knew children or staff who were affected by pollutants in schools. To put the issue in perspective, asthma, which affects 5 million school-age children, is the number one cause of school absenteeism.

Better Lighting and Better Acoustics

High performance schools use daylight as a major light source. Studies have linked classes that are well lit with natural light—and even classrooms with more window space—with measurably higher school performance. “Behavioral scientists say that daylight influences one’s ability to learn; it impacts test scores. Daylight is free and better than artificial light... the windows connect people to

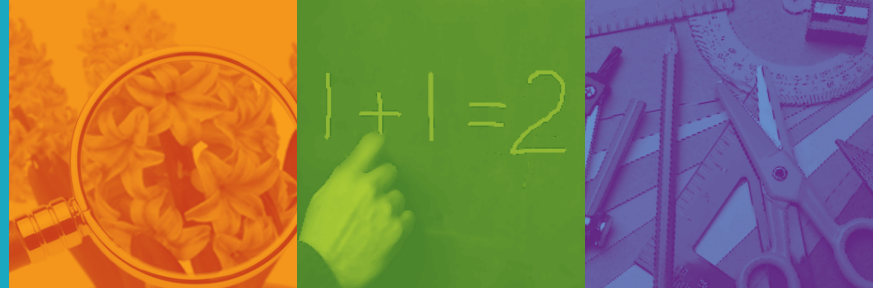


Lynnwood High School in Bethel, Washington, winner of the 2010 James D. MacConnell Award for excellence in facilities planning from the Council of Education Facility Planners International. The school is set on a 40-acre, forested campus with water retention and wetlands areas and features day lit classrooms.

the outside through beautiful views,” says Heinz Rudolf, with Boora Architects of Portland, Oregon, which has designed schools using high performance principles. Says Lisa Laney of the Ohio Green Schools Program, “If the architects pursue day lighting, they may bounce the light off of light shelves, bringing natural light deeper into the room. A room may be fully lit, and the lights may not even be on.” So it’s a strategy that not only promotes learning but also produces energy savings. Effective learning also involves effective listening, so high performance and LEED schools are designed to minimize noise and maximize the learning experience for students.

A Better Learning Environment

The Middleton School District in Middleton, Idaho, embraced principles of high-performance schools back in the early 2000s. The Purple Sage Elementary School, which opened in the district in the fall of 2003, is one example of



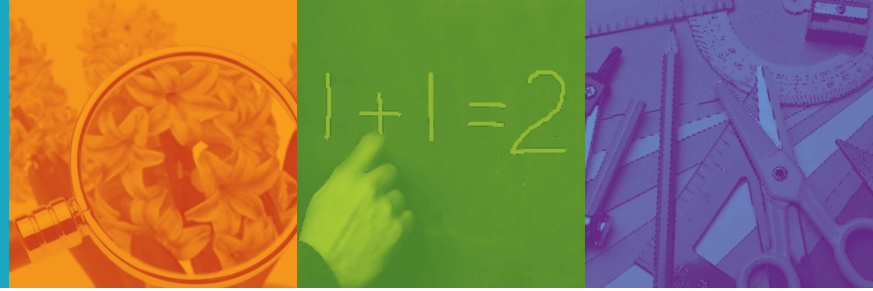
high performance principles at work. Built according to LEED standards, it incorporates numerous energy- and water-saving features. The lighting in the school's restrooms, storage areas, and closets is controlled electronically by sensors—so the lights go on when someone comes in and go off automatically when they leave. Climate controls are electronic, delivering precisely comfortable temperatures. The school's toilets have automatic flushers, and its sinks dispense water automatically. But, just as importantly, the building's natural light, plentiful windows, and light colors create a cheerful interior environment that supports learning. "It is overwhelmingly important to have a good learning environment for students," says Dr. Rich Bauscher, superintendent of the Middleton School District. "Parents tell us that their kids' attitude and desire to learn are attributable to the aspects of high performance schools." Lisa Laney of Ohio agrees, noting, "I think the kids and the staff just feel better in a LEED building."

Teaching Sustainable Practices to the Next Generation

Like the pioneering architects who designed the Willow School, some architects of LEED schools are designing schools as a teaching tool, according to Lisa Laney. "For example, if they're using a rainwater harvesting system, they may have a cistern outside with the rainwater," she says. "Some of the schools have green roof gardens, where they use plantings on top of the roof to capture the rainwater, and that becomes a learning tool for the students."

The Benefits to States, School Districts, and Communities

It's clear that high performance and LEED schools are good for kids, but in recent years it's become increasingly clear that they're also good for states and municipalities. LEED schools are constructed with recycled materials and with building materials that use fewer resources in their manufacture and transport, so they minimize greenhouse gas emissions and waste. Greener schools not only save energy and conserve resources, they also help municipalities address whatever regional environmental problems they may be facing, such as water use, storm water management, air quality, recycling, or mold problems. Nonetheless, until recently, the cost-benefit equation just didn't add up for school districts—the general perception being that sustainable building costs more and that the LEED-



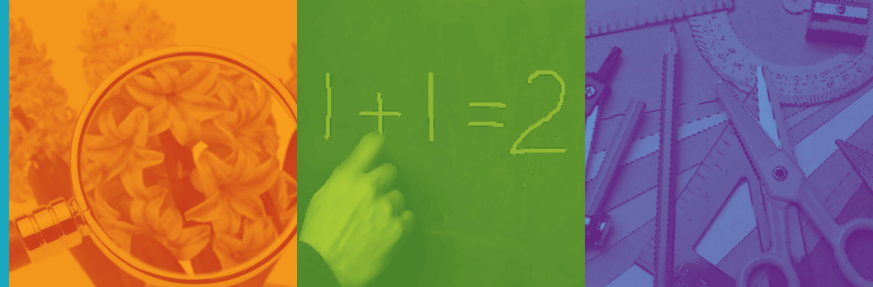
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The Ohio School
Facilities Commission
projected an average
\$6 million in energy
savings over the
40-year life span of a
single middle school
built according to
LEED standards.

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certification process adds a layer of bureaucracy. In 2004 and again in 2006, Davis Langdon, a global construction consulting company, published studies comparing the average costs of building similar commercial and government buildings using green versus nongreen practices. According to the 2007 report, *The Cost of Green Revisited*, “The 2006 study shows essentially the same results as 2004: there is no significant difference in average costs for green buildings as compared to non-green buildings. Many project teams are building green buildings with little or no added cost, and with budgets well within the cost range of non-green buildings with similar programs. We have also found that, in many areas of the country, the contracting community has embraced sustainable design, and no longer sees sustainable design requirements as additional burdens to be priced in their bids.” According to the report, for some types of buildings—such as schools—“improvements in energy efficiency can actually lead to reduced construction cost, since the improvements come from reducing dependence on mechanical systems and improving the passive design of the building.” Passive design involves using elements such as window placement and landscaping to maximize the benefits of the sun’s rays in winter and reduce their impact in summer.

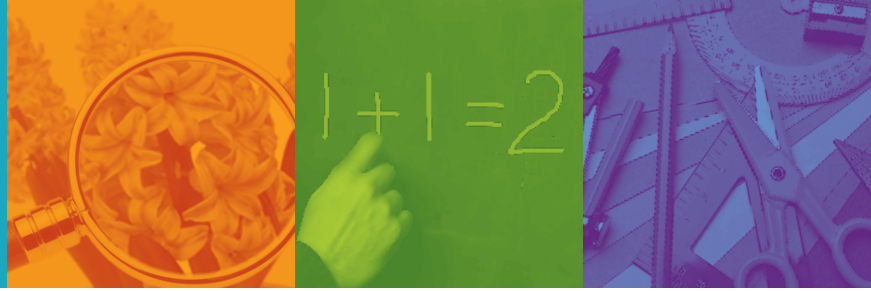
A number of factors contribute to a growing recognition that green schools can be built cost effectively—and even add up to major savings for states and municipalities. For one thing, as energy costs continue to rise, the long-term economic benefits of energy efficiency become more compelling. For another, rising demand for green building materials has made them more available and more affordable. In addition, as more LEED schools come on line, cost analyses make a compelling case in favor of sustainable design. For example, when the Ohio School Facilities Commission looked at the economics of building LEED schools, they projected an average \$6 million in energy savings over the 40-year life span of a single middle school. With 255 LEED schools planned for the state, that added up to enormous savings for Ohio school districts and taxpayers over the next 40 years.



Ushering in a New Era

The Collaborative for High Performance Schools was a first mover on the green school front. Originally established in 1999 to address the issue of energy efficiency in California's schools in collaboration with the state's utility companies, it soon grew into an important resource for schools and school districts around the country who were interested in building healthier, more energy-efficient schools based on Smart Growth objectives. Since 1999, 41 school districts around the country have used CHPS as a resource to build or refurbish schools. Eleven states have worked with the collaborative to develop high performance school building criteria. Overall, some 86 CHPS-recognized high performance schools have been completed since 1999, and another 300 are in various stages of development. The momentum has continued to build. In 2004, parents and environmentalists formed the Green Schools Initiative in California. In 2007, the Green Schools Alliance, based in New York, was created in response to Mayor Bloomberg's challenge to New York City institutions to reduce their carbon footprint 30 percent by 2030. And in 2010, when the first annual Green Schools National Conference was held in Minneapolis, more than 1,000 participants attended—including 100 high schools—from 40 states.

A major turning point came in 2009 with the establishment of the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council, the nonprofit organization that originally developed and now administers the LEED building rating system. The center helps cut through the red tape generally associated with LEED certification and is becoming a hub of activity for promoting the construction and refurbishment of schools based on sustainable practices. In addition to providing resources to support LEED-certification efforts, the Center for Green Schools has put a staff in place that's equipped to travel to local school districts and work directly with local administrators and designers, and has launched a series of initiatives—the Mayors' Alliance, 50 for 50 Green Schools Caucus, and the Congressional Green Schools Caucus—to build momentum for green school initiatives at the local, state, and federal legislative levels. A number of states already have green building regulations, incentives, or guidelines in place.



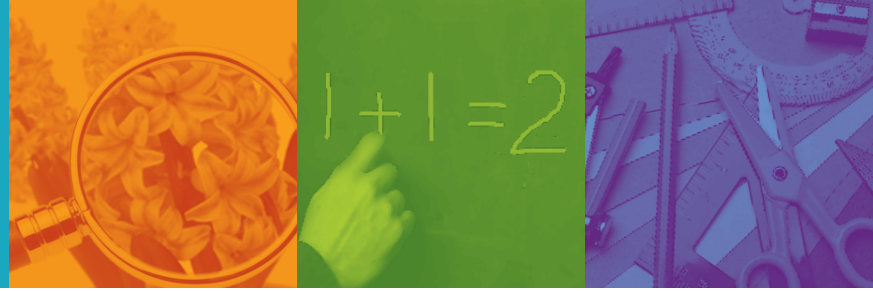
Characteristics of a Green School

- Conserves energy and natural resources
- Saves taxpayer money
- Improves indoor air quality
- Removes toxic materials from places where children learn and play
- Employs day-lighting strategies and improves classroom acoustics
- Employs sustainable purchasing and green cleaning practices
- Improves environmental literacy in students
- Decreases the burden on municipal water and wastewater treatment
- Encourages waste management efforts to benefit the local community and region
- Conserves fresh drinking water and helps manage storm water runoff
- Encourages recycling
- Promotes habitat protection
- Reduces demand on local landfills

—*The Center for Green Schools*
at the U.S. Green Building Council

As of March 2011, according to the Environmental Law Institute’s website, 20 states have implemented policies that require or promote CHPS or LEED green building standards for school construction.

But it’s not just school administrators, environmental advocates, and policymakers who make green schools a reality. Parents, community leaders—and REALTORS®—can play a role in pushing for schools with energy-efficient features, sustainable materials, day lighting, and better indoor air quality. In the end, the results of these efforts—including better schools, cost savings, healthier children, higher test scores, and stronger communities—may be immeasurable.



NAR Tools

NAR's Green Designation¹

The National Association of REALTORS® has created a green designation and benefits program tailored for real estate agents that provides advanced training in green building and sustainable business practices.

Web Resources

The Center for Green Schools²

The U.S. Green Building Council provides guidance, programming, and resources on green schools, including a set of useful planning, project-management, and policy-making guides, as well as links to the Coalition for Green Schools. Other valuable links at the center's site include

Green School Buildings³

Useful K–12 building resources at the Center for Green Schools, including the *Green Existing Schools Toolkit*;

LEED-Certified and -Registered Schools⁴

To download a list of LEED-certified and LEED-registered schools, follow this link.

CEFPI's Moving Sustainability Forward Symposium⁵

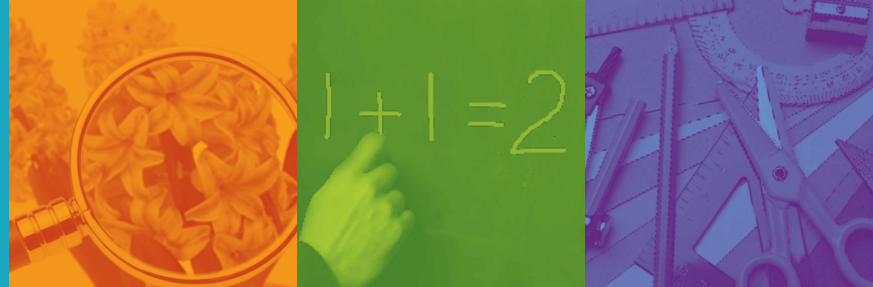
Council of Education Facility Planners International members, individuals, institutions, and corporations are actively involved in planning, designing, building, equipping, and maintaining schools and colleges. This sustainability symposium offers panel discussions, roundtables, and plenty of opportunities to talk about green innovations and ideas.

Collaborative for High Performing Schools⁶

Resources, guidance, and insights on high performance schools and how to work with CHPS to build or refurbish a school according to high performance criteria.

Green Schools Initiative⁷

Tools and research from this advocacy organization founded by parents and environmentalists to create environmentally healthy schools—including a blueprint for organizing to pass a school board initiative.⁸



IAQ Tools for Schools Program⁹

Guidance on how to implement a practical plan for improving indoor air quality at schools, including how to implement a districtwide IAQ Tools for Schools Program.

State Policies¹⁰

The Environmental Law Institute provides up-to-date information on state policies, guidelines, and incentives for building CHPS and LEED schools, with links to specific state requirements.

EPA Educational Resources¹¹

The EPA provides links to programs for teaching sustainability in America's classrooms—resources that you can share with your local schools.

¹ www.greenresourcecouncil.org/

² www.centerforgreenschools.org/welcome.aspx

³ www.greenschoolbuildings.org/Homepage.aspx

⁴ www.centerforgreenschools.org/leed-for-schools.aspx

⁵ www.cefpi.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4763

⁶ www.chps.net/dev/Drupal/node

⁷ www.greenschools.net/

⁸ www.greenschools.net/article.php?list=type&type=7

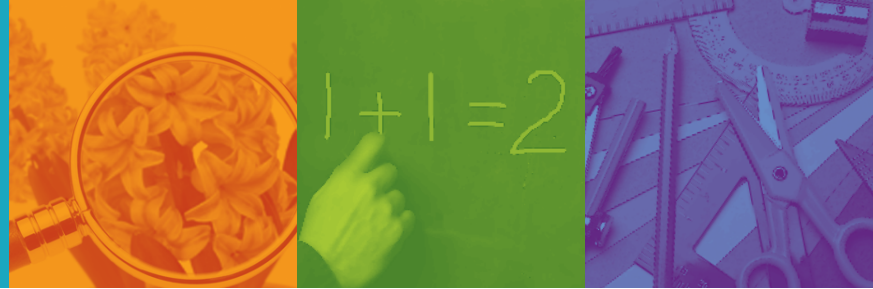
⁹ www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/toolkit.html

¹⁰ www.eli.org/Program_Areas/Healthy_Schools/index.cfm

¹¹ www.epa.gov/greenkit/student.htm



See related article in REALTORS® *Making a Difference*, "Participate in the School of the Future Design Competition."



Walkability and Safe Routes to School

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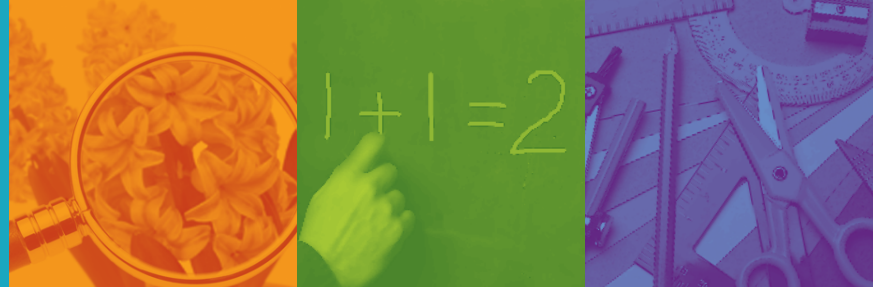
Over the past
50 years, the number
of kids who walk and
bike to school has
declined dramatically.
Given rising concerns
about the health,
environmental,
and economic
consequences,
there's a unified
effort under way
to reverse this
trend—and it's
beginning to make
a difference.

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In 2011, like thousands of other U.S. schools, Fairfield Senior High School in suburban Cincinnati was facing a budget crisis. In response, among other cutbacks, the school board voted in March to eliminate school bus services for high school students for the 2011–2012 academic year, a move that would save the district \$300,000 a year. This wasn't the first time the district's school board felt forced to address funding shortfalls by eliminating bus services. The last time busing was eliminated—or three months in 2004—the Fairfield police sent a clear message to students: Don't even think about walking to school.

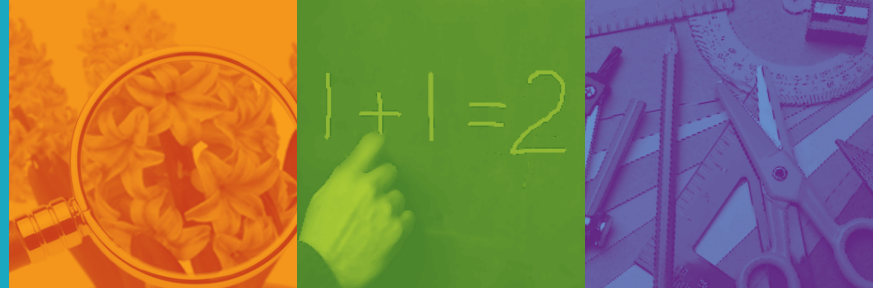
Built in 1997, Fairfield Senior High is set among busy, multilane roads, and there are no sidewalks leading up to the school. Traffic congestion around the school is a major issue in the community—and in 2004 police were terrified at the prospect of kids trying to navigate a hostile environment on foot or on bikes. In the six years since, the route to school has not become any less hazardous. There are still no sidewalks or pedestrian overpasses that make it possible to safely reach the school on foot. In 2011, one parent wrote this on the Fairfield superintendent's blog in the wake of the March announcement: "We live close enough to the high school that my daughter could conceivably walk home from school, but where should she walk? The street? Sidewalks should have been included when the new high school was planned years ago. Now you are going to have hundreds of children walking down the street and around the school with no sidewalks on which to walk. Not to mention that she would have to cross Route 4 to get home."

Explains Randy Oppenheimer, who handles community relations for the Fairfield school district, "The high school was built 14 years ago. Walkability was not viewed as a priority." But, today, walkability is viewed as a priority—in part, because Fairview High School is not an isolated example. Millions of the nation's elementary, middle, and high school students can't walk or bike to school. Others simply don't. Today, the vast majority of kids are driven to school—either by bus or by private vehicle. And, in light of rising health and environmental concerns, reversing this pattern has become a national priority.



The dramatic decline in walking and biking to school among U.S. children has been widely documented, and there's near-universal agreement that it's a problem that needs to be fixed. Based on federal transportation surveys, the percentage of children ages 5 to 18 who walked or biked to school declined from 47 percent in 1969 to 16 percent in 2001. A root cause has been the growth of sprawling suburbs—many of which are simply unwalkable—and the growing dependence on the automobile. The distance between home and school has become an issue. Over the past 50 years, schools have become bigger and been located farther from the families they serve. By 1969 only 34 percent of children ages 5 to 18 lived within one mile of their school, and by 2001 only 21 percent lived within a mile of school. At some point, even kids who lived within a mile of their schools stopped walking and biking to and from school. Today, according to the 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), among five to fourteen-year-olds who live within a mile of school, only 38 percent usually walk or bike—compared to nearly 90 percent in 1969. The consequences of these trends have been significant. Among them are the following:

- Rates of obesity and physical inactivity among kids have risen to the point where 30 percent of our kids are overweight or obese, and one-third of middle and high schoolers are sedentary. It's an issue that moved to the forefront of the national agenda when First Lady Michelle Obama launched the Let's Move initiative in February 9, 2010 to address what she labeled "the epidemic of childhood obesity." In her remarks at the Let's Move launch, she cited the fact that childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past three decades and pointed to the troubling links between inactivity and obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and even Type II diabetes in children.
- The environmental and economic impacts of driving and busing kids to school are not insignificant. The rise in rush hour traffic associated with school trips has been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a key contributor to air quality problems in a number of cities. And the rising cost of busing students—even those who live within walking distance of schools—has become a budgetary issue facing school boards around the country.

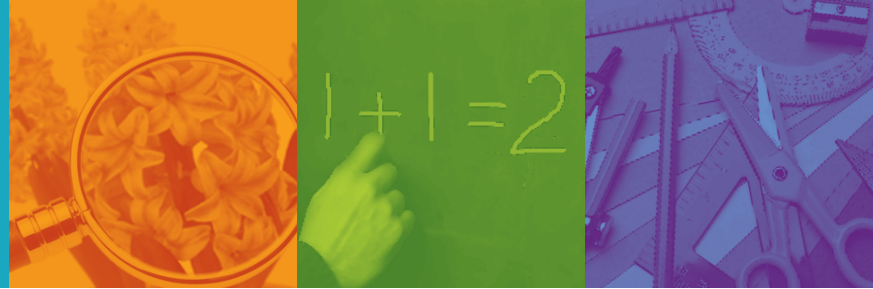


Crossing guards and crosswalks enhance safe travel to and from school in the community of Daybreak in South Jordan, Utah. Photo courtesy of Rio Tinto Kennecott.

Addressing the Issue

These concerns moved to the forefront of the national agenda at the turn of the millennium. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) raised public awareness of the problem with the release of *Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl: Why Johnny Can't Walk to School* in 2000, and the release of a second edition in 2002, as new data continued to emerge. The reports documented the dramatic decline in walking and biking to school and raised serious questions about land use policy, school siting decisions, and related infrastructure issues that served as barriers to walkability. (See related story, *Issues in Public Education, "School Building and Siting"*). In the wake of the NTHP reports, the EPA conducted the first empirical study linking school transportation to high auto emissions. And, in August of 2005, with momentum building for the creation

ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION



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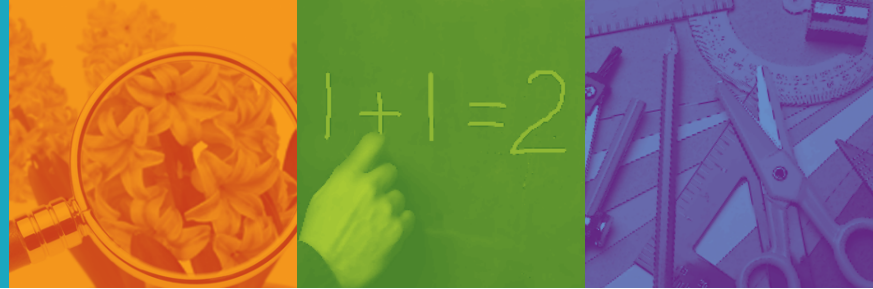
**The National Center
for Safe Routes to
School (SRTS) has
become the catalyst
for a nationwide
effort to create
safer, more walkable
environments.**

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of more walkable and bikable school environments, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, establishing a federal grant program called Safe Routes to School that provided \$612 million in funding for five years to help communities create more walkable school environments. The National Center for Safe Routes to School is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration and is maintained by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center. It has grown into a nationwide organization of state and local coordinators who are implementing the program in all 50 states and Washington, DC, as well as a 20-state network of Safe Routes to School advocates focused on policy change. Today, state transportation departments, biking and walking advocacy groups, planners, engineers, the EPA, the CDC, community groups around the country, and private funders are working to reverse the trend. In combination, these forces are making a tremendous impact on reshaping policies, educating families, and promoting safer, more walkable environments.

Not surprisingly, advocates for improving school walkability, including the National Center for Safe Routes to School (SRTS), are addressing the issue on multiple fronts, focusing on the needs of individual communities and helping to change misguided policies at the state and local levels. They're employing a variety of strategies from educating kids on how to walk and bike safely to spearheading infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, walking paths, and bike trail trails to forging alliances with government agencies and advocates for walking and biking throughout the country.

To get a sense of the level of activity, consider the example of Ohio. SRTS grant funding flows from the Department of Transportation (DOT), and Julie Walcoff, the state's SRTS program manager, is based at the Ohio DOT. Through Walcoff and a network of local coordinators, SRTS reaches out to Ohio's elementary and middle schools to let them know that funding is available for education, engineering, and infrastructure programs to make walking and biking safer, and for so-called "encouragement" programs to promote walking and biking to school. Then it's up to the schools and communities to apply for the grants. "We're assisting communities in what they think is important," says Walcoff. "So if a community's priority is to make it safer for their kids to walk and bike to school, they come to

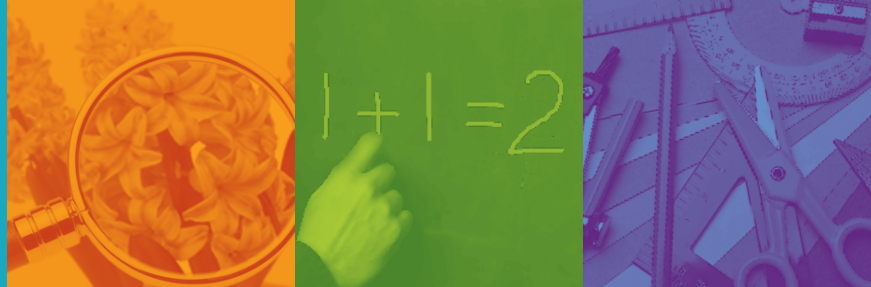


Students en route from Monroe Elementary School in West Valley City, Utah.
Photo courtesy of iwalktoschool.org /Mike Cynecki.

us, and we assist them.” Toward that end, the Ohio DOT distributed \$11 million in 2010 and \$11.6 million in 2011 to fund local SRTS projects. Grants went for a range of infrastructure and engineering projects, including walking paths, traffic signals, pavement markings, bike trails, curb extensions, and countdown devices for traffic signals—which give pedestrians an indication of when a traffic light is going to change. The Ohio DOT also awarded SRTS grants for safety education programs and programs that promote and encourage biking and walking to school—such as newsletters and outreach.

Focusing in on the Problem

In 2010, SRTS released a comprehensive study of student travel patterns, which provides new insights into the barriers to walking to school and gives SRTS baseline data for evaluating the ultimate impact of its programs. By combining surveys of more than 130,000 parents with travel data recorded for students from

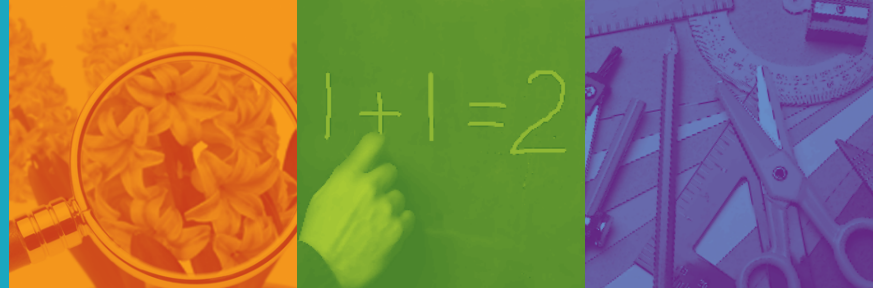


more than 34,000 classrooms in 1,308 elementary and middle schools around the United States, the survey yielded the following:

- The distance between home and school is a major barrier to walkability. Fully 34 percent of the families surveyed lived two or more miles from school. Cars and buses were by far the most common mode of transportation among all parents surveyed—one or the other was used 82 percent of families in the morning and 78 percent in the afternoon.
- Traffic safety is a major problem. Some parents don't allow their children to walk to school because walking is just too dangerous—not because of concerns about crime, which registers as a minor issue, but because the distance is too great or because of road conditions—such as high traffic speeds, the lack of safe crossings, and traffic volumes. Says the report, “The predominant reason kids aren't walking to school is because they do not live in walkable communities.”
- Those parents who allow their kids to walk to school do so because the school is close by, the intersections and crossings are safe, the weather is accommodating, and because there are sidewalks and pathways to carry them.

Today, biking and public transportation are the least common ways of getting to school, and again, family vehicles and school buses are the most common. Based on the 2009 NHTS survey, 40 percent of elementary and middle-schoolers ride the bus—up slightly from 38 percent in 1969—and 44 percent routinely ride in a family car or van—up from 12 percent in 1969. A visit to The National Center for Safe Routes To School website yields an abundance of case studies from communities around the country. Dig a little deeper, and it becomes clear that real change is in the making.

Take the case of Pickerington, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio, and the surrounding Violet Township. The community has addressed a number of underlying school travel problems on its own. For example, Harmon Middle School sits on Harmon Road, which was once a two-lane country road with no sidewalks. A few years ago, the township funded the expansion of Harmon Road



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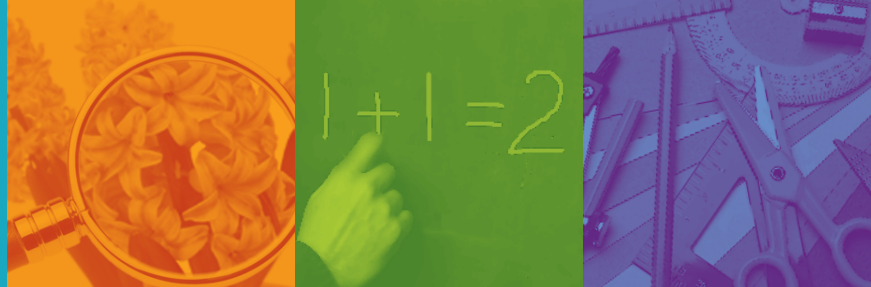
The community of
Pickerington, Ohio is
using SRTS grants to
address the barriers
to walking and
biking—to get kids
moving again.

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to three lanes and added sidewalks on both sides. Today, the kids at the Harmon Middle School are not only able to walk to school but to bike—which they do by the hundreds. A school crossing guard ensures safe passage across Harmon for both walkers and bikers.

Like many neighborhoods developed around the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, Pickerington has two problems: curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. In the neighborhoods that serve two local elementary schools—Fairfield Elementary and Pickerington Elementary—even kids who live within a mile of the schools can't walk or bike because of the way the communities were originally designed. Part of the neighborhood serving Fairfield Elementary—the cul-de-sacs developed before the mid-eighties—has no sidewalks at all. And in neighborhoods serving Pickerington Elementary that do have sidewalks, the cul-de-sacs circle around and link to one another, but they don't connect directly to the main road or to the school. Those are problems that SRTS can address. Says Ira Weiss, a member of the SRTS committee for Pickerington and Violet Township, "At Pickerington Elementary when we looked at the road connections, we said, these kids are two houses away from the school, but they can't get there. Because they're in the middle of a cul-de-sac, they have to walk all the way around to the main street. It turns a 200-foot walk into a two-mile walk. We said, we're going to put a trail in there, so they can walk from the cul-de-sac directly to the school."

Pickerington's 17-member SRTS committee has been busy. Its members include representatives of all the school district's elementary, middle, and junior high schools, as well as the school transportation coordinator, a representative of the police department, the assistant to the superintendent of schools, a former member of the department of parks and recreation, and assorted community leaders, including Peggy Portier, a local go-getter and member of the county historical society, and Ira Weiss, who, among other things, is past president of both the County Planning Commission and an active regional biking group, Consider Biking. They're getting things done. Among other SRTS grants, they applied for—and received—a noninfrastructure grant that included bike helmets for all the middle schoolers in the entire district. "That's more than 2,000 bike helmets," says Weiss. More importantly, they've got a plan.



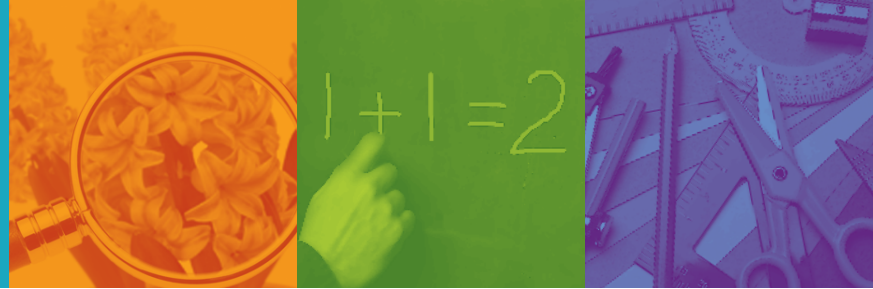
Before a school district can get an SRTS grant, it must develop a School Travel Plan. “The travel plan looks at what the current conditions are, what the barriers are, and how to mitigate those barriers,” says Weiss. The committee then sets its priorities based on that analysis, aiming primarily at improving walkability for kids who live within a mile of school. In 2008, they received funds for creating walking paths and sidewalks to serve both Fairfield and Pickerington students, and in the spring of 2011, construction gets under way. Says Weiss, “Right now at Pickerington Elementary students are not allowed to walk to school. But in a couple of years all the infrastructure will be in place. Then it’s up to the principal.”

Enthusiasm is building community wide. “You can see the excitement by going to the school board meetings—people want to see these things happen,” says Weiss. “They’re realizing that if we put in a sidewalk, it’s not just for the kids. It’s for everybody who’s old enough that their mothers will let them walk to school on up to senior citizens.” So the program has the potential for increasing walking and biking not just to schools but also to local services, retail stores, and restaurants.

Why It Makes a Difference

The benefits of creating walkable environments are clear. Chief among them are the health benefits. But there are other compelling reasons to address the issue. Transportation makes up a rising share of U.S. family budgets—up from 10 percent in 1935 to almost 20 percent today, according to a 2003 report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project. And periodic spikes in gas prices further exacerbate the impact of these costs. Nationwide, in the 25 years from 1978 to 2003, the cost to school districts of transporting students doubled. State experiences vary. The following examples are cited in the 2010 Report *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Policy Recommendations for Removing Barriers to Community-Centered Schools*.

- In Maine, during the 20-year period from 1975 to 1995, the cost of busing the state’s students to school increased by more than 600 percent—from \$8.7 million to more than \$54 million—even though the number of students in the Maine school system actually declined.
- In Maryland, the cost of busing students more than doubled between 1992 and 2006.



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"I can't stress
enough, the
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and bikeable a
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—Ira Weiss
.....

- In Illinois, from 2004 to 2009, "reimbursements for student transportation increased 307.7 percent—which works out to an approximate annual increase of \$32.5 million."

Finally, walkability improves neighborhoods and strengthens communities, and has been linked to improved property values. According to Walking the Walk, a report by CEOs for Cities, "Homes located in more walkable neighborhoods... command a price premium over otherwise similar homes in less walkable areas." A 2009 CEO for Cities study looked at 90,000 recent home sales in 15 markets, and found that "a one point increase in Walk Score was associated with between a \$500 and \$3,000 increase in home values." Says Ira Weiss of SRTS committee in Pickerington, Ohio, "I can't stress enough, the more walkable and bikeable a community is, the more sellable it is."

Web Resources

National Center for Safe Routes to School (SRTS)¹

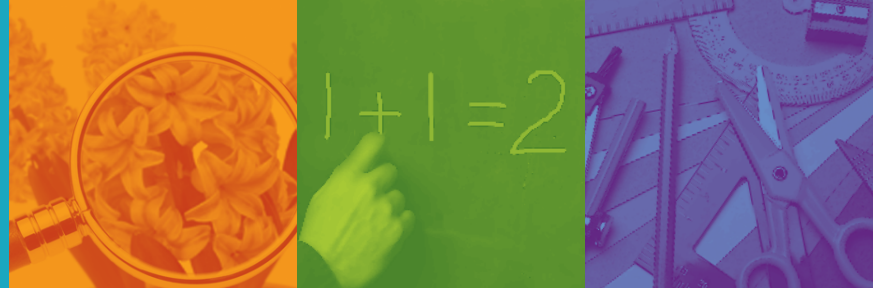
SRTS provides a wealth of information and resources on implementing a SRTS program including information on training and funding for the national program and an interactive map of SRTS programs throughout the United States. Some valuable SRTS links include the following:

Safe Routes to School Toolkit²

This 88-page toolkit produced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Marin County Bicycle Coalition's Safe Routes to School project includes extensive resources for educators and organizers to promote walking and biking to schools. The toolkit includes mapping the routes to school, activities and outreach, classroom lessons, sample Safe Routes to School forms, press releases, and posters.

State Safe Routes to School Contacts³

To find your state Safe Routes to School contact and website, just follow this link and click on the map.



Safe Routes to School State Network Project⁴

Leaders from states around the country are working with SRTS to implement pedestrian- and bike-friendly policies. Follow this link to find network contacts.

Partnership for a Walkable America⁵

The website for this national coalition that is working to promote walkability and that founded International Walk to School day provides links to the Walk to School website and a downloadable checklist that you can use to determine the walkability of your community or neighborhood.

National Complete Streets Coalition⁶

A coalition supporting a complete-streets policy that promotes the design and operation of streets that serve all users—including bicyclists, public transportation users, pedestrians of all ages, and people with disabilities.

Walkscore⁷

Calculate the walkability score for any neighborhood and check out the most walkable neighborhoods in the 40 largest U.S. cities, based on the site's 2008 rankings.

¹ www.saferoutesinfo.org/

² www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002/index.html

³ www.saferoutesinfo.org/contacts/index.cfm

⁴ www.saferoutespartnership.org/about/4058#organizers

⁵ www.walkableamerica.org/

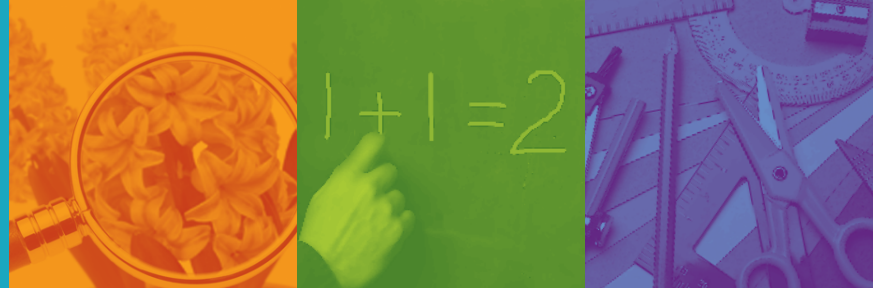
⁶ www.completestreets.org/

⁷ www.walkscore.com/



See related article in *REALTORS® Making a Difference* “Organize a Walk/Bike to School.”

See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, “School Building and Siting.”



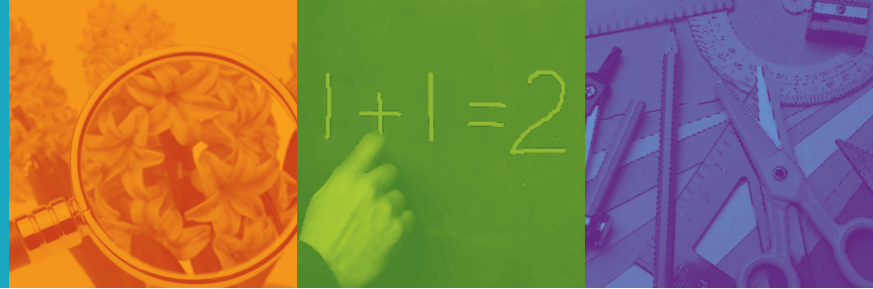
School Building and Siting

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For generations,
school officials
have been building
larger schools and
locating them on
the outer fringes
of communities.
The hidden costs of
these school siting
decisions have been
enormous—and
it's an issue that's
being addressed on
multiple fronts.
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The ideal envisioned by advocates of the Smart Growth and new urbanism movements of the '70s and '80s—and embraced by a generation of planners and designers—is one of mixed-use communities that are walkable and bikeable, where kids attend community-centered schools, and residents walk to nearby retail shops and businesses. It's an idea that's been made increasingly compelling by the growing recognition that we have to reduce our energy consumption and gas emissions—and improve the health and fitness of our children. But in many communities, school siting policies have been stuck back in the 1950s. While planners of all stripes were advocating Smart Growth zoning and building policies at the local and state levels, school districts continued to follow school construction guidelines and state policies that favored so-called sprawl schools—schools that require large tracts of land in outlying areas. Those same policies and guidelines disadvantaged the renovation of existing schools and the construction of smaller, community-centered schools.

The numbers speak for themselves. Nationwide, over the past 60 years, schools have become significantly bigger and there are fewer of them; since 1945, average school size has increased fivefold, and the number of schools has declined by 70 percent. And schools are located farther from the families they serve. Consider this: In 1969, 87 percent of students lived within one mile of their school; by 2001, only 21 percent lived within a mile of school. The environmental and health consequences of school building and siting decisions made over the past 60 years—and the impact on the quality of life in surrounding communities—have been enormous. Among them are these:

- Most kids can't walk or bike to school anymore, a situation widely recognized as a factor contributing to the rise in obesity rates among U.S. school children. (See related article, *Issues in Public Education*, "Walkability and Safe Routes to School")
- Traffic congestion and emissions associated with transportation to and from school have become major problems. The U.S. Environmental Protection



Agency (EPA) cites the rise in rush hour traffic associated with school trips as a key contributor to air quality problems in a number of cities.

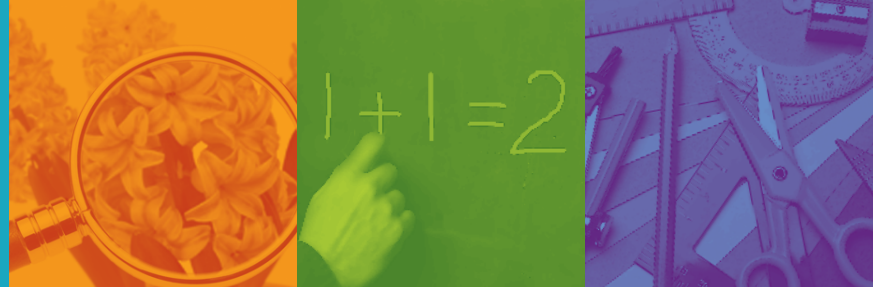
- The cost of busing students—even those that live within walking distance of schools—has emerged as a financial issue facing school boards around the country. Nationwide, in the 25 years from 1978 to 2003, the cost of transporting students to school doubled.

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**The National Trust for
Historic Preservation
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in drawing national
attention to the issue
of misguided school
siting policies.**
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In 2000, The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) played a major role in bringing the issue of misguided school siting policies to the forefront of the national debate with the publication *Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl: Why Johnny Can't Walk to School*. The report raised serious questions about policies and processes that have effectively sabotaged the construction and renovation of community-centered schools—and promoted sprawl at the expense of established neighborhoods. For one thing, the report notes that schools are often exempted from zoning regulations, and school officials have a history of selecting sites without consulting local planning officials—so, in many cases, school boards choose sites that are out of step with the overall community planning goals and requirements. But the report laid partial blame for runaway sprawl school development on two widely accepted standards used to make decisions about where and whether to build a new school: minimum-acreage guidelines and the so-called two-thirds, or “percentage,” rule.

Building Big: Minimum Acreage Requirements

The Council of Education Facility Planners International (CEFPI), the Arizona-based professional association that issues guidance on school construction, played a significant role in influencing the trend toward building megaschools. From the 1970s until 2004, acreage guidelines for new school construction, set by CEFPI, specified that an elementary school of 500 students required 15 acres, and a high school of 2,000 students needed at least 50 acres. As a point of reference, the LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System sets maximum acreage standards for schools: New school campuses must not exceed 15 acres for high schools, 10 acres for middle schools, and 5 acres for elementary schools. To put the issue in further perspective, an older neighborhood school typically



occupies two to eight acres. “The problem has been that, in order to meet those standards, given the cost and availability of land, school officials feel the need to abandon neighborhood sites and build in the middle of nowhere,” says Constance Beaumont, author of *Why Johnny Can’t Walk to School*, in discussing the report.

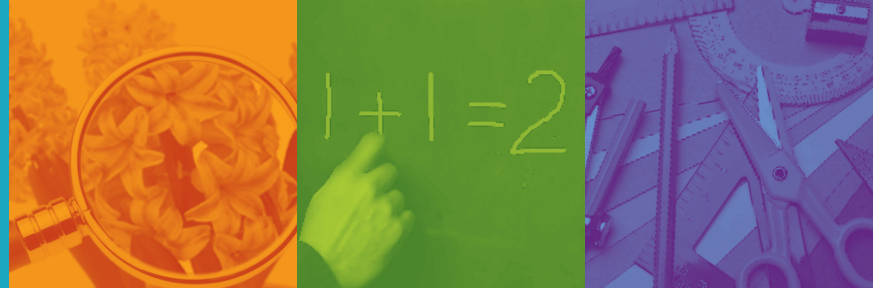
The National Trust had raised a red flag. In 2002, the Trust issued a second edition of the report, and not long afterwards, the EPA commissioned a CEFPI study of state policies. Based on CEFPI’s findings, most states do publish acreage guidelines, and as of 2004, 27 states had minimum acreage standards, many of which mirrored CEFPI’s recommendations. In 2004, in a major reversal, CEFPI revised its siting recommendations to embrace a more flexible approach to school siting—one that now supports community-centered schools.

Over the past decade, some states, including South Carolina, Rhode Island, Minnesota, and New Mexico, have eliminated—and even prohibited—minimum acreage requirements for school sites. In other states, minimum acreage guidelines remain in place. Either way, deeply ingrained policies and practices are hard to change. According to a follow-up report published by the National Trust in 2010 called *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Policy Recommendations for Removing Barriers to Community-Centered Schools*, “South Carolina did away with minimum acreage standards in 2003, but failed to educate localities about the change in policy and the benefits to the community of smaller sites. As a result, local districts continue to build sprawling school facilities on the outside of town.”

Building New Versus Renovating: The Percentage Rule

The National Trust’s 2000 and 2002 reports also took aim at the percentage rule—or two-thirds rule—a widely accepted standard for determining whether to renovate an existing school or to build a new one. The rule basically states that if the cost to renovate a school exceeds 60 percent of the cost of replacing it, the best option is to build a new school. Based on this standard, school districts around the country have abandoned existing schools in favor of new construction. According to an article published in *Governing* magazine, the percentage rule comes from the writings of a relatively obscure Columbia University professor of the 1940s and 1950s; the original article apparently contained no documentation to back up its assertions, which essentially were nothing more than “one man’s

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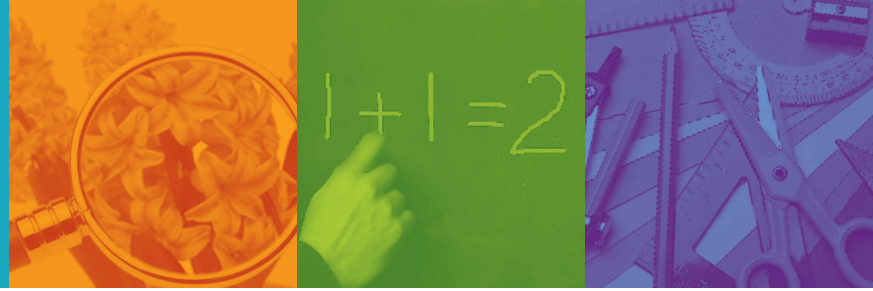
opinion,” according to Royce Yeater, Midwest director of the NTHP, who calls the percentage rule “an old wives’ tale.” Nonetheless, even today, the percentage rule continues to drive decisions about whether to build or to renovate.

When it comes to assessing the cost of building new versus renovating, there are other factors that come into play. “Astonishingly, certain costs, such as demolishing the existing building, building new infrastructure, and land acquisition, are not typically part of the calculation,” according to the 2010 NTHP report, *Helping Johnny Walk to School*. Generally, such formulas fail to take into account the higher costs to communities of transporting students, not to mention the health and environmental implications of building in areas where students can’t walk or bike to school—or the cost of adding sidewalks and pathways 10 or 20 years down the road, a process under way in many communities today. Advocates for community-centered schools encourage policymakers to undertake feasibility studies to get a clear picture of the actual costs before abandoning the old for the new.

Preservationists also cite the hidden cost to communities of closing down existing schools that could be renovated—schools that serve as important anchors for existing neighborhoods. The impact can be significant. In *Hard Lessons: Causes and Consequences of Michigan’s School Construction Boom*, researchers at the Michigan Land Use Institute found that a school closing can affect property values in the surrounding area and had cost the city, county, and schools an estimated \$2 million in unrealized property tax revenue from 1994 to 2003. And, according to that report, “In every case we studied, building a new school cost more than renovating an older one.”

Then there are the environmental costs of relocating schools in outlying neighborhoods. In 2003, the EPA released a study of its own: *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*. It was the first empirical study exploring the relationship between school siting policies and transportation, including the impact of emissions. The study compared two Florida high schools—Gainesville High School, centrally located within a community and surrounded by development, and Eastside High School, located “at the edge of the urbanized area amidst undeveloped land.” The researchers determined that auto emissions generated by Eastside students were more than twice as high as

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—a school closing
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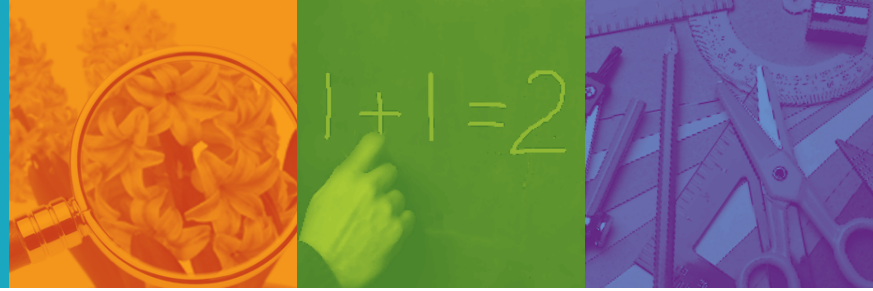


A community-centered school in Somersworth, New Hampshire. Photo courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

those for Gainesville students. The conclusion, “Schools located closer to their students help improve public health, not only by helping children stay active, but also by reducing traffic and automobile emissions. Schools built close to students, in walkable neighborhoods, can be called neighborhood schools. We conclude that compared to our sample from existing schools, neighborhood schools would reduce traffic, produce a 13% increase in walking and biking and a reduction of at least 15% in emissions of concern.”

The Trends

A lot has happened since the National Trust for Historic Preservation released its groundbreaking report in 2000. For one thing, in 2008, the Trust created the Helping Johnny Walk to School project under a cooperative agreement with the EPA. The project provides grants for advocacy, education, and local programs that support community-centered schools. In addition, in 2005, Congress authorized an expenditure of \$612 million over five years to support the establishment of the National Center for Safe Routes to School, creating a national network



2010 Policy Recommendations from The Helping Johnny Walk to School Project

- Remove minimum acreage requirements
- Remove minimum school size requirements
- Remove bias in state funding for new construction
- Address community concerns about reusing older buildings
- Require full cost analysis for new construction (take into account transportation cost and health expenses if schools are located on the outskirts of town)
- Promote coordinated planning among agencies
- Authorize sharing of facilities (joint use)
- Target state capital and maintenance fundings to substandard school facilities serving children from low-income families
- Evaluate support of student transportation
- Review school closing and consolidation options

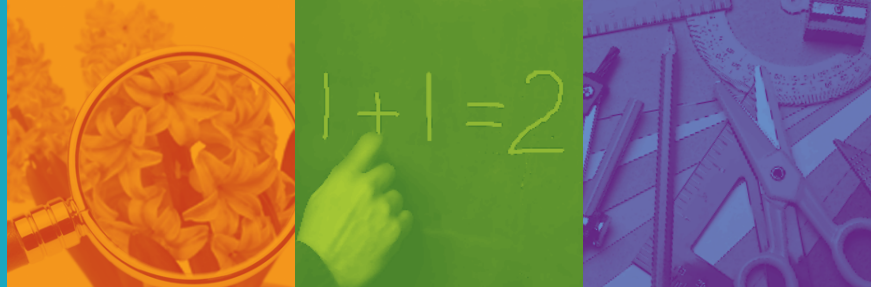
Source: *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Policy Recommendations for Removing Barriers to Community-Centered Schools* by Renee Kuhlman

that reaches into the 50 states and Washington, DC—and is effecting change on a range of issues related to walkability, including school siting policy. Today, there is a significant movement under way—among planners, environmentalists, educators, families, communities, and health, biking, and walking advocates to address the issue of creating more walkable communities, maintaining and building community-centered schools, and changing misguided school siting policies.

Nonetheless, the trend toward building big schools that require large tracts of land is deeply entrenched, and based on current data, it shows no signs of abating. Our nation has recently passed through a school construction boom. New school construction rose steadily from 1995 to 2000 and remained at high levels until 2008, then declined with the onset of the economic crisis. According to the annual review of the school construction industry published in 2009 by *School Planning & Management* magazine, most of the schools under construction as of 2009 are larger schools. Says the report, “The reason, of course, revolves around questions of efficiency and cost.” When measured in terms of construction costs alone, large schools are simply less expensive *per student* to build.

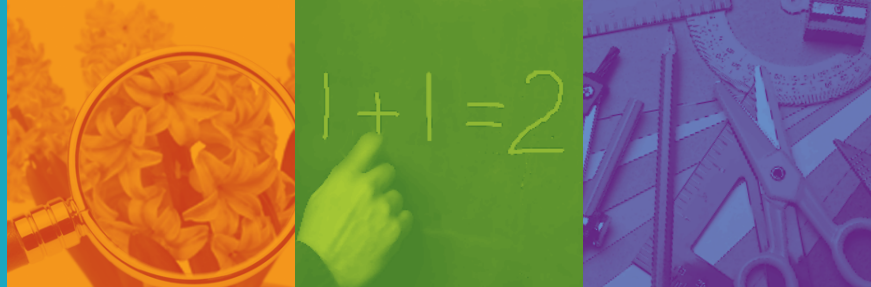
One thing is clear: As long as decisions about building versus renovating, about school size and school siting, are made simply on the basis of

narrowly conceived—and, in some cases, misguided—cost formulas, school districts will continue to build big. For decades, these decisions were justified in part by the belief that larger schools resulted in better overall performance and that bigger schools produced economies of scale that translate into greater



opportunities for students—better facilities, a broader curriculum, and more extracurricular activities. But a growing body of research suggests that small, community-centered schools outperform so-called megaschools. For example, studies show that smaller schools have lower drop-out rates and that students at larger schools are actually less likely to participate in extracurricular activities. In addition, the benefits of putting schools—or keeping schools—in walkable neighborhoods are now widely recognized. Given the compelling need to improve student health, conserve resources, and protect the environment, attitudes are shifting. And a host of public agencies and advocacy groups are calling for school building and siting policies that strengthen existing neighborhoods, promote energy efficiency and reuse, reduce emissions, improve the health of American schoolchildren, and make economic sense.

In that regard, have we made progress since 2000? Perhaps the National Trust’s 2010 report provides the best answer when it says, “Awareness about the health, transportation, and sustainability ramifications of school siting choices has grown significantly. But despite this growing awareness of the benefits of community-centered schools, far too many existing schools continue to be threatened with abandonment, and new schools continue to be built far from the residents they serve.”



Web Resources

Smart Growth and Schools¹

For EPA resources on the subject of building and siting schools according to Smart Growth objectives. Presentations, articles, and links to a host of organizations are available at the site.

State Guidelines for School Facilities²

Access to up-to-date school guidelines for various states.

Helping Johnny Walk to School Project³

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Helping Johnny Walk to School Project awards "sub-grants" for communities and provides resources for advocates and policymakers on how to preserve, renovate, and reuse historic schools.

NTHP Policy Recommendations⁴

Download detailed policy recommendations from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for establishing smart school siting guidelines and public policies.

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF): Build New or Renovate School Facilities?⁵

Resources that help schools determine whether to build new or renovate.

Additional NCEF Resources on School Siting⁶

Safe Routes to School National Partnership: School Siting⁷

Information on state school siting guidelines for walkability.

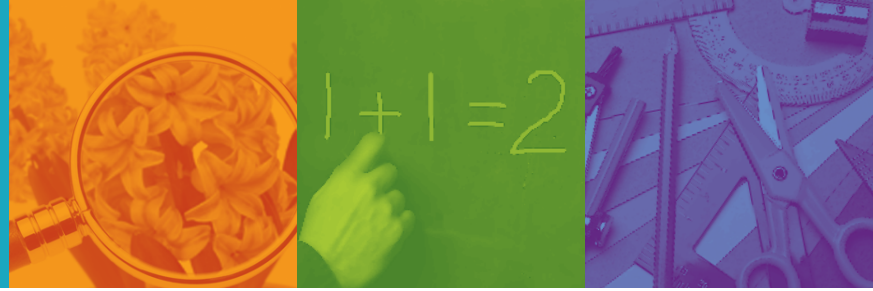
EPA Guidelines for Safe School Siting⁸

Information on new voluntary school siting guidelines released by the EPA in 2010 and other valuable resources.

Safe School Siting Toolkit⁹

Published in 2009 by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, this toolkit provides information on how to promote safe school siting guidelines.

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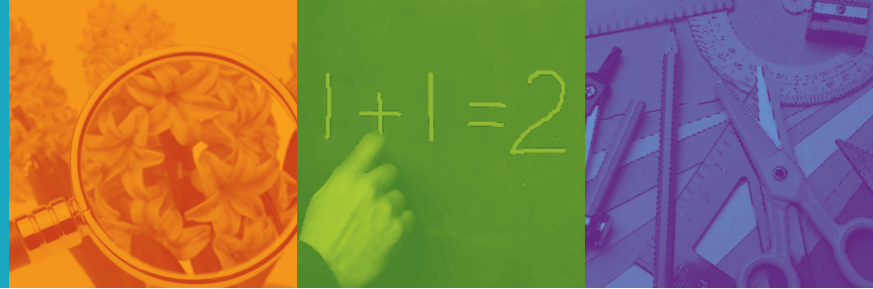


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- ¹ www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/schools.htm
 - ² www.ncef.org/rl/facilities_guides.cfm
 - ³ www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/additional-resources/community_centered_schools.html
 - ⁴ www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/helping-johnny-walk-to-school/policy.html
 - ⁵ www.ncef.org/rl/build_or_renovate.cfm
 - ⁶ www.ncef.org/rl/site_selection.cfm
 - ⁷ www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/5638/5652
 - ⁸ www.epa.gov/schools/
 - ⁹ www.childproofing.org/school_siting_toolkit.htm



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, “Walkability and Safe Routes to School.”

See related article in *REALTORS® Making a Difference*, “Organize a Walk/Bike to School.”



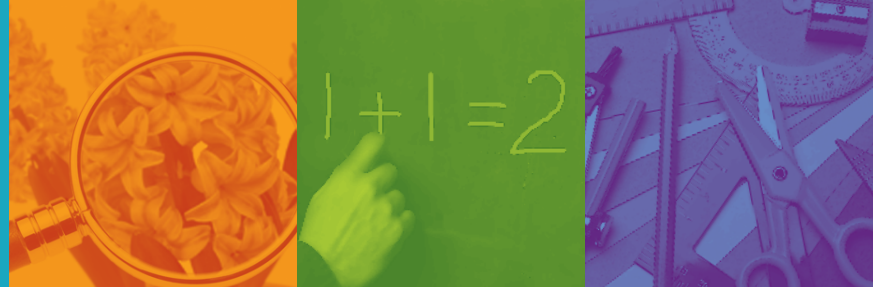
Teachers Living Where They Work

Based on national averages, a teacher's starting salary is about \$39,000 a year; retiring teachers average \$67,000. For many of them, that puts the prospect of home ownership out of reach. Today, despite the drop in home prices since 2008 and historically low interest rates, the problem persists for teachers in communities around the country. It is particularly acute in major metropolitan markets. According to *Paycheck to Paycheck*, a 2009 survey of more than 200 U.S. metropolitan areas, an elementary school teacher can't afford to buy a median-priced home in 40 percent of the markets surveyed—that is, in 83 of those markets. And in 11 of the 210 metropolitan rental markets surveyed, teachers can't afford the rent on a typical two-bedroom apartment. The 2009 survey contained some good news, however. From 2008 to 2009, the drop in housing prices made housing more affordable in some metropolitan areas. According to the report, "Although incomes for elementary school teachers rose by a median of just 1.6 percent, falling home prices and low interest rates made buying a median-priced home newly affordable for elementary school teachers in 33 metropolitan areas [in 2009] compared to 2008." Nonetheless it's an issue that persists in most major cities, wealthy outlying suburbs, and tony resort communities.

The financial challenge for teachers can be compounded by the high cost of commuting. When teachers can't afford to live near schools or locate housing near public transit, they sometimes take on long commutes, which translates not only into higher costs for teachers but more traffic congestion and higher auto emissions. As an example at the higher education level, after the University of Chicago implemented an employer-assisted housing (EAH) program for its employees, a follow-up study showed that the average driving distance for participating employees had dropped from 5.98 miles to 1.30 miles. "In some cases, employees who were driving 30 miles each way to work now live less than three miles from campus," according to the March 2010 report by the Metropolitan Planning Council.

According to *Something's Gotta Give*, a report on working families and the cost of housing published by the Center for Housing Policy in 2005, "Commuting

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Teachers need
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options in the
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address the issue,
some schools and
communities are
developing programs
that help them
find and finance
local housing.
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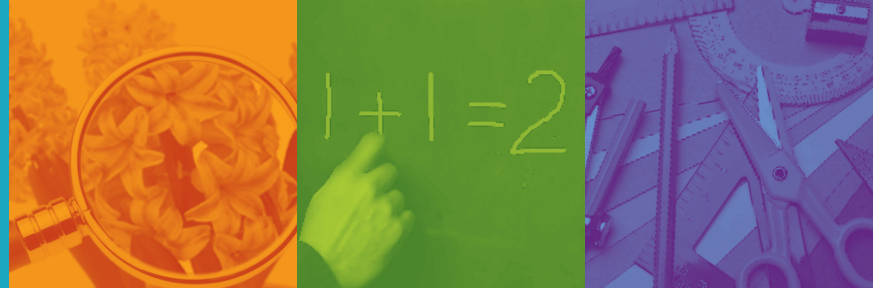


is a common strategy for working families to cope with high housing costs. When the cost of transportation is considered together with the cost of housing, the percentage of working families paying more than half their total expenditures increases five-fold from 8.3 percent to 44.3 percent of working families. Calculations show that working families spend 77 cents on transportation for every dollar decrease in housing costs. Although not all of family transportation cost is attributable to commuting, the journey to work from less expensive housing likely accounts for a substantial part of it.” It’s an expensive trade-off.

Responding with Housing Assistance Programs

In response to teacher shortages, high turnover rates, and the rising cost of housing in recent years, states and municipalities have implemented a variety of programs to make housing more affordable and accessible for teachers. Some of these are programs for which any government employee is eligible including employer-assisted housing (EAH) benefits programs. EAH benefits to an employee include homebuyer/homeownership education and counseling and/or financial assistance. Others are specifically aimed at helping teachers and other key community service professionals such as police, fire fighters, and first responders. Still others link directly to neighborhood revitalization initiatives. For example, Connecticut’s Teachers Mortgage Assistance Program is aimed primarily at encouraging teachers to live and teach in “challenged communities,” those designated by the state as “priority or transitional school districts.” The federal Good Neighbor Next Door Program under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides listings for houses in revitalization areas. These homes are available for half the list price to pre K–12 teachers, firefighters, and law enforcement officers. The program has a three-year occupancy requirement, and listings are open for only five days.

The Chicago Public School system has one of the leading EAH benefit programs in the nation—the Teacher Homebuyer Assistance program, administered through a partnership with the Chicago Department of Housing. According to HousingPolicy.org, the program provides \$3,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance for homes purchased in the city, as well as interest-free loans that are fully forgiven after fulfillment of a five-year teaching commitment.



To spur revitalization, the program increases its award to \$7,500 if a qualified teacher buys a Chicago Housing Authority redevelopment property. Launched in 2005 to improve teacher retention rates, by 2008 Chicago’s Teacher Homebuyer Assistance had helped more than 500 teachers buy homes in the city, according to a report by the city’s Metropolitan Planning Council. And it includes an education and counseling component, widely recognized as a key element of any successful EAH program.

In high-priced housing markets such as the San Francisco Bay area or the city of Orlando, Florida, it’s all about affordability—and making it easier for teachers to live where they work. The San Jose Teacher Homebuyer Program, established in 1999, has helped hundreds of teachers purchase new homes. The city has also built units for teachers to rent at below-market costs. Orlando’s Down Payment Assistance Program provides as much as \$20,000 in homebuyer assistance to qualified teachers and public safety personnel.

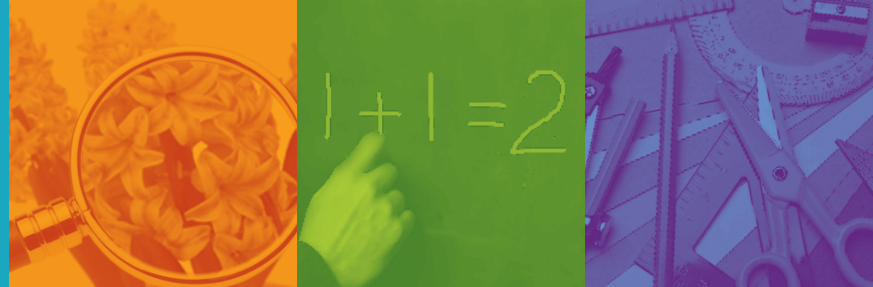
In 2011, New York addressed teacher shortages in the fields of mathematics, science, and special education by launching a targeted housing program. The new program provides about \$15,000 over a period of two years for housing- and relocation-related expenses for qualified teachers. That in exchange for a three-year commitment to teach in one of these disciplines in a “high-need school.”

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“Even now, the
average cost of a
house is way beyond
what a single teacher
can afford...”
—Ed Robinson
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Getting Creative in Maryland

Private initiatives have surfaced in some communities to address the problem, including bank-administered mortgage programs for qualified teachers that offer discounted mortgage rates and closing-cost assistance. Perhaps more compelling, however, are the innovative private initiatives that have sprung up—programs that combine entrepreneurial creativity with federal, state, and county tax incentives or government-sponsored EAH benefit programs to expand access to affordable housing. Among these, two recent examples—both in the state of Maryland—stand out.

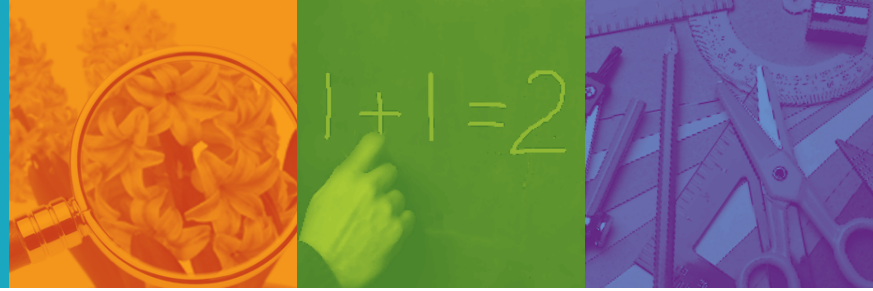
Maryland is one of the wealthiest states in the country, a fact reflected in the high cost of housing. “Even now, the average cost of a house is way beyond what a single teacher can afford on their own without help,” says Ed Robinson, president of TheMDRealEstateTeam.com with Keller Williams Flagship of Maryland. The



state aggressively recruits new teachers to address teacher shortages and some Maryland counties experience low teacher retention rates. According to the Maryland State Education Association, teacher education programs produce less than half the number of teachers needed to fill vacancies each year, and it costs a school district well over \$100,000 every time a teacher leaves—something nearly 7,000 Maryland teachers do each year. As a result, out-of-state recruiting is ongoing, and every year thousands of new teachers move to Maryland. Relocating teachers, many of whom are recent graduates, face particular challenges.

The state has responded with a number of programs. According to REALTOR® Ed Robinson, Maryland has a closing assistance program and an EAH program in which the state matches up to \$2,500 of employer-assisted housing contributions; both operate at the local or county level. And there are an array of other programs—many of them county-based—that can be used to help teachers lower the cost of home buying. In 2005, after researching the mix of benefits available, Robinson founded the Housing Program for Educators, which operates through an exclusive arrangement with six Maryland teacher associations to provide a wide range of benefits to teachers who use TheMDRealEstateTeam.com as their agency. The level of benefits available to specific teachers depends on any number of factors, and it gets complicated. “To access the state’s employer-assisted matching fund, you have to use a Community Development Administration (CDA) loan. That’s a statewide loan program,” says Robinson. “Using the CDA Loan as the foundation, you can piggyback other programs. In Anne Arundel County, for example, employer-assisted matching funds are available to any county employee; the county will put up the initial \$2,500 in employer-assisted housing funds and then match their own \$2,500. Our program can work with that program. Then we layer different benefits on top of it. For example, there’s one program that, if you literally live in the same jurisdiction as the school where you teach, you get additional benefits on top of that.”

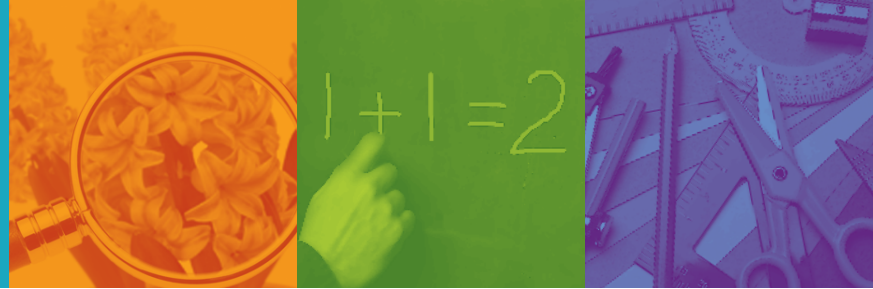
In addition to piggybacking these federal, state, and county benefits to help teachers finance new homes, Robinson’s Housing Program for Educators adds other benefits, including up to \$1,000 in closing assistance, access to short-term discounts on mortgage rates from two major lending institutions, and an educational program that teaches teachers about credit and the home buying



Miller's Court in Baltimore, Maryland offers affordable, loft style apartments specifically designed for teachers.

process. Perhaps the most ingenious element of the program is this: Robinson works with local landlords to negotiate special lease terms for teachers—so relocating teachers can rent an apartment until they're ready to buy a house and then get out of those leases without penalties. Again, in order to gain access to the benefits of the Housing Program for Educators, a teacher who is buying a home must use Ed Robinson's firm as his or her real estate agent. But there are clear advantages for teachers. By affiliating with six of the state's teacher associations, Robinson has access to a large pool of clients, which gives him significant negotiating leverage. The result is an unusual private initiative that gives thousands of teachers access not only to affordable housing options but to a dedicated real estate team that can work with them, sometimes over a period of years, to help them find and afford housing.

Then there's a pioneering private effort under way in the city of Baltimore, where Seawall Development Company has turned an abandoned factory in a transitional north Baltimore neighborhood—once the home of H. F. Miller and Son Tin Box and Can Manufacturing Plant—into Miller's Court, a mixed-use development with loft style apartments for teachers. The inspiration for this



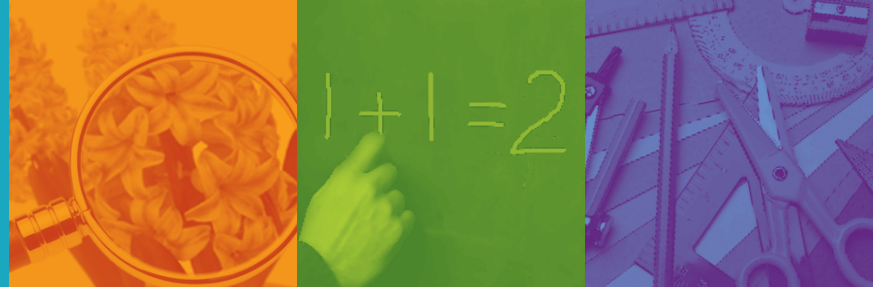
extraordinary project sprang from two distinct impulses—the desire both to improve teacher housing and to do socially responsible real estate development. Donald Manekin, who started the development company with his son Thibault, was formerly the chief operating officer of the Baltimore City Public School System. “He saw this rotating door of great teachers being recruited—through programs like Teach for America and the Baltimore City Teacher Residency—and they’d come in and do a two-year commitment,” says Jon Constable of Seawall Development. “When they moved to Baltimore, they had to find housing quickly, and there wasn’t much available. So most of them ended up isolated with a challenging job and a challenging living situation. They would do their two years and get out of Dodge.” As result, the Baltimore schools were losing out on keeping these talented and committed teachers.

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Seawall Development
used creative
financing to rehab an
abandoned factory
in Baltimore and
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for affordable
teacher housing.

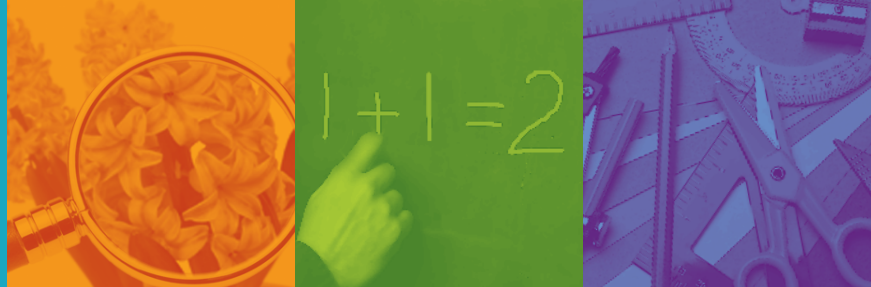
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To address the issue, Seawall Development used creative financing to rehab the abandoned factory and turn it into a model for affordable teacher housing. The developers combined a U.S. Treasury Department New Market Tax Credit and federal and state historic tax credits to put together the project, which combines commercial space for nonprofit tenants and 40 loft style apartment units—all available to teachers at below-market rents. With the teacher discount, at the low end, a one-bedroom in Miller’s Court goes for \$760 a month, compared to \$1,100 for the market. At the high end, a three-bedroom goes for the mid-\$1500s. “It’s generally a roommate situation,” says Constable of the larger units. Although the rental units have the look and feel of high-end condominiums that would appeal to just about any urban professional, Miller’s Court was specifically designed to meet the needs of teachers—with elements based on insights from focus groups made up of Baltimore teachers. For example, every bedroom has its own bathroom, so larger apartments can be shared. Instead of a common laundry facility, teachers said they wanted their own washers and dryers—because most of them have been living in dorm spaces and buildings with shared laundry facilities for years. And Miller’s Court features a common resource room, with copy machines and other conveniences. Plus there’s free parking and a free fitness center. “I know it sounds too good to be true,” says Constable. “So some of these folks are signing leases sight unseen.” Not surprisingly, when it opened in 2009,



the building had 100 teachers on its “waiting list,” a database of interested renters; Seawall Development now has 400 interested teachers on that list.

Although the apartments are available to nonteachers at standard rents, today Miller’s Court is 100 percent occupied by teachers—most of them K–12 teachers in the Baltimore City school system. The keys to the project’s feasibility include the creative financing based on upfront tax credits, thoughtful planning, and what can only be called pure inspiration. And, given its success, Seawall Development is rehabbing another nearby Baltimore building, replicating the Miller’s Court development and financing strategy. Union Mill, slated to open in August 2011, encompasses 25,000 square feet of commercial space for nonprofit tenants and 55 apartments expressly developed for Baltimore teachers. As of May 2011, the commercial space is 100 percent preleased, and the apartments are 65 percent preleased. Says Constable, “And we’re on track to be 100 percent preleased before the building opens its doors.” That’s no surprise given the compelling need for attractive, affordable housing for the city’s teachers.



Web Resources

Paycheck to Paycheck¹

The Center for Housing Policy's 2010 report on wages and the cost of housing in America, available in an online, interactive version.

Metropolitan Planning Council²

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) helps employers and communities design and implement customized EAH programs to meet local needs and engage business leaders in broader housing solutions.

TheMDRealEstateTeam.com³

The Housing Program for Educators, founded by REALTOR® Ed Robinson and serving members of six of the state's teacher associations.

Miller's Court⁴

This Baltimore project provides an example of how one developer used a combination of tax credits to develop affordable housing for teachers and play a role in revitalizing an urban neighborhood.

¹ www.nhc.org/chp/p2p/?phpMyAdmin=d3a4afe4e37aae985c684e22d8f65929

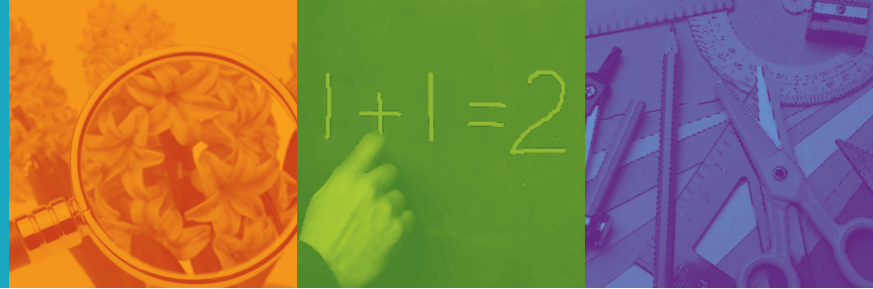
² www.metroplanning.org/work/project/8

³ www.themdrealestateteam.com/

⁴ www.millerscourt.com/



See related article in REALTORS® *Making a Difference*, "Explore Housing Programs that Support Teachers."



Charter Schools: Are They Achieving Results?

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Charter Schools
emerged in the
1990s as a promising
alternative to
traditional public
schools. So far, it's
an experiment that
has yielded mixed
results—and some
compelling insights.
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When KIPP DIAMOND Academy opened in 2002 the new charter school leased a handful of classrooms along two corridors in an existing public middle school in a gritty North Memphis neighborhood. It was one of the first charter schools in Memphis, championed by the local Hyde Foundation and aimed at attracting underperforming students from throughout the city. It was an exciting new option for parents in a city school system where only 6 percent of high school graduates are deemed college ready. The people at KIPP Memphis wanted to make a difference, and they did. In 2010, of the school's entering class of fifth graders, 90 percent were at the bottom half of their peer group in math and 87 percent were in the lower half in reading. By comparison, 91 percent of eighth graders—who were preparing to graduate from KIPP Memphis—were in the top half of their peer group in math and 71 percent were in the top half of the peer group in reading. In a nation where 40 percent of low-income students enroll in college, 85 percent of KIPP's graduates go on to college. "Our goal," says Jamal McCall, executive director at KIPP Memphis, "is to get kids on grade level by the time they leave our school and be on the path to college."

KIPP DIAMOND Academy in Memphis is part of a nationwide network of KIPP charter schools, each operated and funded autonomously, and widely considered one of the top networks of charter schools in the United States. That's no small issue. Today, according to *Waiting for Superman*, a 2010 documentary that explores the crisis in public education and the promise of charter schools, only one out of five charter schools is achieving amazing results—dramatically improving performance among low-income students. KIPP academies are consistently among them.

Charter Schools Today

The charter school movement got its start in the early nineties, after numerous studies demonstrated that the U.S. school system was falling behind those of most other industrialized countries. The school-choice movement springs from two distinct impulses: One is the concept of introducing "choice" into the public

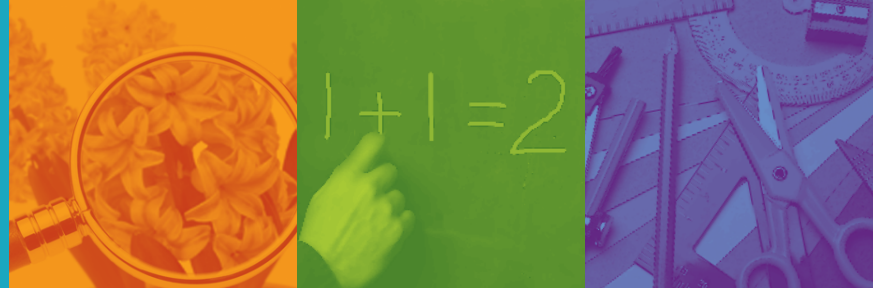
ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION



Students at KIPP DIAMOND Academy in Memphis, part of a nationwide network of KIPP charter schools.

education system, an idea that first surfaced in the writings of free-market economist Milton Friedman in the 1950s and that inspired the school voucher movement of the 1980s. The second impulse came from education reformers, particularly within the African-American community. Their goal was to provide innovative, community-based schools for high-poverty students who are failed by the nation's public school system. The convergence of these two forces helped provide the impetus for the modern charter schools movement.

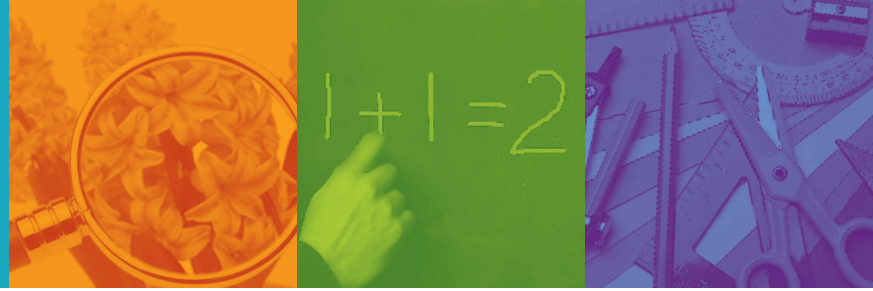
Much like school vouchers, charter schools are viewed as a way of applying free-market principles to the challenges facing public education. Theoretically, charter schools would put competitive pressure on traditional public schools to improve—because their very existence gives parents the freedom to choose another option. Whether that strategy has worked has been widely debated among economists. And, overall, charter schools have not proven to be the solution to the education crisis. But there is ample evidence—in the form of results from individual charter schools—that some charter schools can and do significantly improve school performance among low-income, African-American, and other historically underserved students.



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In 1991, Minnesota became the first state to enact a charter school law, and it built the first charter school in 1992. By 2010, there were 5,453 charter schools either open or slated to open in the United States and more than 1.7 million U.S. students enrolled in those schools. Typically founded by parents, educators, entrepreneurs, and community groups who see a real need for improvement in their community, charter schools are controlled by a contract—a charter—between a state authority (e.g., a state university or state school board) and the governing board of the charter school. The board is similar to a conventional school board; it is publicly accountable for performing at the level the state requires. But charter school boards operate independently of district boards of education. In some respects, charters resemble private schools—in that they may have smaller class sizes than conventional public schools and have their own, unique educational programs. But as public schools, they must by law have a fair and open admission process. Most students are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis or by lottery where there are more applicants than available slots. The laws governing charter schools vary from state to state. The Center for Education Reform (CER), which promotes and monitors charter schools, publishes an annual scorecard ranking state charter laws on a number of variables, including school autonomy and funding equity. According to CER’s 2011 rankings, Washington, DC, with just over 100 charter schools, has the best overall charter school law. Laws can also determine which students are eligible to apply. In Tennessee, for example, the original law allowed only low-performing students or students slated to attend low-performing schools to apply to charter schools like KIPP Memphis. In 2010, Tennessee changed its charter school law, extending eligibility to all high-poverty students, regardless of their prior performance.

Designed to shake up the conventional public school system, charter schools were created as child-centered learning environments. “They offer flexibility that is not generally able to be implemented in a conventional public school, specifically in available instruction methods (direct instruction or exponential learning or Montessori, for example) used to create an environment that’s good for children,” says CER president Jeanne Allen. “Parents can see what their options are and

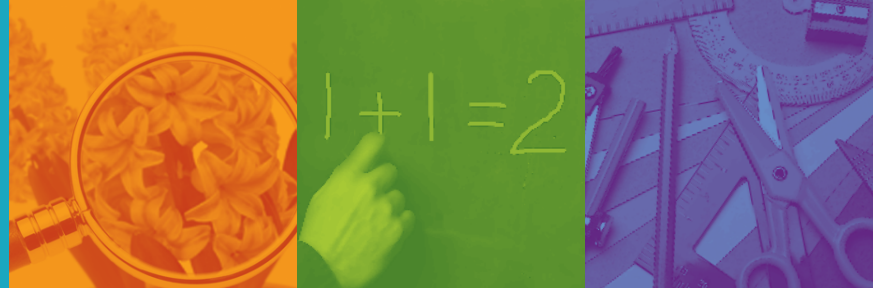


Students at KIPP DIAMOND Academy in Memphis.

what would work best for their child. Charters service kids who have not been well served by the system in the past.” Those might include gifted, at-risk, minority, low-income, and special needs students.

The Debate over Charter Schools

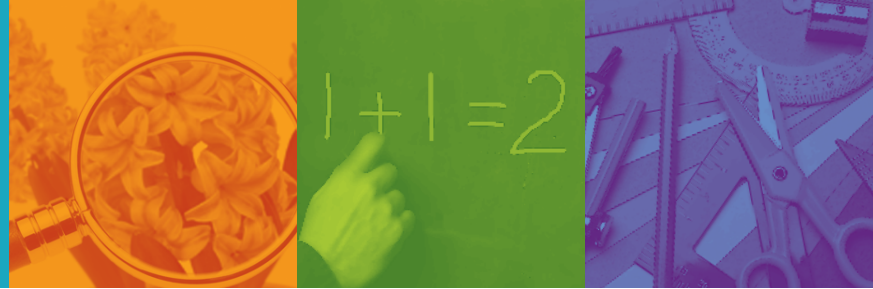
Accountability is one of the cornerstones of the charter school movement. And, given that they operate outside the traditional public school systems, charter schools are held to high standards and measure performance relentlessly. Nationwide, results from the first charter school experiments were generally positive, suggesting that they were outperforming traditional schools. But as the number of charter schools continued to grow, the results became less consistent. In August 2004, a new set of findings began to emerge, when the American Federation of Teachers announced that, based on analysis of results



from the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress, charter school students nationally performed worse in math and reading than their public school counterparts.

In its Fall 2010 issue, *National Affairs* published an article by Frederick Hess entitled “Does School Choice ‘Work’?” that reviewed the litany of studies on charter school performance that have emerged in the late 2000s. According to that article

- a 2009 study by the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes found “wide variation in performance” among charter schools;
- a 2010 report by the Institute of Education Sciences found charter schools, on average, to be “neither more nor less successful than traditional public schools in improving student achievement, behavior, and school progress.” The report made a clear distinction: “... charter schools serving more low-income or low-achieving students had statistically significant positive effects on math test scores, while charter schools serving more advantaged students—those with higher income and prior achievement—had significant negative effects on math scores”;
- a 2009 study of New York City students by Caroline Hoxby, an economist at Stanford University, looked at students in charter schools versus those in traditional schools. The findings were as follows: students that attend a charter school from grades K–8 would “substantially outperform” their district counterparts;
- a 2009 study of Boston students in middle school and high school, conducted by Harvard economist Thomas Kane, reported “large positive effects for charter schools”;
- and in 2010, Mathematica Policy Research did a study of the KIPP system and found that if a child enters a KIPP middle school in the fifth grade (which is when it starts), by seventh grade “half of the KIPP schools evaluated showed growth in math scores equal to an additional 1.2 years of schooling.” The bottom line—KIPP academy’s students “significantly outperformed similar public school students in both reading and math.”

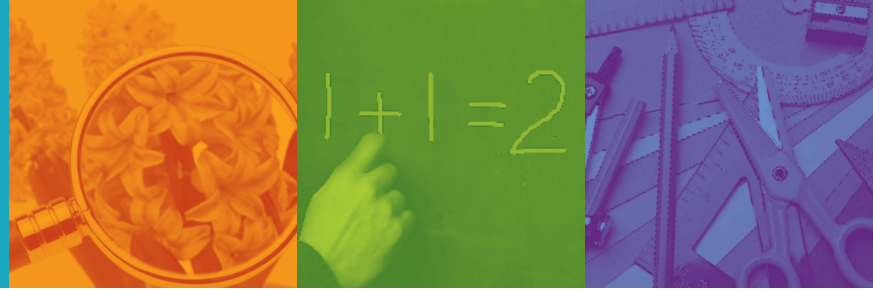


“The positive findings from New York, Boston, and KIPP should not be too surprising,” writes Frederick Hess in *National Affairs*. “Students who switch from troubled schools to high-quality charter alternatives are likely to benefit—especially in cities like Boston and New York, where caps on charter schooling and an abundance of talented charter operators have produced a rich crop of terrific schools. By the same token, however, proponents of market-based school reform should not be surprised that the results may look very different in other environments.” The debate about “choice,” Hess argues, has been inspired in part by “a tendency to vastly overpromise.”

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Indeed, in December 2010, when the Ross Global Academy in New York City was listed among the 12 charter schools that would be closed by the city that year, reporter Sharon Otterman wrote this epitaph in the *New York Times*: “The Ross Global Academy opened five years ago on a raft of promises, like an innovative curriculum that would spiral through different historical eras, small class sizes, yoga, Mandarin lessons, an extended day and organic food prepared by a chef... But on Monday, Ross Global became a cautionary tale for the city’s well-heeled charter backers, among 12 schools the city announced it would seek to close this year for poor performance.”

What the research seems to show is this: just like public schools, some are good, some not so good, and some are downright bad. “It’s not the type of school that makes a school great. It’s the leadership,” says Jamal McCall of KIPP Memphis. “And if a charter is done correctly, it can be a great way to improve schools.” Some charter schools achieve impressive results—particularly in addressing the needs of historically underserved students. The KIPP system—where schools incorporate a high level of discipline, extended school days, a shortened summer, and, in the case of KIPP Memphis, “fun” into the academic program—is one example of a successful approach. Charter schools such as Chicago’s Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men and New York’s Eagle Academy, which focus on educating black males and reversing historically high dropout rates, represent other good examples. At New York’s Eagle Academy, which takes pride in its emphasis on hiring black male teachers and mentors, 80 percent of the school’s students stay with the program and graduate.



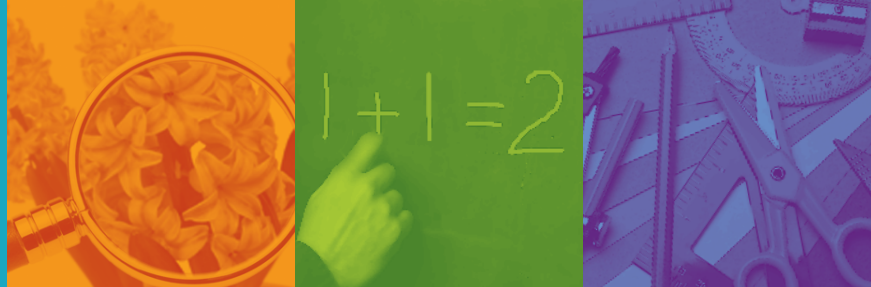
The Funding Issue

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Charters are
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Charter schools face a unique set of funding challenges. While they receive public financing, it is often not commensurate with the funding provided to public schools. For example, KIPP Memphis received about \$7,600 per student from the city school budget during the 2010–2011 academic year for its middle school program. Memphis’ public middle schools received \$10,000 per pupil. According to CER, in November of 2009, support from the public coffers for charter schools was averaging, nationwide, 61 percent of what the conventional public schools were receiving—\$6,585 per pupil compared to \$10,771 per pupil for public schools.

Why the disparity in per-student allotments? “That’s the way charter schools laws were enacted in the early 1990s,” says Mary Kayne Heinze, CER media relations director. “Charters are supposed to be leaner and meaner, expected to do more with less. I think that was the initial logic behind putting the funding so low. Now we realize that while they tend to spend less than the schools in their host district, they still need more money than that in order to have quality teachers.” KIPP Memphis depends on its board of directors, local donors, grants, and the funding from the Hyde Foundation to make up the significant shortfall between the cost of the program and the public allotment—a shortfall of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per pupil per year (as of 2011, the school has 400 students). During the school’s early years, KIPP Memphis paid the city \$376,000 per year to lease those two corridors in the public school where they operated until 2010. And teacher salaries at KIPP Memphis are higher than those of Memphis city schools, in part because of the longer school day and school year at KIPP. The school has moved to a new building and has plans to add elementary and high school programs. By 2015, their goal is to have 10 KIPP schools in the Memphis area.

KIPP DIAMOND Academy is thriving. But not every charter school has a philanthropic foundation behind it. Many charter schools face funding challenges that continue year after year. California offers a charter school revolving loan fund. Grants, private and corporate donations, and other government funds are often combined to meet a charter school’s funding needs. Some schools and communities turn to private venture funds and consultants that serve as liaisons



with banks and other financial institutions. To survive, good charter schools often need advocates in their communities—to support their interests in dealing with resistant school systems; to help them negotiate leases, locate buildings, and find classroom space; and, in some cases, to address counterproductive state charter laws.

Web Resources

Center for Education Reform's Charter Connection¹

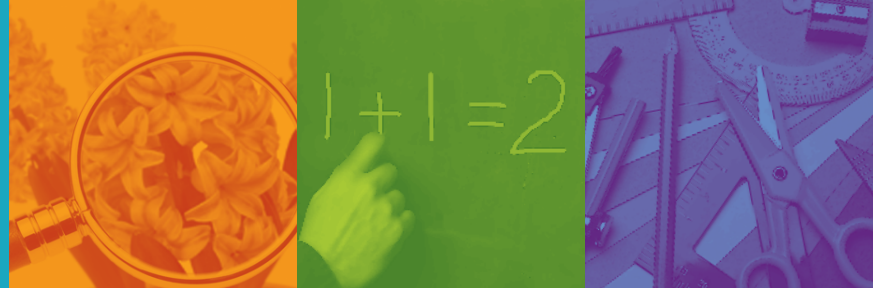
Extensive background on U.S. charter schools, including an annual survey, research reports, and state-by-state data on enrollments and funding.

Charter School Laws Across the States: 2011 Rankings and Scorecard²

An interactive map with information on charter school laws by state and links to the entire 2011 Charter School Laws Across the States report.

¹ www.edreform.com/Issues/Charter_Connection/

² www.charterschoolresearch.com



Federal Education Programs: The Politics of Reform

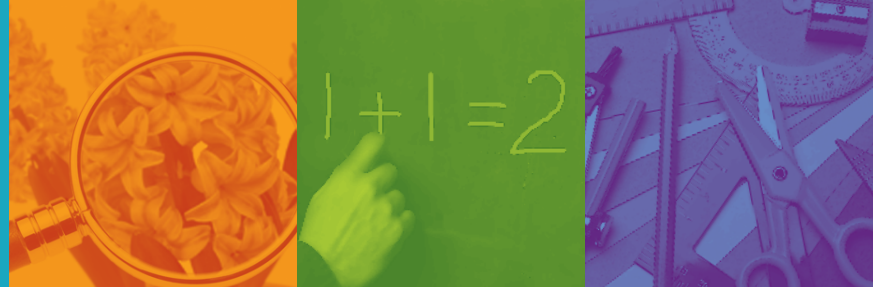
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Federal education policy hinges on certain fundamental goals—promoting student achievement, ensuring U.S. competitiveness, and providing equal access to educational opportunities. But how to achieve those goals has been the subject of great debate.

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When the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into space in 1957, reactions among political leaders in the United States ran the gamut from outrage to indifference. Governor Averell Harriman of New York, arguing that the American scientific community lacked sufficient financial and other support, remarked, “To me it is shocking that a backward nation, which, as I know, was far behind us at the end of the war, has now caught up and apparently surpassed us in the vital field of outer space and missile development.” On the other hand, Senator Jacob Javits, also of New York, maintained that there had been no race between the United States and Russia to launch a satellite and that to create one in response to the Soviet satellite launch would be “directly contrary to our policy.” Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana kicked it up a notch. “What is at stake in all this is nothing less than survival,” he said, adding that this latest achievement by the Soviet Union “should not be tossed off lightly by the White House,” then occupied by President Dwight Eisenhower. Within a year, the U.S. Congress had passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). In addition to significantly expanding federal support for higher education, the bill called for improvements in science, math, and foreign language programs at the elementary and secondary level. Ultimately, NDEA served as a major source of educational loans that enabled thousands of Americans to go to college. It was the most comprehensive federal education legislation ever passed—aimed directly at increasing U.S. competitiveness during the Cold War Era.

Like the debate over Sputnik, disagreements over federal education policy are wide-ranging and, in some cases, politically charged. And, although there is universal agreement over the importance of educating the millions of students in our nation’s public schools, there is ample debate over how much the federal government should spend, how that money should be spent, and what the federal government’s role should be in shaping education policy.

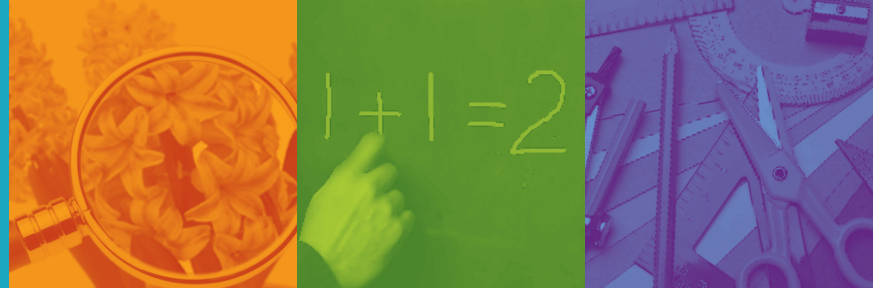


Federal Education Legislation

The history of federal education policy reads like a primer on party politics. In the 1960s and 1970s, Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty and a growing recognition of the importance of civil rights expanded education legislation at the federal level. In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I of that bill serves as the foundation for programs to fund schools serving a high percentage of low-income students. ESEA also led to the creation of the National Diffusion Network, which promoted and funded substantial education innovations in the nation’s schools from 1975–1995—programs that achieved measurable results. Funding for the National Diffusion Network ended with the introduction of federal budget-cutting initiatives of the 1990s under the Republican Party’s *Contract with America*. But Title I is still in place, and ESEA has been reauthorized every five years since 1970. As a result, ESEA remains the primary piece of federal legislation governing federal spending on education—and, ultimately, governing federal involvement in education reform. In 2001, ESEA was amended and rebranded as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and signed into law in January 2002 under the Bush administration. On March 13, 2011, the Obama administration released its blueprint for revising the ESEA—and overhauling the education policies embraced in No Child Left Behind.

In addition to legislation promoting policies aimed at improving the education system, federal legislation has also focused on expanding access to education—for the disabled, minorities, women, low-income groups, and immigrants. Today, in addition to ESEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a major source of federal education funding. IDEA’s predecessor, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was originally passed in 1975. In addition to ESEA and IDEA, there are scores of programs and initiatives that make federal funds available to improve education for specific groups of students including the Early Learning Challenge Fund, Reading First, and English-language instruction programs. “Throughout history, the United States has broadened educational opportunities for the less fortunate,” writes Jack Jennings, president and chief executive officer of the Center on Education Policy (CEP), in a February 7, 2011 article entitled “Get the Federal Government Out of Education? That Wasn’t the Founding Fathers’ Vision.” The article continues, “After the Civil War,

ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION



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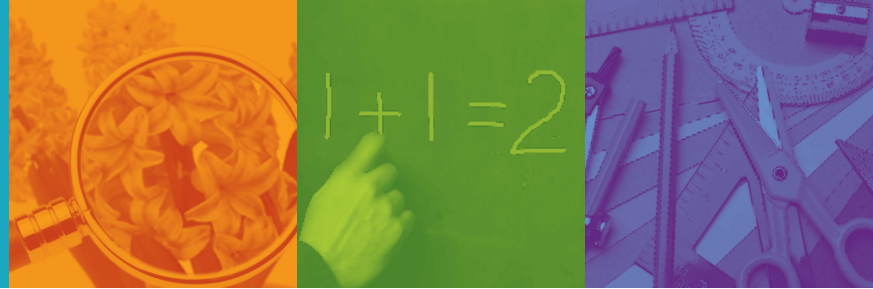
According to the
1983 report *A Nation
at Risk*, the average
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the federal government helped create public schools for freed slaves. After great waves of immigration of the early 20th century, vocational programs provided job training for newcomers. In the 1950s, federal courts moved to expand educational opportunity, and in the 1960s, Congress broadened civil rights, economic opportunities, and improvements in schooling. African-American adults and children benefited as did women and girls who gained from Title IX, which opened up educational and sports opportunities. As a result, the achievement gap narrowed between adolescent white and black students. And the percentage of children with disabilities who attended public school rose from only 20 percent in 1970 to 95 percent in 2007.”

When Ronald Reagan became president in 1981, his administration strongly opposed expanding federal funding and in fact even contemplated abolishing the U.S. Department of Education. From 1981 to 1986, federal funding for education actually decreased as a percentage of total spending from 7.4 to 6.4 percent, but President Reagan did commission a study that significantly influenced education policy—the National Commission on Excellence in Education. With the release of the commission’s findings in 1983, the issue of U.S. competitiveness—like that embodied in the Sputnik debate that had sparked the education legislation of 1958—reared its head again. The 1983 report—*A Nation at Risk*—raised the specter that the United States would fall behind in a global economy, and countries like Japan could in fact surpass the United States. The report’s opening was dramatic: “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.” The 1983 commission reported that

- an estimated 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States could be considered functionally illiterate and that functional illiteracy among minority youth was as high as 40 percent;

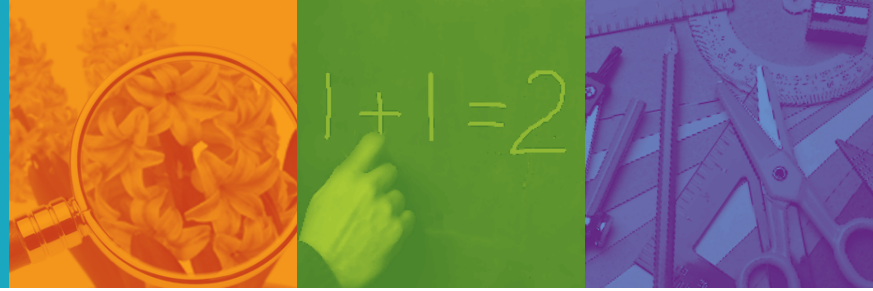


- average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests was “lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched”;
- there had been a steady decline in science achievement scores of U.S. 17-year-olds as measured by national assessments of science in 1969, 1973, and 1977.

In response, education reformers proposed the creation of a common core curriculum, academic standards, and strong accountability systems. Building on these efforts and ideas, President George H. W. Bush convened the nation’s governors in September 1989 for the inaugural National Education Summit. The governors, led by then-Governor Bill Clinton, established an ambitious agenda entitled *America 2000*. By the year 2000

- all children in America would start school ready to learn;
- the high school graduation rate would increase to at least 90 percent;
- American students would leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. In addition, every school in America would ensure that all students learned to use their minds well, so that they could be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy;
- U.S. students would be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement;
- every adult American would be literate and would possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
- every school in America would be free of drugs and violence and would offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Although the goals of *America 2000* were not achieved, the 1989 education summit set the stage for an increasing emphasis on accountability and standards-based education reform, opening the way for the major overhaul of ESEA proposed by President George W. Bush in 2001 — No Child Left Behind. The law set standards for educational attainment by individual students, requiring any state



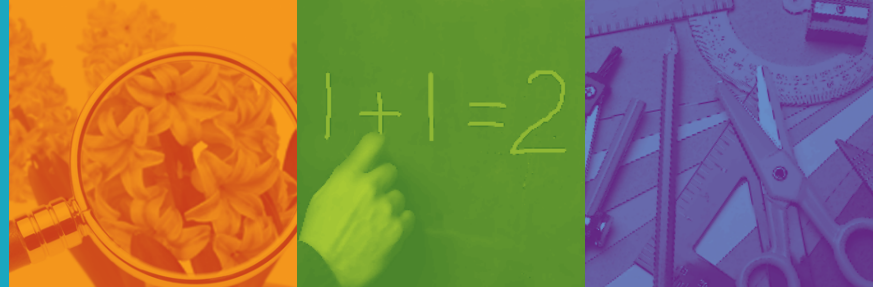
that receives federal funding to develop assessment tests that must be administered at the fourth and eighth grade levels. The act did not, however, set a national achievement standard—that was left up to the states. Students were expected to achieve proficiency by 2014 as measured by those state standards. And the debate began.

No Child Left Behind

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The passage of No
Child Left Behind
in 2001 resulted
in huge increases
in funding for
elementary and
secondary education.
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No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a milestone in federal education reform. As a result of the bill Congress supported huge increases in funding for elementary and secondary education. In addition, by making academic standard setting and assessment testing a condition for receiving federal education dollars, NCLB expanded federal influence in the area of student testing. It also focused on improving results among low-income students. States were required to break down performance data by four student subgroups: economically disadvantaged, minority, English-language learners, and special education students. This approach was seen by many as one of the strongest elements of NCLB. In the past, state accountability systems generally looked at the overall performance of a school, without measuring the performance of subgroups of students. Many education reformers believed such systems hid the achievement gaps that persisted between different groups of students. But the bill also included sanctions against schools that do not make progress against standards set by states under NCLB. Here's how the *New York Times* characterizes those sanctions on its website under *Times Topics*: "Schools that fail to make the required annual progress, whether overall or for subgroups, face a mounting scale of sanctions, from being required to provide tutoring to students in poor-performing schools to the threat of state takeovers or the shutting down of individual schools."

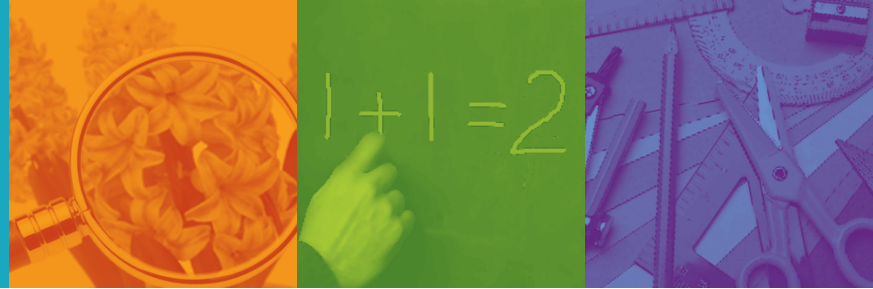
From its beginnings, discussions over NCLB were plagued by conflict. While everyone seemed to agree with the basic concept of attempting to increase education standards, the bill was controversial for a number of reasons. Some conservatives opposed it as an expansion of the federal government's role in education. Some education reformers criticized the punitive approach of imposing sanctions on "failing" schools, which, in some cases, are schools that face the greatest challenges and have the fewest resources—particularly those struggling



with large low-income populations. Others raised a common criticism of any standardized testing system—that it encourages educators to teach to the test, focusing on skills that will raise test scores instead of taking a broader approach to develop thinking skills and help children learn. Finally, there were those who argued that the goals set out in NCLB were simply too ambitious and unrealistic.

In the end, the results themselves proved to be NCLB's undoing. On December 17, 2010, the Center on Education Policy released a report on the results of NCLB titled "How Many Schools and Districts Have Not Made Adequate Yearly Progress? Four Year Trends." The report found that fully "one-third (33%) of the nation's schools did not make adequate yearly progress in 2009" and that "this was an increase from 29 percent in 2006, but a decrease from the high point of 35 percent in 2008." According to the *New York Times*, "In October 2009, the latest results on the most important nationwide math test—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—showed that student achievement grew faster during the years before the No Child Left Behind law, when states dictated most education policy. Scores increased only marginally for eighth graders and not at all for fourth graders, continuing a sluggish six-year trend of slowing achievement growth since passage of the law."

In 2011, as the U.S. government embarks on the next ESEA reauthorization and revisions to NCLB, politics will likely play a major role in the outcome. According to *ESEA Reauthorization: NCLB and the Blueprint*, released by the U.S. Department of Education in March 2011, which compares NCLB with the Obama Administration's *Blueprint for Reform*, the new plan would retain some of the key elements of the original NCLB—including the focus on equity, standards-based reform and accountability, and improving academic performance across the student population by continuing to break down test results by student subgroups such as low-income students and English-language learners. But it also focuses on addressing some of the key shortcomings of the older legislation. For example, under NCLB, schools that were not making progress were classified as "failing." The new plan calls for differentiating schools based on student growth and progress rather than attainment of a specific level of achievement. Instead of sanctions, the program proposes to provide "real rewards for high-poverty schools, districts and states showing real progress, especially in serving



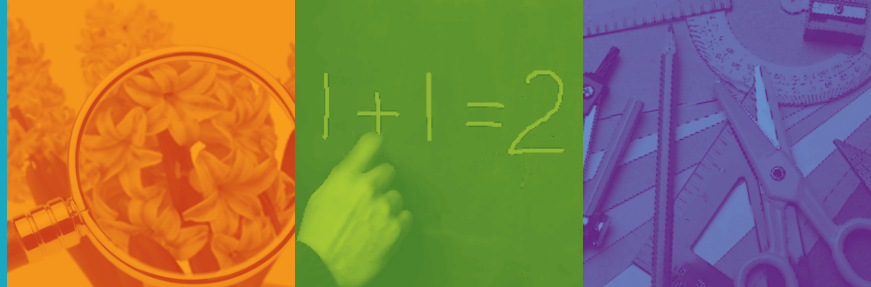
underserved populations and closing achievement gaps.” Whereas NCLB focused almost exclusively on assessment tests, the *Blueprint* calls for the development and use of better assessment—and looking beyond assessment to measures such as attendance, conditions for learning, and course completion to “paint a fuller picture of a school.” Moreover, the *Blueprint* proposes to promote “meaningful change in persistently low-performing schools,” by allowing more flexibility in setting standards at a local level and making “meaningful investments” in low-income and low-performing schools.

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“Renewing the
Elementary and
Secondary Education
Act in 2011 will
be particularly
challenging.
The issues are
difficult and the
politics tricky.”
— Jack Jennings

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According to a January 15, 2011 Associated Press story entitled “Obama’s Education Focus Faces Big Hurdles,” the Democratic president faces a significant challenge in an environment where Republicans—many of whom would “prefer a series of small measures to a broad rewrite of NCLB, as they are wary of another giant bill”—make up a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. A host of interest groups—including the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Schools Boards—have a stake in the debate. These groups have pressed for much-needed revisions to NCLB, and while they support many of the new plan’s broad principles, they oppose specific elements of President Obama’s *Blueprint for Reform*. The Center on Education Policy has been tracking education progress against NCLB objectives for the past decade. According to a December 2010 article—“The Policy and Politics of Rewriting the Nation’s Main Education Law”—written by Jack Jennings of CEP, “Renewing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2011 will be particularly challenging. The issues are difficult and the politics tricky. To succeed, the President will have to make ESEA a high-priority issue, Republicans will have to make an exception to their general policy of opposing President Obama, and national education organizations and newer reform groups will have to support compromises. The nation needs a new education law. In the eight years since NCLB was enacted, we have learned a lot, and new issues have arisen. We simply cannot tolerate two years of political deadlock before we again address the country’s need to improve its schools.” The outcome remains uncertain. And, as of April 2011, federal education policy—and the future of America’s schools—is in political limbo.



Web Resources

U.S. Department of Education¹

Up-to-date news and information on federal education policies and programs, including *ESEA Reauthorization: A Blueprint for Reform*, the Obama administration's plan for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), released on March 13, 2011.

U.S. Department of Education/Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)²

For a comprehensive list of the federal education programs administered by the OESE.

Center on Education Policy³

Research on public education and federal education programs.

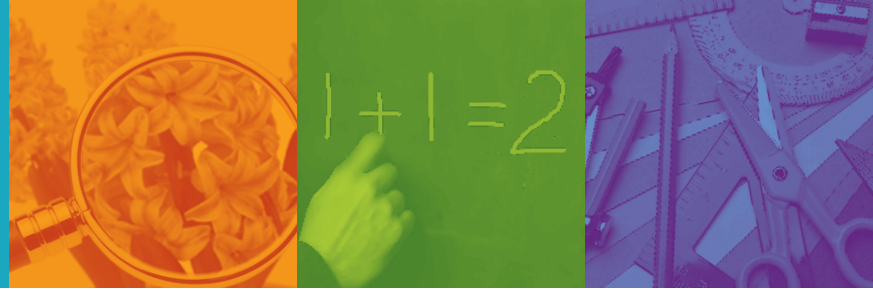
¹ www.ed.gov/

² www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/programs.html

³ www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?DocumentTopicID=6



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, "How Schools Are Funded."



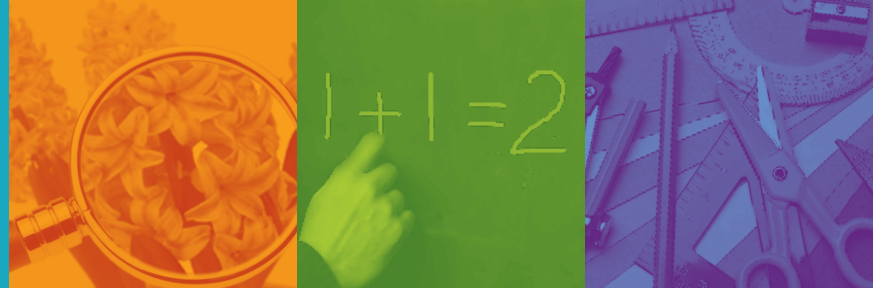
How Schools are Funded

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An enlightened
citizenry is
indispensable for the
proper functioning
of a republic. Self-
government is not
possible unless the
citizens are educated
sufficiently to enable
them to exercise
oversight. It is therefore
imperative that the
nation see to it that a
suitable education be
provided for
all its citizens.
—Thomas Jefferson
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There are nearly 50 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Each year, it costs roughly \$10,000 per student to teach them everything from the fundamentals of reading and writing to algebra and environmental science, to teach them how to work together, and, ideally, to prepare them for college. During the 2006–2007 school year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. school districts spent more than \$562.3 billion to educate these students, to operate and invest in the schools, and to provide related services to local communities—such as adult or preschool education. Where does that money come from? It comes primarily from state and local coffers. Overall state governments provide about 48 percent; local governments, about 44 percent; and the balance—8 percent—comes from the federal government.

Ultimately, the responsibility for education rests with the states. In fact, in many states, K–12 education is the only constitutionally mandated public service. And, historically, funding for education has been a local responsibility—not a federal one. Nonetheless, the federal government has a vested interest in education, expressed in the words of Thomas Jefferson that appear on this page. Theoretically, although education is not a fundamental right articulated in the U.S. Constitution, the public education system must serve to prepare the nation’s citizens for participatory democracy—and, by today’s standards, to enable the United States to compete in an increasingly complex global economy. Toward those ends, federal funding for education is designed to supplement state budgets.

Today, the primary sources of federal funds for public education are the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), originally passed in 1965, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Title I funds, targeted to schools with high-poverty students, are provided by ESEA, which was rebranded in 2001 as No Child Left Behind. Federal grants are also available for a variety of specific education programs, such as Reading First and English language instruction. With the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, the federal government not only expanded its role in education reform but also increased education



funding—from \$42.2 billion in 2001 to \$54.4 billion in 2007. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 included an infusion of roughly \$100 billion for education over a period of two years—a substantial figure, given that the total U.S. Department of Education budget was \$45 billion before the passage of ARRA. Nonetheless, although the federal government’s share of education spending is growing, federal dollars still make up a small share of overall expenditures on elementary and secondary education.

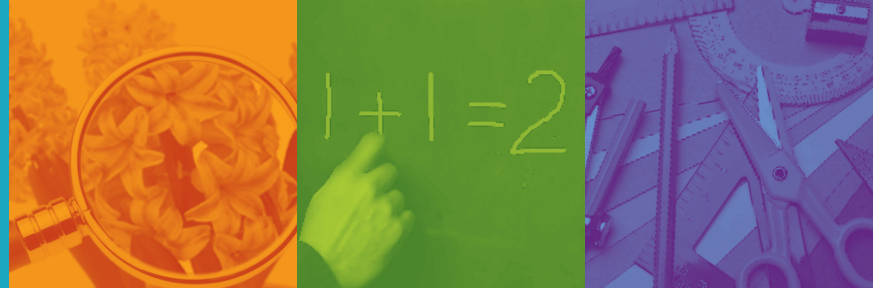
State and Local Education Funding

In the end, most of the money to fund public education comes from state and local revenues. How states and localities share this responsibility varies from one state to another. In some cases, state governments contribute the lion’s share of public education funding. In others, local funding makes up a greater share. Vermont and Hawaii sit at one extreme. According to an Associated Press analysis of 2007 U.S. Census data published in *USA Today*, fully 88.5 percent of Vermont’s public education program was funded by the state—and only 5 percent came from local sources. In Hawaii, 84.8 percent of the public education expense was borne by the state and only 3 percent locally. In contrast, according to that report, “States with the highest percentage of local government funding were Illinois (58.2%), Nebraska (57.3%) and Connecticut (57.3%).”

At the state level, revenues for education come primarily from sales and income taxes, both corporate and personal. But states use various other mechanisms to help fund schools, including taxes on motor vehicles, tobacco, alcohol, and utilities. According to the Center for Public Education, at least 24 states use lotteries to fund schools, in some cases funneling all the proceeds from their lotteries into education, including higher education.

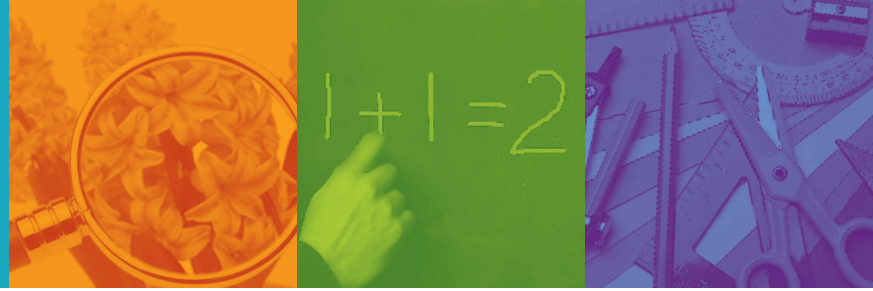
At the local level, revenues for school funding come primarily—but not exclusively—from property taxes. According to the Associated Press analysis, nearly 64 percent of locally generated revenue for public education comes from property taxes. And, while communities vary in the percentage of property taxes that go to fund education, in general, about 50 percent of our property taxes are used to pay for public education.

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The cost of funding the nation’s public elementary and secondary schools exceeds \$500 billion a year. And the bulk of those funds come from state and local coffers.

Historically, the heavy reliance on property taxes for local school funding created a system that was inherently unequal and inconsistent—and caused dramatic variations in funding between school districts and even within school districts. According to *Where We Stand: America’s Schools in the 21st Century*, published in 2008 at pbs.org, “Depending on the property wealth of a community, its schools might boast gleaming buildings and equipment, or they might be dilapidated—struggling with the burden of outdated equipment and unpaid bills.” In addition, state funding systems and per-pupil expenditures on education vary significantly from state to state. Since the 1970s, in an effort to spur improvements in the nation’s public schools, reformers have focused in part on the issue of how schools are funded—and targeted both the state and federal funding systems.

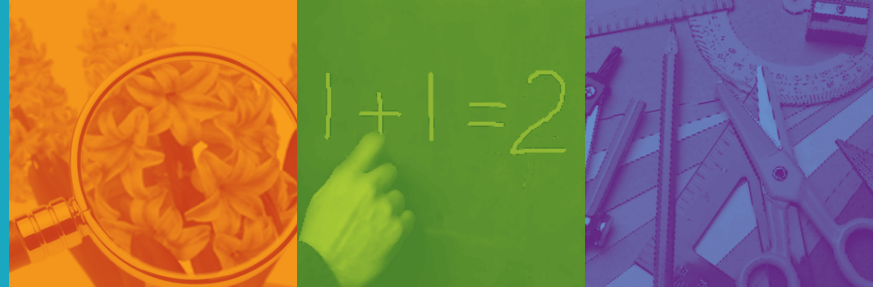


The Big Issues—Adequacy and Equity

Government’s responsibility for education funding—at the federal and state levels—is defined by the two key principles of *adequacy* and *equity*. Adequacy refers to the amount of funding required for students to be provided with a reasonable opportunity to meet certain educational standards; equity refers to the amount of funding one group of students receives as compared to other groups of students—for example, low-income students versus other income groups. Following the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, equity began to surface as a key element of the federal government’s education agenda—the central question being, does public education provide an equitable education to all its citizens, regardless of race, income group, or ethnicity? Adequacy—that is, the question of how well the nation’s elementary and secondary school systems are doing the fundamental job of educating—moved to the forefront in the 1980s, with the increased emphasis on standards-based education reform. Historically, both adequacy and equity have been difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. Nonetheless, for decades, efforts to improve public education through litigation have been inextricably tied to these two issues.

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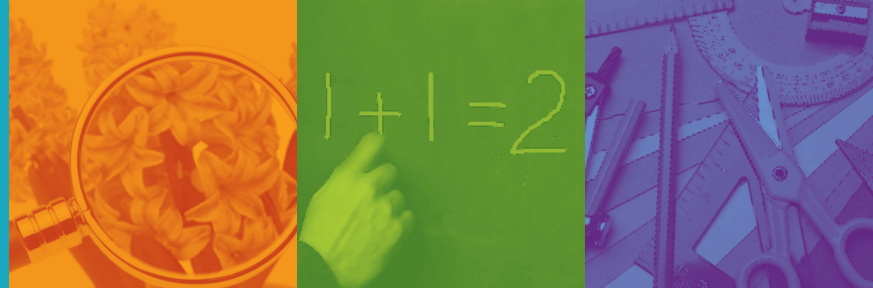
Since the 1970s, education reformers have used litigation to challenge funding systems. These suits have been filed on both equity and adequacy grounds and, variously, at the federal and state levels. Following a 1973 defeat in the U.S. Supreme Court of a landmark equity-based lawsuit (*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*), reformers turned their attention to the state courts. They experienced some success with equity litigation at the state level, putting pressure on states to address inequities in the allocation of education funds. In response, many states developed funding formulas. One such formula was a “foundation” program that many states still use today. Under this system, the state identifies a base level of funding—a foundation level—for the state’s public education system. The districts within that state are then required to tax at a given rate and the state makes up the difference between the locally generated funds and the foundation level. Not surprisingly, these formulas and how they are applied vary from state to state. And, in the end, per-pupil spending on education and the specific mechanisms for allocating that money are wide-ranging.



In 1983, the landscape changed dramatically—and the focus of education finance litigation shifted from equity to adequacy. A national commission report titled *A Nation At Risk* warned that America’s economy might suffer in the growing global economy if education systems did not improve. In response, standards-based reform was proposed as a way of improving the nation’s schools. States began developing standards for student achievement, along with assessments to measure student progress toward attaining those standards. In the 1980s, for the first time, a measure of adequacy existed in the form of state standards—and the stage was set for courts to test the constitutionality of education finance systems on adequacy rather than equity grounds. As a result of these shifts, according to an article by Lauren N. Gillespie in the *Cornell Law Review* (July 2010), education finance litigation has gone through three phases: First, equity-based lawsuits at the federal level; second, equity-based lawsuits at the state level; and finally, adequacy-based litigation at the state level. Writes Gillespie, “Current reformers are in the third wave of education finance litigation, pursuing an adequacy-based strategy in state courts.”

By 2005, litigation challenging state education finance had been filed in 44 of the 50 states. Thirty-two of these were adequacy suits. According to the Education Commission of the States, which tracks school finance litigation, in 14 of these cases the courts found in favor of the plaintiffs, ruling that state funding systems were either wholly or partially in violation of the state’s constitution. Courts have ruled in favor of the states in only seven cases.

For example, the landmark case of *Rose v. Council for Better Education* was filed in 1985 by a group of schools in Kentucky’s poorer rural school districts. The suit challenged the constitutionality of the state’s school funding system based on equity grounds. In its 1989 ruling in favor of the schools, the Kentucky Supreme Court went a step further and invalidated the entire state system of education, finding it inadequate and incapable of providing students with an opportunity to reach high education standards. While the court did not prescribe specific education reforms, it directed the legislature to create an education system that would provide every student in the state the opportunity to develop seven



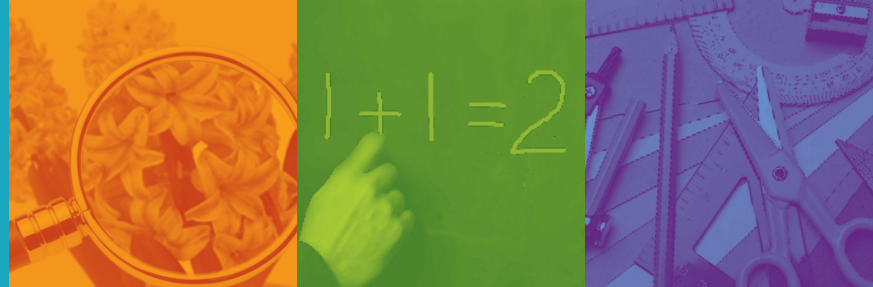
specific, clearly defined capacities. In 1990, the Kentucky state legislature passed a comprehensive set of education reforms based on the court’s ruling, and as a result, school funding in Kentucky increased substantially, and a number of reforms were put in place.

Although litigation has resulted in education finance reform in many states, such suits are expensive and can stretch on for many years. For example, over the past three decades, New York State has been embroiled in education finance litigation—with suits being filed both on adequacy and equity grounds. A 1993 suit, *CFE v. State of New York*, argued that the state “was failing in its constitutional duty to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education to hundreds of thousands of its schoolchildren.” Despite a ruling in favor of the plaintiff, the case then went through a series of appeals, special hearings, and a significant costing-out study—a process that lasted more than a decade. In the interim, other similar lawsuits were filed in New York State. As an example of the substantial nature of these judgments, in 2004, New York State was ordered to provide up to \$14 billion in additional funding to the New York City School District over a five-year period. Yet it wasn’t until 2007 that the state finally increased its education budget—all of which raises the question of the cost-effectiveness of such a process. Writes Michael Griffith in “School Finance Litigation and Beyond” (April 2005), “While school funding lawsuits have produced broad changes in some states, there are instances where the cost of litigation—both financially and in terms of impacts on the education system—may outstrip any benefits.” Griffith argues that in many cases litigation becomes a tool for states to delay much-needed reforms and that it behooves states to address these issues before litigation surfaces. For example, the state of Maryland—without the provocation of a lawsuit—put a commission in place to study and recommend education reforms, many of which have been implemented to great success.

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The Challenges Ahead

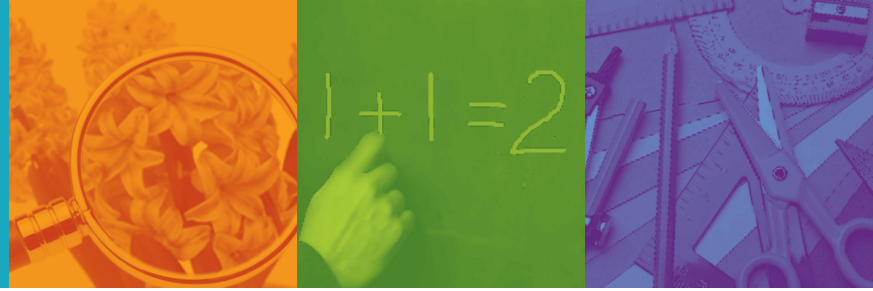
As the debate over how to improve our education system continues, it remains tied to education finance—and the issues of adequacy and equity. Today, researchers, reformers, and policymakers have sophisticated tools that help illuminate the problem. But solutions are more illusive. Since the 1990s, the National Assessment



of Educational Progress has provided a valuable tool for comparing student achievement across states and school districts—a measure that reaches beyond state performance standards, which vary dramatically from one state to the next. And, in recent years, reformers have provided compelling evidence that inequities and inadequacies persist. For example, based on an Education Trust analysis released in 2006, “On average, states and localities spend \$908 less per student in districts educating the most students of color, and \$825 less per student in districts educating the most low-income students as compared to what is spent in the wealthiest and whitest districts.” The Education Trust simultaneously released research findings that demonstrated how the Title I funding system serves to “widen rather than narrow the education funding gaps that separate wealthy states from poor states.”

There is ample evidence that our country needs to find ways to improve public education—and that there is room for education finance reform. Yet, as states face severe budget crises in the wake of the recession that began in 2008, many are slashing education budgets. In February of 2011, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that 34 states and the District of Columbia have cut their K–12 budgets since 2008. Given that the biggest item in school budgets—often as much as 50 to 70 percent—is teacher salaries, teacher cutbacks are widespread. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—the economic stimulus package—provided grants to help states make up budget shortfalls, including funding for education jobs. As of 2010, 95 percent of U.S. school districts had either received or been promised grants under ARRA. Nonetheless, according to the Center for Education Policy, 45 percent of those schools still had to cut teaching jobs during the 2009–2010 school year. And, as of July 2010, roughly 75 percent of schools expected to cut teaching jobs in 2010–2011.

With school budgets undergoing intensive scrutiny nationwide, state and local governments and school boards are trying to find ways to reduce expenses without eroding school performance, and that’s an enormous challenge. But the real challenge may be for states to look closely at education funding—even as they cut budgets—and spend more effectively. “If you look across the country, you see education financing getting sliced—often in the most thoughtless and destructive



ways,” writes *New York Times* columnist David Brooks in a February 28, 2011 editorial. He cites, among other cutbacks, Hawaii’s decision to reduce the number of days in the school year. “Of all the ways to cut education, why on earth would you reduce student time in the classroom?”

On March 3, 2011, the U.S. Department of Education released a set of guiding principles, “Promising Practices on Productivity, Flexibility” to help cash-strapped states determine “how to spend education dollars productively and highlighting flexibility available for spending federal funds.” In releasing the report, Secretary Arne Duncan told the national press, “There is a right way and a wrong way to cut spending, and the most important guiding principle I can offer is to minimize the negative impact on students and seize this opportunity to redirect your spending priorities.” In all likelihood, the education funding decisions state and local leaders make today will affect America’s future in ways we have yet to imagine.

Web Resources

ACCESS¹

The National Access Network provides a wealth of information on litigation and education finance reform in all 50 states. Links at the site include a clickable map that provides access to resources and activities by state, as well as current news, research, and policy papers on school finance reform.

The Funding Gap²

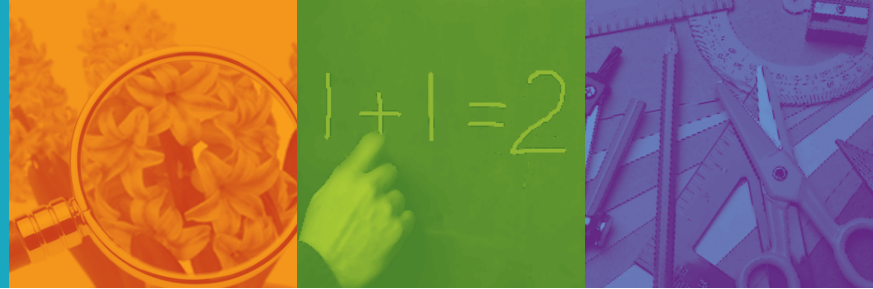
Visit the Education Trust for their most up-to-date report on funding gaps within and among states.

Money matters: A primer on K–12 school funding³

An excellent overview of school funding issues at the Center for Public Education’s website.

Public Education Finances 2008⁴

This report contains U.S. Census data on public school revenues and spending on a state-by-state basis—including tables showing per-pupil expenditures, property taxes as a percentage of total local revenues, and state education spending as a percentage of total state spending.



State Expenditure Report 2009⁵

Published by the National Association of State Budget Officers, this report examines spending in all areas of state budgets, including elementary and secondary education.

¹ www.schoolfunding.info/index.php3

² www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/the-funding-gap-0

³ www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Policies/Money-matters-At-a-glance/Money-matters-A-primer-on-K12-school-funding.GMEditor.html

⁴ www.census.gov/govs/school/

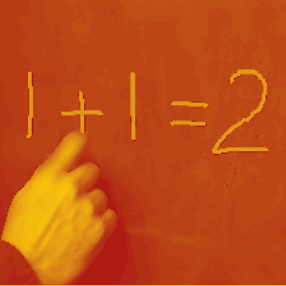
⁵ www.nasbo.org/Publications/StateExpenditureReport/tabid/79/Default.aspx

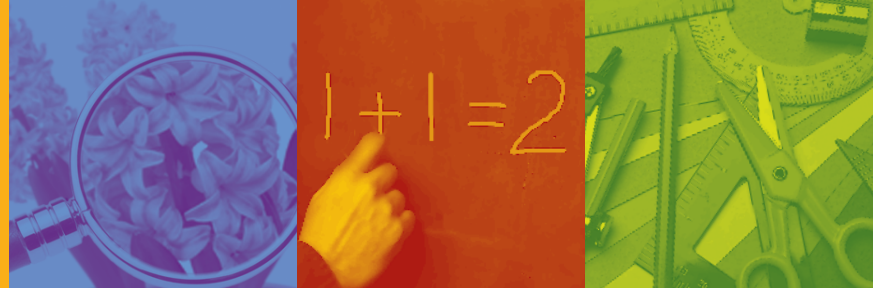


See related article in *REALTORS® Making a Difference*, “Provide Scholarships for Local Students.”

For related articles in *Issues in Public Education*, “Federal Education Programs: The Politics of Reform,” and “School Building and Siting.”

REALTORS®
MAKING A DIFFERENCE





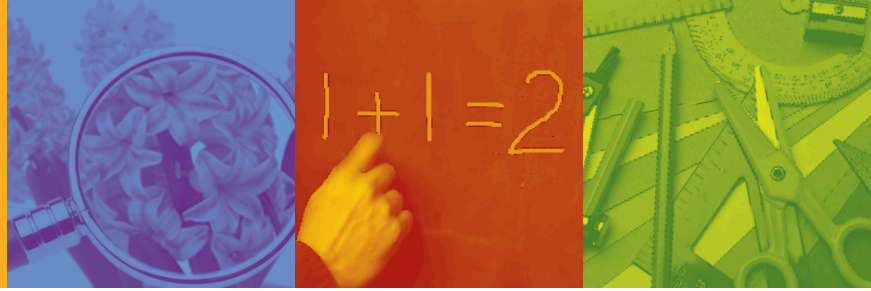
Participate in the School of the Future Design Competition

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Cosponsored by the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) and the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI), the School of the Future Design Competition is a nationwide program that encourages middle schoolers to learn about creating sustainable school environments that are healthy and energy efficient. The competition is a way for REALTORS® to connect with students, schools, and the community. NAR encourages REALTOR® associations and REALTORS® to participate in this innovative program. The most important thing REALTORS® can do is to visit schools in their communities and get them to register for the competition. They can also become mentors or guest speakers and serve as judges for the competition. REALTOR® associations can play a role by promoting the competition to their members and by supporting and sponsoring student teams.

Based on feedback from participating REALTORS®, the School of the Future Design Competition can be a life-changing experience for kids and adults—and is a valuable way for REALTORS® to serve the community. “It’s an amazing experience for the kids. And just an amazing feel-good for you,” says REALTORS® Wendy Furth, who has served as a judge and mentored a team of middle schoolers in East Los Angeles. “These fifth graders flew through the curriculum. They took copious notes—and developed an understanding of everything from composting and recycling to the role natural light plays in the classroom.”

Rick Rielly, president of Columbia-Greene Board of REALTORS® in Rhinebeck, New York, signed up a nearby middle school for the competition. When a handful of seventh-grade girls put together a team, Rielly became their mentor. During the planning and construction phase of the competition, Rick met with them for about an hour each week—bringing them a sample solar panel, offering ideas and encouragement, and donating matching polo shirts to the team. “At first, it was just something for them to do after school. But by the time these young ladies presented their design and model to the local school board—and then via Skype to the Northeast regional competition—they were transformed into hard-working,



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—the students
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Students from Bulkeley Middle School, Rhinebeck, New York with awards created by REALTOR® Richard “Rick” Rielly.

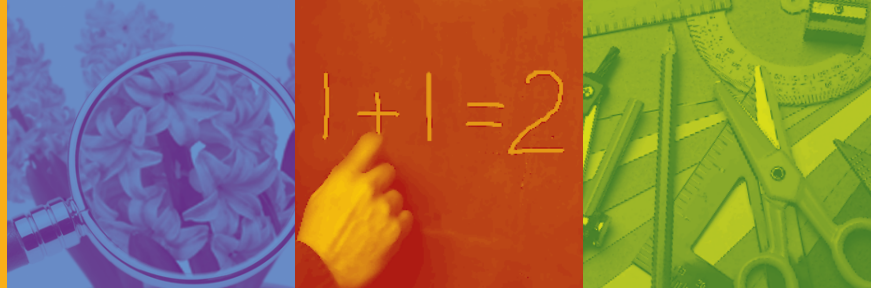
methodical, interested young women. They had gained so much confidence.” The team was pictured in their matching shirts on the cover of the district’s annual school calendar—a treat for the kids. “The school got a ton of publicity,” says Rielly.

It’s a win-win for schools. Participation costs them nothing. “It can dovetail easily into any of the projects teachers are doing in their classrooms. The curriculum is free and easily downloaded from the CEFPI website,” says Furth. The models for the competition are made from found materials. Furth, for example, enlisted a donation of packing boxes from a local supplier. One school used pizza boxes. Another made roof tiles out of peg-like materials from a set of picture frames.



How to Get Involved

Whether you’re a REALTOR® or an association, the best place to start is by learning about the competition. Visit REALTOR.org and the CEFPI website to find out more and to get the curriculum, timelines, webinars, and videos. The best way for a REALTOR® to participate is to visit a local school to tell them about the

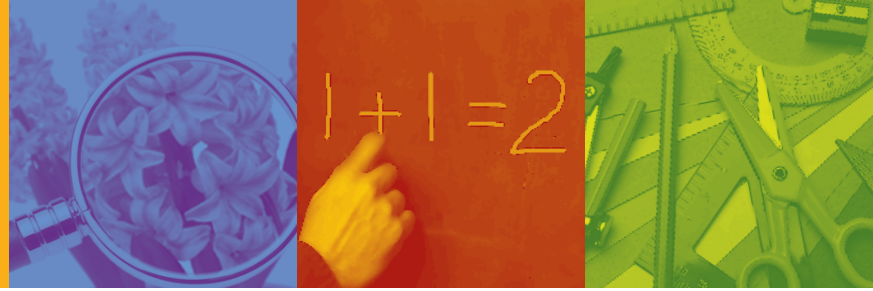


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NAR provides
materials to support
this effort, including
brochures that
REALTORS®
can leave behind...
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competition. The most important step for associations is to encourage REALTOR® participation. For example, the Southland Regional Association of REALTORS® in Southern California uses its website to promote the competition to its members in the Greater Los Angeles region. In some instances, associations reach out to local schools—or school districts. Allison Organtini of the Ulster County Board of REALTORS® in Kingston, New York, did just that and is now working to get the association more involved. Says Organtini, “The competition is a great way to reach out to the community and let them know we care.”

NAR provides materials to support this effort, including brochures that REALTORS® can leave behind following a school visit and postcards that REALTOR® associations can use to reach out to members. Other materials, such as the curriculum, are easily down-loaded from the CEFPI website. In addition, a video about the School of the Future Design Competition is available at REALTOR.org and on the CEFPI website. “If you know teachers in your area, enlist their help,” advises Furth. “Get a group of REALTORS® together at your local association to visit area schools and make a presentation. Just open up your laptop, get online, and show them the video of the program. Those kids can sell the program better than anyone else.” Like Wendy Furth and Rick Rielly, individual REALTORS® can become mentors, working with a team of middle schoolers. Even if you haven’t had an opportunity to visit a local school, if you sign up to be a mentor at the CEFPI website, CEFPI can send you a list of participating schools in your area to help you connect with a team.

REALTOR® associations can participate by sponsoring a team of middle school competitors. A sponsorship can involve anything from setting up an event where the students can practice their presentations to funding part of a team’s travel expenses to a state, regional, or national jury. The School of the Future Design Competition is an ongoing program. Participating schools can start to register in the spring. Students begin work on their projects the following school year. Judging begins in January of each year. NAR provides cash awards to the first and second place regional winners, presented by representatives of a local REALTOR® association. The association may organize an event in conjunction with a local CEFPI chapter to honor the teams when they present the checks.



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Students love the
competition because
it lets them make
their own learning
happen...
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The highlight of the competition is an awards ceremony and reception for the regional winners at NAR in Washington, DC. NAR provides the funds for up to four students to travel to Washington. Local associations may want to provide additional funds to allow more students from a team to make the trip. Students love the competition because it lets them make their own learning happen, allows them to feel a sense of pride in their school and community, and helps them visualize the future. You too can become part of it.

NAR Tools

School of the Future Design Competition at REALTOR.org¹

Get details about the competition, request brochures and postcards, and watch a design competition video and webinars. Distribute the brochures when you visit local schools, and use the postcards to market the competition to your colleagues and members.

Web Resources

Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI)²

This is where schools can register their teams, REALTORS® can sign up to be mentors, and anyone can access videos, program requirements, and curricula.

Facebook³

Become a fan and check out news and updates on the School of the Future Design Competition Facebook page.

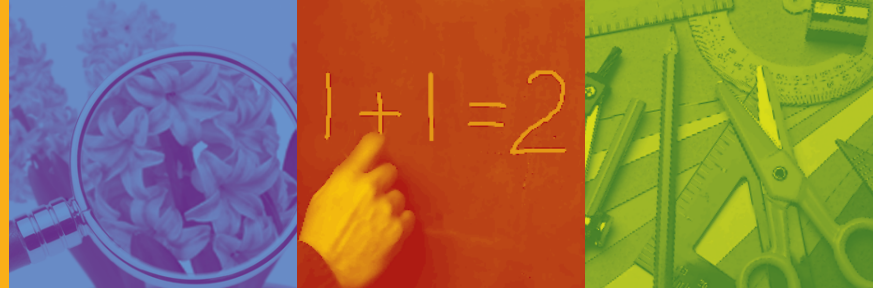
¹ www.realtor.org/government_affairs/smart_growth/schools_of_the_future

² www.cefpi.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3550

³ www.facebook.com/pages/School-of-the-Future-Design-Competition/145836942121858



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, "The Benefits of Green Schools."



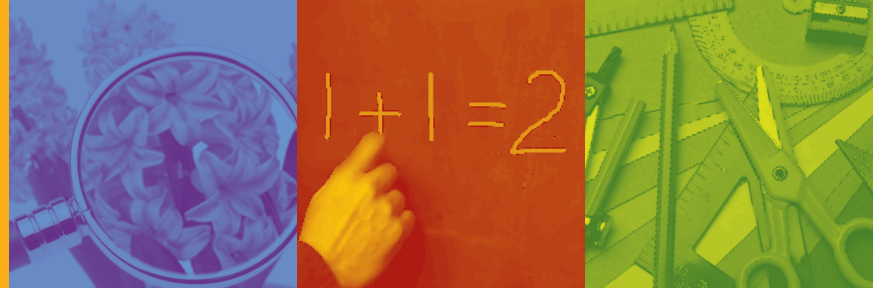
Serve on a School Board

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School boards make
decisions that have
an enormous impact
on schools and
communities—and
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REALTOR® can make
than serving on
one of them.
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There are 14,000 school boards around the country—and there's no greater commitment a REALTOR® can make to improving public education than serving on one of them. School boards are grappling with major issues that affect public education. According to a survey of more than 1,000 school board members released by the National School Boards Association in 2011, the most urgent issues school boards face today include raising student achievement levels and uncovering new funding sources—issues that can have an enormous impact on the quality of life and future of communities.

Eight years ago, REALTOR® Donald G. Warner joined the school board in Upper Moreland Township, Pennsylvania, a working-class district. In 2011, he's serving his fourth and final term as board vice president. He calls the experience challenging and rewarding—rewarding, because he's played an active role in improving the way the board operates and ultimately improving the schools in his district. "Test scores are skyrocketing," he says. "And we've been achieving all the No Child Left Behind benchmarks." He's been involved in issues ranging from school budgets and new school construction to successfully addressing discipline problems among high schoolers and engaging parents in raising expectations for their children's performance. Today, the board is focused on finding creative ways to make up budget shortfalls—by improving cost efficiencies and uncovering potential revenue sources.

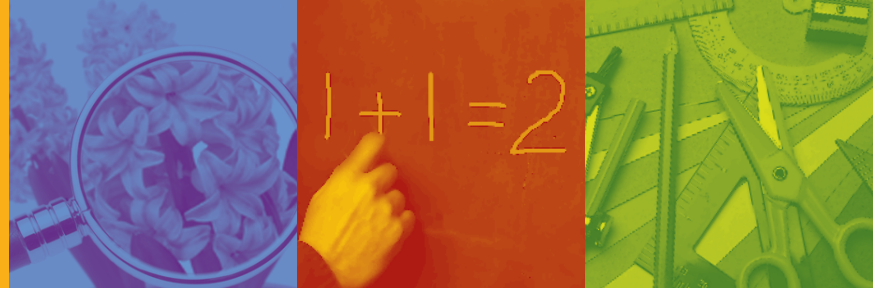
Janice Cavanaugh, of Wilmington, North Carolina, first joined the board of the New Hanover County Schools more than 20 years ago. "In 1987, the school board decided to eliminate all requests for school transfers involving special emergency circumstances—such as medical problems," says Cavanaugh. "I thought the decision was draconian and lacked compassion and logic." She started speaking out at school board meetings, and when a position on the board opened up, she was appointed. Cavanaugh not only played a role in reversing the board's policy on emergency school transfers but also has continued to serve on the school board for 13 years now, and she has served on the federal legislation committee that lobbies Washington on school issues. Through her REALTOR®



REALTOR® Alan Mudd (third from left) at a meeting of the Board of Education for the Jefferson City Public Schools in Jefferson City, Missouri.

association, Cavanaugh requested—and received—RPAC funding to help with two of her election campaigns. To run, she says, “takes hard work. You have to get out and let people know who you are. But anybody can do it if you have the courage and conviction.”

Many other REALTORS® and REALTOR® association staff and leadership are past or present school board members, including the following: Armando Rodriguez, governmental affairs director, Greater El Paso Association of REALTORS®; Laura Benson, president-elect 2010, Sarasota Association of REALTORS®; Alan Mudd, past president, Jefferson City Area Board of REALTORS®; Chris Fraser, past president, Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS®; Janine McLauchlan, executive officer, White Mountain Board of REALTORS®; Joe Hassmann, Hassmann Real Estate.



NAR Tools

RPAC Funding

If you're running for a school board, you may be eligible to receive RPAC funds through your local REALTOR® association or board, depending on your association's RPAC contribution policies and state and local election laws governing your locality. To determine your eligibility, contact your local association's government affairs director or executive officer. If you're eligible, the next step involves reaching out to key association leadership and RPAC trustees to explain the rationale for why your candidacy should receive RPAC support, including your position on the issues and campaign strategy. For more information, contact your local REALTOR® association.

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NAR provides

valuable tools

that can help a

REALTOR® run for a

local school board.
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NAR REALTOR® Party Hub¹

A comprehensive, web-based, grassroots communication system for online member outreach, engagement, and mobilization that uses Convio software. Associations can use the "Hub" to send member e-newsletters to get them to support a REALTOR® running for school board.

Campaign Services Program²

This program provides REALTOR® associations with a range of sophisticated tools and services for advocacy campaigns and candidate support—at no or reduced cost—including access to voter files, polling and campaign consulting services, and resources for developing customized and targeted communications for association members and registered voters.

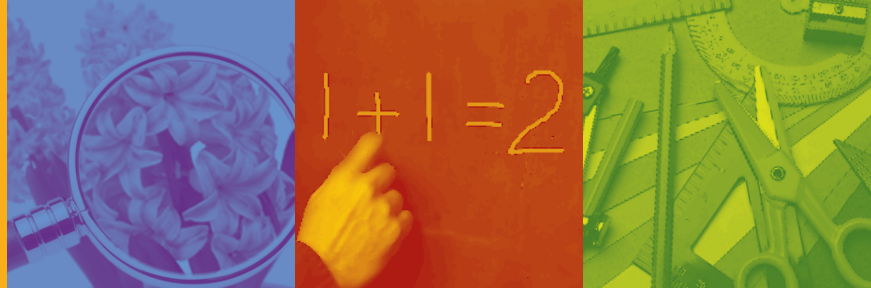
Web Resources

SchoolBoardCampaign.com³

The nuts and bolts of how to mount a campaign.

National School Boards Association⁴

News and views from the national association and school boards around the country.



School Districts⁵

An overview of how different school districts around the country are organized.

Search the Web

Since the laws governing school boards vary dramatically from one district to the next, google your local school board to locate its website for relevant information.

¹ www.realtoractioncenter.com/hub

² www.realtoractioncenter.com/for-associations/electoralservices

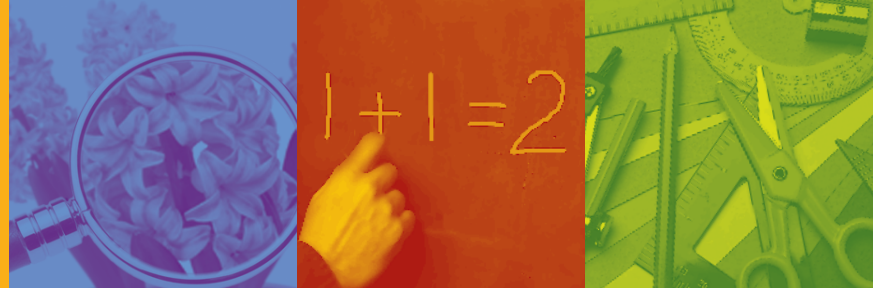
³ www.schoolboardcampaign.com

⁴ www.nsba.org

⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_district



See *Issues in Public Education*. By serving on a school board, you may be able to make a difference in addressing any of these school issues.



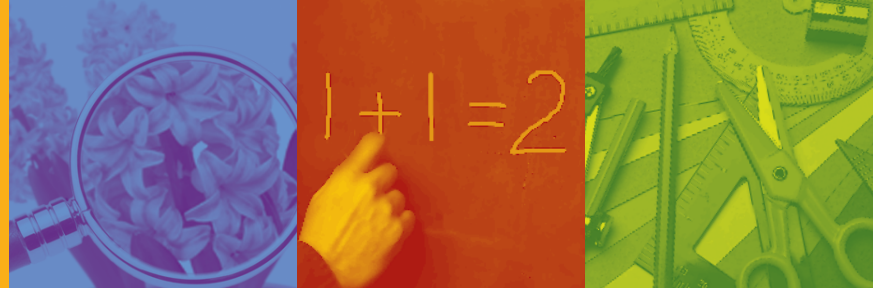
Provide Scholarships For Local Students

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By funding
scholarship programs
for college-bound
students, REALTOR®
associations are
investing in the future
of their communities.
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Since 2001, the St. Augustine & St. Johns County Board of REALTORS® has awarded more than \$70,000 in scholarships to local high school seniors to help them defray the cost of attending college. “We only have 850 members,” says association executive Victor J. Raymos. “Imagine what a large association could do.” At this point, they’ve got the process down. At the start of each school year, members of the education committee reach out to area schools, publicizing the \$1,000-per-student scholarship program. “We go to see the guidance counselors at the schools. We make up flyers and posters for them to put up around the school,” says Raymos. “We encourage them to give this information to any and all senior students. Then we follow up with a few more visits before the application deadline.” To qualify, students must have a C average or better—which extends opportunities beyond top students who tend to receive multiple scholarship offers—and they must submit an essay and references. The education committee awards ten annual scholarships based on a blind selection process—including a scholarship that’s awarded each year to the child or grandchild of a REALTOR® or affiliate member.

The scholarship money can be used for any college-related expense, including books and living expenses. “You wouldn’t think \$1,000 would be life changing. But it is. When we present the scholarship awards at area high schools, parents come up to us in tears. ‘You can’t imagine how much you’ve done for my son or my daughter,’ they say,” says Raymos. Funds for the program are raised through annual association events—including two popular live auctions—and donations from REALTORS® and affiliate members. The association also provides a check-box on its annual dues invoice that allows members to donate to the scholarship program when they renew. Says Raymos, “We feel very passionate about education in general and the education of our high school seniors in particular. These scholarships help them do good things for themselves and for the community. It’s just a great program.”

Every year, the Austin Board of REALTORS® Foundation awards up to 15 scholarships of \$1,000 to \$4,000 each to area high school students. In fact, over the past 20 years the foundation has provided more than 250 scholarships to



The Austin Board of REALTORS® Foundation hosts a property tour at the Barton Place Condominiums to raise money for its programs.

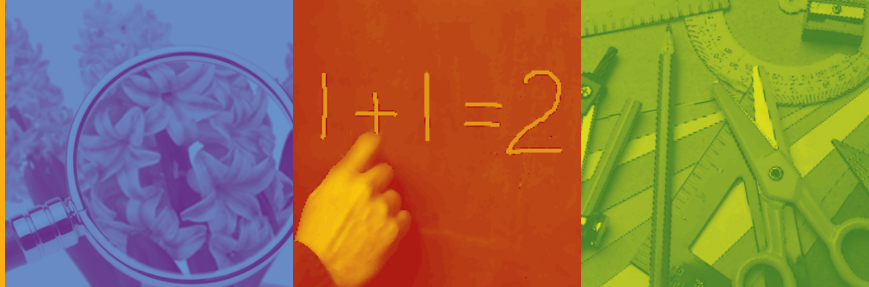


Ann Marie Sandlin and John Rosshirt present a scholarship to Caitlin Richter of Leander High School on behalf of the Austin Board of REALTORS® Foundation.

high school seniors in Central Texas to help their families defray the cost of higher education. In 2011, the foundation sponsored a Mercedes-Benz raffle to help raise money for the scholarship program. “Proceeds from the raffle will allow the foundation to continue to provide these bright young people with scholarships, so they can pursue higher education opportunities,” says Angela Tovar Brutsché, director of marketing and communications for the Austin Board of REALTORS®. Established in 1952 by the association, the foundation promotes real estate-related research and conducts charitable projects in the community, in addition to administering the scholarship program. Says Brutsché, “Investing in our youth is an investment in our future. By helping these students through generous support, REALTORS® make Central Texas a better place to live.”

Here are some of the other associations that get behind their students and schools by providing scholarships or endowments.

- The Pickens County Board of REALTORS® in Atlanta, Georgia, sponsors a scholarship program and annual school supply drive.
- The Royal Gorge Association of REALTORS® in Canon City, Colorado, provides small scholarships to local high school students and makes donations to Senior Fun Fest each year.
- The Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS® in Charleston, South Carolina, financially supports the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce’s Education Foundation and funds the endowment of a chair at the Carter Real Estate Center at the College of Charleston.



Web Resources

USA Fundraising.com¹

Tips and ideas for your next fundraiser.

National School Foundation Association²

The NSFA provides information on how to start a foundation to support public schools in your area.

The Council on Foundations³

Answers to frequently asked questions about starting a foundation.

Grant Space⁴

Information on how to start a foundation, including free webinars, tutorials, and other tools.

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University⁵

To start a nonprofit or foundation you need to apply for 501(c)(3) federal-tax exemption. This site provides useful links to help with that process.

¹ www.usafundraising.com/

² www.schoolfoundations.org/en/starting_a_foundation/

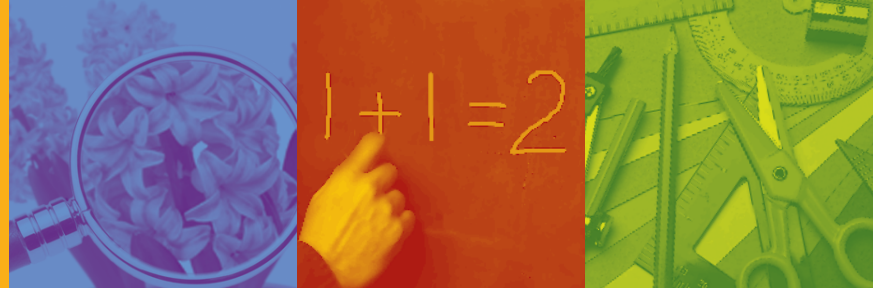
³ www.cof.org/templates/41.cfm?ItemNumber=17637#general_steps_in_starting_a_foundation

⁴ grantspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Nonprofit-Management/Establishment/Starting-a-nonprofit

⁵ www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/About/Links/start_nonprofit.aspx



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, “How Schools Are Funded.”



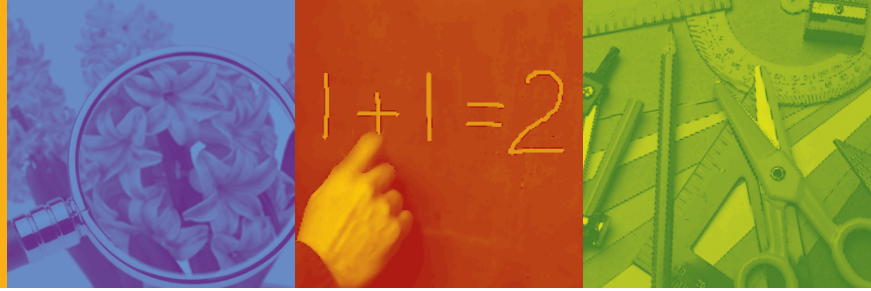
Read, Teach, and Mentor in Your Community

It all started when a school principal invited a few representatives of the Lexington-Bluegrass Association of REALTORS® to tour a single local elementary school. “After the tour, we were trying to think of a way to say thank you,” says Melissa Poynter, then chairman of the association’s professional standards committee. “Someone suggested we donate a book to the library. Then we thought, why don’t we give every school a book and then go to the schools and read the books?” Poynter then spearheaded the development of a unique book program that involves 115 elementary schools throughout the association’s 11-county area—and scores of association members. The association selects a children’s book each year, donates it to area schools, and the REALTORS® conduct readings and discussions at each of the 115 schools. “It’s an easy, low-cost program that has generated big, big results,” says Poynter. The program brings REALTORS® into the schools, raises their profile in the community, and benefits local students and schools.

For those interested in establishing a similar program, Poynter recommends getting in touch with school superintendents first, then the word filters down to principals and to librarians. Poynter, who now heads up the association’s community education committee, oversees the program and travels to many of the schools. Nearby REALTORS® join her for the annual readings. The first year, REALTORS® read *A Hat for Ivan*, and they all wore hats. The second year they brought in a children’s book illustrator, and the reading was filmed for the local public television station. The following year, they focused on bullying, not only reading a relevant book but talking extensively with the students about the topic. “We have REALTORS® who’ve been enthusiastic from the beginning. They see just how rewarding it is—the kids are so excited to see us. And it’s really grown,” she says. “At this point, there may be 15 REALTORS® at any individual school at any given moment.”

Poynter has been involved with another innovative program at the Lexington-Bluegrass Association of REALTORS®. The association has developed an interactive software program, “Building your Bucks,” that helps teenagers become

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In classrooms
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REALTOR® Jack Owens of the Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS® with his *Reading with REALTORS®* students.



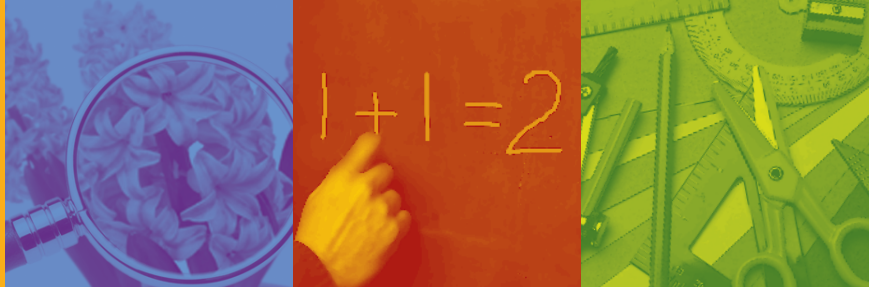
REALTORS® Kim Patton and Casey Weesner of the Lexington-Bluegrass Association of REALTORS® read and present the book *Enemy Pie* by Derek Munson to local students.

financially literate. It's accessible on the association's website for community presentations and includes a complete curriculum-based program covering rent-to-own, leasing, credit cards—and credit scores.

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Check out "Building
your Bucks,"
developed by the
Lexington-Bluegrass
Association of
REALTORS® at
www.lbar.com/
BuildingYourBucks.
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In classrooms around the country, individual REALTORS® and REALTOR® association staff members give of their time to read, mentor, and teach local students—and to promote better schools and better communities. Heather DeDonna, a REALTOR® in North Carolina, teaches character education once a month at her son's school. Lana Lavenbarg, a REALTOR® and broker in Oregon, is teamed up with a local elementary student for a year, and they spend 30–45 minutes a week doing reading, homework, puzzles, or games together. The Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS® coordinates a group of members that mentor local elementary school students working to improve their reading skills. Randy Reynolds of Colorado Springs, Colorado, volunteers with Junior Achievement of Southern Colorado to teach students the value of the free enterprise system and financial literacy. And Stephanie Carlson, a former teacher and REALTOR® in Wichita, Kansas, helps out as a substitute teacher and participates in the local middle school *Lip Sync* production, an incentive program to encourage positive behavior among students.

Angela Tovar Brutsché, director of marketing and communications for the Austin Board of REALTORS®, calls herself a lifelong learner, but through her activities working with Austin students, she's become something of a



lifelong teacher. Brutsché serves as a volunteer in the Junior Achievement program—helping students learn career-related skills—and at Communities in Schools, a Texas-based, business-education partnering organization, where she tutors middle school students. She has mentored at a school that serves a large Hispanic population. “It’s very moving to hear students discuss issues surrounding U.S. citizenship or express their fears about violence in Mexico,” says Brutsché. “Our discussions definitely give me a broader perspective.” Working with area students also keeps her connected to the community. “The more we are connected,” she says, “the stronger our neighborhoods will be.”

Web Resources

United Way¹

Your local United Way chapter can connect you to reading and mentoring programs in area schools.

Junior Achievement²

Junior Achievement sponsors youth education programs at the elementary and high school level.

HomeWords³

Created by the *Los Angeles Times* and cosponsored by the California Association of REALTORS®, HomeWords is designed to help middle and high school students take a critical look at what it will take for them to own or rent a home in the future.

Building Your Bucks⁴

Online financial course for middle and high school students, created by the Lexington-Bluegrass Association of REALTORS®.

¹ apps.liveunited.org/myuw/

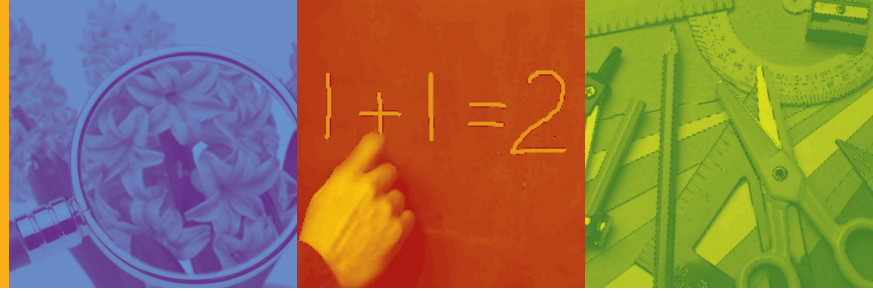
² www.ja.org/involved/involved_vol_want2.shtml

³ www.subscriber-services.com/sfchron/nie/pdf/AC_HomeWords.pdf

⁴ www.lbar.com/BuildingYourBucks/



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, “Cultural Issues: The Achievement Gap.”

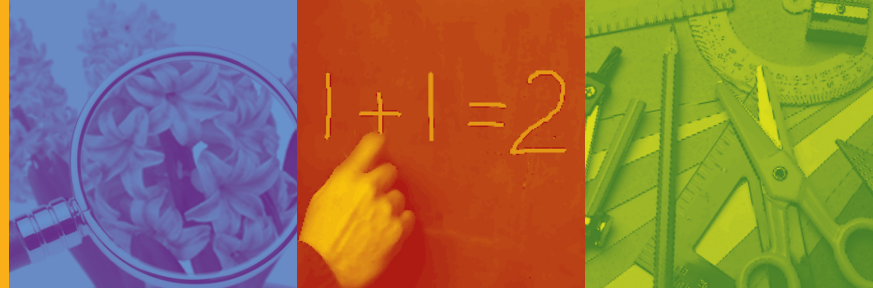


Explore Housing Programs that Support Teachers

For many teachers, the cost of owning a home or even renting an apartment near the schools where they work is nearly impossible because of the mismatch between teacher salaries and the high cost of housing. It's a problem that makes it difficult for some communities to attract and retain teachers. REALTORS® can help make housing more affordable and accessible for teachers by working with lenders, nonprofits, schools, and government agencies to promote employer-assisted housing programs, by educating teachers about their housing and financing options, and by developing special initiatives to address the issue.

Maryland is one of the wealthiest states in the country. "Even now, the average cost of a house is way beyond what single teachers can afford on their own without help," says Edward Robinson, an agent with Keller Williams Flagship of Maryland and president of TheMDRealEstateTeam.com. The state aggressively recruits new teachers from out-of-state to address teacher shortages, but, for some of them, the cost of housing makes it difficult to make the move and hard to stay there—a factor contributing to low teacher retention rates in some Maryland counties. In 2005, inspired by his wife to address these issues, Ed Robinson established an innovative Housing Program for Educators, which may be among the most comprehensive in the nation. The program is offered to teachers around the state through an exclusive affiliation with six of the state's teacher associations. Today, Robinson and his team focus primarily on serving these teachers. The high volume of business gives Robinson the leverage not only to negotiate discounted rates for teacher-homebuyers with select lenders but to negotiate discounted rents and special lease terms with area property managers—so teachers who aren't ready to buy can get out of their leases without penalty when they are ready. In addition, Robinson has become an expert in the state's Community Development Administration (CDA) mortgage products, state and county employer-assisted housing programs, and other special programs for which teachers may be eligible. The Housing Program for Educators then bundles these programs to maximize the

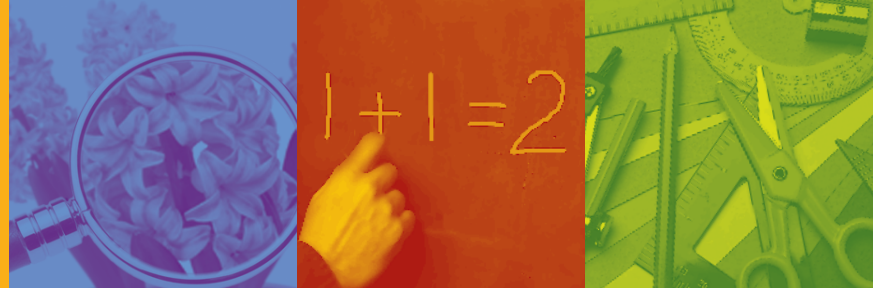
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The community of
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raising teacher
retention rates.
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REALTOR® George Hall (left) and two clients who participated in the Housing Program for Educators through TheMDRealEstateTeam.com with Keller Williams Flagship of Maryland.

benefits to each teacher-homebuyer. Depending on their eligibility, it can add up to thousands of dollars in teacher savings. In addition, the housing program offers up to \$1,000 in closing-cost assistance.

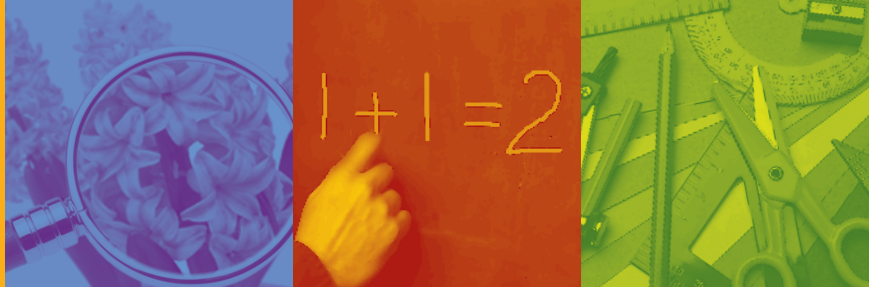
TheMDRealEstateTeam.com is a one-of-a-kind business model. The agency is organized around its successful Housing Program for Educators. “Each of our agents is assigned to a school. They essentially become account managers for that school,” says Robinson. Their goal is to provide real estate services to the individual teachers, whether they’re ready to buy a home or not, so there’s an extensive educational component to the program. “Many of these incoming teachers are recent graduates who are paying off educational loans,” says Robinson. “Our program is about more than making home ownership affordable. It helps teachers understand credit, how credit works, how to establish credit, and how to build credit.” Teacher-clients are encouraged to take



TheMDRealEstateTeam.com’s class that guides them through the entire home-buying process. “We teach them how to reduce their debt-to-income ratios and help them prepare financially to buy a house,” says Robinson. As a result, the program builds relationships with teachers that stretch over many years. It helps teachers get to the point where they can buy a house and then enables them to get more house for their money.

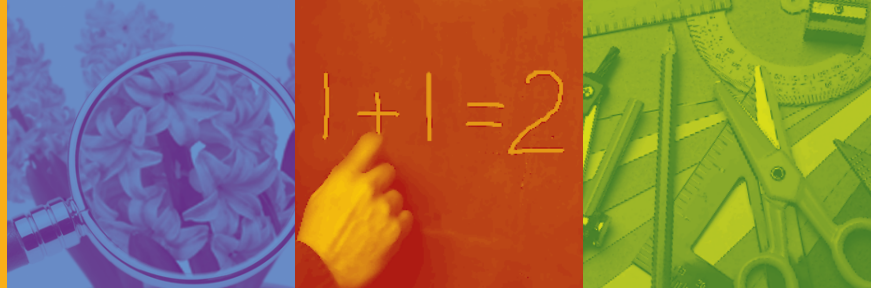
In nearby Virginia, the Fredericksburg REALTORS® Foundation has created a grant program to help new teachers make the transition to their communities. Hands Up for Educators—established in 2010 by the foundation—provides grants to new teachers for security deposits, utility deposits, and the first month’s rent when they move to Fredericksburg, Virginia, and the surrounding four-county area. “New teachers are hired in June and July but don’t get their first paycheck until September,” says Kim McClellan, government affairs director for the Fredericksburg Area Association of REALTORS® and staff liaison to the foundation. “So they have to move here, find a place, put down a security and utility deposit, and pay their first month’s rent—but they’re waiting for a paycheck for quite a long time.” Hands up for Educators makes the transition more affordable. Seed money to launch the program came from an Ira Gribin grant from the National Association of REALTORS®. In its first year, Hands Up for Educators provided \$7,765 to nine new teachers to help them defray the costs of settling into their new community. The foundation’s first partnership is with the NSWC Federal Credit Union, but they plan to expand by adding lending partners and reaching out to local businesses to help fund the program. To publicize the grant program within the education community, the foundation worked with human resources departments at the school systems, who then got the word out to new teachers. Administering the program is straightforward: Grants are funded on a first-come, first-served basis. Says McClellan, “We just verify each teacher’s records with the school system. The only requirement is that the teachers have to serve out the full school year.”

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Hands Up for
Educators provides
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the Fredericksburg
community.
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The REALTOR® Association of Prince William (PWAR) in Prince William County, Virginia, partnered with the county school district to help teachers understand the local housing market and financing benefits available to teachers through state and federal programs. Although the level of activity has subsided in recent years, at the height of the market, area schools were bringing in 600 new teachers a year—many from outside the region. During periods of peak hiring, the association served as a valuable resource for the school system by making presentations, providing information about employer-assisted housing programs, and identifying agents who were knowledgeable about teacher-related housing programs.

Other REALTORS® around the country are taking NAR’s employer-assisted housing (EAH) class and contacting local employers, including schools and governments, to discuss employer-assisted housing and ways to implement EAH benefits for employees in their communities. An EAH benefit for teachers can include homebuyer or homeownership education programs provided by REALTORS® and their teams, counseling services provided by a nonprofit organization, and/or financial assistance available through schools and government agencies.



NAR Tools

NAR's Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) Class¹

This four-hour class focuses on how to work with local employers to discuss employer-assisted housing (EAH), the benefits of EAH, and three options—homebuyer and homeownership education, counseling and financial assistance—that employers can implement to help their employees become homeowners or afford a home close to where they work.

NAR's Expanding Housing Opportunities (EHO) Class²

EHO is a six-hour course designed to educate real estate professionals on the range of affordable housing opportunities including how to identify and explain the range of affordable housing opportunities and their benefits to clients and to build partnerships to expand housing opportunities through advocacy, workforce housing initiatives, and green building concepts.

NAR's Housing Opportunity Program³

The Housing Opportunity Program offers programs, grants, training, and resources that help REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations expand housing availability and insure an adequate supply of rental housing and home ownership opportunities in their communities. A number of workforce housing resources are available including a guide to implementing an EAH benefit program called *Developing an Employer-Assisted Housing Benefit Plan: Step-by-Step Guide* as well as materials and documents that employers find useful in determining which EAH plan benefit to offer.

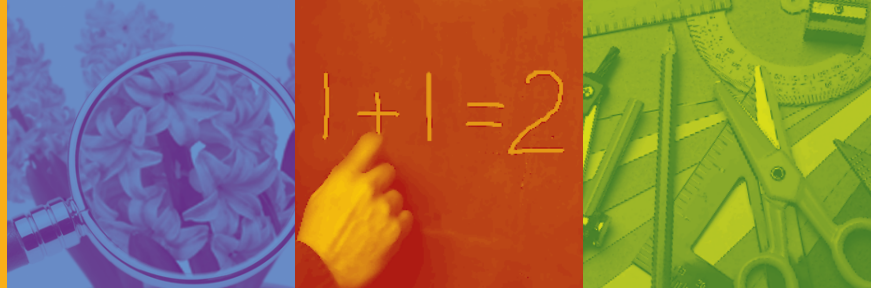
¹ www.realtor.org/eahclass

² www.realtor.org/ehoclass

³ www.realtor.org/government_affairs/housing_opportunity/



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, "Teachers Living Where They Work."



Organize a Walk/Bike to School

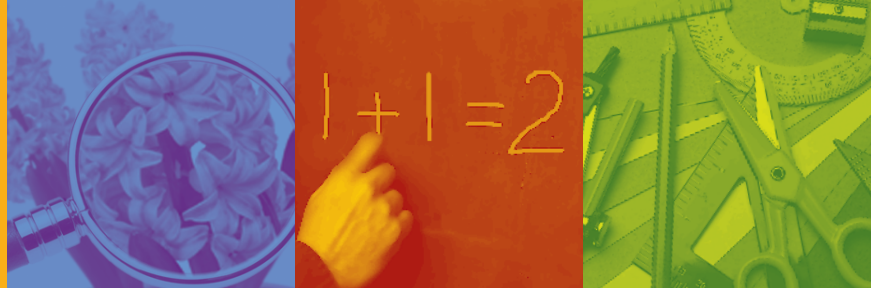
There's a national movement afoot to get more kids to walk and bike to school—and the momentum just keeps building. The reasons are clear. In 2009, only 13 percent of children ages five to fourteen walked or biked to school—compared to 48 percent in 1969. Studies have shown that even kids who live within a mile of their schools aren't walking in significant numbers. But that's starting to change. International Walk to School Day has become a major national event attracting millions of participants. Communities around the country are beginning to operate walking school buses—where supervising adults lead a busload of walkers to and from school. And, with the 2005 passage of Safe Routes to School legislation, hundreds of communities around the country are implementing programs to make school routes safer, more walkable, and more bikeable. It's all part of an effort to get kids moving again—and to strengthen neighborhoods. There are a number of ways REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations can participate in this nationwide effort.

.....
Every fall, millions of
school-age kids walk
or bike to school on
International Walk
to School Day—it
builds communities,
and it doesn't cost
a cent.
.....

Organize a Walk/Bike to School Day

In 2010, millions of kids around the world participated in International Walk to School Day, and more than 3,500 schools registered for the event at the organization's website. It's easy to participate in International Walk to School Day, which is held on a designated date each fall. REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations can reach out to neighborhoods, schools, and families to organize a walk to their neighborhood schools. It's an ideal way for REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations to have a real impact in their communities. And organizing a Walk to School Day costs nothing. It involves reaching out to the people and schools in your community and putting together a one-day event.

Some communities get creative. "One year, we did something called Walk with a Cop Day. We had police officers, deputies, and sheriffs walking the kids," says Ira Weiss, a member of the Safe Routes to School committee in Pickerington, Ohio. "This year, we added our servicemen and women walking—so kids would feel comfortable walking with police officers but also with the military. That was a cool addition to the program." Organizers around the country agree that



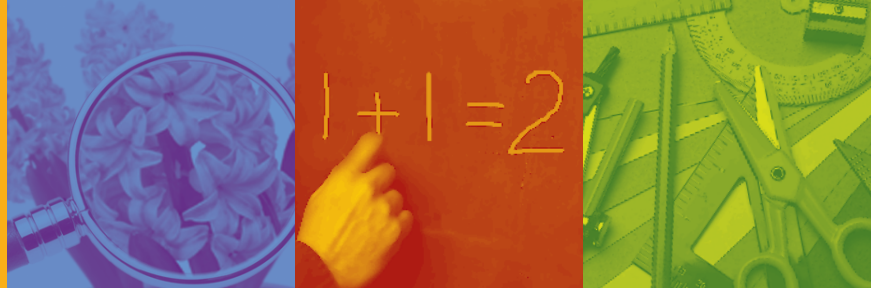
The Pickerington School District's *Walk with a Cop Day*. Photo courtesy of Peggy Portier.

politicians love to join the walks. Says Weiss, “We have the police chief, the mayor, the fire chief participating.”

If you're interested in promoting walkability in general, participating in International Walk to School Day is an ideal way to test the waters. Registered participants gain access to downloadable support materials and an e-newsletter leading up to the event. Registering is not essential—but walking is. Participation builds awareness of the issues associated with improving walkability and can foster real change. According to a report published in 2009 by Walk to School, based on a survey of participants,

- 35 percent of Walk to School events fostered the addition of the promotion of walking and bicycling to existing school policies;
- 33 percent led to the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks, or crossing guards in neighborhoods surrounding schools;
- 25 percent led to the addition of signage near schools.

Importantly, these events are part of a nationwide effort that is generating tangible results. Among the schools participating in the 2009 Walk to School



event, 42 percent of those surveyed were engaged in Safe Routes to School programs—which aim to make walking and biking part of the daily routine of area elementary and middle schoolers.

Spearhead a KidsWalk-to-School Program

KidsWalk-to-School is a program sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has been instrumental in the nationwide effort to promote regular walking and biking to school. After all, the health consequences of low levels of physical activity among our children have been enormous. Over the past 30 years, obesity rates among U.S. children, and the incidence of associated health conditions, have skyrocketed. Walking and biking to school can make a difference.

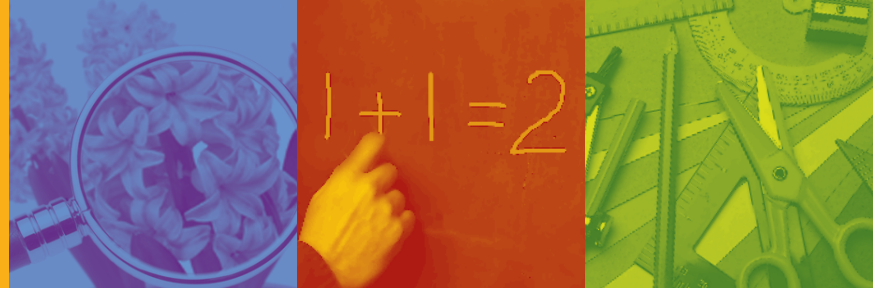
The CDC provides tools for implementing a walk-to-school initiative in your community, including a checklist that provides details regarding how to

- engage parents, schools, and community leaders to organize a successful one-day walk/bike event;
- assess your community's school routes and map a safe walk;
- hold a formal planning meeting to involve key stakeholders;
- and implement an ongoing community-based walk-to-school program.

Create a Walking School Bus

According to a comprehensive 2010 survey by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, when asked about the barriers to walking to school, parents of elementary and middle schoolers identified physical safety as a major concern—not because of crime but because of the distance to school, the high traffic speeds, the lack of safe crossings or crossing guards, and traffic volumes. Walking school buses provide an innovative way to address the safety issue. How does it work? Designated parents walk groups of children to school, picking them up along the way to school and dropping them off on the way home—just as a school bus does but on foot. To find out how to organize a walking school bus in your neighborhood or community, visit walkingschoolbus.org.

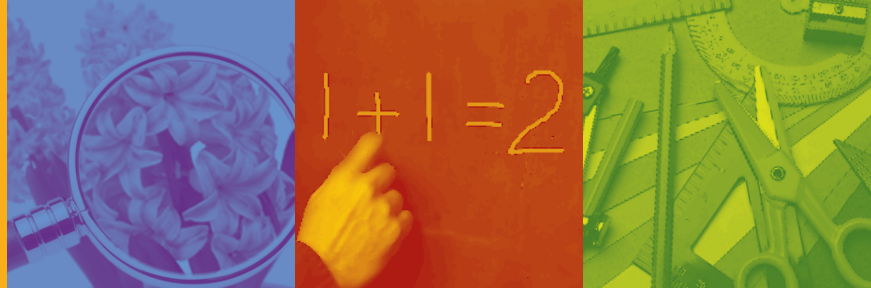
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Through KidsWalk-
to-School, the CDC
provides tools for
implementing an
initiative in your
community.
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Fairhope, Alabama elementary students and volunteers take part in a walk to school event. Photo courtesy of iwalktoschool.org.

The Benefits

There are plenty of reasons to promote walking and biking to school. The most compelling may be the desire to encourage kids to be more active. But there are other benefits to these programs. Walking and biking to school reduces traffic congestion and gas emissions, and, long-term, it can help address the high cost of school busing that's stretching school budgets. Just as importantly, it strengthens communities by bringing parents, children, and community leaders together. Studies have shown that walkable communities command higher property values. And, by participating in Walk to School Day, communities learn about the importance of improving the infrastructure that enables safer walking and biking—passable sidewalks, safe crosswalks, traffic signals equipped with countdown devices, and, for schools, crossing guards and bike racks. Walk to School Day builds awareness for walking or biking every day. See for yourself. Before launching any kind of walk-to-school program or event, test the route to your neighborhood school. By walking the school routes, you'll learn more not only about how to make walking to school easier and safer, but also about how to make your overall community more pedestrian- and bike-friendly.



NAR Tools

Smart Growth Action Grant¹

NAR's Smart Growth Action Grant program is available to support REALTOR® association efforts to implement programs and activities that position REALTORS® as leaders in improving their communities by advancing Smart Growth principles. REALTOR® associations can apply for a Smart Growth grant to help them plan, develop, and implement a walk or bike to school day event or program.

Web Resources

International Walk to School Day²

Get all the basics on how to participate in International Walk to School Day and register your event online. An interactive map is available at the site so you can locate participating schools in your area. A **walkability checklist** is also available on the website.³

Walking School Bus⁴

Guidance on how to organize a walking school bus in your community, with resources and a downloadable PDF that provides guidance.

A Video of the Walking School Bus⁵

Watch this video to see how a walking school bus works.

KidsWalk-to-School⁶

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides a wealth of information on how to organize, promote, and publicize a Kids-Walk-to-School program in your community.

¹ www.realtoractioncenter.com/for-associations/smartgrowth/smart-growth-action-grants.html

² www.walktoschool.org/

³ www.walktoschool.org/buildevent/checklists.cfm

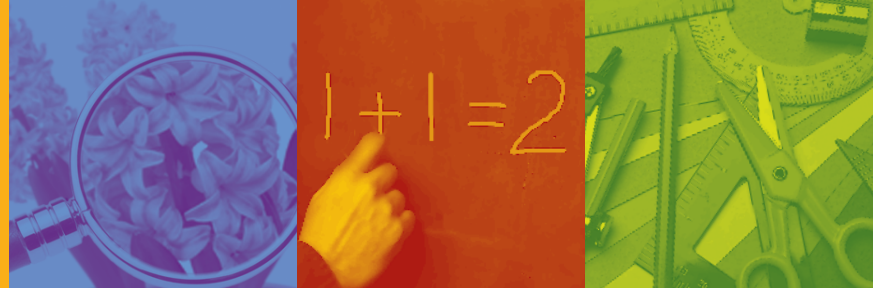
⁴ www.walkingschoolbus.org/

⁵ albany.patch.com/articles/video-take-the-walking-school-bus-wednesday-for-health-environment#video-2118008

⁶ www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/resources.htm



See related articles in *Issues in Public Education*, "School Building and Siting" and "Walkability and Safe Routes to School."

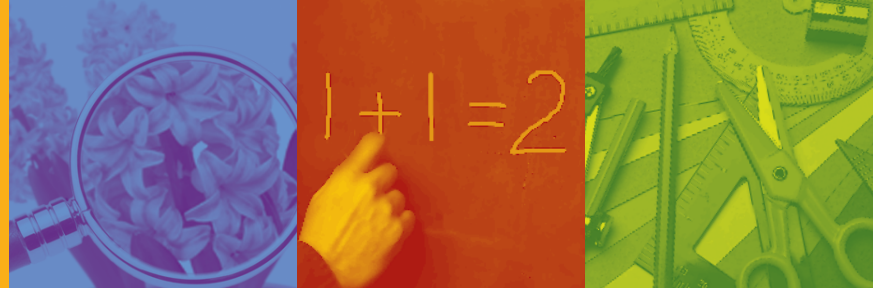


Support Innovative Projects That Improve Schools

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REALTOR®
associations provide
much-needed
financial support
to the schools
and students in
their communities
through a variety
of innovative
programs—all
funded largely
through association
fundraisers and
REALTOR® donations.
.....

In 2010, the public education committee of the MetroTex Association of REALTORS®—which has a long history of supporting area schools—established a grant program to fund special projects at area public elementary, middle, and high schools and invited local student organizations to take the initiative and apply. In the program’s first year, the committee selected three winning proposals from more than 20 applications. Students at the Caesar Chavez Elementary School in inner-city Dallas proposed the creation of a powerhouse of a chess club. The student council at the Gene Pike Middle School in the Dallas suburbs wanted to get students involved in a program to stop bullying. And in the rural community of Scurry, Texas, Scurry-Rosser High School’s National Honor Society felt strongly that the student body needed a place to gather, study, and meet outdoors. Each of these three schools received a \$3,000 grant. “The committee looked for projects that had the greatest potential impact for the most students and would lead to a positive environment for the whole school. And they felt it was important that a student organization be the driver behind the project,” says Bill Head, the association’s director of communications. In the coming years, the MetroTex Association of REALTORS® hopes to expand the program, which is funded by association fundraising events. “When people are looking at neighborhoods, communities, and towns, schools are very important,” says Bill Head. “For some families, it’s number one on the list. So it’s important that REALTORS® are giving back to the schools and communities as a whole.”

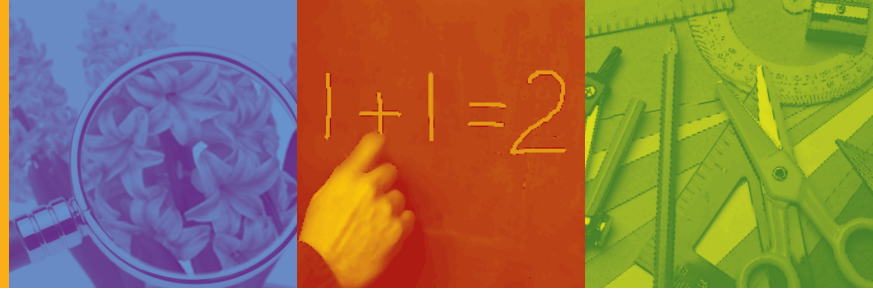
In 1989, the Dayton Area Board of REALTORS® (DABR) and Ruskin Elementary School in Dayton, Ohio, were paired as partners in education. Since then, the DABR Foundation has provided nearly \$350,000 in support to the K–8 school, much of it raised through the foundation’s annual event, usually a golf outing. Through the partnership, every Ruskin teacher has a \$150 “incentives and supplies” reimbursement opportunity, and DABR has partnered with Books & Company to provide another \$150 per teacher for books. The association also fields special requests to cover a range of costs from graphic calculators for an



Palo Duro High School Students at a D-FORCE lunch with Amarillo Association of REALTORS®.

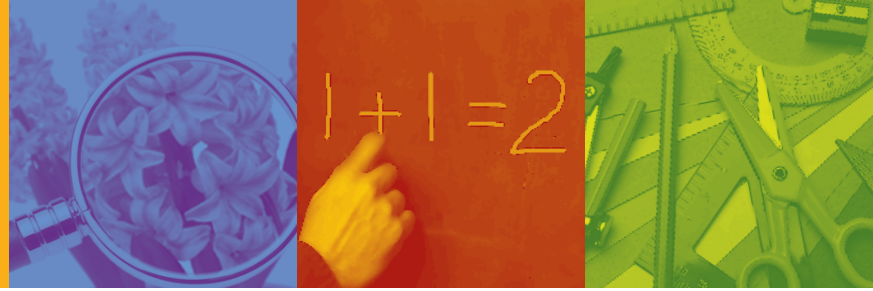
entire class to repairing musical instruments to graduation gowns and track and field T-shirts. But DABR’s commitment extends beyond funding. “Members of the Dayton Area Board of REALTORS® take their commitment to Ruskin seriously,” says Nicholas Popadyn, the association’s director of professional development. They give of their time and talents by tutoring and reading, judging science fairs and speech contests, and by participating in holiday activities, teacher appreciation lunches, school uniform clothing drives, and an end-of-the-year carnival. Some real estate offices have even adopted classrooms.

Every school has different needs. Among the more than 1,800 students at the Palo Duro High School in Amarillo, Texas, 85 percent are economically disadvantaged and 75 percent are minority students. The school has put a positive behavior program in place to reinforce the idea that Palo Duro “Dons” are Focused, Organized, Respectful and Consistent Every day—dubbed the D-FORCE project. The Amarillo Association of REALTORS® contributes \$500 a month during the academic year to help fund the program and provides lunch



Volunteers from the Jefferson City Area Board of REALTORS® with the school supplies they purchased for local schools.

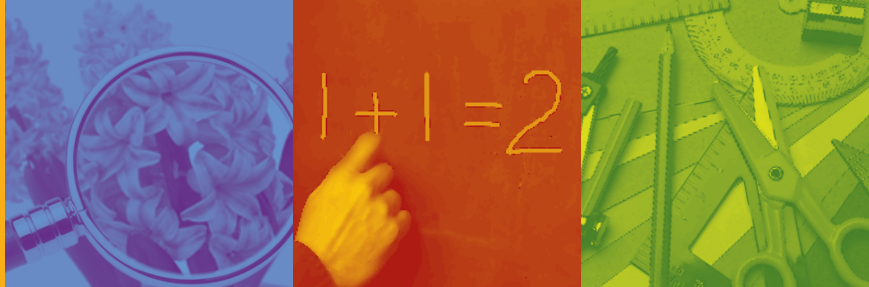
every six weeks for students who meet certain program milestones—including no disciplinary referral or unexcused absences—and achieving a grade point average based on criteria set by the school. Hundreds of students attend the lunches. “One of the best parts is seeing the REALTORS® and students engaging in conversation,” says Denise Price, RCE. “The Palo Duro staff is amazed at how well the REALTORS® and students converse with one another.” At the end of the school year, the association hosts a carnival. Member companies sponsor booths—for a basketball throw, face painting, karaoke, and a dunking booth where teachers, school staff, and even the Palo Duro principal have been dunked. Candy, popcorn, and hamburgers are served up. It’s a real community event, bringing the students together in support of the D-FORCE project and sending a powerful message: the community cares about its students.



Here are some other REALTOR® associations that provide funding and support for innovative school projects:

.....
Every school—and
school district—has
different needs.
.....

- The Jefferson City Area Board of REALTORS® in Jefferson City, Missouri, has established a nonprofit corporation that works with business partners to purchase school supplies and help students in need with school-related expenses.
- The Montrose Association of REALTORS® in Montrose, Colorado, has a grant fund serving two local elementary schools that provides additional educational programs for students.
- The REALTOR® Association of Prince William in Prince William, Virginia, organizes an annual back-to-school shopping project.
- The Reno/Sparks Association of REALTORS® in Reno/Sparks, Nevada, organizes an annual school supply drive.
- In 2010 and 2011, the La Crosse Area REALTORS® Association in La Crosse, Wisconsin, sponsored a Fair Housing Poster Competition at a local international school in celebration of Fair Housing Month.
- In 2008, the Greater Louisville Association of REALTORS® in Louisville, Kentucky sponsored an art contest with area elementary schools to recognize the service of American veterans.
- The Pickens County Board of REALTORS® in Atlanta, Georgia, sponsors an annual school supply drive and a scholarship program.



Web Resources

Community Matters¹

Information on the Safe School Ambassadors program.

How to Build School Partnerships²

Valuable insights on how to create school-community partnerships from Learning Point, an educational consulting firm.

National Network of Partnership Schools³

This network at Johns Hopkins University facilitates community-school partnerships at the school, district, and state level and with organizations and universities, and provides research and tips on effective partnerships. The network's guidebook *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* is available for sale on the website.

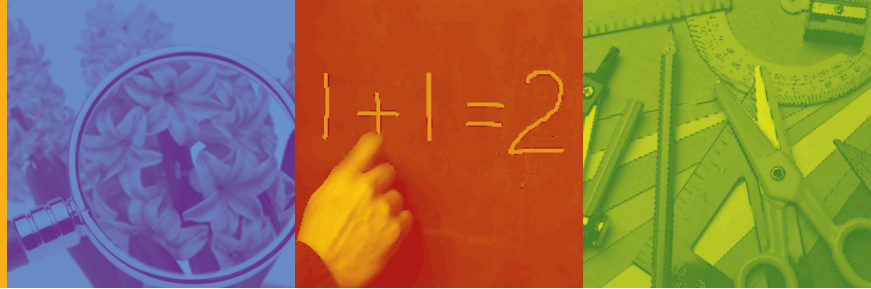
¹ www.community-matters.org/safe-school-ambassadors/

² www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa400.htm

³ www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, "Cultural Issues: The Achievement Gap."

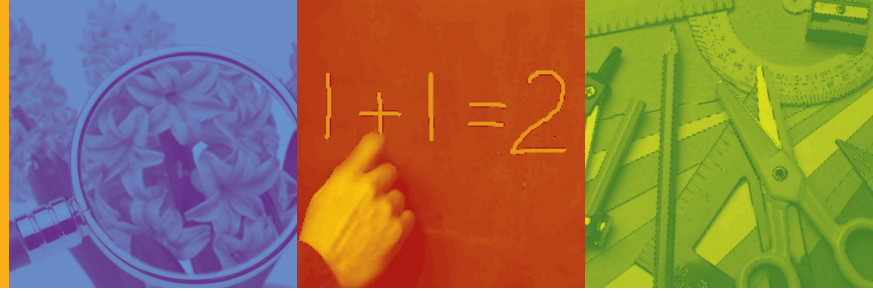


Volunteer in Schools— and for Schools

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REALTORS® can
play an integral role
in improving the
nation's education
system—by donating
their time to
community-based
and school-centered
efforts.
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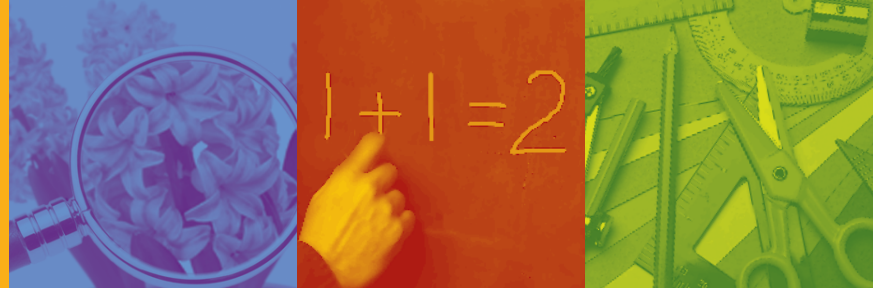
The Washoe County School District, which serves Reno/Sparks and the surrounding area in Nevada, faces some tough challenges—including the threat of budget cuts during the 2011 legislative session and low graduation rates and proficiency levels in K–12 schools. The district has a new superintendent, Dr. Heath E. Morrison, with a bold strategy for reforming the schools, and community leaders want to get behind him. Several members of the Reno/Sparks Association of REALTORS® (RSAR) are playing an instrumental role in that effort by volunteering their time—and substantial energy—in support of education reform. REALTORS® Daryl Drake and Kris Layman, both members of the RSAR legislative committee, are also members of the Council for Excellence in Education (CEE), a group of business leaders from throughout the community that shares a commitment to improving K–12 education. Says Drake, who played a central role in establishing CEE and developing a Community Compact in support of its efforts, “The program is designed to elevate awareness of the importance of K–12 education throughout our region and to promote the improvement of graduation and proficiency rates.” RSAR leadership is expected to approve the compact—continuing its longstanding support of local public schools.

REALTORS® have a significant role to play. “From the time our new superintendent, Dr. Morrison, arrived, he could not stress enough the vital role that the real estate community plays with regard to the schools,” says Kris Layman, past president of RSAR. “When we have to list and sell a home to a family, that school is really part of the home. Dr. Morrison has taken us on as a champion of that cause. He knows he has some schools that are hard to sell, and he’s doing everything in his power to improve the schools.” Through their involvement, Drake and Layman bring the REALTOR® perspective to the process and help engage the broader community—opening the way for better schools. “This is a monumental task that we’re taking on,” says Layman. “I believe that Daryl and the rest of us are going to be successful in changing the perception of our community and our schools and meeting the goals that the superintendent has put forward.”



Linda Mattson and Myra Smallwood of the Royal Gorge Association of REALTORS® with Canon City High School students at Senior Fun Fest.

Jim Johnson, a REALTOR® specializing in property management in Spring, Texas, has been volunteering all his life. As the parent of two special-needs children, Johnson was heavily involved in the Special Olympics program. In 1987, he helped create a district-sponsored booster club to provide support for Special Olympics teams. Now his granddaughter attends Ehrhardt Elementary School, with nearly 600 students and a very active community presence. He has taken on numerous volunteer roles at Ehrhardt, but perhaps the most ambitious is his current position as coordinator for the school's 256 volunteers—a job that has involved building the school's volunteer, teacher, and parent teacher organization databases, as well as setting up three Yahoo-based user groups to facilitate better communication. He coordinates volunteers for activities ranging from the school's rummage sale and school fun nights to library and administrative office support. In an effort to learn the job, Johnson took it upon himself to visit various district offices and find out how others address the challenges inherent in the position. He's become a recognized force in the school community. "I'm on

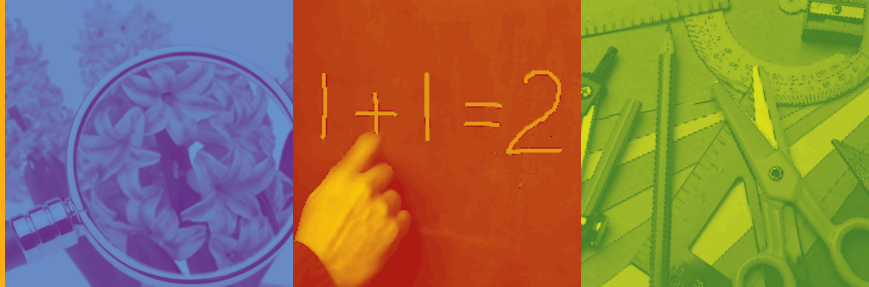


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REALTORS®
around the country
volunteer their time
at schools—and
for schools.
.....

a first name basis with the district superintendent and the principal. I attend the monthly VIP luncheons where they cover a wide range of subjects, and I learn a lot,” says Johnson. “The neat thing about being a REALTOR® is that when the district recently changed the elementary school, they asked me to be part of the committee. I was able to give my insight from a REALTOR’S® viewpoint.” Johnson is in a position to make a real difference in the school and the community. And there’s an added benefit—“I love going over to the school because I get more hugs than I can stand,” he says.

Here are some of the REALTORS® and association leadership around the country who volunteer their time at schools—and for schools. They help raise money for local schools, organize projects in support of local schools, and volunteer at the school level or through community-based organizations that support schools.

- Jana Miracle, Sandals Realty, Sarasota, Florida, is an active member of the parent teacher student organization. She participates in major fundraising events and student activities, and chaperones student field trips at her daughter’s middle school.
- Kelly Nahas, Keller Williams, Boise, Idaho, organized a project with other groups in her community to provide new shirts to students who were unable to afford to purchase shirts for school.
- Members of the Royal Gorge Association of REALTORS® in Canon City, Colorado, volunteer at two area high schools during Fun Fest, which incorporate games, fellowship, and fun for graduating seniors the night before graduation.
- Kay Watson of K. Watson Properties–Metro Brokers, Centennial, Colorado, past president of the Colorado Association of REALTORS®, lends her support to the Littleton Public Schools Foundation, which has provided wireless capabilities and computer labs in every area school and made it possible for a local elementary school to be a music and art magnet school.
- Libby Rentz, New York State Association of REALTORS®, vice president of finance and chief of staff, serves on her local school’s parent school association, development committee, technology committee, and endowment subcommittee, and manages the school’s website.



NAR Tools

NAR Good Neighbor Awards¹

This program recognizes REALTORS® who are improving the lives of others through volunteer work. Each year, five winners are selected to receive \$10,000 grants for their charities as well as national publicity to help their causes.

Web Resources

Project Appleseed²

This national campaign promotes parental and community involvement in public schools and spearheads three annual events including Public School Volunteer Week to help promote better schools and mobilize parents and other volunteers.

VolunteerMatch.org³

To find public schools in your area actively seeking volunteers, follow this link to the searchable database at VolunteerMatch.org. Then enter your town or city and state for location and the words “public school” in the keywords box.

How to Volunteer⁴

Guidance on “How to Volunteer at a Public School.”

¹ www.realtor.org/rmogoodneighbors/2008/goodneighborhomepage

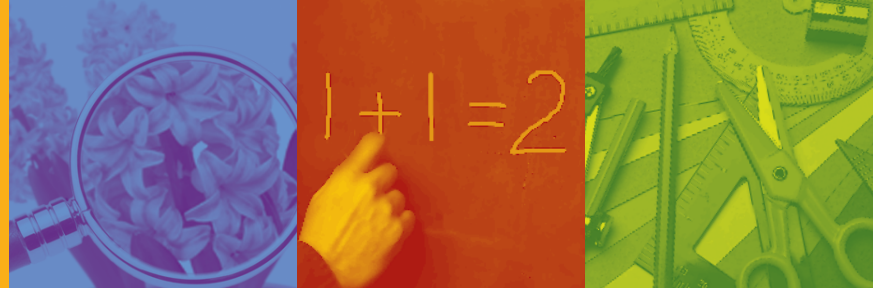
² www.projectappleseed.org/

³ www.volunteermatch.org/search

⁴ www.ehow.com/how_2183529_volunteer-public-school.html



See related article in *Issues in Public Education*, “Cultural Issues: The Achievement Gap.”

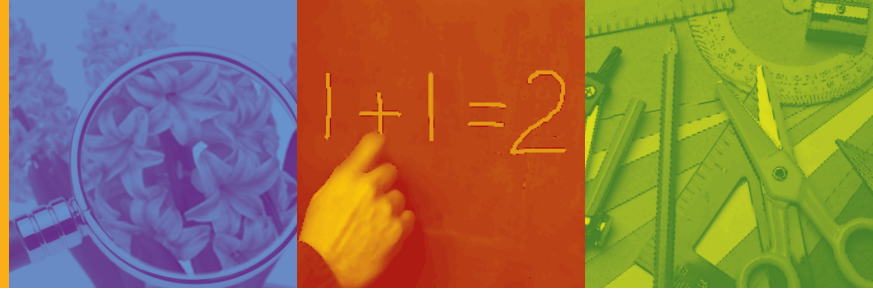


Advocate for a Local School Issue

In 2010, the Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS® (CTAR) in South Carolina was faced with a difficult decision. Should they support tax increases to fund infrastructure improvements to local schools? And which of two proposals should they support? The first called for a one-cent sales tax over six years. The second—approved by the school district—called for an increase in property taxes. Before taking a position, CTAR decided to find out more about public sentiment on the issue. They contacted the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) for assistance in commissioning a poll to gauge public support for both proposals. The results were clear: the public opposed a property tax increase and supported the sales tax proposal. CTAR then stepped forward to lead a successful campaign to support the six-year, one-penny sales increase that would generate an estimated \$450 million for infrastructure improvements. The money would go toward the construction of 14 new schools, four school renovations, three land acquisitions for school development, seismic evaluations for six school building, design plans for one school, and improvement of athletic facilities at existing schools. “Thanks to polling services provided by NAR, we won our referendum battle against a property tax increase,” says Ryan Castle, government affairs director for CTAR.

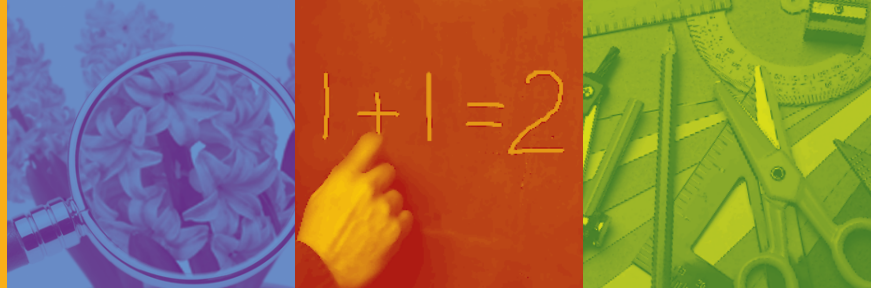
School districts around the country face issues related to how to improve schools while minimizing the tax impact on area citizens. And REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations are often compelled to take a stand. “Good schools unify and define communities,” says Philip Matricardi, former vice president for governmental and public affairs at the Seattle-King County Association of REALTORS® (SKCAR) in Washington State. In 2005, two funding measures for the Auburn School District were proposed—one to relieve overcrowding in elementary schools districtwide, another to provide funding for technology improvements and upgrades. Neither measure—a bond and a replacement levy—meant raising property taxes. SKCAR threw its support behind both ballot propositions and encouraged its membership to get involved and to get out the vote. But before

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Through advocacy,
REALTOR®
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issues related to
education funding.
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doing so, Matricardi did his homework, researching levels of achievement in the schools and the district's record in terms of managing school construction and financing projects.

Through advocacy, REALTOR® associations can serve as strong voices that help inspire improvements in public schools. For example, the Sarasota Association of REALTORS® (SAR) has supported a series of ballot initiatives for school financing that were critical for their local schools. Because of past RPAC contributions, SAR was able to tap into RPAC funding to provide \$10,000 to a committee formed in support of a local referendum. In Nevada, the Washoe County School District trustees and superintendent have pushed forward significant reform measures to target student performance, and the Reno/Sparks Association of REALTORS® has been actively engaged in supporting both reform measures and trustees seeking reelection. REALTORS® can also play a role. Jim Johnson of Houston, Texas, is not only actively involved in his granddaughter's local elementary school but also has worked on a variety of projects and issues at the district level. For example, he served on a committee to adjust elementary school attendance boundaries in order to accommodate the 2011 opening of a new elementary school. NAR can provide significant support on advocacy issues—to help REALTORS® make a difference in their local communities.



NAR Tools

The NAR REALTOR® Party Hub¹

The “Hub” is a comprehensive, web-based, grassroots communication system for online member outreach, engagement, and mobilization. Associations can use it to send local Calls for Action to get members to contact a local or state official or state representative to support a school issue. The system includes information about a member’s voting history, party affiliation, and voter-registration status.

NAR’s Campaign Services Program²

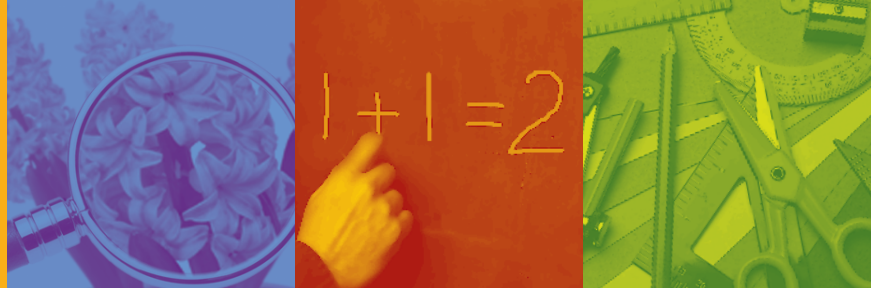
This program makes it possible for a state or local REALTOR® association to obtain useful demographic information from voter records, such as vote history, age, and homeowner status. Outside consulting services are also available to associations who require assistance with identifying voter groups they want to target for communications to advocate for an issue—such as supporting school infrastructure improvements or advancing reform measures in a local school district.

NAR’s Issues Mobilization Program³

State and local REALTOR® associations can use this program to organize and manage effective issue campaigns that benefit and promote REALTOR® public policy. It’s designed to provide requesting REALTOR® associations with financial, technical, and/or educational assistance to help advance their issue campaigns. For example, the program would pay for such activities as conducting a public opinion poll on a school siting issue or targeting public communications to help pass a school ballot measure supported by the REALTORS®.

NAR’s Land Use Initiative⁴

If your state or local REALTOR® association needs an analysis of pending local land-use regulations and ordinances, use this free-of-charge service. It will help you craft your association’s response to a proposed local regulation or ordinance (for example, a school impact fee) that may affect area schools and real estate transactions—and help you respond in a way that best supports your members.



NAR's Smart Growth Grant⁵

This grant provides seed funding to REALTOR® associations to initiate efforts to engage in local land use issues, including school siting and construction, with other stakeholders and elected officials.

¹ www.realtoractioncenter.com/for-associations/hub/

² www.realtoractioncenter.com/campaignservices

³ www.realtoractioncenter.com/issuesmob

⁴ www.realtoractioncenter.com/landuse

⁵ www.realtor.org/government_affairs/smart_growth/grants



REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations advocate for a broad range of school-related issues. See the articles in *Issues in Public Education*, including “How Schools Are Funded.”

APPENDIX





Steering, Schools, and Equal Professional Service

The REALTORS® Code of Ethics commits members of the REALTOR® organization to providing equal professional service without discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender (sex), sexual orientation, disability (handicap), familial status, or national origin. That commitment reflects the same principles embodied in the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits such discrimination in housing-related transactions.

What is Steering?

“Steering” under the Fair Housing Act is the process of influencing a buyer’s choice of communities based upon the buyer’s race, color, religion, gender, disability, familial status, or national origin. Steering on the basis of any of the characteristics defined under the Fair Housing Act is not only unethical, it’s illegal because it limits the housing opportunities available to that buyer. Steering occurs when an agent limits the housing options available to a buyer by directing prospective homebuyers interested in equivalent properties to different neighborhoods or communities or even different parts of the same development according to the buyer’s race or other characteristics protected under the Fair Housing Act. One way such “directing” can occur is through comments by an agent, either positive or negative, about a community. For example, if an agent limits or does not provide housing options to a buyer in a community because of the community’s racial composition, that agent may effectively be making housing unavailable. Or if an agent expresses his or her own positive or negative views about certain communities or schools, the purpose of which is to direct a buyer either towards or away from a community, then that agent may be stating a housing preference based on race or familial status or religion. These would be violations of the Fair Housing Act and of the REALTORS® Code of Ethics.

Nothing in the Fair Housing Act limits buyers’ choices of where they want to live. On the contrary, the Fair Housing Act protects the buyer’s ability to choose housing and prohibits certain actions by sellers, real estate agents, and others who might otherwise limit that choice. This raises the question of what an agent can



do to accommodate a buyer's preferences. Nowhere is this more of an issue than when the question of schools comes up during the homebuyer search.

Discussions about schools can raise questions about steering if there is a correlation between the quality of the schools and neighborhood racial composition—or if characterizations such as “a school with low test scores” or “a community with declining schools” become code words for racial or other differences in the community. Similarly, making unspoken distinctions by promoting a school in one district while keeping silent about the quality of another school can have the same effect. These become fair housing issues.

What is equal professional service?

The National Association of REALTORS® created the Equal Professional Service Model to help real estate agents adopt practices that enable them to anticipate and to address housing search issues fairly and equitably. Consistency is the cornerstone of this model. It involves using systematic procedures to help ensure that agents and real estate firms are providing consistent service to all their customers. The keys to the model are offering objective information, providing a variety of choices, and letting the customers set the limits of their housing search. Schools offer an excellent example of the Equal Professional Service Model at work. “I often hear REALTORS® say ‘I’m not allowed to talk about schools,’” says Fred Underwood, director of diversity for the National Association of REALTORS®. “In fact, schools play an important role in a homebuyer’s decision. And it’s important for REALTORS® to understand how to address their questions.” Based on the Equal Professional Service Model, use the following approaches.

- **Let objective information, not subjective information, be the guide.** When customers ask, “How are the schools?” The best thing a REALTOR® can do is guide them to third-party information, so they can make a decision on their own. “It’s okay to talk about schools, but don’t make the judgment call yourself,” says Underwood. “Give homebuyers the resources they need to make the decision for themselves. Remember, it’s not about your kids. It’s about their kids. Every child has different needs, and every family has different preferences.” Objective information is easy to document and quantify and is widely available,



given the widespread use of the Internet. Some states even have websites that compare schools. “Keep a list of school or community-based websites that offer information about schools so you’re prepared to provide those web addresses to your customers,” says Underwood. “Better still, build relationships with local schools, so you know where to direct people’s inquiries. Be equipped to provide contact information at schools or make appointments with the schools—so your customers can go visit the school and find out for themselves.”

A buyer who wants a home in the Abraham Lincoln school district is providing an objective criterion for a home search. An agent can clearly identify and find housing in that school district. On the other hand, a buyer wanting a home in a “good school district” is unclear about what he or she wants. Is it the school with the best football team, the most AP students, the newest facility, or something else? Agents attempting to choose homes based on this kind of request substitute their own judgment for the buyer’s regarding what makes a school good.

- **Offer a variety of choices.** This is a good way to make sure you are not limiting choices beyond what the buyer has asked for. While schools are an important criterion for many home seekers, they are not the only criterion. For example, a buyer who wants a house in the Abraham Lincoln district also has a price range, size, style, and other factors in mind. Would you offer a four-bedroom house to a buyer who is looking for three bedrooms? How about a two-bedroom with room to expand? Offering housing that otherwise meets the buyer’s needs but is outside the Abraham Lincoln school district is a way to expand choices. And by offering choices in a systematic way, real estate agents can respond consistently to homebuyers’ needs.
- **Let the customer set the limits—and make his or her own choices.** By providing objective answers and resources and offering a variety of choices, the agent can take direction from the choices buyers make. That enables an agent to help buyers narrow the search to find the houses they want to buy. Take the example of the customers looking for a home in the Abraham Lincoln school district. If an agent offers them options outside the district but they decide not to pursue that option, their decision allows the agent to confidently move forward with finding homes only in that school district.

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If, however, the buyer chooses to pursue a house outside the Abraham Lincoln district and raises questions about the schools, the way an agent responds to comments or questions such as “I heard this area has bad schools” or “Where do you send your children to school?” can mean the difference between steering and providing equal professional service. A truthful response is not necessarily a violation of the law, but the buyer could perceive such a response, even if truthful, as a way of limiting choices or as discrimination. Instead ask, “What makes a school good for you?” and then suggest a third-party source such as a school district website. That allows the agent to refocus the search on objective information available to the agent.

In any case, an agent should keep good records documenting the buyer’s initial request, the options provided outside the district, and the subsequent decision to stay within the district.

Finally, how does a REALTOR® deal with stark differences in school quality? —By providing access to objective information. “There’s nothing wrong with a REALTOR® providing a list of all the school or community websites or setting up school visits to help buyers get the information they need to make informed decisions,” says Underwood. “In fact, that’s a valuable service, particularly for out-of-towners.” In the end, providing access to objective information helps buyers make their own decisions about schools, communities, and the homes they choose.



NAR Official Policy on Public Education

REALTORS® recognize the impact that quality education makes in every aspect of society. The future of business and industry, the real estate market and homeownership, our communities, and our nation depends on well-educated citizens and a well-educated workforce. To that end, we support programs and policies that promote quality education by efficiently financing capital construction, maintenance, and operations of our public school systems. We believe that public education is a state and local issue.

Community, family, and parental involvement in schools support such quality education. Thus we encourage all members of the REALTOR® family to actively involve themselves with local education issues and institutions, both individually and within their REALTOR® organizations.

We further encourage state legislatures, local government, school systems and private enterprise to explore all avenues that will increase efficiency through better allocation of resources to the classroom by developing creative solutions, and promoting community and corporate involvement, rather than looking predominantly to the overburdened taxpayer.



Glossary of Terms

Accountability: Under No Child Left Behind, each state is required to set academic standards for what every child should know and learn. Student academic achievement is then measured for every child, every year. The results of these annual tests must be reported to the public.

Achievement Gap: The difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on standardized tests compared to their peers. Under No Child Left Behind, test results must be sorted into groups of students: those who are economically disadvantaged, are from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for their child's school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing.

Adequacy: An approach to school funding that begins with the premise that the amount of funding schools receive should be based on some estimate of the cost of achieving the state's educational goals. This approach attempts to answer two questions: How much money would be enough to achieve those goals, and where would it be best spent?

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): An individual state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards under No Child Left

Behind. Adequate Yearly Progress is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year.

Alternative Schools: This term broadly refers to public schools that are set up by states or school districts to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Alternative schools offer students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems an opportunity to achieve in a different setting. While there are many different kinds of alternative schools, they are generally characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller teacher-student ratios, and modified curricula.

At Risk Students: Students with socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty or teen pregnancy, which may place them at a disadvantage in achieving academic, social, or career goals. Such students are deemed at risk of failing, dropping out, or "falling through the cracks" at school.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA): Commonly referred to as the Stimulus Package or the Recovery Act, this bill was enacted by the 111th U.S. Congress to create jobs and to promote investment and consumer spending during the recession of the late 2000s.

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Brown v. Board of Education (1954): Landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that declared unconstitutional any state law that established separate public schools for black and white students.

Charter Schools: Charter schools are independent public schools designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs, and others. They are sponsored by designated local or state educational organizations, which monitor their quality and effectiveness but allow them to operate outside the traditional system of public schools.

Choice: The idea of applying free-market principles to the challenges facing public education by allowing parents to choose where to send their children to school. Parents and others who support school choice have spawned the charter school, school voucher, and other school reform movements.

Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS): Seeking to improve student performance and the entire educational experience by building the best possible schools, CHPS has developed technical resources for schools, districts, and practitioners on the design, construction, maintenance, and operations of high performance schools.

Community-Based Schools: Schools that engage the whole child and his or her family with active after-school recreation and learning activities, crisis assistance, medical and mental health services, student service learning, and programs for parents.

Community-Centered Schools: Schools that are centrally located within communities and serve as anchors that help to define and sustain neighborhoods. The recognition of the importance of community-centered schools has spawned the movement to retain existing schools or to build new ones within existing neighborhoods.

Council of Education Facility Planners International (CEFPI): An Arizona-based professional association that issues guidance on school construction.

Debt-to-Income Ratio (DTI): Percentage of a consumer's monthly gross income that goes toward paying debts. There are two major kinds of DTI: front-end ratio, which indicates the percentage of income that goes toward housing costs, and back-end ratio, which indicates the percentage of income that goes toward paying all recurring debt payments, including those covered by front-end ratio DTI.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): ESEA, which was first enacted in 1965, is the principal federal law affecting K–12 education. No Child Left Behind is the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA.

Employer-Assisted Housing: A term that describes any of a number of ways that employers help workers afford housing in the communities in which they work. Private employer funds—often supplemented by public and nonprofit funds—help to improve workforce retention, recruitment, and morale. By assisting employees in the process of buying or renting homes close to work or transit, employers

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help reduce long commutes that contribute to traffic congestion, dependence on oil, air pollution, time away from family, and employee stress and fatigue.

Equity: The concept that students have a right to equal access to educational opportunities and thereby to life opportunities. During the 1970s and 1980s, many state courts found great disparities in base per pupil spending between high property wealth and low property wealth districts. Those courts mandated that funding disparities be eradicated. In placing districts on a level playing field, the courts often invoked equal protection clauses in state constitutions.

Green School: A school built according to sustainable building practices and incorporating environmentally friendly features in order to reduce the school's ecological footprint, make the school environment healthier, and get the entire community thinking about solutions to the ecological problems we face as a nation.

Hazard Busing: This term describes the necessity of using school buses to transport children short distances from home to school because of unsafe road crossings and/or lack of sidewalks.

High-Performance Schools: High performance schools are facilities that improve the learning environment while saving energy, resources, and money. The term refers to the physical facility—the school building and its grounds—and reflects the belief that well-designed facilities can enhance

academic performance and make education a more enjoyable and rewarding experience. The Collaborative for High Performance Schools has developed a best-practices manual to help schools, districts, and practitioners achieve high performance design, construction, and operation.

High-Poverty/Low-Poverty Schools: High-poverty schools are those in which more than 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches, while schools in which 25 percent or fewer students receive free and reduced-price lunch are referred to as low-poverty schools.

Highly Qualified Teacher: According to No Child Left Behind, a teacher who has obtained full state teacher certification or has passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state; holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches.

Independent School: A private or nonprofit school, funded by tuition and private donations and grants, that is not part of a school system. An independent school is governed by a board of trustees (instead of by the state board of education) and is accredited by an approved state or regional association. While an independent school may be either religious or nonreligious, it must be nondiscriminatory.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A landmark 1975 federal law, originally known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In

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exchange for federal money, schools must guarantee that all children with disabilities receive a “free, appropriate public education.” Different portions of the law cover children from birth to age 21. The law has been amended several times but originally addressed children with disabilities who were kept out of the public schools and taught either at home or institutions.

LEED Certification: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—LEED—is a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings. The Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) was established in January 2008 with the support of the U.S. Green Building Council and manages the LEED building certification and the professional accreditation processes. The U.S. Green Building Council developed the LEED rating system and offers LEED-based education programs, while the GBCI independently administers the LEED professional accreditation program.

Let’s Move!: An initiative launched in 2010 by First Lady Michelle Obama to address the epidemic of childhood obesity.

Magnet School: District-operated government schools designed to attract a diverse student body from a variety of attendance areas. Most magnet schools are designed around a specific theme or method of instruction and have a select student population and teaching staff.

Minimum-Acreage Standards: State-mandated or -suggested minimum acreages for public school construction. Requiring large lots—usually unnecessarily—often forces the building of public schools outside existing towns or developed neighborhoods and prevents schools from serving as the centers of community that they formerly were. Locating schools outside established communities increases costs by requiring transportation by car or bus as well as the construction of infrastructure such as roads, water lines, and sewer lines.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): An independent benchmark, NAEP is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, the National Center for Education Statistics has conducted NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts.

New Urbanism Movement: Similar to the Smart Growth movement, New Urbanism encourages planning and design principles that promote walkability and mixed-use development.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): An act signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, No Child Left Behind was designed to improve the educational opportunities of every American child through greater accountability for results, expanded local control and flexibility, and new options for parents. NCLB includes minimum targets (“benchmarks”) that are set higher over time and

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employs the concept of “failing” schools—those that consistently fail to hit their benchmark targets for several years in a row. After the sixth year of failure a school is slated to be restructured. Options may include closing the school, converting the school to a charter school, hiring a private company to run the school, or asking the state office of education to directly run the school.

National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP):

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit, membership organization that provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to save America’s diverse historic places and revitalize communities.

Percentage Rule: Or two-thirds rule. A widely used—but increasingly discredited—standard for determining whether to renovate an existing school or to build a new one, the rule states that if the cost to renovate a school exceeds 60 percent of the cost of replacing it, the best option is to build a new school.

Reading First: A federal grant program through which states and districts receive support to apply scientifically based reading research—and the instructional and assessment tools consistent with this research—to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade.

Safe Routes To School: Originally a California initiative (SR2S) passed in 1999 that mandated infrastructure and safety improvements to

accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, SR2S spawned programs in other states. The 2005 passage of federal legislation authorizing the national Safe Routes to School program resulted in the establishment of the National Center for Safe Routes to School, a federally funded initiative that reaches into all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

School of the Future Design Competition: The School of the Future Design Competition encourages middle school students throughout the country to work in teams to design a school that will be a better learning environment, more energy efficient, more friendly to the natural environment, and integral to the surrounding community. The National Association of REALTORS®, in partnership with the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI), sponsors the competition.

Smart Growth Movement: An urban planning and transportation theory that concentrates growth in urban centers in order to avoid sprawl; advocates land use that is compact, public-transit oriented, walkable, and biker-friendly; and that has community-centered schools, mixed-use development, and a broad selection of housing choices.

Special Education: Programs designed to serve children with mental and physical disabilities. Such children are entitled to individualized education plans that spell out the services needed to reach their educational goals, ranging from speech therapy to math tutoring. Traditionally, special education has

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taken place in separate classrooms. Increasingly, the services may also be offered in regular schools and classrooms.

Sprawl Schools: Large educational facilities—incorporating large parking lots, multiple buildings, and outsized sports fields—often located far from town or city centers and necessitating the transportation of students by bus or automobile.

Standardized Test: A test administered and scored in a consistent, or standardized, manner. Standardized tests are designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent, so that they are useful for comparative purposes.

Standards-Based Reform: A recent shift in education policy and school reform toward reaching consensus on and establishing standards for what students need to know and to be able to do at each grade or developmental level.

Sustainability: The most popular definition of sustainability can be traced to a 1987 United Nations conference that defined sustainable developments as those that “meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

Title I: The first section of No Child Left Behind, Title I refers to programs aimed at America’s most disadvantaged students. Title I Part A provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of

children in high-poverty schools to enable those children to meet challenging state academic content and performance standards.

Title IX: Title XV of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a U.S. law, enacted on June 23, 1972, that amended Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 2002 it was renamed the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, in honor of its principal author Congresswoman Mink, but is most commonly known simply as Title IX. The law states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...” —20 United States Code Section 1681

Underperforming Students: Students who—for any number of reasons, which may include lack of academic resources, poor schools, poverty, lack of health care—chronically perform below their academic level.

Underserved Students: Underserved students are defined as students who do not receive equitable academic resources when compared to other students. Typically these groups of students include low-income and racial or ethnic minorities as well as others.

Vouchers: A document or chit, usually issued by the state, that can be used by parents to pay tuition at an out-of-district public school, a private school,

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and/or a religious school. The term is also used more broadly to describe school-choice proposals in which states help pay tuition for children attending private or religious schools.

Walk Score: At walkscore.com, “Walk Score” is a number between 0 and 100 that measures the walkability of any address. A score between 90 and 100 means that “daily errands do not require a car”; a score of 70 to 89 means that the majority of daily errands can be done by walking; 50 to 69 indicates that “some amenities” are within walking distance; a 25 to 49 score indicates that “few amenities” are within walking distance; and the lowest scores—0 to 24—mean that almost all errands require a car.

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