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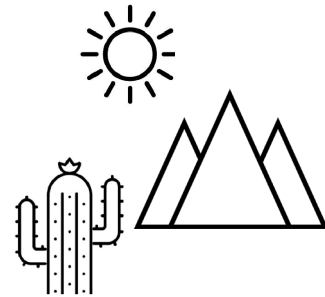
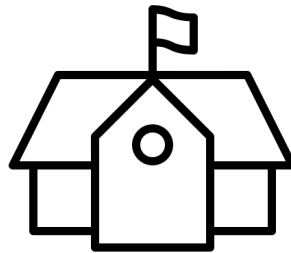
Vincent, Jeffrey M

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2018

# Small Districts, Big Challenges

Barriers to Planning and Funding  
School Facilities in California's  
Rural and Small Public School Districts



**CENTER FOR  
CITIES+SCHOOLS**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Jeffrey M. Vincent





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# *Small Districts, Big Challenges: Barriers to Planning and Funding School Facilities in California’s Rural and Small Public School Districts*

**Jeffrey M. Vincent**

April 2018

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# I. Introduction: Rural California School Facilities

In 2017, the California Department of Education (CDE) announced the “Small School District Assistance Initiative,” aimed at providing targeted assistance to small and rural school districts in the state.<sup>1</sup> A prime focus of the initiative is assisting small and rural school districts with improving their facilities.

To aid CDE’s efforts, this study investigates the facility challenges and issues facing rural and small school districts in California. With this research, we ask:

1. Are rural and/or small school districts at a competitive disadvantage in providing adequate and equitable facilities?
2. What are the major obstacles rural and/or small districts face in getting state capital funds?
3. Given the findings, what changes in state policy and/or regulations might improve the ability of rural and/or small school districts to adequately plan and finance their facilities?

We utilize a mixed method approach to understand the capital investment patterns and facility planning processes of rural and small public school districts in California. In Part II we present findings from analysis of school district data on facility-related characteristics and spending trends. In Part III, we present findings from interviews with 40 rural and small school district officials from across California. See appendices for detailed methods and data descriptions.

Research on school facility issues in small and/or rural school districts is very limited. There is a small academic and grey literature focused more broadly on the overall administrative/financial challenges for rural/small districts, which sometimes mention facility issues.<sup>2</sup> A number of challenges emerge most prominently in this literature. Rural and small districts face a number of issues with their current facilities, from the age of the buildings and a lack of modern technology infrastructure, to a lack of energy efficiency and environmental considerations (which can compound and increase districts costs), as well as presence of health hazards due to the buildings. These challenges are not unique to rural/small districts but seem often to be more pronounced in them as smaller districts are frequently described as having lower bonding capacities to raise funds for capital projects.

An oft-cited challenge for small/rural districts is difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified teachers because these districts generally cannot offer competitive salaries. Another prominent theme in this literature is the very small administrative staff structure; in rural districts the superintendent is often the only administrator and the only chief executive in the community, managing potentially the largest employer in the community. As “jacks of all trades,” superintendents in these districts have to play a larger role in both financing and managing facilities construction projects, which is often well beyond their training. The issue of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr17/yr17rel12.asp>

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for list of recent literature.

consolidation comes up repeatedly throughout the literature: as small school districts consolidate in order to reach supposed economies of scale for educational quality (in part to address curricular and staffing limitations). Based on the literature, in recent years there is community pushback on the consolidation trend for small/rural districts.

Our findings provide a rich understanding of the facility planning and investment challenges experienced by rural and small school districts across California. The findings also provide long term guidance to CDE in amending state policy and regulations, improving technical assistance, and reforming funding formulas to overcome the challenges faced by local school districts in planning and funding their facilities.

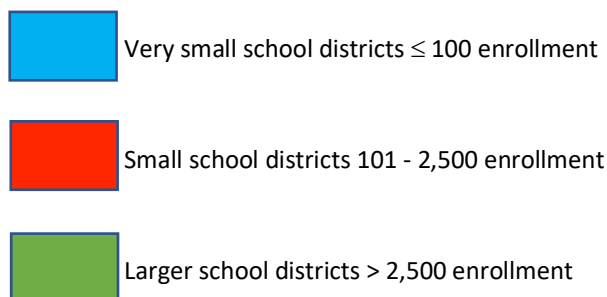
## II. Facility Trends of California’s Rural and Small School Districts

In this section, we assess the facility-related *characteristics, needs, and local investment effort* for rural and small school districts in California. Indicators of need include percentage of unduplicated students enrolled in the district, assessed value of property within the district, and the district’s bonding capacity. Indicators of local effort to plan for and invest in their facilities include outstanding local debt and comparing actual average annual expenditures in facility maintenance and operations (M&O) and capital spending against best practice standards in these areas. We group districts into three size categories as shown in Figure 1. In presenting our findings, we begin with general characteristics of small and rural districts, then look at the top and bottom quintiles of facility spending.

We focus on understanding the relationships between three categories of California school districts:

- 1) small school districts;
- 2) rural school districts; and
- 3) school districts that have received the least state funds for school facility modernization in recent years from the state’s School Facility Program (SFP).

*Figure 1: Three categories of school districts by size*

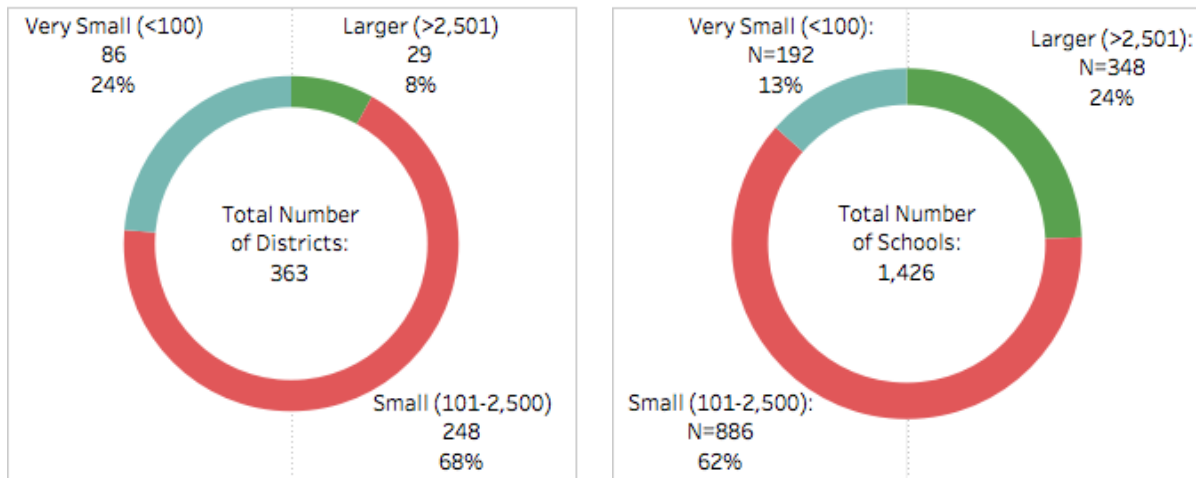




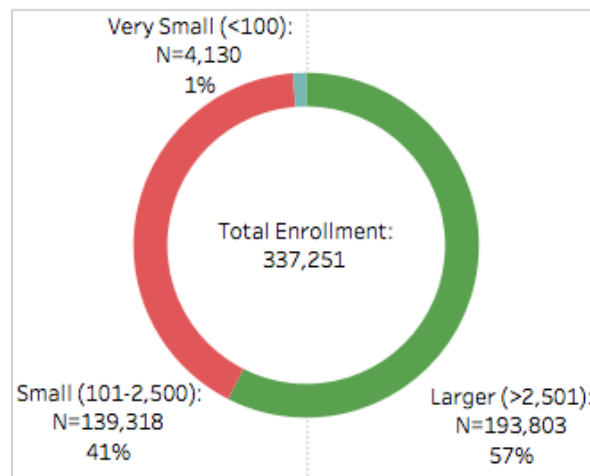
## Facility Characteristics of Rural and Small School Districts

California has 363 school districts (1,426 schools and 337,251 students) categorized as rural by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), as shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4. The overwhelming majority (91%) of California’s rural school districts enroll below 2,500 students. Nearly a quarter (24%) are “very small,” enrolling fewer than 100 students. The counties of Tulare (27), Kern (23), Humboldt (19), Siskiyou (19), Fresno (17), and Shasta (17) have the most rural school districts in California.

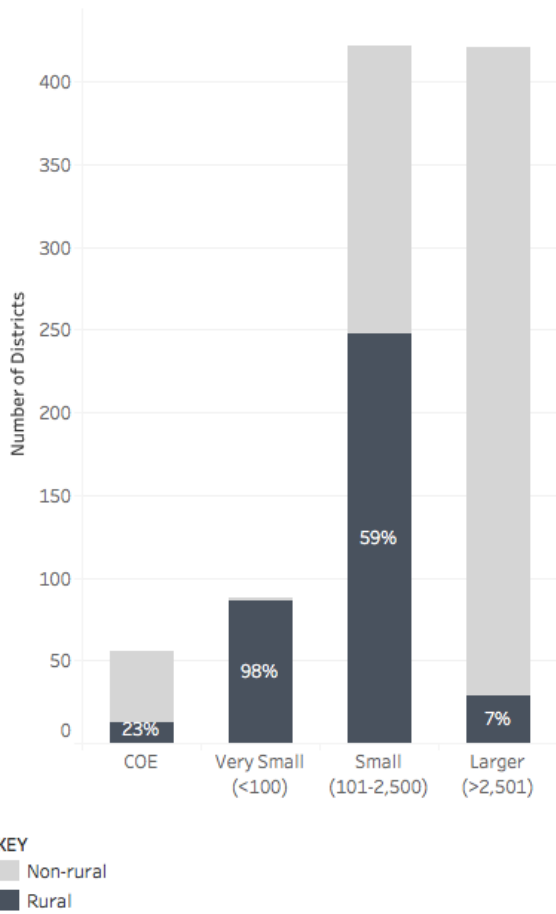
*Figure 2: Number of rural school districts and schools in California by enrollment size (2014)*



*Figure 3: Enrollment in California’s rural school districts by size (2015)*

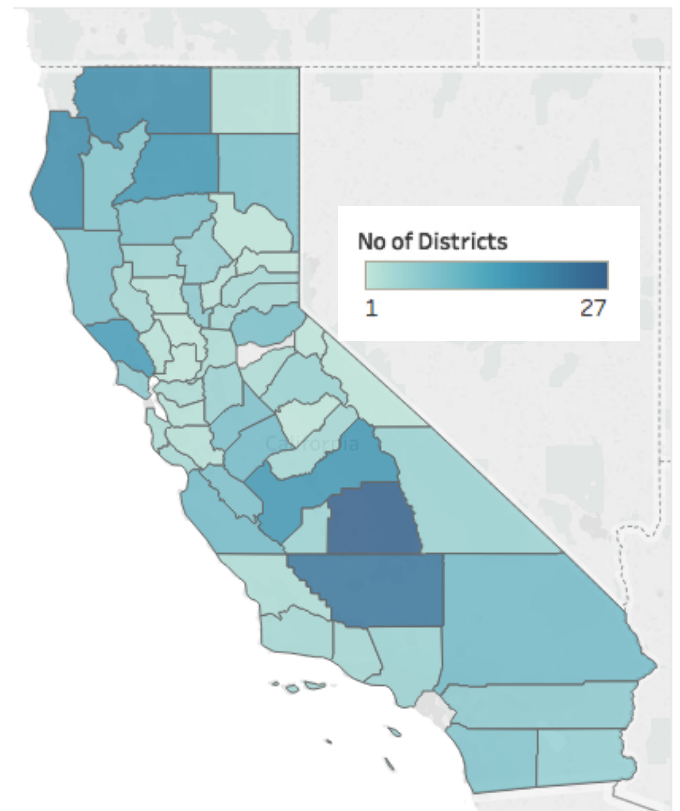


**Figure 4: Distribution of rural school districts in California by size (2014)**



*59% of small districts are rural*

**Figure 5: Number of rural school districts by county (2014)**

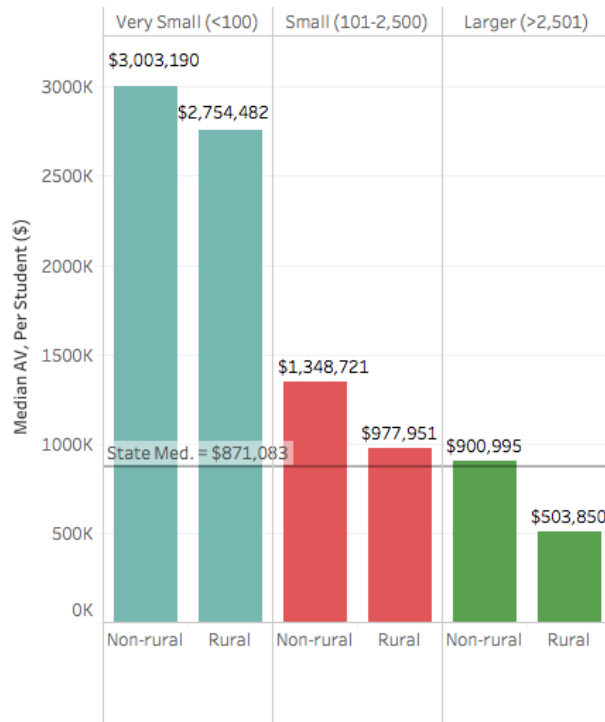


*Tulare and Kern counties have the most rural districts*

## Facility Needs of Rural and Small School Districts

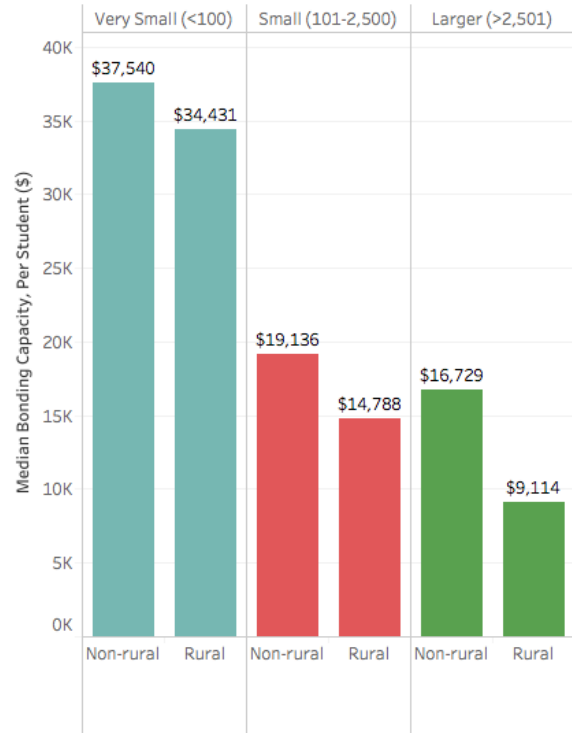
As indicators of need in rural school districts, we use assessed value (AV), bonding capacity (BC), and unduplicated pupil count (UPC). In all size categories, rural districts have lower median AV and BC than non-rural districts, as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

*Figure 6: Median assessed value of California school districts by size categories (2017)*



*Rural school districts have substantially lower assessed value and bonding capacity*

*Figure 7: Median bonding capacity of California school districts by size categories (2017)*



## Facility Investment Effort of Rural and Small School Districts

Looking at local effort, rural districts have much lower outstanding debt on average than urban and suburban districts. Few very small and small districts passed bonds in 2014-2016. Thus, it is not surprising to see that a higher share of rural districts spent below the annual capital investment benchmark, compared to non-rural districts. But rural districts fare better on annual M&O spending, with a lower share of rural districts falling below the benchmark (with the exception of very small rural districts).

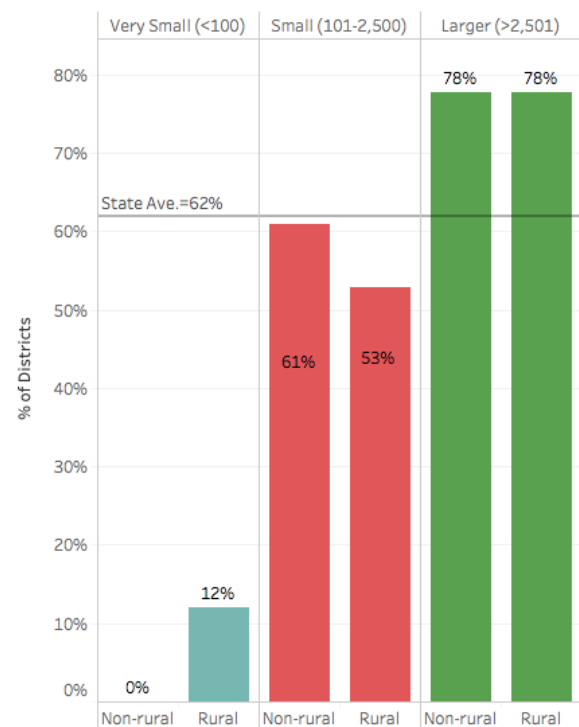
**Figure 8: Average outstanding debt of California school districts by size categories (2012)**



*Rural school districts fare slightly better on annual M&O spending, with a lower share of rural districts falling below the spending benchmark*

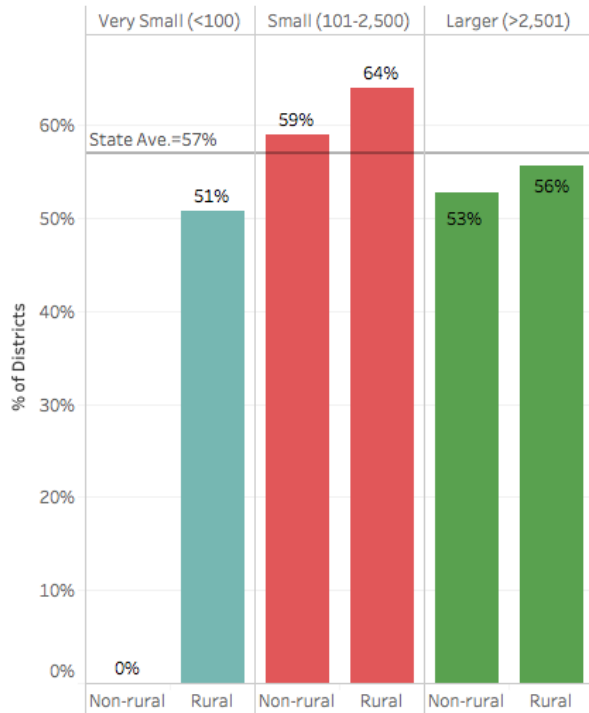
*Rural school districts have substantially less debt per student*

**Figure 9: Percent of school districts with average annual M&O spending below best practice benchmark (2008-2012)**



Source: Vincent and Jain 2015

**Figure 10: Percent of school districts with average annual capital spending below best practice benchmark (2008-2012)**

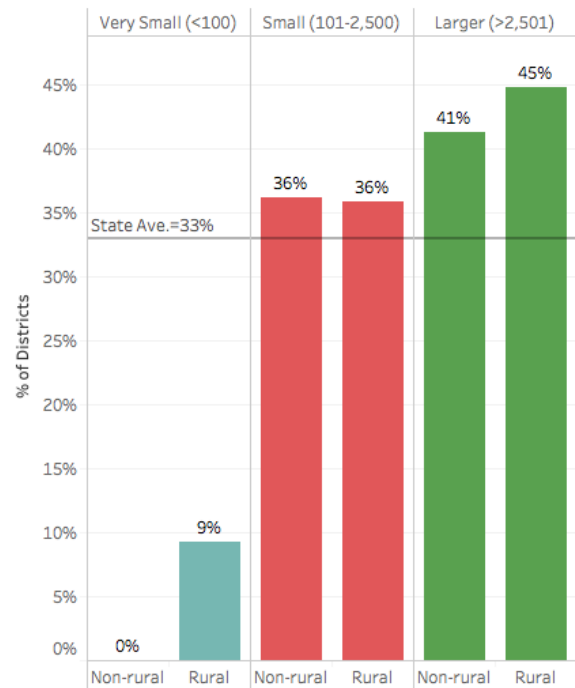


*Rural school districts are less likely to meet capital spending best practice benchmarks*

Source: Vincent and Jain 2015

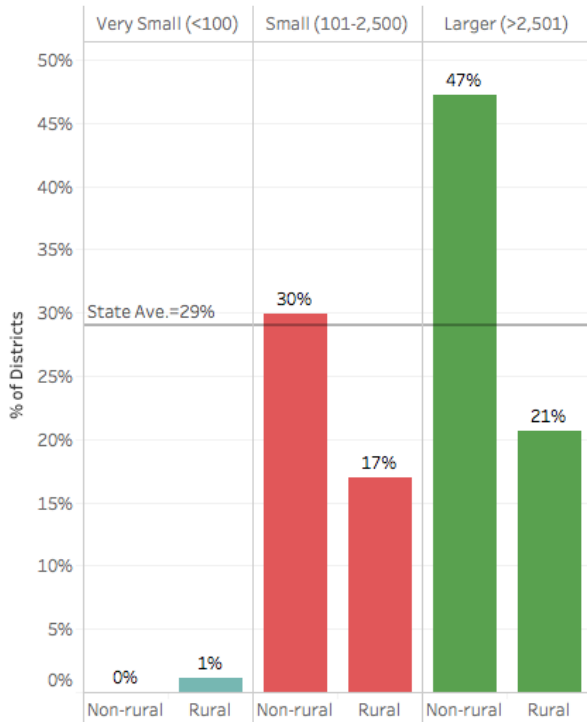
*Rural school districts are more likely to underspend on both capital and M&O*

**Figure 11: Percent of school districts with both average annual M&O spending and average annual capital spending below best practice benchmark (2008-2012)**



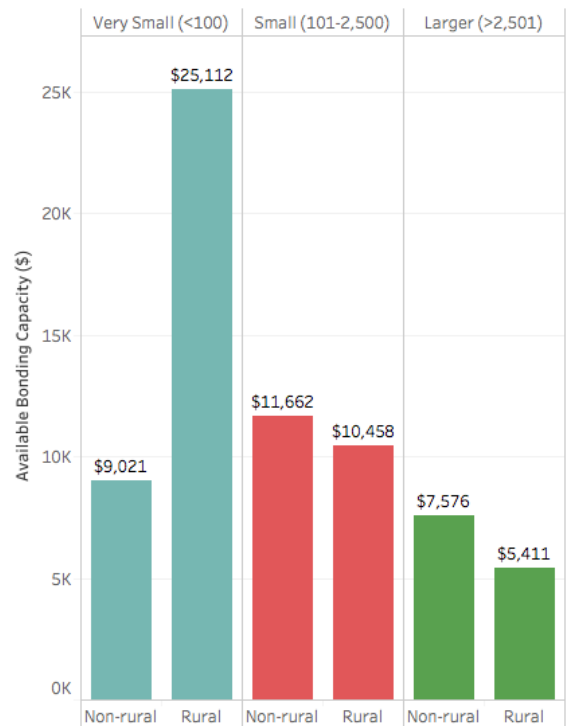
Source: Vincent and Jain 2015

**Figure 12: Percent of school districts that passed local bonds by size (2014-2016)**



*Rural school districts are much less likely to have passed a school bond in recent years*

**Figure 13: Median available bonding capacity of California school districts by size categories (2014)**



*Rural school districts tend to have less available bonding capacity per student*

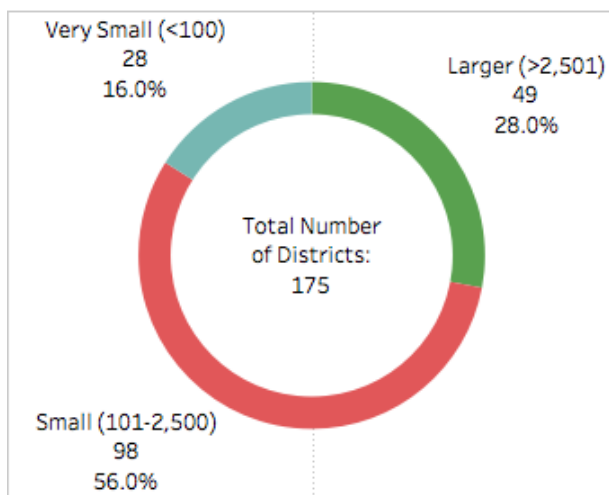
## Comparing High- and Low-Spending School Districts: How Do Rural and Small Districts Fare?

To further investigate whether or not rural and/or small school districts appear to be at a competitive disadvantage with respect to providing adequate and equitable school facilities, we look at the characteristics of high and low capital spending districts. Dividing all school districts into five equal groups (quintiles) of capital spending, the next set of figures show size characteristics of the top and bottom quintiles of: total per student capital spending (2008-2012), total per student SFP grant allocations (1998-2014), and total per student SFP Modernization grant allocations (1998-2014).

### Seventy-two percent of districts in the bottom quintile of total capital spending are small

There are 175 school districts (1,121 schools and 453,203 students) in the bottom quintile of capital outlay for the years 2008-2012, as shown in Figure 14. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of these districts are small or very small. Los Angeles and Humboldt counties have the highest number of districts in the bottom quintile of capital spending in these years.

*Figure 14: Number of school districts in the bottom quintile of capital spending by size categories (2008-2012)*

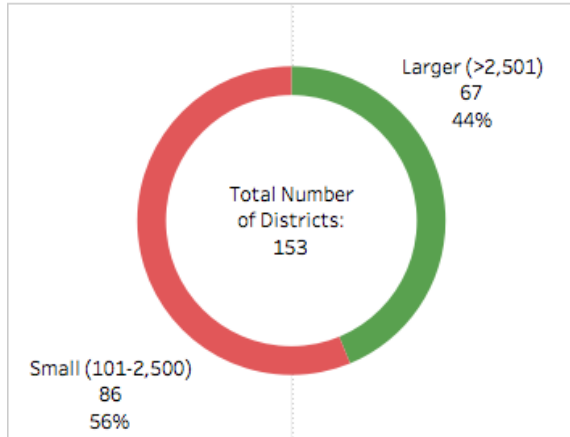


*72% of the school districts in the bottom quintile of capital outlay are small (< 2,500 enrollment)*

### Fifty-six percent of districts in the bottom quintile of per student SFP grant allocations are small

There are 153 school districts (1,417 schools and 673,753 students) in the bottom quintile for the total dollar amount received through the SFP for the years 1998-2014, as shown in Figure 15. More than half (56%) of these are small. Kern (12), Los Angeles (11), and Sonoma (10) counties have the most school districts falling in the bottom quintile of SFP funding.

*Figure 15: Districts in bottom quintile of per student SFP grant allocations (1998-2014)*

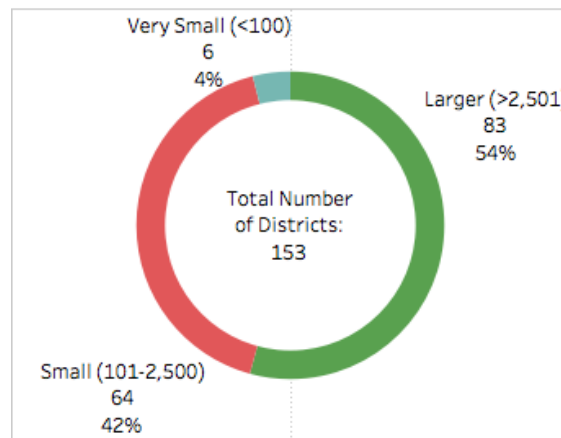


*56% of the school districts in the bottom quintile of per student SFP grant allocations are small (< 2,500 enrollment)*

### Forty-six percent of districts in the bottom quintile of per student SFP Modernization grant allocations are small

There are 153 (1,568 schools and 963,305 students) districts in the bottom quintile of total SFP Modernization Grants received, 1998-2014, as Figure 16 shows. Forty-six percent of districts in this bottom quintile are small or very small districts. Los Angeles County (74) has the highest number of bottom quintile SFP Modernization Grant districts.

*Figure 16: Districts in the bottom quintile of per student SFP modernization grant allocations (1998-2014)*





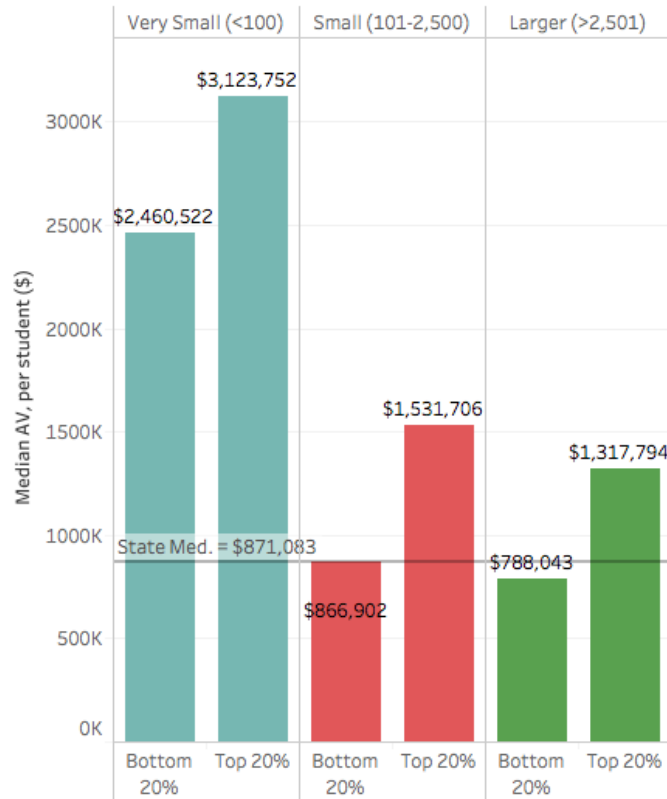
## Comparing Districts in the Top and Bottom Quintiles of Facility Spending

Next, we compare districts in the top and bottom quintiles of facility spending for the years 2008-2012, looking at enrollment size.

### School District in the Bottom Quintile of Total Capital Outlay Have Much Lower Assessed Value and Bonding Capacity

Figures 17 and 18 show the dramatic difference in assessed value and bonding capacity for high- and low-spending districts.

*Figure 17: Median Assessed Value Per Student (2017) of Top and Bottom Quintile Capital Outlay Districts (2008-2012)*



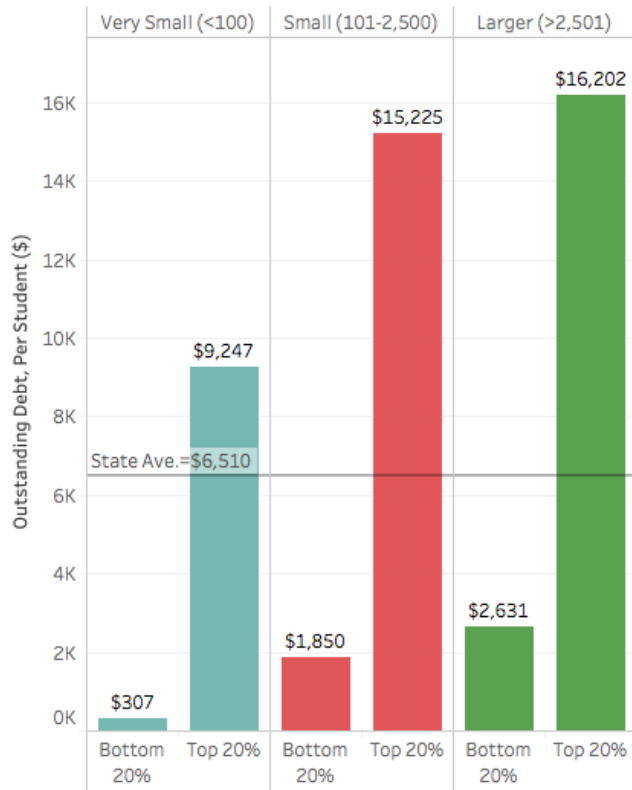
*Figure 18: Median Bonding Capacity Per Student (2017) of Top and Bottom Quintile Capital Outlay Districts (2008-2012)*



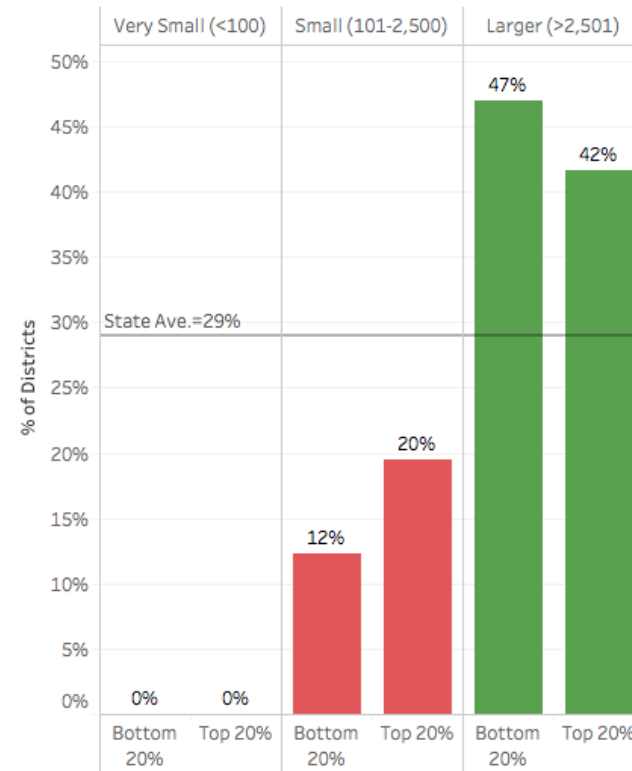
## School District in the Bottom Quintile of Total Capital Outlay Have Much Less Debt and are Much More Likely to Underspend on Facilities

Districts in the bottom quintiles of capital outlay for the years 2008-2012 tend to have much less outstanding debt than high spending districts, as shown in Figure 19. This is not surprising – if they have spent less, they likely would have less debt. It is also not surprising that much fewer small districts in the bottom quintile of capital outlay (2008-2012) have passed local bonds in recent years, as shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 19: Average Outstanding Debt Per Student (2012) by Top and Bottom Quintiles of Capital Outlay (2008-2012)**

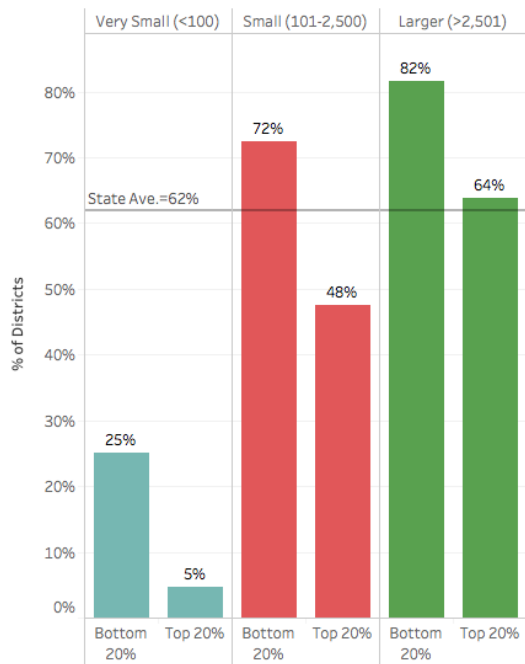


**Figure 20: Percent Passed Local Bonds (2014-2016) by Top and Bottom Quintiles of Capital Outlay (2008-2012)**

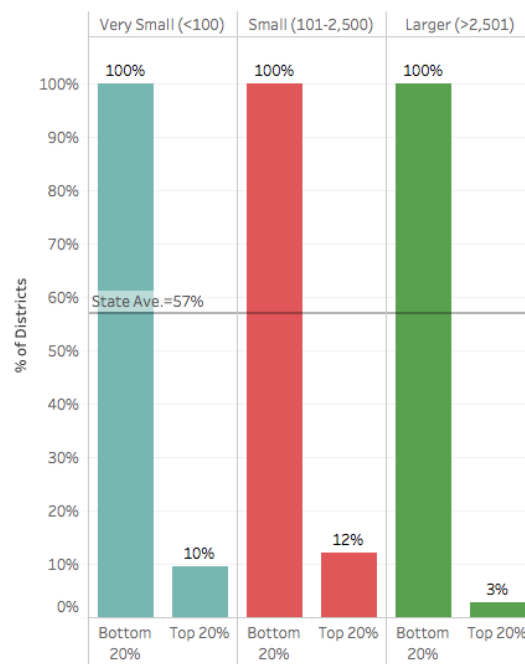


As Figures 21-23 show, small districts in the bottom quintile of total capital outlay (2008-2012) were dramatically more likely to underspend on their facilities. What is striking is the vast difference in meeting minimum spending benchmarks between the top and bottom quintiles.

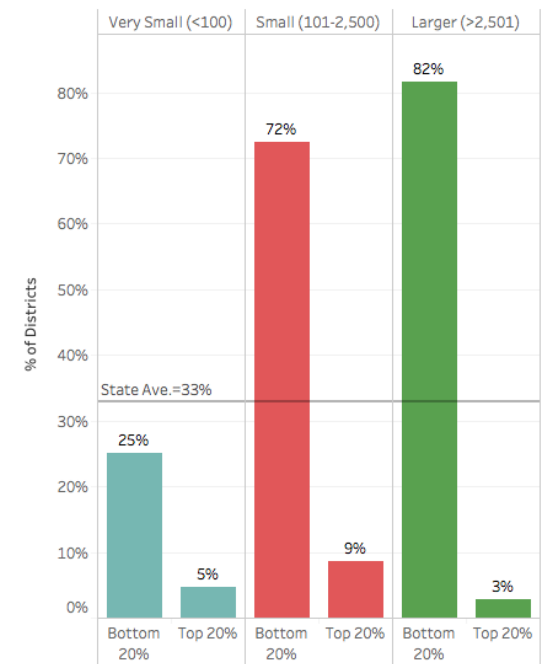
**Figure 21: Percent Below Annual M&O Benchmark (2008-2012)**



**Figure 22: Percent Below Annual Capital Benchmark (2008-2012)**



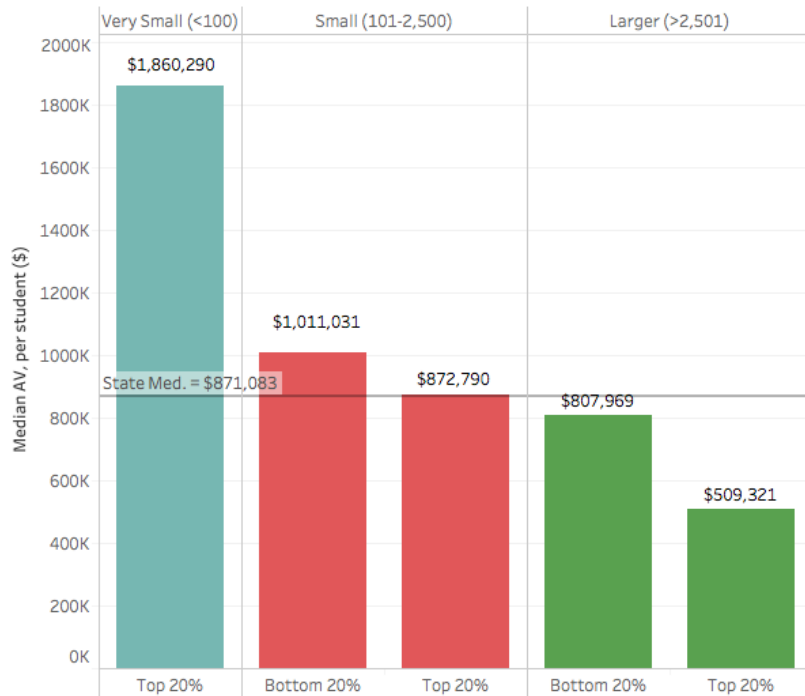
**Figure 23: Percent Below Annual Capital and M&O Benchmark (2008-2012)**



## School Districts in the Bottom Quintiles of Per Student SFP Grants Have Higher Assessed Value and Bonding Capacity

Interestingly, the districts in the bottom quintile of per student SFP grants have higher median AV and higher bonding capacity on average, as shown in Figures 24 and 25.

**Figure 24: Median Assessed Value Per Student (2017) of Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Grants (1998-2014)**



Note: There are no very small school districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants per student.

**Figure 25: Median Bonding Capacity Per Student (2017) of Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Grants (1998-2014)**



Note: There are no very small school districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants per student.

## Districts in the bottom quintile of SFP Per Student Grants Have Less Outstanding Debt

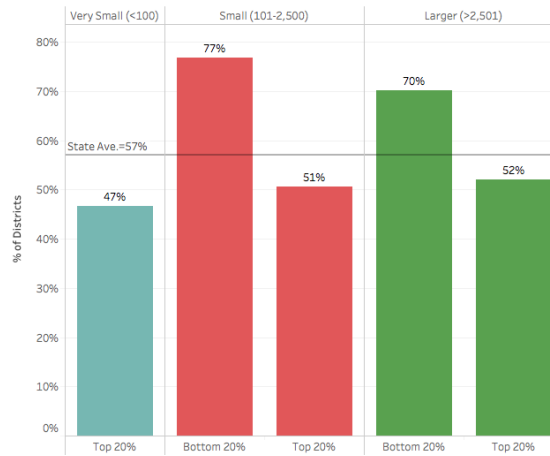
Comparing districts in the top and bottom quintiles of total SFP grants per student received 1998-2014, districts in the bottom quintile have much less outstanding debt. Districts in the bottom quintiles of SFP grants are much more likely to fall below annual spending benchmarks for M&O and capital investment. Perhaps in an effort to “catch up,” the districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants were more likely to pass local bonds in the recent years of 2014-2016.

**Figure 26: Average Outstanding Debt Per Student (2012) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Grants (1998-2014)**



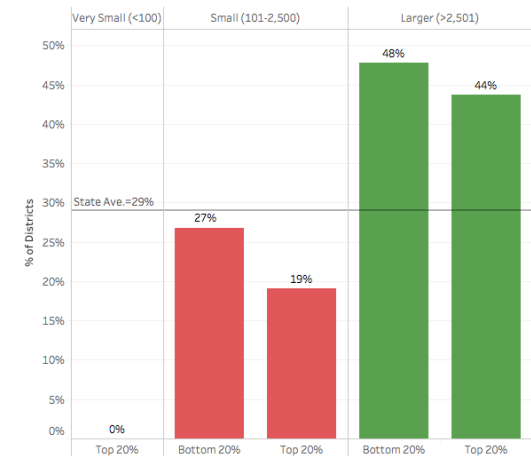
Note: There are no very small school districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants per student.

**Figure 27: Percent Below Annual Capital Benchmark By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Grants (1998-2014)**



Note: There are no very small school districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants per student.

**Figure 28: Percent Passed Local Bonds (2014-2016) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Grants (1998-2014)**

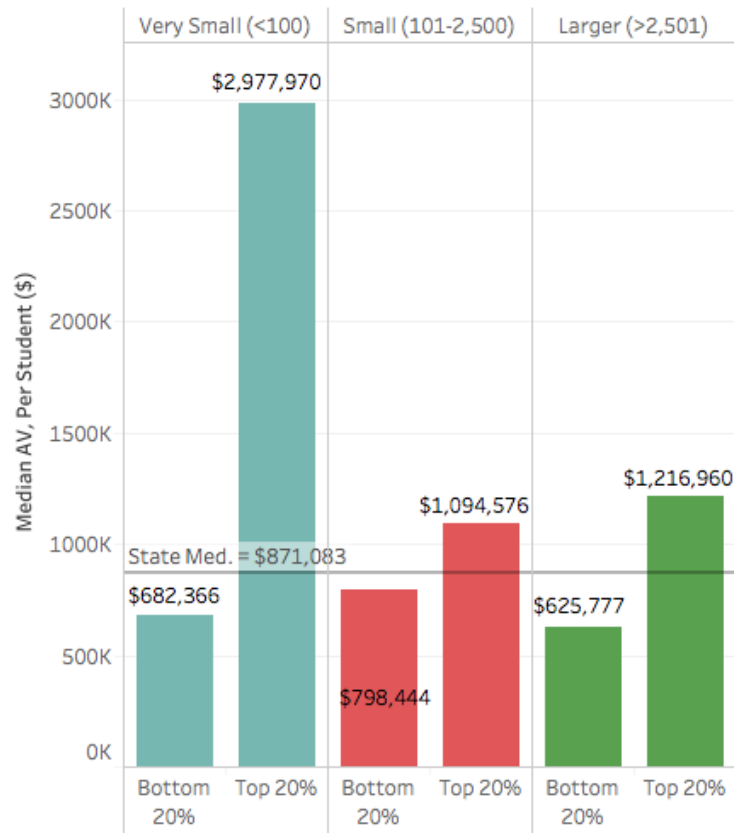


Note: There are no very small school districts in the bottom quintile of SFP grants per student.

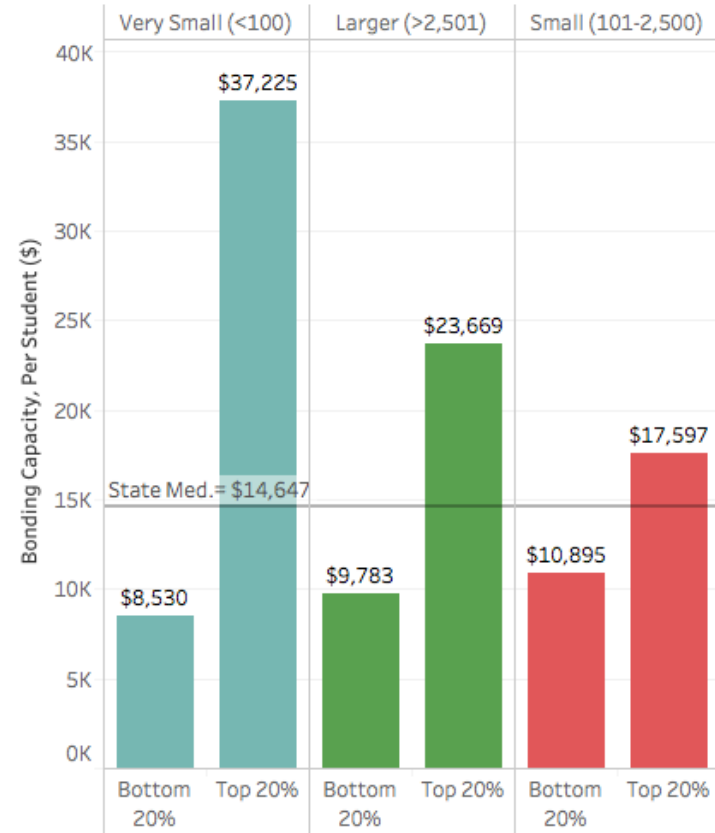
## Districts in the Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants Have Lower Per Student Median Assessed Values and Bonding Capacities

Looking at districts in the top and bottom quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants received 1998-2014, districts in the bottom quintiles have lower per student median assessed values and bonding capacities, both overall and in each size category.

**Figure 29: Median Assessed Value Per Student (2017) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants (1998-2014)**



**Figure 30: Median Bonding Capacity Per Student (2017) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants (1998-2014)**



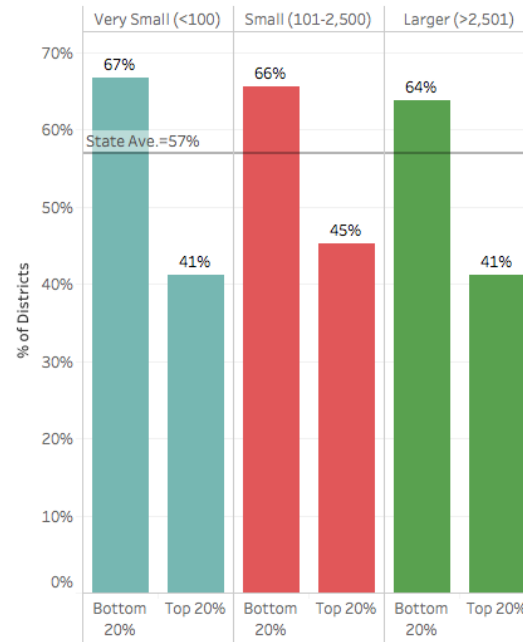
## Districts in the Bottom Quintile of Per Student SFP Modernization Grants are More Likely to Underspend on Facilities

Districts in the bottom quintiles of SFP Modernization grants have lower outstanding debt, with the exception of the very small district category. The bottom quintile also has a much higher share of districts that are below the annual M&O (with the exception of very small districts), Capital, and Capital and M&O benchmarks. Again, perhaps as a way to “catch up,” these bottom quintile districts were more likely to pass local bonds in the recent years of 2014-2016.

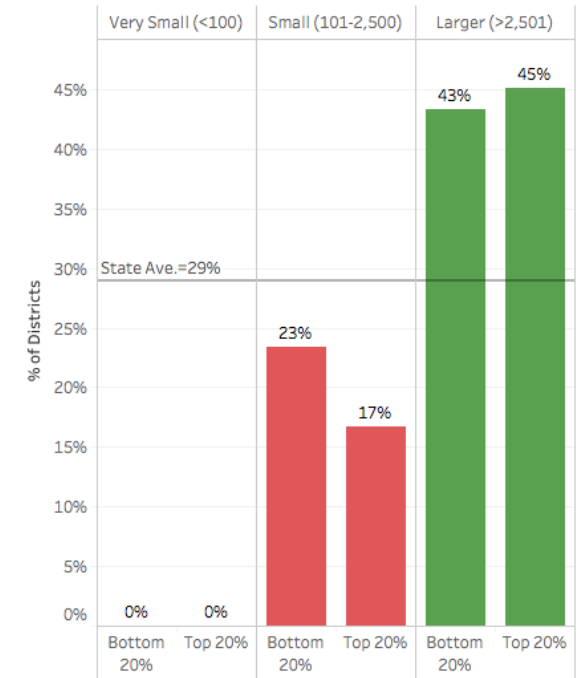
**Figure 31: Average Outstanding Debt Per Student (2012) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants (1998-2014)**



**Figure 32: Percent Below Annual Capital Benchmark by Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants (1998-2014)**



**Figure 33: Percent Passed Local Bonds (2014-2016) By Top and Bottom Quintiles of SFP Modernization Grants**



## What is the Correlation Between Local Property Wealth and Facility Spending for Rural and Small Districts?

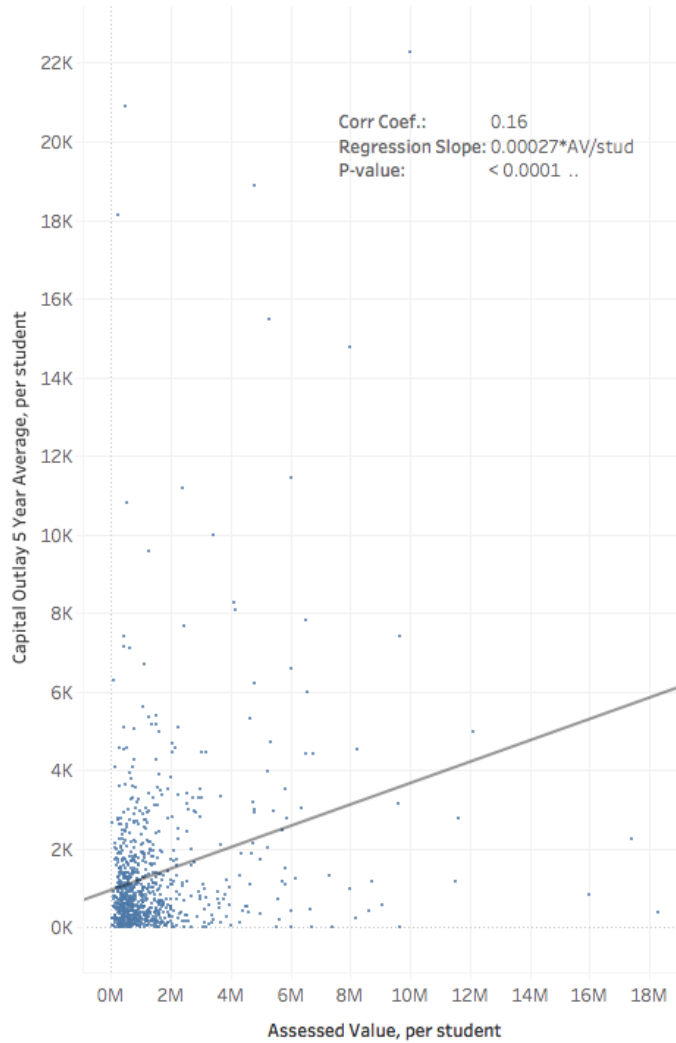
Next, we look at the correlation between local property wealth and school facilities spending, both on capital outlay and on M&O. School districts typically use their general operating budget for maintenance and operation of facilities and the capital budget for capital projects. Capital budgets are largely funded by local general obligation bonds that are paid for by local property taxes. Hence, it is not surprising to see a strong correlation between property wealth and capital outlay, as Figure 24 shows. We find that, on average, 1 dollar increase in property assessed value (AV) is associated with 0.029 cent increase in per-student capital outlay. This relationship is even stronger in smaller districts with 100-2500 students; 1 dollar increase in per student AV is associated with 0.039 cent increase in per-student capital outlay. However, the relationship between property wealth and capital is not clear in very small districts with less than 100 students. Though it appears that property wealth is associated with a *decrease* in capital outlay, the variance in the very small district data is too great to conclude that this negative relationship is real. We also suspect that this negative relationship may reflect the lower rates of local effort in many very small districts.

Unlike capital spending, maintenance and operations (M&O) spending come out of a district's general operating budget, which also pays for other operating costs such as teacher and administrative salaries and utilities. The general operating budget is mainly funded by state transfers through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Despite the state's efforts through the LCFF to make school district general operating funding more equitable, we still see disparities in M&O spending as Figure 35 reveals. On average, 1 dollar increase in per student AV is associated with 0.015 cent increase in per student M&O spending. This relationship is stronger for small and very small districts.

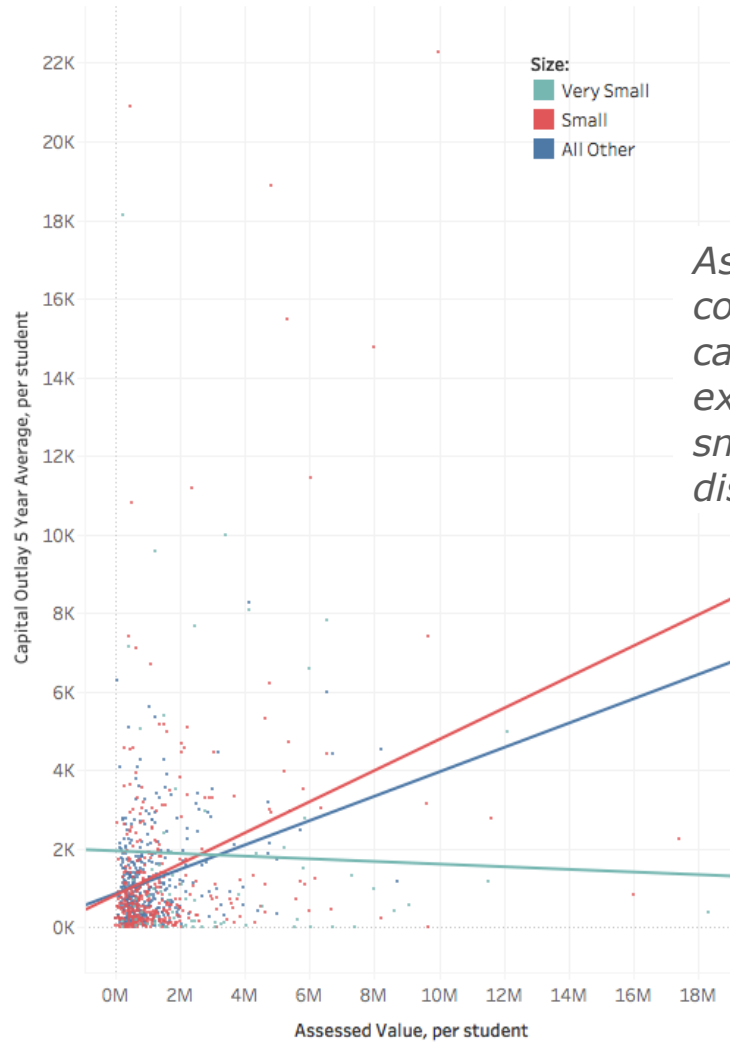


Figure 34: Correlation between Assessed Value and Capital Outlay

Correlation between Assessed Value (2017) and Capital Outlay (2008-2012)



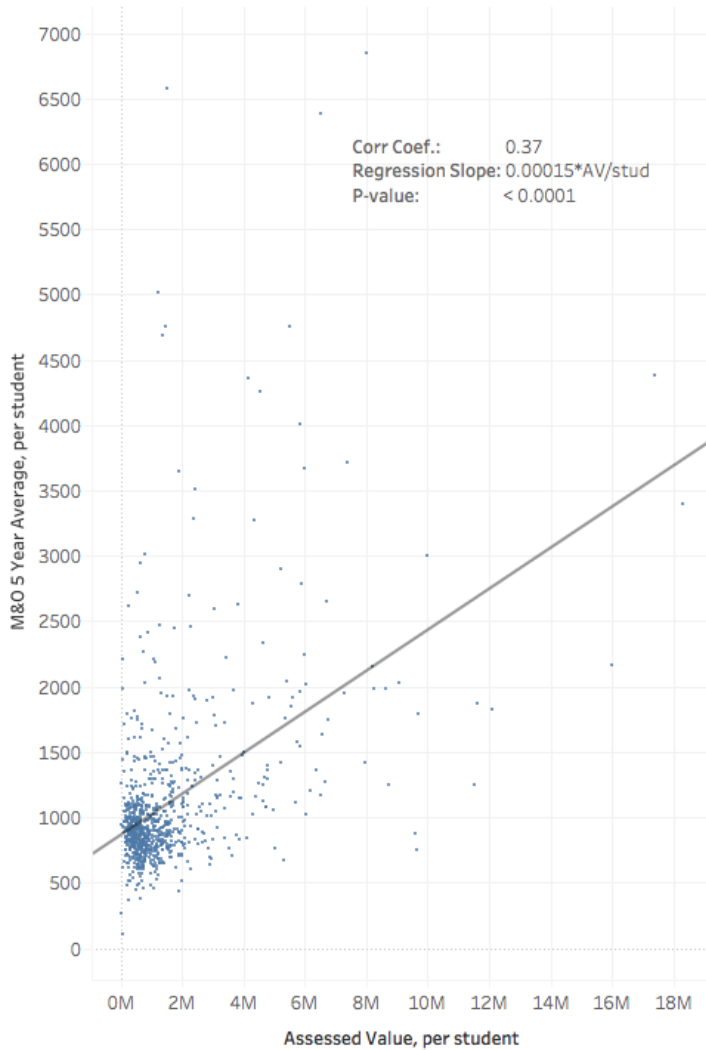
Correlation between Assessed Value (2017) and Capital Outlay (2008-2012), by size category



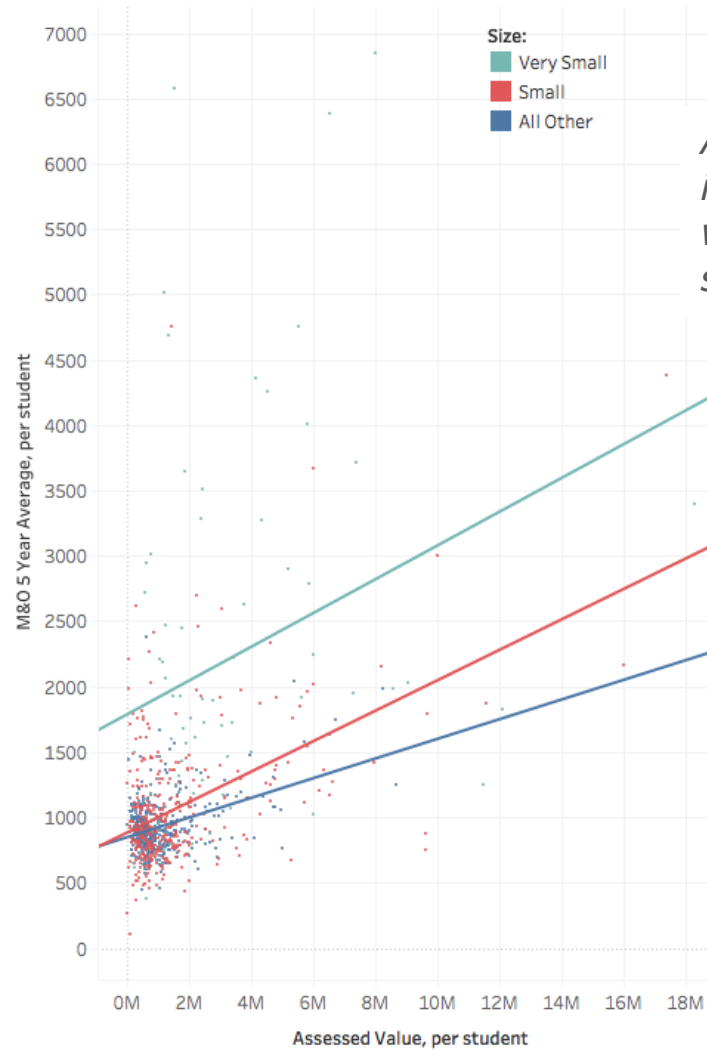
*Assessed value is correlated with capital outlay, except for very small school districts*

Figure 35: Correlation between Assessed Value and M&O Spending

Correlation between Assessed Value (2017) and M&O (2008-2012)



Correlation between Assessed Value (2017) and M&O (2008-2012), by size

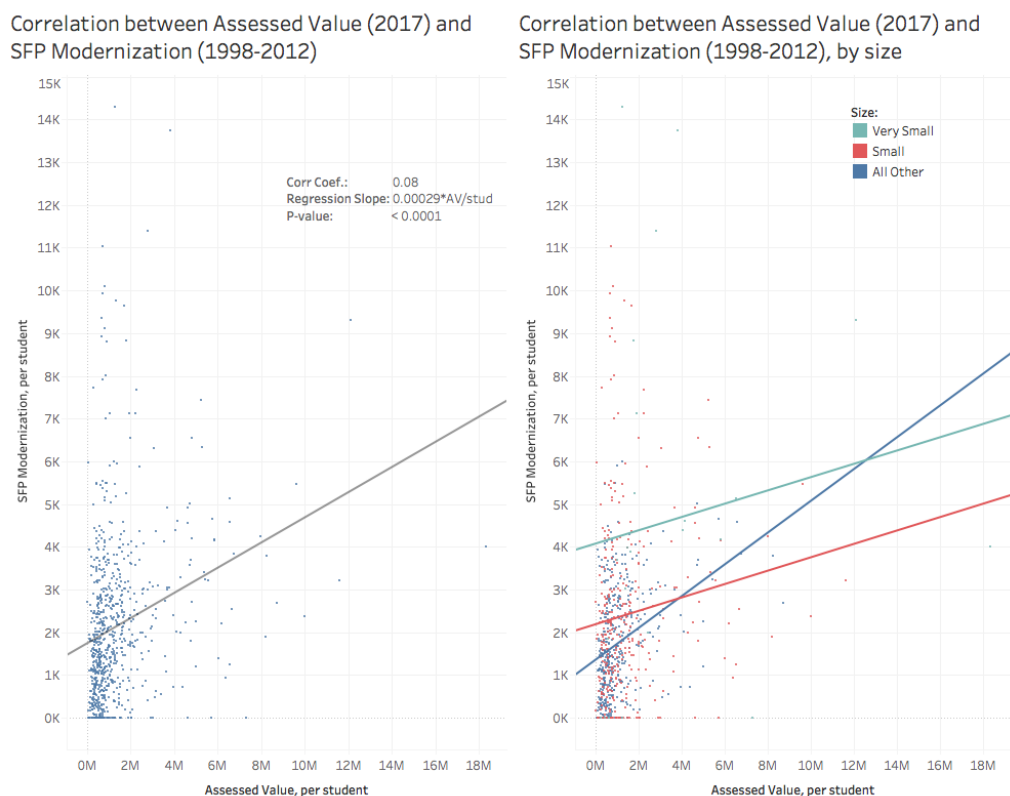


*Assessed value is correlated with M&O spending*

## Correlation Between Local Property Wealth and SFP Modernization Grant Allocations

Between 1998 and 2014, 34% of all of the state's School Facility Program (SFP) funds were spent on modernization projects.<sup>3</sup> Given that the SFP is set up as a matching grant program, we expect some correlation between the modernization grant size and local property tax base (AV). As Figure 36 shows, we do find a positive, but weak relationship between AV and SFP modernization funding for the years 2008-2012. Perhaps this is due to the fact that only 32% of very small districts and 77% of small districts received SFP modernization funding, while 94% of larger districts have received SFP modernization funding.

**Figure 36: Correlation between Assessed Value and SFP Modernization**



*Assessed value is highly correlated with receiving SFP grant allocations, regardless of district size*

<sup>3</sup> Jain, L. S. & Vincent, J.M. (2016). *Building Pressure: Modeling the Fiscal Future of California K-12 School Facilities*. Berkeley, CA: Center for Cities + Schools, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California-Berkeley. Retrieved from [http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/uploads/Jain\\_Vincent\\_2016\\_Building\\_Pressure\\_final.pdf](http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/uploads/Jain_Vincent_2016_Building_Pressure_final.pdf)

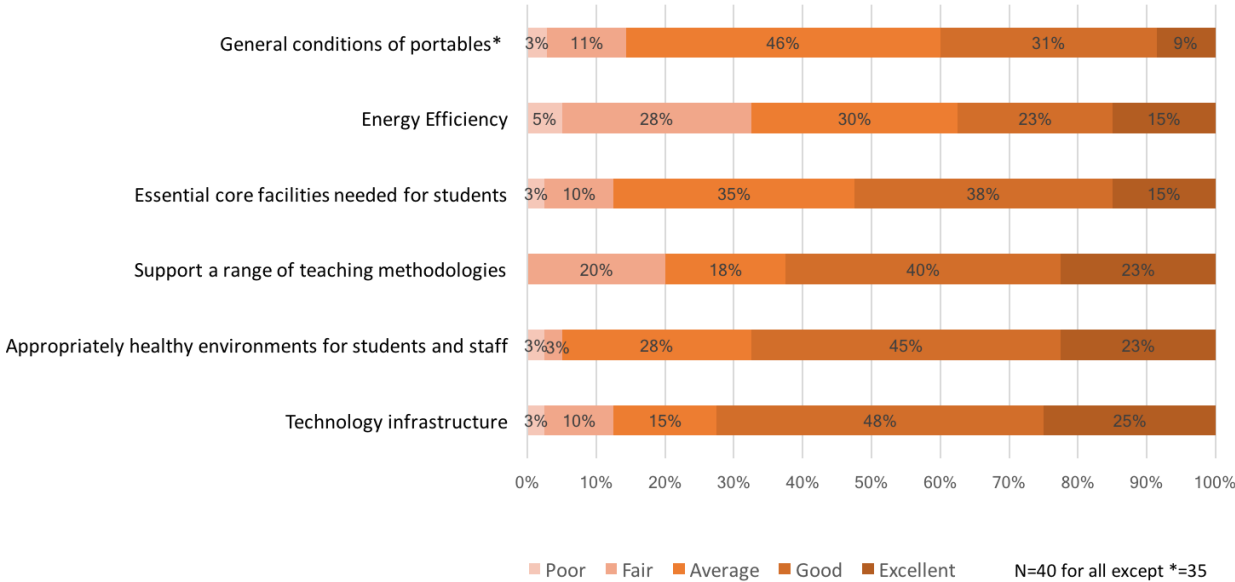
# III. Learning from Rural District Leaders: Interview Findings

Next, we present the findings from semi-structured interviews with officials from 40 small and rural school districts in California. Interviews focused on four topics: opinions on the quality and adequacy of facilities, local facility planning and management approaches, local capital planning and budgeting, and overarching challenges experienced. The overwhelming majority (84%) of our respondents have worked in public education for more than 20 years. About one-third of them have spent more than 20 years in public education administration. Unless otherwise noted, N=40 responses for each question.

## Quality Rating of Buildings and Grounds

Asked to rate their districts’ facilities on a variety of aspects, respondents were most concerned about their facilities not being energy efficient and not having essential core facilities for students (e.g., labs, instructional rooms, extra-curricular rooms, etc.), as shown in Figure 37. Eighty-eight percent of responding districts have portable classrooms. The majority (83%) own their portables. Only 40% rated their portables as “good” or “excellent” condition. Less than half (46%) rated their portables in “average” condition, while 14% rated them “fair” or “poor” condition.

Figure 37: Quality rating of school facility components



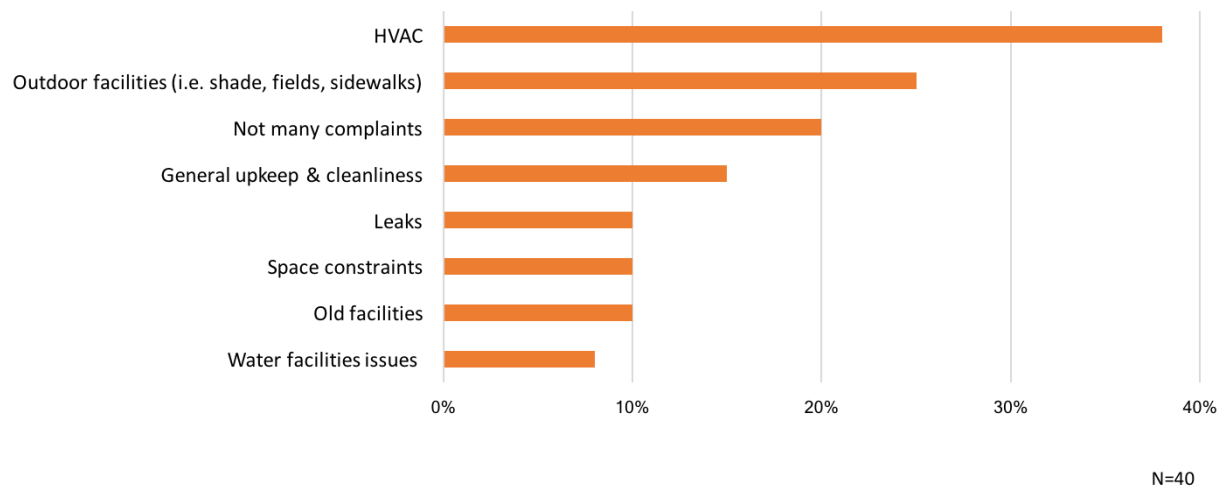
## Facility Maintenance & Operations Budgeting

Only half (49%) of districts reported they are consistently able to budget enough each year on facility cleaning, upkeep, and maintenance.

*51% of rural school districts are not able to consistently budget enough each year for facility cleaning, upkeep, and maintenance.*

Issues of thermal comfort and indoor air quality, outdoor facilities, and cleanliness were the most commonly reported staff complaints. The most frequently reported facilities complaints respondents receive relate to HVAC systems and the resulting thermal comfort and air quality concerns.

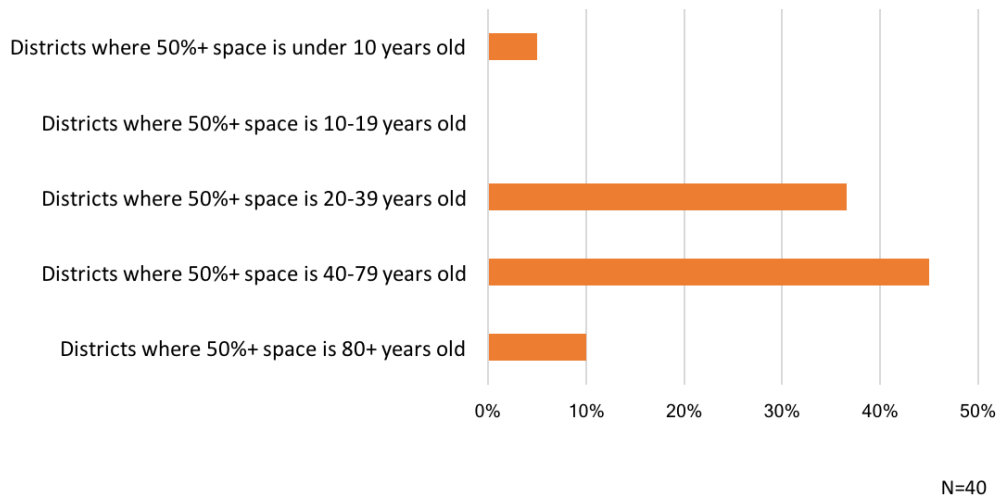
*Figure 38: Most common facility related complaints received*



## Age of Facilities

Fifty-five percent of responding districts report that at least half of their school facilities are 40 or more years old. Ten percent of districts report least half of their facilities are 80 or more years old.

*Figure 39: Age of school buildings*



## Local Facility Planning and Management Approaches and Strategies

Having an up-to-date districtwide facility master plan that includes data on the conditions of facilities and having an education specification document are best practices in public school facility infrastructure management. However, usage of these tools was not consistent across responding districts.

*28% of rural school districts do not have a facility master plan*

*69% of rural school districts do not have a facility condition index (or similar)*

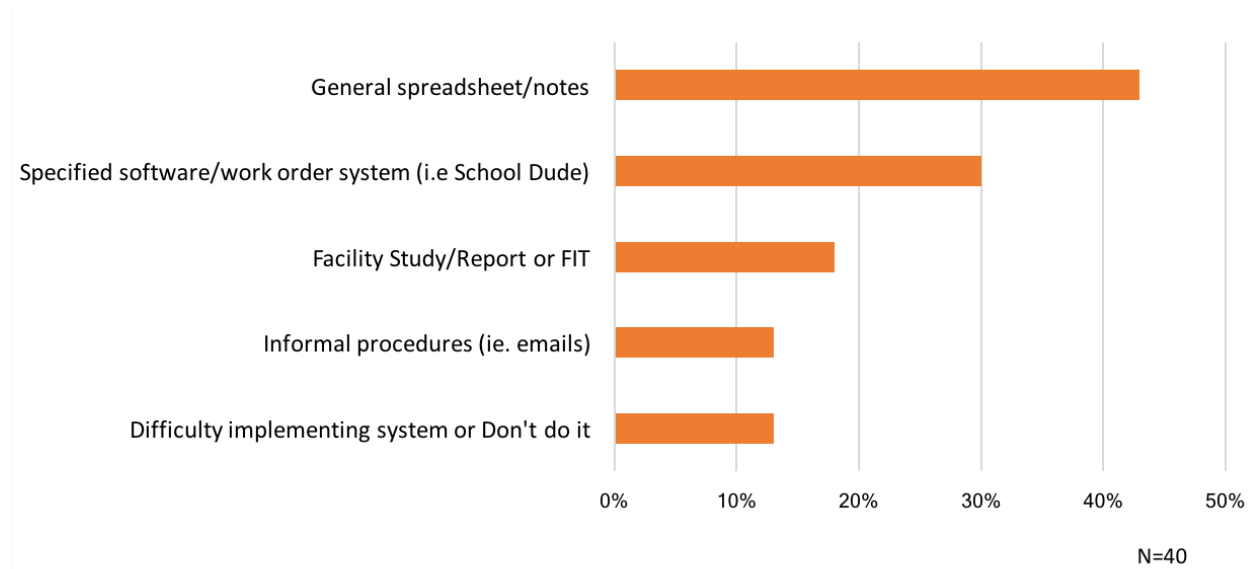
*89% of rural school districts do not have an education specification document*

## Facilities and Good Repair in the LCAP

Asked about how they addressed facilities and good repair in their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), most respondents reported that they filled out the Facility Inspection Tool (FIT) and reported the findings in the LCAP.<sup>4</sup> Some reported that their LCAP listed items to repair according to the FIT findings. Only four respondents reported that their district did not involve a parent advisory committee in the good repair section of their LCAP.

In terms of tracking facility information and keeping records, 43% of respondents reported that they keep an assortment of notes and/or spreadsheets to track work completed. Many of these noted they focus on keeping work orders recorded manually in a basic spreadsheet. Only 30% report that they use a software work order system to do so.

*Figure 40: How districts track and manage facility information*



<sup>4</sup> In the state's LCAP template, districts are required to address how they will ensure their facilities are in "good repair" per the definition in Education Code Section 17070.75(e). Developed by the Office of Public School Construction, the Facility Inspection Tool (FIT) is defined as follows: the "uniform definition of good repair, the FIT is intended to be used by school officials, county offices of education, students, teachers, and parents to aid in ensuring that all California school children have access to clean, safe, and functional school facilities. Intended as a visual inspection tool, fifteen components are evaluated as a part of the FIT. Additionally, the FIT includes a rating system to evaluate each component, and ranks the overall condition of the school."

<http://www.dgs.ca.gov/opsc/Programs/deferredmaintenanceprogram/goodrepairstandards.aspx>

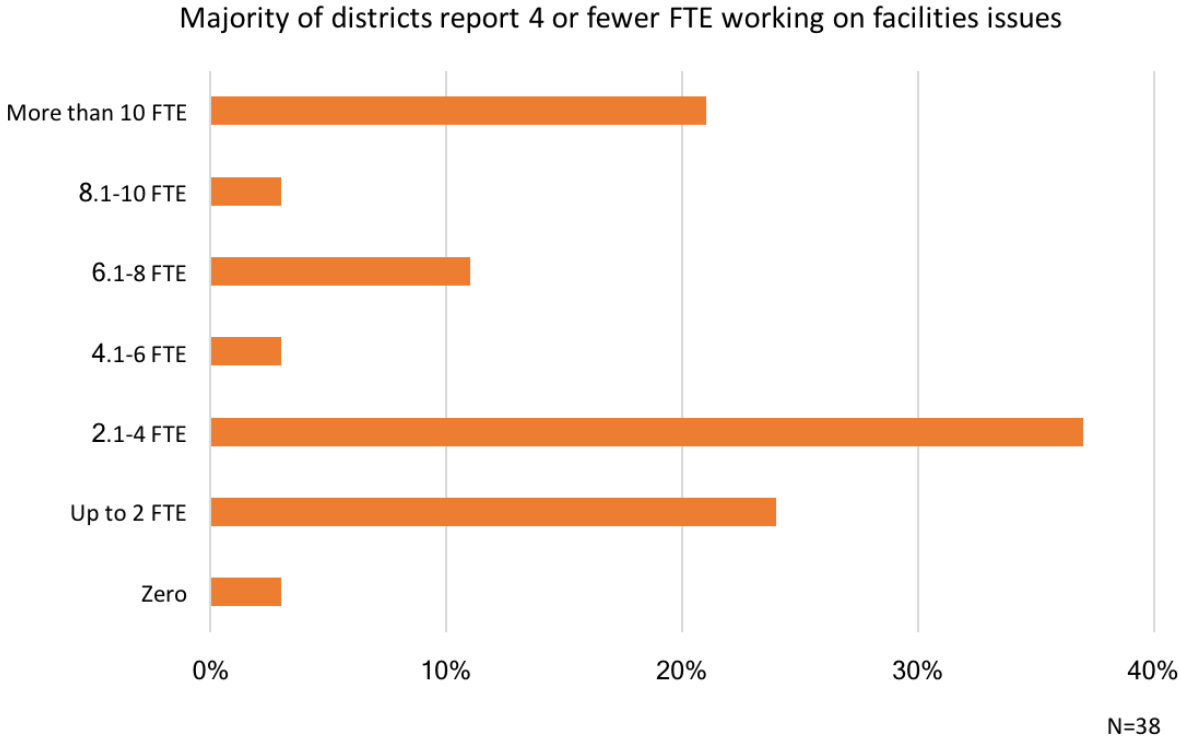
Asked about how decisions are made about prioritizing facility improvements, respondents described many different approaches. Most districts report that they focus on projects that arise due to student health and safety concerns. Most of our respondents described having frequent (often weekly) meetings with their facility manager (or maintenance manager) to discuss needed repairs. Depending on scope, the school board will be involved. Half of respondents reported utilizing private sector consultants (architects, contractors, etc.) in helping the prioritize facility projects needed.

**Facility Personnel**

Almost half (N=19) of school districts report that they do not have dedicated staff who serves as facility director/manager. In nearly all of these cases, either the superintendent or the chief business official serves as the de facto facility director. Most of these also report they have a full or part-time director of maintenance. The majority of districts report 4 or less FTE working on facility issues.

*48% of rural school districts do not have a dedicated facility director*

*Figure 41: Facility FTE in Rural and Small School Districts*





## Facility Collaboration with County Offices of Education and Others

About half (51%) of school districts reported that they work with their local County Office of Education (COE) on facility-related matters. They listed a range of items they work on, including budgeting, contractor bidding, facility plans/records, serving in a consulting role, and assisting in the decision-making processes. One respondent noted that this work with COEs is changing,

We used to go to our COE. But then, about 4 years ago, they changed their model of services to a fee based model. Before the change, COE provided a lot of support to small districts. They had people who have been in facilities management for a long time to give us advice. Now when we need to apply for grants, we need to get a consultant.

More than half (63%) of districts report that they share space on their campus(es) with a County Office of Education program, Head Start Program, Charter School, or other program by another entity. Activities involved in the shared spaces included a wide mix: charter schools, health classes, adult special education, preschool/day care, Head Start, a library, after school programs, parks and rec, youth centers, community based organizations, a migrant program, and community college.

Only 11% of districts reported that they are experiencing pressures, or having discussions about, consolidating with other districts.

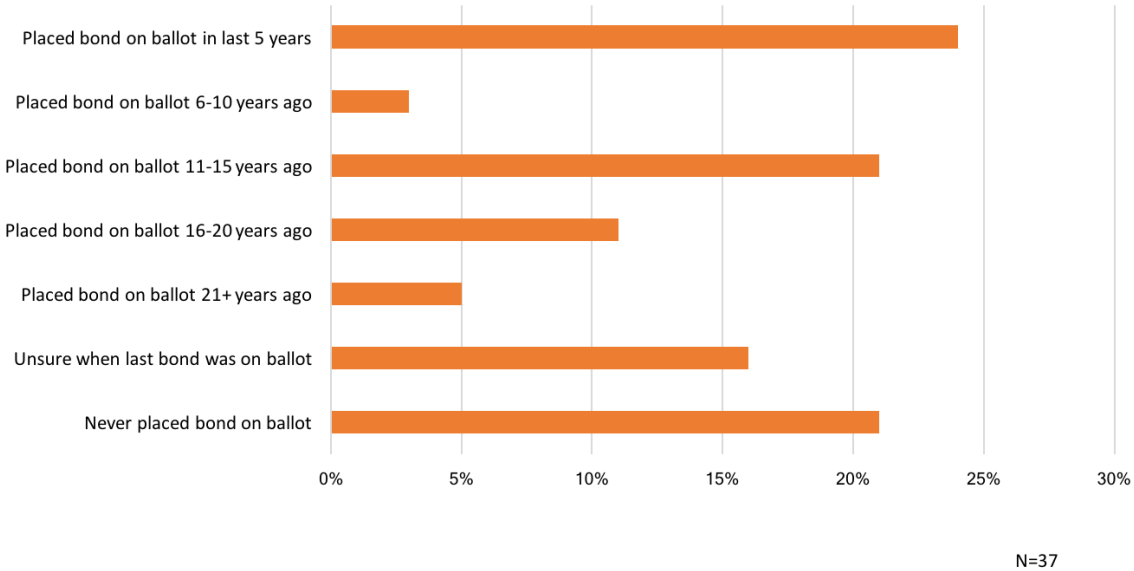
*11% of rural school districts  
considering district consolidation*

## Capital Planning/Budgeting

Twenty-one percent of districts report never having put a local bond on the ballot. Another third of districts have not had a local bond within the last 10 years. Only 24% have had a local school bond in the last 5 years. The majority (69%) of responding school districts have not done any new construction (new buildings or additions) in the past 5 years.

*21% of rural school districts  
report never having put a local  
bond on the ballot*

*Figure 42: Past Local Bonds on Ballot*



*68% of rural school districts report that they are experiencing residential growth that will likely translate into enrollment growth in the next 5 years*

*15% of rural school districts report they are likely to put a local bond on the ballot in next 5 years*

About two-thirds (68%) of responding districts report that they are experiencing residential growth that will likely translate into enrollment growth in the next 5 years. Yet only 15% of respondents report that they plan to have a local bond in the next 5 years (2018-2022). The top 3 reasons given for not planning a bond in the next 5 years were that their district could not support it economically (N=7); politically unpopular (N=7); don't have the bonding capacity to support it (N=5). Other reasons given include recently passed a bond (N=2); many students living outside of district (N=2); do not have facilities needs (N=1); and just have not discussed it (N=1).

In the past 5 years, 54% of districts report they have done “modernization” (defined as major renovation or additions or campus wide upgrades such as data, communications, fire alarms, etc.). Work described in this area by respondents included communication systems installation/upgrade (N=11), energy/HVAC work (N=5); security/fire alarm (N=4), entire school

modernization (N=3), teaching space/classrooms (N=3), parking lot improvement (N=3), library renovation (N=2), gym improvements (N=2), roof (N=2), and flooring/carpeting (N=2).

*44% of rural school districts  
have not done any modernization  
projects in last 5 years*

More than half of responding districts (59%) reported that they have made emergency repairs in the past 5 years. The top emergency repairs reported were roof repair (N=9), water or septic repairs (N=5), and HVAC repairs (N=4).

*59% of rural school districts  
have made emergency repairs in  
last 5 years*

When the state's Deferred Maintenance program ended in 2013,<sup>5</sup> spending restrictions were removed and this funding was "rolled" into each district's LCFF grant allowing giving districts much greater freedom of choice in how to spend funds on facility repair and maintenance. About two-thirds (67%) of responding districts report their deferred maintenance spending has remained at similar levels before LCFF and under LCFF. Only 11% report it has decreased, while 14% report it has increased.

*36% of rural school districts  
have not looked into whether or  
not they would qualify for the  
state's Facility Hardship Program*

Nearly all (92%) of responding districts reported they received Prop 39 energy efficiency funds in recent years from the State of California.<sup>6</sup> Of these districts, most (85%) report that they did not couple Prop 39 funds with SFP funds. Reasons reported for not coupling funds included that they did not get SFP funds or had difficulty with general SFP funding process to obtain funds for combined use.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/opsc/Programs/deferredmaintenanceprogram.aspx>

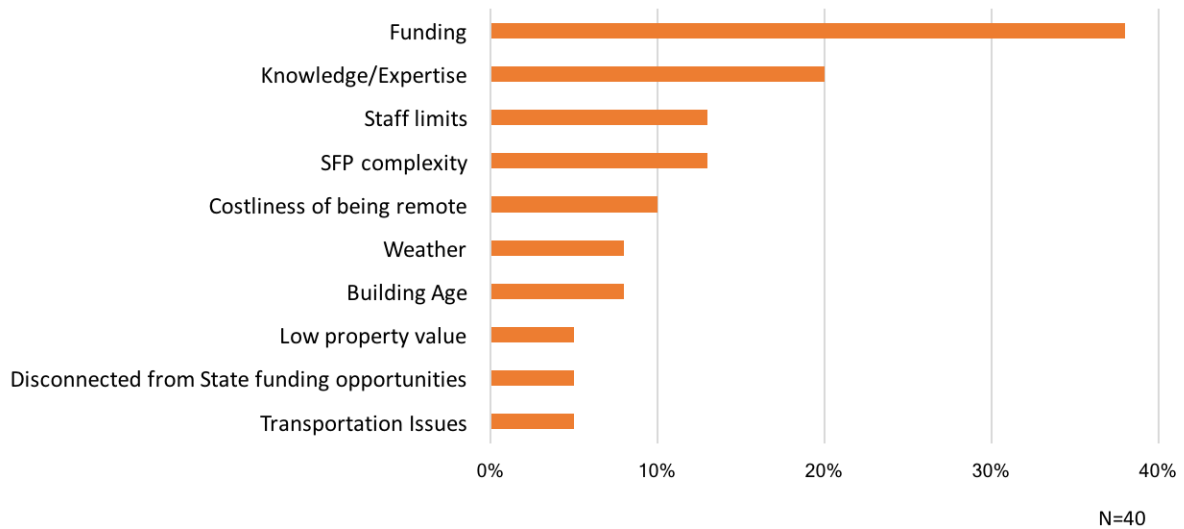
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency/proposition39/>

## Challenges Facing Small and Rural Districts

Responding district officials reported a host of challenges they face as a school administrator in planning and managing their district's facilities. Not surprisingly, lack of funding was the most often cited challenge. Following funding were four issues related to in-house expertise (lack of knowledge, SFP complexity, and staff limits).

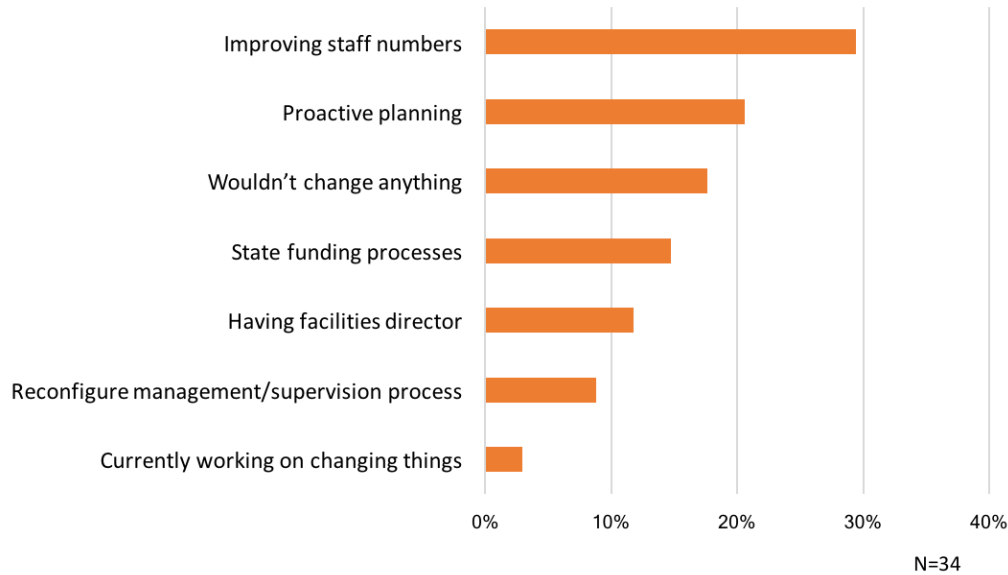
*Lack of funding and expertise on facilities are overwhelmingly the main challenges reported by school districts*

*Figure 43: Facility challenges experienced by rural and small school districts*



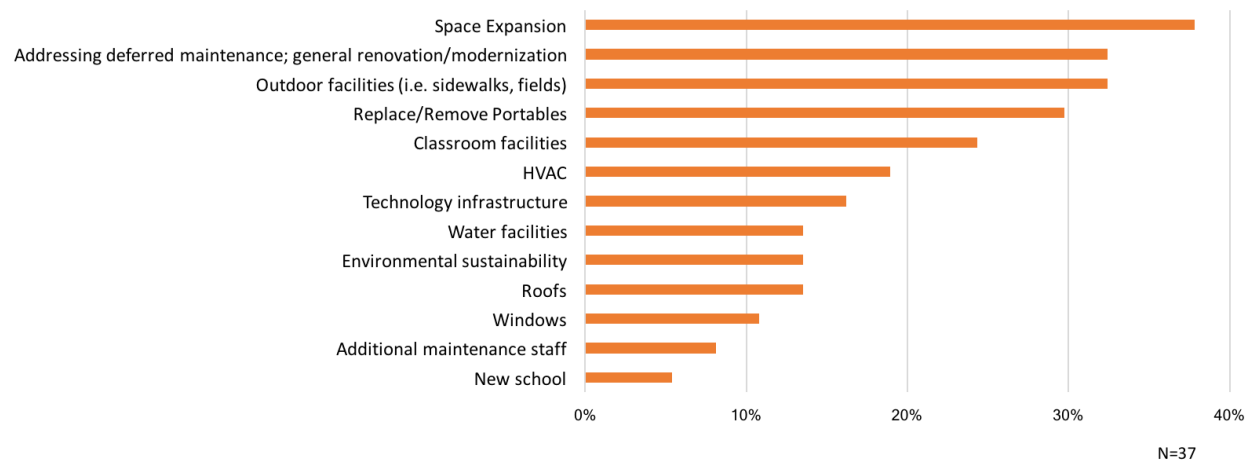
The most often-cited facility operations/management process within the district that they would you like to change or improve was increasing staff that worked on facilities.

*Figure 44: Facility operations processes district leaders would most like to change*



Asked if funding was not an obstacle, what would be their top three priority projects, respondents most often cited space expansion (38%), outdoor facilities (32%), deferred maintenance (32%), and removing portables (30%).

*Figure 45: Priority projects identified by district leaders*



## IV. Discussion and Policy Recommendations

Our findings provide important insights to state agencies and policymakers in the facility needs of small and rural school districts in California. We summarize our findings into four overarching challenges faced by small and rural school districts in California and point to implications for state policy.

### Challenge: Severe Capital Budget Constraints

An overarching challenge is that budget and capital funding constraints districts severely limit the minor and routine facility repairs and the major modernization work small/rural school district leaders would like to do. The lack of funding drives (or is driven by) many of the other, specific challenges that these districts face. Quotes illustrate this fundamental challenge of very limited facility funding:

*“Really the issue is money. We need help. We can’t do facility repairs on our own, we just can’t do it. There’s just not enough cash. We can do stopgap measures, but we can’t do things like modernization and new construction.”*

*“If the state allocation board will continue to provide for hardship funding, we will get by, but I will never get ahead.”*

*“We don’t get enough money because there’s only so much money that can go around. And in the last few years money has been set aside and invested for people needs, and the facilities have gotten put to the side.”*

*“A crucial aspect of districts’ lack of money is that they are often reactionary in responding to facility needs, rather than proactive in planning ahead or undertaking modernization or new construction efforts.”*

*“At this point, of all the things that go on with LCAP and the reporting and all of that, if the facilities aren’t falling down around us, they kind of take a secondary role out there. We don’t tend to think about them much.”*

*“I would like to improve the structure of the maintenance schedule, so that we’re looking at things and thinking ahead, and planning for and staying on top of repairs, etc. Which doesn’t always happen, because it’s one person [our maintenance person].”*

*“Things don’t get done unless they become an emergency and that’s kind of a trend that I’m trying to change in the culture here... An A/C doesn’t get repaired unless it’s gone. That kind of thing... There’s very little done with regards to routine maintenance, and there is very little funding set aside for that and we’re in the process of changing that.”*

*“Proactive planning... To me that’s a clear need, to understand that maintenance of facilities is equally as important as modernization... Maintenance means services, getting repainted - we do those things when we have to as opposed to just scheduling it in.”*

*“We have to continually do minor upgrades to keep things as good as possible, because we don’t have the funds to do anything major.”*

## Challenge: Lack of Technical Expertise and Adequate Staffing for Facilities

Too often, small and rural districts in California report not having the staff time or expertise to effectively plan, manage, and/or renovate their facilities. Hiring consultants to do this work is frequently an expense that cannot be afforded or prioritized against other needs. In many cases, it is impractical for very small districts to have maintenance specialists. Quotes from our interviews illustrate this point:

*"We do not have any background in facilities. Sometimes I do not even know what questions to ask."*

*"You have no idea who to call at the state when you need something. You have to hire a consultant to figure out who to call. I cannot call my COE to ask who I should call because they are going to bill me for asking the question."*

*"We used to go to our COE. But then, about 4 years ago, they changed their model of services to a fee based model. Before the change, COE provided a lot of support to small districts. They had people who have been in facilities for a long time to give us advice. Now when we need to apply for grants, we need to get a consultant."*

Many superintendents interviewed also noted that their districts are strapped in terms of facility staffing, both administratively and operationally. Quotes illustrate this challenge:

*"If money were no object, having an actual facilities director would be terrific... There are lots of roles that you have in a bigger district that there's nobody really to do in a small district."*

*"Sometimes things happen, and I don't get wind of them because I'm in the classroom, I'm being the Principal, I'm being the Superintendent - you know, I've been known to cook lunch if I can't find a sub for a sick cook. So sometimes I miss things... If I was only the Superintendent, or if we had a Facilities Director, we'd be more on top of what was happening - legislatively, new requirements that were coming down the pike, things we could benefit from by applying. I just think it's maybe a lack of time - focused knowledge and time [that's a challenge]."*

*"We have such a small group of people in here who are already pulled thin on the jobs that they have. And I would say... our rural schools, our personnel do a variety of things, where at larger districts there's more focus on specific areas. Anytime anything comes up, I think our biggest challenge is who's going to do that, and when's it going to get done, because we're already all spread so thin."*

*"I don't think the state agencies...really understand how small districts are. If you look at the state criteria, small districts are 2,500 or less. We're talking 18 students, so we don't have expertise, we don't have full time people. So they send things here like they send to LA, expecting some department to take care of it. Well my secretary puts it on a pile until we hit a third notice, then we'll get to it. We just do not have the manpower, or the time, or the expertise to deal with the kind of stuff they want."*

## Challenge: Limited Local Bonding Capacity for Many Small and Rural School Districts

Most superintendents cited a lack of funding as the main culprit for their facilities issues. Many small and rural districts often do not have the assessed values that larger and/or urban districts can tap into, as our analysis reveals. Sometimes, their bonding capacities are too small to pay for major projects, as one respondent articulated: “I don’t have enough bonding capacity in my jurisdiction to build a portable.” Respondents also noted that the voters in their districts are often not supportive of increased taxes to support school facility upgrades. Many respondents reported that even when they do wish to pursue local facility bonds, they do not know where to start and the process to do so is expensive and complicated. Quotes illustrate this challenge:

*“Our bonding capacity is so small that by the time we pay the underwriters, the lawyers, and other fees, we will not have enough money to get any [facility] benefits.”*

*“We are a retirement community with a lot of older, wealthier, and conservative residents. Last time we talked about putting a bond on the ballot, they campaigned against it. But they gave us a million dollars in donations.”*

*“[Our last bond] was the first one we’d ever passed. We are small, rural, and conservative, and so getting one passed was a great thing, and I think we would have little luck with doing another.”*

*“Because we’re so rural, we did not meet whatever the formula showed that would give us the capacity to do a bond, because maybe we’re so sparsely populated that it wasn’t feasible that people could... cover the cost of the bond.”*

Property wealth shapes how school facilities are built, renovated, maintained, and operated. Despite the state’s efforts to equalize public school funding, property wealth is still the leading predictor of how well California’s public school facilities are maintained and operated. Wealthy districts have well-kept facilities, while many low-income districts struggle to upkeep older school facilities.<sup>7</sup> This means that lower wealth districts are much more likely to have inadequate and unsafe school facilities. The majority (72%) of the districts in the bottom quintile of capital spending (2008-2012) are small or very small. In all size categories, rural districts have less median AV than non-rural districts. Thus, it appears that from a capital revenue perspective, small and rural school districts may face a competitive disadvantage in providing adequate and equitable facilities.

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent, J. M., & Jain, L. S. (2015). *Going it Alone: Can California’s K-12 School Districts Adequately and Equitably Fund School Facilities?* Berkeley, CA: Center for Cities + Schools, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California-Berkeley. Retrieved from [http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/uploads/Vincent\\_Jain\\_2015\\_Going\\_it\\_Alone\\_final.pdf](http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/uploads/Vincent_Jain_2015_Going_it_Alone_final.pdf)



## Challenge: State Facility Funding Mechanisms Difficult for Small Districts

Many of our interviews felt that understanding eligibility requirements and then submitting applications for state funding is complicated and overly time-consuming. Most respondents reported they have to hire outside consultants to apply for state capital grants. Sometimes, superintendents lamented that do not even know what funding is available to them. Quotes illustrate this challenge:

*"It is just terrible that we have to hire a consultant to access state funds."*

*"Our budgets are so small that we cannot afford the upfront soft costs to access funding, even if we qualify for funding. So we do not even pursue it."*

*"I have only 70 students but I still have to have a cafeteria to feed the kids, and I still have to have school buses. My budget is 100 pages so is LAUSD's. Theirs just have many more 0's."*

Many of our respondents also felt that state facilities funding mechanisms are unfair to smaller districts. Of central concern is when small or rural districts simply do not have the local funds (either because of low bonding capacity, unwilling voters, or both) to get matching funds from the state. Additionally, respondents highlighted that many of the state's facility funding formulas are based on average daily attendance (ADA), which many feel is unfair to smaller districts. Many respondents also pointed to the unique nuances that often come with being rural that greatly affect facilities, such as schools being in remote locations, sometimes in harsh weather environments that strain facilities, or accessing clean water sources – dealing with the facility implications of these issues requires continued facility investment. Respondents also noted that there are typically cost premiums for many services because rural districts are remote. Quotes illustrate these challenges:

*"Funding is tied to ADA. So what are we supposed to do when enrollment is down? Close down half of the building and let it rot?"*

*"DIR certification requirement is hard for small and rural districts. We cannot find DIR certified contractors in rural areas."*

*"The state wants to give matching grants. But some districts do not have the resources to get those funds. They can save it up, I suppose. But that means some kids can go through their whole school career in very poor facilities."*

## Recommendations

Based on our research findings, we make the following policy recommendations.

### Provide Targeted Technical Assistance to Small and Rural School Districts

Small and rural school districts in California would likely benefit greatly from free or very low cost technical assistance on facility planning, management, and construction. The State of California should explore ways to provide this technical assistance to bring value to small and rural school districts. Technical assistance should include, but not be limited to, assistance with state capital funding eligibility determination and applications, creating facility master plans, assessing existing facility conditions and needs, and developing education specifications. Technical assistance can be delivered through training and workshops offered regionally throughout the state in locations reasonably assessable to remote districts. For example, multiple respondents reported desire for a regional support center or person who can provide technical expertise on facilities related issues and can guide districts through the state funding grant application process.

Quotes from our interview views illustrate the value specialized technical assistance could bring to small and rural districts.

*“Money is hard to come by, so somebody who could keep an eye out for grants that we would have to apply for, or some kind of programs such as solar programs – where you can partner with PG&E and get some solar, and over a number of years you can see what the financial benefit is – we don’t have anybody that looks into that stuff for us.”*

*“[Facilities] are not my area of expertise, and I haven’t had much experience with it... I’d like someone to come out and walk the facilities with us - you know, what do they see?”*

*“It’s about validation from the outside: having someone come in with fresh eyes, walking the sites, with a consultant type of lens. That would be nice.”*

*“I wish there would be like an ombudsman, someone at the state department who just deals with small districts... Who understands how their end of it works, but who also understands small school districts. Someone you could call and say, oh I have this issue. Or, I want to do this, is there funding available?”*

### Assist Small and Rural School Districts in the Local Bond and Election Process

Respondents repeatedly stressed their financial challenges with regard to basic upkeep and upgrades of facilities. As our analysis shows, these are very real challenges for small and rural districts in California. The State should look at establishing a capital funding program or approach that specifically targets small and rural school districts. One way would be through looking at adequately raising their ability to pay for needed facility projects – filling the gap between their local resources and full project costs. This approach should not be entirely based on ADA and take into account the limitations that are specific to rural and small districts such as a lack of certified contractors and cost premiums due to being remote. Like the technical assistance recommendation above, the state should establish regional support centers or people who can advise and/or guide districts through the bonding and ballot process. Lastly,

multiple respondents suggested that the state should look at facilitating regional school construction and modernization bonds that group districts together and reserve portions of those funds for the participating school districts. Under such an approach, the State could serve as the organizing entity to take advantage of a larger scale bond.

### Ensure state funding addresses needs of small and rural school districts

It is clear from our findings that many small and rural school districts need more help in raising funds for new constructions and major renovations, as well as adequately maintaining their existing facilities. In tandem with technical assistance and helping districts raise local funds for capital needs, the State should look closely at reforms to the School Facility Program that alleviate competitive disadvantages. Numerous respondents voiced the opinion that the State should establish a capital funding program specifically for small/rural school districts, given their unique challenges. This type of program should look at funding formula options that are not per-student and/or have a wealth adjustment, taking into account the limitations that are specific to rural and small districts such as a lack of certified contractors and cost premiums due to being remote. Again, regional support staff who can guide districts through the grant application process would be welcome, based on our findings.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Methods and Data

Our mixed-methods approach involved two data sets.

### Data Set 1: School District Characteristics and Spending

Data set 1 assembles characteristic data (e.g., enrollment, student poverty, assessed property value, and local general obligation bond passage, state School Facility Program (SFP) capital grant allocations, etc.) for all California public school districts, from a variety of sources including the California Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and other secondary sources for years 1998-2014. We also include author-calculated data from previous studies (e.g., building inventory square footages, minimum capital spending benchmarks, etc.).

Dataset 1 contained useable data for 92% of California's public school districts (921 of 1003):

- *School district demographic data*: California Department of Education ([www.ed-data.org](http://www.ed-data.org)) and the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)]
- *School district locale codes*: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, which group districts into urban, suburb, town and rural locales. See: NCES locale codes: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/definitions.asp>
- *Local assessed value (AV)*: Eastshore Consulting. (Note: Three outlier districts (Belridge Elementary, McKittrick Elementary and Midway Elementary Districts) in Kern county were excluded from the analysis, as they have very large AV due to oil fields.)
- *School district capital outlay*: Local Education Agency (School District) Finance Survey (F-33) published by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Common Core of Data (CCD). Inflation adjusted using the Turner Construction Index (TCI).
- *School district maintenance and operations (M&O) spending*: Local Education Agency (School District) Finance Survey (F-33) published by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Common Core of Data (CCD). Inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- *California School Facility Program (SFP) grants*: California Office of Public School Construction (OPSC).
- *School district bonds*: California Department of Education ([www.ed-data.org](http://www.ed-data.org)); California Coalition for Adequate School Housing.

### Dataset 2: School District Interviews

Data set 2 comes from 40 semi-structured, open-ended interviews conducted over a four-month period in 2017 with school district leaders from small and rural school districts across California. The qualitative interviews focused on the facility-related challenges faced and what these local education leaders feel would help them overcome these challenges. Interviews were structured around four topics: opinions on the quality and adequacy of facilities, local

facility planning and management approaches, local capital planning and budgeting, and overarching challenges experienced. Sampling technique, interview protocol, and participating school district characteristics are presented in the Appendix.

We utilized a stratified random sampling technique, stratifying by district size and locale type, to obtain a sample of 40 school districts. We use 4 size and 4 locale subcategories, as described in the matrix below, to determine the distribution of California’s 518 small school districts (2,500 or less enrollment) in each subgroup. For example, there are 61 "Rural and Small Medium" districts, which make up 11.8% of all small districts. To ensure that our sample reflects the true population of school districts in the state, we randomly selected school district per this distribution. Interviews were conducted by phone and typically last about 1 hour. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

*Table 1: School District Sampling Matrix*

<i>Locale</i>	<i>School District Size (Enrollment)</i>				<i>Subtotal</i>
	<b>Very Small (1-99)</b>	<b>Small (100-499)</b>	<b>Small-Medium (500-1249)</b>	<b>Small "Plus" (1250-2500)</b>	
<b>Not Rural (NCES: "City" or "Suburb")</b>	0; 0%	15; 2.9%	25; 4.8%	41; 7.9%	18%
<b>Semi-Rural (NCES: "Town")</b>	2; .4%	10; 1.9%	44; 8.5%	43; 8.3%	19.7%
<b>Rural (NCES: "Rural Fringe" or "Rural Distant")</b>	45; 8.7%	128; 24.7%	61; 11.8%	25; 4.8%	47.9%
<b>Remote Rural (NCES: "Rural Remote")</b>	41; 7.9%	25; 4.8%	11; 2.12%	2; .4%	14.5%
<b>Subtotal</b>	17.5%	34.7%	27.3%	20.4%	518; 100%

## Appendix B: Recent Academic and Grey Literature on Rural and Small School District Facilities

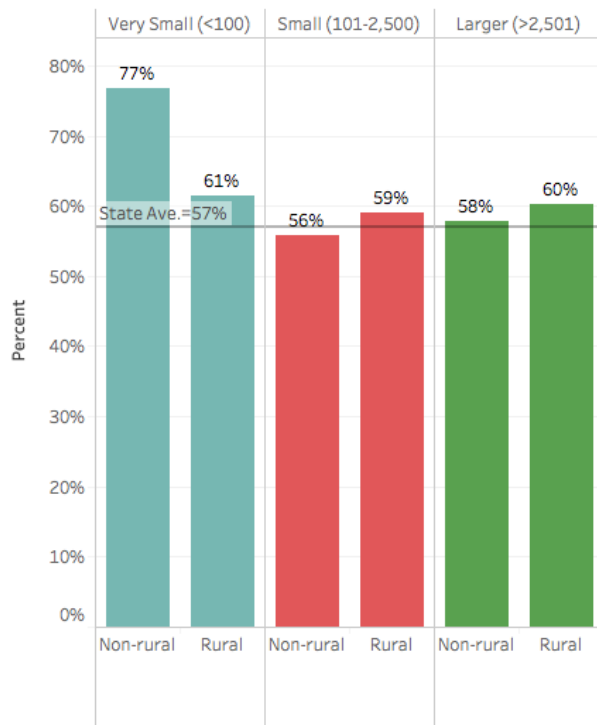
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## Appendix C: What is the relationship between Unduplicated Pupil Count (UPC) and Facilities?

Under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the State of California utilizes the “unduplicated pupil count” (UPC) as a key measure of district student disadvantage. Although there is not a causal link between students and facility quality, for equity reasons it is important to whether or not disadvantaged students may or may not be further burdened by facility inadequacies or disparities.

The percentage of UPC across rural and non-rural districts and by size is fairly even, as Figure 46 shows. However, non-rural very small districts have a much higher UPC % on average.

*Figure 46: Percent Unduplicated Pupil Count of California School Districts by Size Categories (2015)*



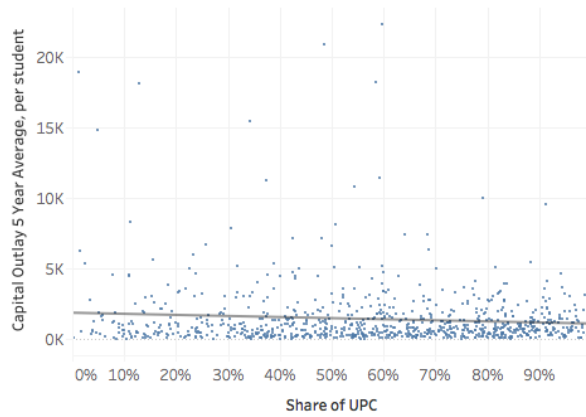
*Rural school districts have slightly higher percentages of unduplicated pupils (UPC), in small and larger districts*

Districts with a higher percentage UPC spent less per student on capital outlay and more per student on M&O. Districts with higher share of UPC have lower capital outlay (statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ), as the scatter plots below show.<sup>8</sup> We see this negative relationship in each size category, though it is not statistically significant for very small districts. In contrast, the overall relationship between the share of UPC and M&O spending is positive (statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ). The relationship is stronger for very small districts, as indicated by the steeper fitted line. However, for larger and small districts the relationship between UPC share and M&O spending is not statistically significant.

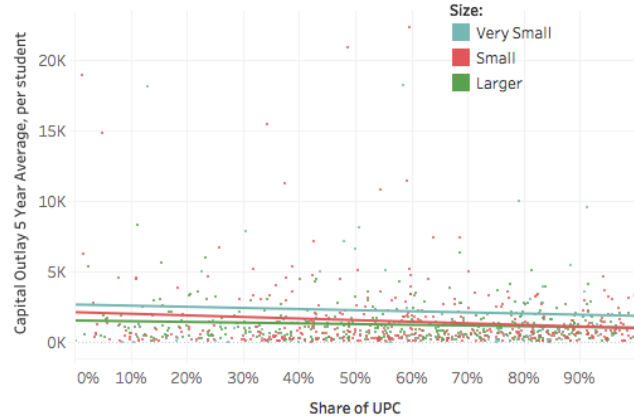
<sup>8</sup> We saw a similar relationship when we used FRPM as our income indicator, though the relationship was not statistically significant.

**Figure 47: Correlation between Unduplicated Pupil Count and Facilities Spending**

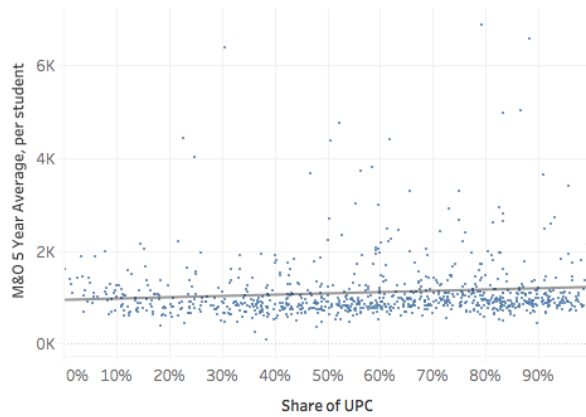
% of Unduplicated Pupil Count (2015) and Per Student Capital Outlay (2008-2012)



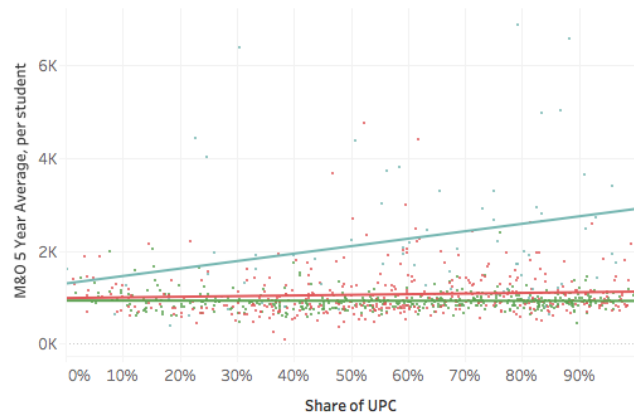
% of Unduplicated Pupil Count (2015) and Per Student Capital Outlay (2008-2012), by size



% of Unduplicated Pupil Count (2015) and Per Student M&O Spending (2008-2012)



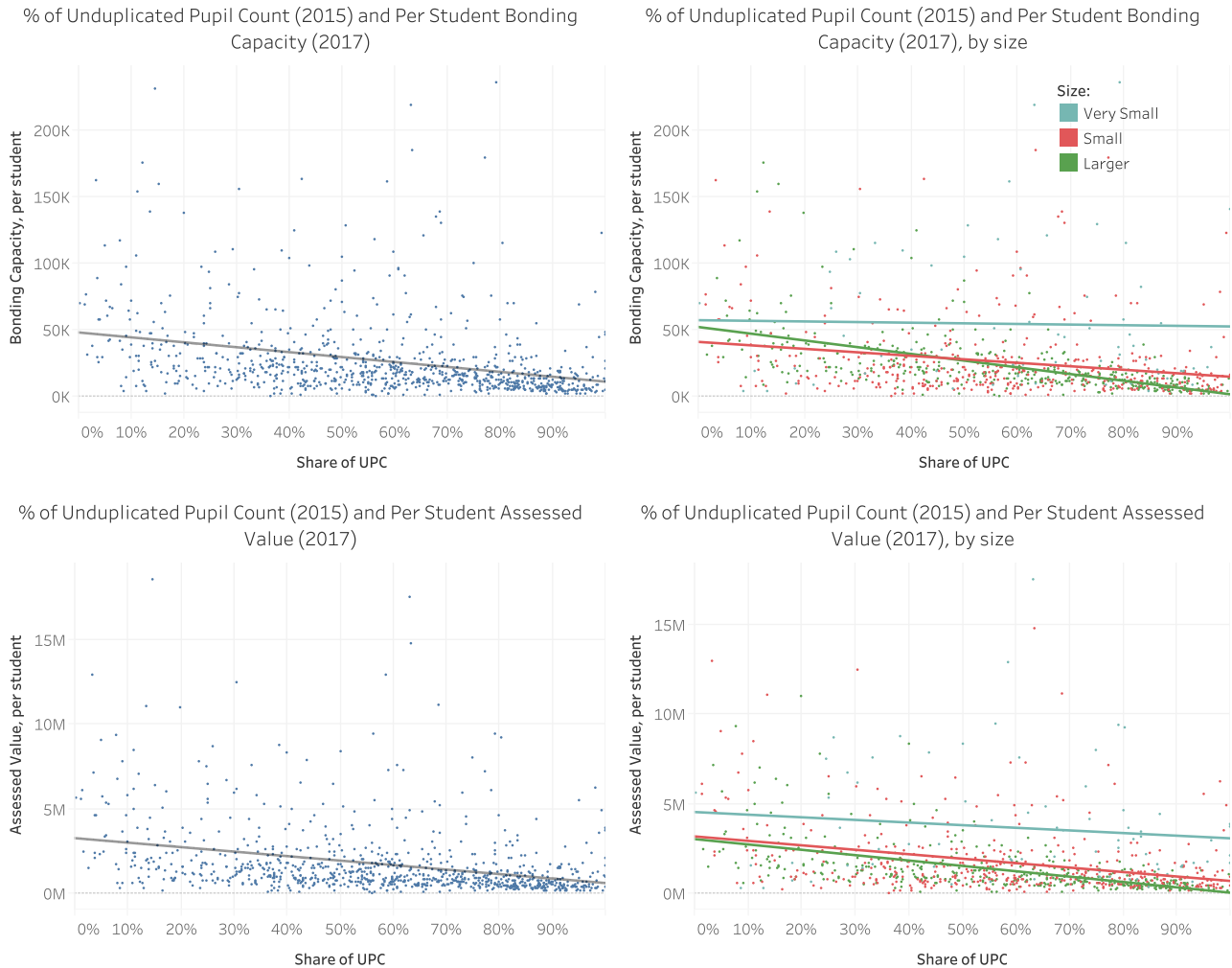
% of Unduplicated Pupil Count (2015) and Per Student M&O Spending (2008-2012), by size





Overall, we find that districts with a higher percentage of UPC have lower assessed values and lower bonding capacities. As shown below, the relationship between share of UPC and AV and between share of UPC and AV are negative (and statistically significant). The relationships are negative for all size categories, though they are not significant for very small districts.

**Figure 48: Correlation between Unduplicated Pupil Count, Bonding Capacity, and Assessed Value**



## Appendix D: Interview Instrument and Selected Results

### A. Professional Information

How many years have you worked in public education?

How many years have you worked in public education?	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>0 to 5</i>	0	0%
<i>6 to 10</i>	1	3%
<i>11 to 15</i>	3	8%
<i>16 to 20</i>	2	5%
<i>21 to 25</i>	15	38%
<i>26 to 30</i>	9	23%
<i>31 to 35</i>	5	13%
<i>36 to 40</i>	3	8%
<i>41+</i>	2	5%
<i>Total</i>	40	100%

How many years have you worked in public education *administration*?

How many years have you worked in public education administration?	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>0 to 5</i>	2	7%
<i>6 to 10</i>	7	17%
<i>11 to 15</i>	7	17%
<i>16 to 20</i>	10	24%
<i>21 to 25</i>	9	22%
<i>26 to 30</i>	3	7%
<i>31 to 35</i>	1	2%
<i>36 to 40</i>	1	2%
<i>Total</i>	40	100%

How many years have you been working at your current school district?

How many years have you been working at your current school district?	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>0 to 5</i>	18	45%
<i>6 to 10</i>	8	20%
<i>11 to 15</i>	4	10%
<i>16 to 20</i>	2	5%
<i>21 to 25</i>	3	8%
<i>26 to 30</i>	5	13%
<i>Total</i>	40	100%

## B. Opinions on the Quality and Adequacy of Facilities in Your District

1. How many schools are in your district? (And: total square footage?)
2. Estimate percentage of the school space that is the following ages:

Age of facilities	N	Percent
<i>Districts with 50%+ space being under 10 years old</i>	2	5%
<i>Districts with 50%+ space being 10-19 years old</i>	0	0%
<i>Districts with 50%+ space being 20-39 years old</i>	15	37%
<i>Districts with 50%+ space being 40-79 years old</i>	18	45%
<i>Districts with 50%+ space being 80+ years old</i>	4	10%

3. Do you have any portable classroom buildings? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Do you own or lease them? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. How would you rate the general condition of the portables on a scale of 1 to 5?  
(1=poor, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5      don't know

4. Now, I'd like to have you score/rate your buildings and grounds on a scale of 1 to 5 for a few qualities that I will read off. (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent)

Do your buildings and grounds:

- Support a range of teaching methodologies (e.g., small groups, project-based learning, science, STEM, etc.)?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5      don't know  
poor                      fair                      average                      good                      excellent

- Have adequate technology infrastructure, such as electrical capacity, internet band width, etc.)? (Note: not *equipment technology*, e.g., iPads, computers, etc.)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5      don't know  
poor                      fair                      average                      good                      excellent

- Are they reasonably energy efficient? In other words, do you feel that your energy/utility expenditures are reasonable for your facility sizes?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5      don't know  
poor                      fair                      average                      good                      excellent

- Have appropriately healthy environments for students and staff? (e.g., good indoor air quality, acceptable noise levels, thermal comfort, etc.)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5      don't know  
poor                      fair                      average                      good                      excellent

- Have the essential core facilities needed for your students? (e.g., labs, instructional rooms, extra-curricular rooms, etc.)
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      don't know  
poor                      fair                      average                      good                      excellent

5. In your opinion as an educational leader/administrator, are you able to budget/spend enough on facility cleaning, upkeep, and maintenance?

<b>Are you able to budget/spend enough on facility cleaning, upkeep, and maintenance?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	19	49%
No	18	46%
<i>Varies year to year</i>	2	5%
Total	39	100%

6. What are the most common facility related complaints you receive from teachers, students, and parents?

<b>What are the most common facility related complaints you receive from teachers, students, and parents? (N=40)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>HVAC</i>	15	38%
<i>Outdoor facilities (i.e. shade, fields, sidewalks)</i>	10	25%
<i>Not many complaints</i>	8	20%
<i>General upkeep &amp; cleanliness</i>	6	15%
<i>Old facilities</i>	4	10%
<i>Space constraints</i>	4	10%
<i>Leaks</i>	4	10%
<i>Water facilities issues</i>	3	8%

### **C. Understanding Your Local Facility Planning and Management Approaches/Strategies**

Now I'd like to ask you about how your district does its facility planning and management.

7. Does your district have a Facility Master Plan?
- If so, when was it created/updated?
  - What was the process and who was involved?
  - Can you send me a copy?

8. Does your district have a Facility Condition Index or Assessment database?
9. Does your district have an Education Specification document? [May need to define for them: An Educational Specification evaluates the buildings and curriculum, in concert, to determine if the structures are in place to support what the community has defined as educational priorities. It's more than a building plan; it's an education plan that guides architects, school designers, and curriculum planners;  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/sf/documents/edspecs.pdf>
  - a. If so, when was it created?
10. How did you address facilities and good repair in your LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan)? Was a parent advisory committee involved? (*Note: facilities “in good repair” as defined in the Education Code is a required thing to address in Priority 1, Basic Necessities, in the state’s LCAP template*)
11. How do you manage/track your facility records and maintenance information?

<b>How do you manage/track your facility records and maintenance information? (N=40)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>General spreadsheet/notes</i>	17	43%
<i>Specified software/work order system (e.g., School Dude)</i>	12	30%
<i>Use facility study/report or FIT</i>	7	18%
<i>Difficulty implementing system or don't do it</i>	5	13%
<i>Informal procedures (e.g., emails)</i>	5	13%

12. How do you make decisions about prioritizing facility improvements?
  - a. Who makes those decisions in your district?
  - b. Where do you get the information and advice needed to make these decisions? (For example: from an architect, consultants, etc.?)
13. Who serves as “facility director/manager” for your district? (in other words, is there a dedicated staff for this?)

<b>Dedicated Staff for Facilities</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Yes</i>	21	52.5%
<i>No</i>	19	47.5%
Total	40	100%

14. How many FTE does your district have that work on facilities operations, management, and planning? (this would include custodial and grounds)

15. Do you work with your County Office of Education on facility matters? If so, what do they help you with?

<b>Do you work with your County Office of Education on facility matters?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Yes</i>	20	51%
<i>No</i>	14	36%
<i>Rarely</i>	5	13%
Total	39	100%

16. Is your district experiencing any pressures, or discussions about, consolidating with other districts?

<b>Is your district experiencing any pressures, or discussions about, consolidating with other districts?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>No</i>	32	86%
<i>Yes</i>	4	11%
<i>Not sure</i>	1	3%
Total	37	100%

17. Do you share any space on your campus(es) with a County Office of Education program, Head Start Program, Charter School, or other program by another entity?

<b>Do you share any space on your campus(es) with a County Office of Education program, Head Start program, charter school, or other program by another entity?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Yes</i>	24	63%
<i>No</i>	14	37%
Total	38	100%

## D. Understanding Your Capital Planning/Budgeting

18. When was the last time your district put a facility bond on the ballot?

<b>When was the last time your district put a facility bond on the ballot?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Last 5 years</i>	9	23.7%
<i>6-10 years ago</i>	1	2.6%
<i>11-15 years ago</i>	8	21.1%
<i>16-20 years ago</i>	4	10.5%
<i>21+ years ago</i>	2	5.3%
<i>Unsure</i>	6	15.8%
<i>Never</i>	8	21%
Total	38	100%

19. Do you have plans for (or foresee going for) a local facility bond in the near future (i.e., next 5 years)? If yes, when? If not, why not?

<b>Do you have plans for (or foresee going for) a local facility bond in the near future (i.e., next 5 years)?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>No</i>	31	77.5%
<i>Yes</i>	6	15%
<i>Maybe</i>	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

20. In the past 5 years, have you done any modernization (major renovation or additions; campus wide upgrades such as data, communications, fire alarm) work?

a. If so, what? How many schools?

<b>In the past 5 years, have you done any modernization (major renovation or additions; campus wide upgrades such as data, communications, fire alarm) work?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Yes</i>	21	54%
<i>No</i>	18	46%
Total	39	100%

21. In the past 5 years, have you done any new construction?  
 a. If so, what? How many schools?

In the past 5 years, have you done any new construction?	N	Percent
No	27	69%
Yes	10	26%
Currently in planning stage	2	5%
Total	39	100%

22. Have you made any emergency repairs in the past 5 years?  
 a. If so, what were the emergencies?

Have you made any emergency repairs in the past 5 years?	N	Percent
Yes	22	59%
No	14	38%
Not sure	1	3%
Total	37	100%

23. Did you receive Prop 39 energy efficiency funds?<sup>9</sup>  
 a. If so, what did you use them for?  
 b. Did you couple them with state SFP funds?  
 c. If not, why not?

Did you receive Prop 39 energy efficiency funds?	N	Percent
Yes	35	92%
In application process	2	5%
No	1	3%
Total	38	100%

For districts that received Prop 39 funds, did they combine Prop 39 and SFP funds?	N	Percent
No	28	85%
Yes	3	9%
Unsure	2	6%
Total	33	

24. Now that Deferred Maintenance program money is rolled into the LCFF grant, how has your M&O spending changed? (Increased? Decreased?)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency/proposition39/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/opsc/Programs/deferredmaintenanceprogram.aspx>



<b>Now that Deferred Maintenance program money is rolled into the LCFF grant, how has your M&amp;O spending changed?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Stayed the same</i>	24	67%
<i>Increased</i>	5	14%
<i>Decreased</i>	4	11%
<i>Not sure</i>	3	8%
Total	36	

25. Have you looked into whether or not you qualify for the Facility Hardship Program of California’s School Facility Program?<sup>11</sup>

a. If so, explain why and how you qualify. If you have not looked into it, why not?

<b>Have you looked into whether or not you qualify for the Facility Hardship Program of California’s School Facility Program?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Yes</i>	20	56%
<i>No</i>	13	36%
<i>Not sure</i>	3	8%
Total	36	100%

Of the more than half (56%) of responding districts who report looking into whether or not they qualify for the Facility Hardship Program, half of them (N=10) claimed they did not qualify and a fifth of them (N=4) said they were in the process of exploring it. The qualifying reasons given by the remaining quarter (N=5) included water issues, condemned buildings, having lots of portables, having large projects, and qualifying as part of modernization money. More than a third (36%) of responding districts report that they have not looked into whether or not they would qualify for the Facility Hardship Program of California’s School Facility Program. Reasons given for not looking into it include lack of time, knowing they would not qualify, not having a need, and not being familiar with it.

26. Is your district experiencing residential growth that will likely translate into enrollment growth in the next 5 years?

<b>Is your district experiencing residential growth that will likely translate into enrollment growth in the next 5 years?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>No</i>	25	68%
<i>Yes</i>	8	22%
<i>Not sure</i>	4	11%
Total	37	

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/opsc/Programs/facilityhardshipprogram.aspx>

## E. Conclusion: Challenges & State Assistance

27. What would you say are the 3 biggest challenges you face as a school administrator in planning and managing your district's facilities?

What would you say are the 3 biggest challenges you face as a school administrator in planning and managing your district's facilities? (N=40)	N	Percent
<i>Funding</i>	15	38%
<i>Lack of Knowledge/Expertise</i>	8	20%
<i>SFP complexity</i>	5	13%
<i>Staff Limits</i>	5	13%
<i>Costliness of being remote</i>	4	10%
<i>Building Age</i>	3	8%
<i>Weather</i>	3	8%
<i>Transportation Issues</i>	2	5%
<i>Disconnected from State funding opportunities</i>	2	5%
<i>Low property value</i>	2	5%
<i>Coordination</i>	1	3%
<i>Prioritizing limited funds</i>	1	3%
<i>Bonding Capacity</i>	1	3%
<i>Dry rot</i>	1	3%
<i>M&amp;O staff funding</i>	1	3%
<i>Lack of Board focus on facilities</i>	1	3%
<i>Community agreement</i>	1	3%
<i>DAR certification</i>	1	3%
<i>Community culture of mediocrity</i>	1	3%
<i>Expensive DSA</i>	1	3%
<i>Office space</i>	1	3%

28. What facility operations/management processes within your district would you like to change/improve?

<b>What facility operations/management processes within your district would you like to change/improve? (N=34)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Improving staff numbers</i>	10	29%
<i>Proactive planning</i>	7	21%
<i>Wouldn't change anything</i>	6	18%
<i>State funding processes</i>	5	15%
<i>Having facilities director</i>	4	12%
<i>Reconfigure management/supervision process</i>	3	9%
<i>Currently working on changing things</i>	1	3%

29. If funding was not an obstacle, what would be your top three priority projects?

<b>If funding was not an obstacle, what would be your top three priority projects? (N=37)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Space expansion</i>	14	38%
<i>Outdoor facilities (i.e. sidewalks, fields)</i>	12	32%
<i>Addressing deferred maintenance; general renovation/modernization</i>	12	32%
<i>Replace/remove portables</i>	11	30%
<i>Updating classroom facilities</i>	9	24%
<i>HVAC</i>	7	19%
<i>Technology infrastructure</i>	6	16%
<i>Roofs</i>	5	14%
<i>Environmental sustainability</i>	5	14%
<i>Water facilities</i>	5	14%
<i>Windows</i>	4	11%
<i>Hiring additional maintenance staff</i>	3	8%
<i>New school</i>	2	5%
<i>Corrosion proofing</i>	1	3%
<i>Updating bathrooms</i>	1	3%
<i>School relocation</i>	1	3%
<i>Seismic issues</i>	1	3%
<i>Emergency lock down systems</i>	1	3%

30. What services or assistance could state agencies provide to help your district plan, manage, and improve your facilities?
31. What do you think state leaders need to better understand about the facility-related issues small/rural school districts in CA face?

VERBATIM RESPONSES

1	We're operating on a shoestring - doesn't leave very much for textbooks, instructional materials, and then facilities.
2	There are nuances for rural school districts - for instance, being hooked up to canal water vs normal water. Any type of support and understanding of those would be good. Understanding those nuances is key.
3	Sometimes the money isn't there, the number of students aren't there - get trapped in the formula where there isn't enough money to keep the facilities running. The best thing would be if the state got involved in a good way - making available funds to work with rural schools where things might not be working as well.
4	One of the most important things that state leaders should know is that school districts have a mission to provide education for our kids. But it also requires for housing to take place. In rural districts, it is not possible to do both. We are generally low populated. We are generally economically disadvantaged. So we don't have access to bond funds or parcel taxes that urban and more wealthy school districts have access to. I think that state leaders need to recognize that every kid in California needs to be treated equally, regardless of where they are being provided with their education. It is the state's responsibility, working with the local education boards, to ensure that each kid has safe, clean and healthy learning environment and adequate facilities.
5	I don't think any of the state agencies really understand how small, small districts are - the criteria is 2500 or less, but we're talking 18 students. We just don't have the manpower or the time or the expertise to deal with anything. Basically, at this point we want them to stay away. It's not tailored to how small, small districts really are. I don't know that the state truly understands how rural and how small some districts in the state really are. I wish there was an ombudsman - someone at the state we could contact who would recognize how it works for us. And tell us if there's even funding available for stuff. One contact who is knowledgeable. But again, we rely on the county office a lot, though they don't do much with facilities.
6	Small districts have less kids, so they have less money, so they don't have as much flexibility with maintenance and other facility issues. Really the issue is money. We need help - we can't do facility repairs on our own. We can only do stopgap measure, but not modernization and new construction.
7	One of the changes we were hoping for was a different application process. The process is just taking time away from me and my business manager. Also, with our budgets as small as they are, any project is potentially extremely damaging to our budget, so we have to continually do minor upgrades to keep things as good as possible. Which may not be that different from larger districts. Our reserve is up to 35%, but we still don't feel comfortable with that. If we had a major facility incident, that could be extremely damaging. Our budgets are so small and everything is so expensive, we can't keep up on facilities.
8	Money doesn't go very far. Especially because we need to pay prevailing wages. Would be nice for them to see it in practice.
9	Budget. They need to understand that we don't have the funding coming in. To maintain a building in Santa Cruz costs the same as in Carmel.

- 10** Get that modernization money flowing. There's a huge backlog. And for the whole construction process, that's a complex process but if they were more streamlined, then we could get by without consultant help. Simplifying things would help us.
- 11** Comparably speaking - we just don't have the percentage to set aside for facilities and maintenance. And our staffs are already paid less. We have a difficult time managing our budgets. If the state could have somebody come out and allocate dollars to us, that'd be a really efficient way of meeting the needs of rural schools.
- 12** I'm not sure most of our senators know what the "other California" looks like.
- 13** There are challenges specific to small districts. You have facilities that need to accommodate multiple use rooms. Campus size itself maybe a problem for rural districts. We don't have that problem. But it would be nice to replace the old portables. Portables in general do not look great and do not last very long.
- 14** Because they don't have the same amount of personnel to long term plan, we rely on support from the County Office of Ed. That support has been very strong but it ebbs. From a state level, the facilities decisions at legislative level - when the input for this is made by big districts, it doesn't take small districts into account. Something like requirement of transitional kindergarten, which affected facilities, they didn't think about how that would affect small districts that didn't have the facilities for that. They need to consider small districts in terms of policy.
- 15** I have not worked at a small district long enough to answer this question. This district is also different from most small districts. It is not a high poverty district.
- 16** We have the largest economy in the country. Yet, we are the 49th in education funding. Why? There is a reason why there is a teacher shortage. Nobody wants to teach at these schools. We get lumped in with larger schools. Just because we are small we should not get mistreated. When we pass laws, we need to pay attention to details. How about we have superintendent focus groups before we pass any laws. State leaders need to come and visit what small rural districts are like. Because we small and rural districts tend to be more conservative, we tend to elect conservative, which means that we have no voice in the Democratic super majority assembly.
- 17** I know we need regulations and compliance. But most of the regulations are created for much larger schools than we are. Some of these regulations are onerous to small districts that do not even have facilities director or dedicated maintenance people. They also need understand that small and rural communities place great value on their schools.
- 18** They need have a better understanding about what it is like to live in a rural district, especially in a mountainous area. Complying with ADA is an issue here. We do not have the business infrastructure here to develop any partnerships. We do not have big developments; our developer fees are very limited. Our community has a lot of retirees who are not eager to pass bonds. There should be a separate school facilities program for rural communities. It is just not fair.
- 19** How remote we are, how harsh the conditions are on our buildings. It's really a different world than the urbans/suburbans. In small/rural districts, schools are the center for a lot of things - the school districts often provide a community center, so more demands on our facilities.
- 20** Small districts lack expertise and resources to access funds. State leaders need to just get out and walk with superintendents of small districts.
- 21** 1. We don't have the internal expertise in what we need to and the processes we need to follow. Getting people with that expertise out to rural areas is very challenging and costly. 2. Not all COE's support their districts equally. Ideally, we should be able to get this support from our COE. Our neighbor has a great COE that support them. Our COE tells us to hire a consultant. It is insulting and not helpful at all.

- 22 We do not have the bonding capacity or the ability to pass bonds. We also do not have the manpower to maintain our facilities like urban districts do. We typically have harsher environments, which means more wear and tear. And we do not have enough people to deal with them.
- 23 Funding process is very complicated for small districts. We have the same requirements as large district.
- 24 Big thing for me is I'm doing it all and I don't have time for a lot of other stuff like...I don't have assistants. I don't even have a secretary so I'm making all the phone calls and doing this. when there's issues.... I have a thing that needs to get done and its, I've known about a month and I haven't done it because I'm y'know... small schools, we wear many, many hats. and for me, I'm doing CALPADS, I'm writing LCAP, I'm doing, assigning students, I'm going out to buy supplies and doing all the vendor recs. I've met with probably 30 different contractors this summer as far as getting carpet and paint and landscaping and asphalt. adding that more bureaucracy or red tape is extremely, extremely difficult because we don't have the time. during the school year I'm doing lunch duty. So, there's 45 minutes out of my day that I can't be making phone calls or talking because I'm out there, y'know, watching kids.
- 25 The money that comes in is not enough to do what you actually need to do. We cannot do anything about thing like increases in employee costs. 85% our budget is people. So the remaining 15% is for everything else.
- 26 The interesting thing about a small, we call them smalls around here, is you know, it's a small district. So, we still have all the same requirements -accountability and paperwork and all that stuff that a large district would be required to do. I just came from a large district and I had a huge, bloated district office that did all the things that I now personally do. I do all the special ed, I do help with the facilities. And when I say help with the facilities, I was actually catching squirrels two weeks ago, into the school year. Because we're overrun with squirrels and I'm the guy out there setting traps and doing that. And it's funny to watch County of Ed people coming up, when I'm coming around the corner with a live trap with 20 squirrels in it. Because other superintendents don't do that sort of stuff. But that's what smalls have to do -I have to go up on the roof and fix things, because if there's no one else available to do it, I have to do it. And I think that's what a lot of people don't understand with smalls, is that we just don't have the people, and that you just don't have a facilities guy, or an HVAC guy, we have to learn those things. I have to run to Home Depot lots of times to get parts for my maintenance guys.
- 27 Rural can mean a lot of different things, so there are some very rural districts like ours. We just don't operate like everybody else. Our two-classroom school is so small, it's like managing a home. To even get contractors out here, it costs too much due to driving/gas. There really isn't much here other than the school. And we just don't have the staff to seek funds for facilities. Also, don't assume that a district has a facilities director - maybe make a list of districts (state-wide or county-wide) that don't have a facilities director and offer combined services/resources to them.
- 28 Biggest issue is that whenever we look at a problem in the state, statistics are coming out of large urban areas. This recent bond passed last year is not really going to reach us in the same way it helps larger districts. The one size fits all approach doesn't work. We need a caveat that's specific to small districts, part of the law. Things get passed that really help big districts but not us. We also face the challenge of not having local contractors, so we're paying a premium for them to travel. And we don't have enough contractors for competitive bids, so we end up paying more. Another note: We have a small district (less than 10 kids) that contracts administration with us. So we have to do everything twice (2 LCAPS for instance). We're starting to see this model, one district administration providing services to another district.
- 29 The extreme distances people commute (30-40 miles), weather extremes. Regional experts. Prop 39. Fine tuning Prop 39.

- 30** We don't have resources at the ready. We don't have a tile store, for instance. It's important for the state to understand that we don't have access to resources that bigger urban or suburban districts have access to. Puts a bigger strain on resources because of the rural, remote location. We tend to patch things until they break, and due to deferred maintenance going away, it's now up to the districts to manage their funds themselves.
- 31** when people hear rural they thing "LCFF winners" but not the case, but don't benefit from reduced lunch funds concentration because they are higher socio-economic
- 32** I think they need to understand that we are, all of us, are working in schools that were built for a completely different purpose than what should be occurring with students now. Meaning we got buildings from the 50s and 60s and 70s primarily that aren't designed to help students learn with the kind of technologies and resources that are available now. And so they need to understand that it's like when General Motors had to retrofit their entire production operation to make it modern and competitive? That's kinds of what schools and facilities need to happen (chuckles). We need to sit down and say "Woah. We're working out of buildings that were designed to have kids in rows and seats with a chalkboard." And that isn't how business functions, that's not how the world is anymore. So they need to understand that we need to completely redesign schools.
- 33** Geographical location is key. And I know the state can act quickly when they need to. I think we need to spend more money on the entire infrastructure of the state, and schools are one piece of the infrastructure. I need to have someone I can call at the state. No one here has time to research what we need to do. To me it just has to be a streamlined process.
- 34** I think it comes down to the capacity of a small number of individuals taking on all of the requirements that are set forth across all areas of education. And so even the increase in mandates and requirement areas that do not seem to be connected to facilities take away time and resources that could be directed toward facilities. I imagine this becomes, we're a district of 1600, I imagine the smaller the district the more complex that becomes because the staff is smaller, yet it has the small number of responsibilities. So using myself as the example, I am a beginning 4th year superintendent and essentially, who came up through the curriculum side of things yet I am tasked to be the facilities manager in our district and that can be a challenge. And again, I know I'm talking in circles on this one a little bit, but to recap that. Each time there is an additional demand placed on districts, even if its outside the area of facilities, ultimately for the small district is takes away focus from other areas such as facilities.
- 35** I think they just need to, the two issues, the smaller school takes a beating because of the weather and because of the lack of funding. We're not getting the same, we don't have the opportunities that a large district with a lot funds would have, so that's the first thing to be cognizant of. The second thing, because of limited resource I find there is a desire for more help, which I think is really important. Then the population of kids we serve. We serve kids from poverty. These are the kids that have the greatest need so they should have the nicest facilities because they have the greatest need. So how do we make that happen.

- 36 Well I don't know if this is facilities and maintenance. And I think they got it because they changed the law, that public works thing with \$1000 just [chuckles] it was tying everybody's hands, we couldn't get any projects done. And I'm sitting there on the computer and I have 6 or 7 projects on the computer, I mean come on. I got a lot of other responsibilities, I don't have time for this [laughs]. And like, and what's the point? What are they doing with that after its posted? Was anything ever done with any of that? I think they do get it, they get it, I think they know that it wasn't, that it's not perfect. I kind of have a concern that they are going to start fining people, I'm not real big on that as a solution. I hope it doesn't run more small guys out of business. But I think the state pretty much gets it. I think that people keep them informed. I think the whole system needs to be less elaborate and easier to circumvent. I don't think it should be an apply process. I think you should get so much money for building on a regular basis and then you know. If you want to save that up for a new building or whatever, they you've got that money to do with what you want to do instead of going in and okay, I'm on the list. I'm number 165 but the governor took all the money this year. You know that might be fine if I had a project manager sitting around doing nothing all day but when I got a bunch of other stuff to do, that's a gamble I'm not ready to take on.
- 37 Well they need to understand exactly what I was saying before. We have limited budget and limited personnel and we need to be able to maximize the use of every nickel. When we're having to pay extra for prevailing wage or whatever, for jobs, that really don't make sense to have to do that. We're having to force contractors to be [unintelligible] contractors and then pay themselves prevailing wage so that we can get them to work on our facilities. Everything becomes more expensive for everybody. So we need to consider so legislative relief on some of that stuff. Even if it just went back to the way it was the year before last, that would be great. The safety part of the code, I'm good with. The ADA accessibility part of the code, I'm good with. I totally understand that stuff. The part where you're doing gimmies to the trade unions in the way that you have to hire contractors and that there are even restrictions on using your own people for something. That's where it doesn't make any sense. And it's not really serving the public. And it becomes more expensive for everybody. So that's the stuff that I'd love to see some relief on but the rest of it, you know. They could streamline the process for DSAs. They could streamline a few things in that regard I suppose. Though I've had some great DSA support and everything. So I'm not trying to diss them at all. I have good relationships. You know, and it's a couple other things where its gonna sound stupid but where they sort of waste time. Like right now, this is the second year we've been required to test all employees that are going to use any kind of pesticide, even if it's a Clorox wipe. They have to take a one hour course. And you know, I can see taking it once. But to take it every single year is taking away from the time we can spend with those people to do professional development that matters to kids. And they've already had the class. If they take it once, it should be sufficient. But instead, just be able to use the Clorox wipe on the desks when the kids had the sneezes, they have to take an hour course which is ridiculous. So it's like when the state makes these little rules, they have to think about really what is the upstream on it. And how is that the best use of people's time. And can we do that another way that doesn't waste people's time.
- 38 I was working at [redacted] before. The school is built on a hillside. The ground was leveled out. For the playground, over the years, the playground started to slide down the hill. We had to dig these holes into the ground and place a retaining wall, which was extremely expensive. We couldn't get any funding for that, so ended up getting donations from community members to get a nice playground. That would have been our whole year budget to get that job done. To do a job, it can wipe out your whole budget if you don't have access to funding to get those services done. Small school districts have the same things. Might be on a smaller scale, but you have to do the same things that everyone else.



- 39** It just seems like what happens, and I don't know the realities, but we've applied for various facilities, grants, and things over the years. Just smaller dollar amounts, \$50,000, \$75,000, those types of things, that seem to always go to the larger districts. And I don't know if it's because they look at, well they're serving more students, or those types of things. Now, I feel very positively benefited by the fact that six years ago we were able to get \$4 million dollars, plus, to remodel our building that greatly needed something. It had been, it was 1970 since anything had been done here. And it was greatly in need of a redo, which we got. So, at this point we're just trying to stay on top of things, keep it up to snuff, because the reality is that I don't think we'd ever get another dollar based on our size. I think they would look at us and say, nope, you need to consolidate or you need to do something else. We live in the fourth largest or fifth largest county in the state, square miles wise, but if we have 25 school districts in our county, and I believe we are still the smallest high school district in the state of California. And, I think it's just numbers. They look at who is being served, and any type of funds come available that's essentially where they go. So, I consider us fortunate to have gotten the remodel, we're going to try to keep things as up-to-date and up-to-snuff as we can with our deferred budget and budget streams, which right now we are fairly comfortable. If we start losing more students then who knows what going to happen in the next 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 years. Because they're not, people aren't jamming the highways coming here to move because there is not a lot of industry, there is not a lot of things for people to move here for. So, I mean being a community of probably less than 1,700 now, and we have other larger communities within an hour or less, I don't see the State throwing more money at us.
- 40** I think because of our size and there's a lack of—we don't have the ability to manage them quite the same as people within larger schools—there's those economies of scale built in, and we just don't have that. So, the percentage that we spend on facility maintenance is higher. We're lucky that we can consolidate costs to single campus, but for most of us it's difficult for us to adequately manage those facilities. There's also a lot of us that are dealing with a fluctuation with enrollment. We're smaller, and it can go into extremes and we need facilities that can scale back and forth.