CHARTER SCHOOL
FACILITIES INITIATIVE

CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES INITIATIVE
INITIAL FINDINGS FROM TWELVE STATES

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COLORADO LEAGUE of CHARTER SCHOOLS
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National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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AIR
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PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Charter schools across the nation struggle with inadequate and costly facilities. Recognizing the need for accurate facilities-related data, the Colorado League of Charter Schools ("the League") developed the Charter School Facilities Survey. The Survey was first administered to charter schools across the state of Colorado. The League published the results of the Colorado Charter School Facilities Survey in a 2008 report entitled "*Shortchanged Charters: How Funding Disparities Hurt Colorado's Charter Schools.*" With the help of the Shortchanged Charters Report, the League was able to move forward state legislation and local policy changes that have positively impacted Colorado's charter schools.

Eager to help other states obtain similar legislative success for their charter schools, the League launched the Charter School Facilities Initiative ("CSFI") in conjunction with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (the "Alliance"). The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research ("AIR") [1] has been subcontracting with the Colorado League of Charter Schools to collect the research and data on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education since October of 2011. To date, AIR has subcontracted for the data collection and research of charter school facilities in seven states[1]: Arkansas[2], Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. Partnering with other organizations, the League has also surveyed Georgia, Indiana, Tennessee and Texas. The goal of the CSFI is to identify prominent shortcomings in the current capital landscape and to develop public policy recommendations leading to a comprehensive, long-range system for providing adequate and equitable facilities for public charter schools.

To that end, the CSFI uses the Charter School Facilities Survey to gather objective, reliable, and comprehensive facilities data from each partner state's charter community. With assistance from the participating states' charter support organization ("CSO"), the League customized each state survey to fit the local context. The League's research team assisted with data collection and data analysis and provided each CSO with a state-specific report. Reports for Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Texas are currently available on the CSFI website: www.facilitiesinitiative.org. Final reports from Arkansas, Rhode Island, and South Carolina will be available on the website after each state has released their respective report to their community and local media. To date, 13 states have participated in the Initiative. Table 1 outlines the states that have participated and the timeframe in which the data collection occurred. This report analyzes only 12 of those 13 states as Arkansas data was collected in late spring and the data was not yet available during the analysis represented in this document.

1 The CSFI is partially funded by the National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research ("AIR") as part of its mission to provide the resources, information, and technical assistance to support high-quality charter schools. The Resource Center is funded through the U.S. Department of Education.

2 Arkansas data was collected in the late spring, therefore, the data was not available during the analysis represented in this document.

Table 1. Timeline of Data Collection for the Charter School Facilities Initiative through Spring 2013

Semester, Year of Participation	States that have Participated in the Charter School Facilities Initiative as of November 2013
Fall, 2007	Colorado
Fall, 2010	Georgia, Indiana, Texas
Fall, 2011	New York, Tennessee
Spring, 2012	Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey
Spring, 2013	Arkansas*, Rhode Island, South Carolina
Total Number of States	13

* Arkansas's facilities data was not available in time to be included in this report.

In addition, the CSFI has developed a database which houses all of the common survey items. The ultimate goal is to build a comprehensive data set that represents at least half of the nation's charter school facilities. The resulting facilities data set will help to identify common trends across charter school facilities, including: access to public facilities, facilities financing, and size and other amenities. Further, this data set will also be used to research links between facilities attributes and school outcomes measures like teacher retention and school performance.

Currently, the CSFI database includes survey data from 1,025 charter school facilities across 12 states. While the data set has not yet reached the point of national charter sector representation, data from 12 states can provide a glimpse into emerging patterns. This report provides initial findings across the 12 states with respect to charter school facilities' size, resource availability, and expenditures.

METHODOLOGY

In order to make nationally relevant statements about the state of charter school facilities across the country, the data set needs to represent the national charter landscape. To accomplish this, the League developed a sampling method based on the "size of the state" (number of charters in the state), the age of charter sector, and geographic conditions. One-hundred percent of the charter school facilities in each selected state were invited to participate in the survey.

Overall participations rates, by state, varied from 36 percent in Texas (with 537 charter school facilities) to 100 percent in Rhode Island (with 20 charter school facilities). For the purposes of the CSFI surveys, facilities (not charter schools) are the unit of analysis, and the number of charter schools in a state does not necessarily equal the number of charter school facilities because some charter schools may have more than one facility under the same charter contract. In this survey, schools that have separate state identification numbers, but share the same site and have the same chartering board, are considered to be one case (or facility). Additionally, for charter schools with multiple campuses, each campus is considered a separate facility and, therefore, a separate case. Further, when two or more charter schools share a building (co-location) each individual school is considered a separate case. In these instances, facility identification numbers are used to ensure that the spaces are accounted for appropriately. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of charter schools and facilities in each state, as well as the percent of facilities that have participated in the study thus far.

Table 2. Number of Charter Schools, Charter School Facilities, and Percent Participation by State

State	Number of Charter Schools (when surveyed)	Number of Charter School Facilities (when surveyed)	Percent of Charter Facilities to Participate
Colorado	141	141	75%
Georgia	43	43	84%
Idaho	43	53	96%
Indiana	59	59	59%
Massachusetts	70	69	91%
Michigan	201	298	67%
New Jersey	89	92	75%
New York	186	200	86%
Rhode Island	16	20	100%
South Carolina	55*	49	98%
Tennessee	41	36	86%
Texas	208	537	36%

* Six of South Carolina's charter schools are online schools.

Survey Development

The CSFI required the best possible survey to capture valid and reliable data about charter school facilities and their needs. To accomplish this, the League commissioned a survey design team featuring Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc., former school district administrators Wayne Eckerling and Allen Balczarek, and various school leaders. Cuningham Group's architect, Paul Hutton, has designed a variety of schools and is known for his creative, cost-effective, and environmentally-conscious facilities. He currently serves as a member on the Committee on Architecture for Education (CAE) Advisory Group for the American Institute of Architect's School Division. Wayne Eckerling and Allen Balczarek together have more than 60 years of experience in public school teaching and administration. Dr. Eckerling is a former assistant superintendent in Denver Public Schools where he was responsible for supervision of charter schools, planning, and research. Mr. Balczarek was a planning and research director for Denver Public Schools and his responsibilities included new school planning and program implementation. Both Dr. Eckerling and Mr. Balczarek also have experience with general obligation bond planning and implementation.

The Charter School Facilities Survey addressed three main topics, including:

1. General Facility Information

- Demographic information including grades served, year of inception, and the number of students on any waiting lists.
- Future facility plans.
- Year of construction.
- Facility ownership.
- Facility adequacy, condition, and maintainability.

2. Facility Funding and Expenditures

- Annual rental, loan, and/or bond payments.
- Capital project expenditures.
- Access to public funding in support of capital costs (e.g. school district assets, bond funds, state facility funds).

3. Measurements of the Facility, Site, and Instructional Spaces

- Facility, site, and classroom size.
- Information technology resources.
- Facility amenities such as gymnasiums, lunch rooms, libraries, and playgrounds.

For each participating state, the survey was streamlined to exclude extraneous items to cut down on the time that it took schools to complete the survey. This survey was also tailored to fit the specific landscape and needs of each state. In addition, the League worked closely with each state's CSO to ensure that the survey was customized to fit the local context and vernacular. For example, in Texas, charter schools are not allowed access to local tax revenue. Therefore, the district bond election section that was included in other state surveys was dropped from the Texas survey in its entirety. Local terms were also woven into the survey; replacing "charter school" with "community school," in Texas for example, to enhance face validity for the respondents.

Data Collection

The Facilities Survey was administered via an online survey tool. School administrators were responsible for completing survey questions regarding the facility in general, including: grade levels served, original construction year, and perceptions regarding the condition of the facility and its impact on student learning. Charter school business managers (who are sometimes also the principal) were asked to report on capital projects completed, funding sources, facilities expenditures including bond and/or rental payments, and whether the school has participated in any local facilities funding programs. Both the general facility and facility funding and expenditures sections took an average of 20 minutes to complete. The size of the facility, site, and instructional spaces was assessed by paid consultants using laser and/or wheeled measurement devices.

State CSOs led on-the-ground data collection efforts. CSO staff members hired and oversaw the measurement consultants and worked with the League to manage the overall project. The League trained the CSO staff and consultants to support the implementation of the survey process and to oversee the data compilation. The League's research team cleaned, formatted, and analyzed all survey and measurement data. The survey data was then merged with enrollment, per-pupil funding, and school demographic data obtained from each state's department of education.

Facilities Standards

Standards for each state were derived from more than a decade of published regional and national new school construction data[3] from traditional school districts, local state or district standards (as available), and professional judgment and input from leading educational architects. The standards are intended to be neither excessively generous in allocating space nor unnecessarily limiting to charter school opportunities. (Appendices A-D shows the relevant classroom, facility and site size standards for each of the 12 states that have participated in the Charter School Facilities Survey).

Analysis

While this report is largely an update on the multi-state report based on 10 states' data from March 2013, two additional states' data have been added to the state by state trend analysis, and additional national level analyses have been added. Namely, the data from 12 states were analyzed to compare average results for charters by facility location (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural) and by the percentage of low income students attending the schools, measured by qualification for free and reduced (FRL) priced meals (a commonly used proxy for socio-economic status). The goal here was to explore whether the common key findings from within each state differ depending on geographic location and/or percentage of FRL students served by charters.

3 School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for each year, including 2001 through 2012.

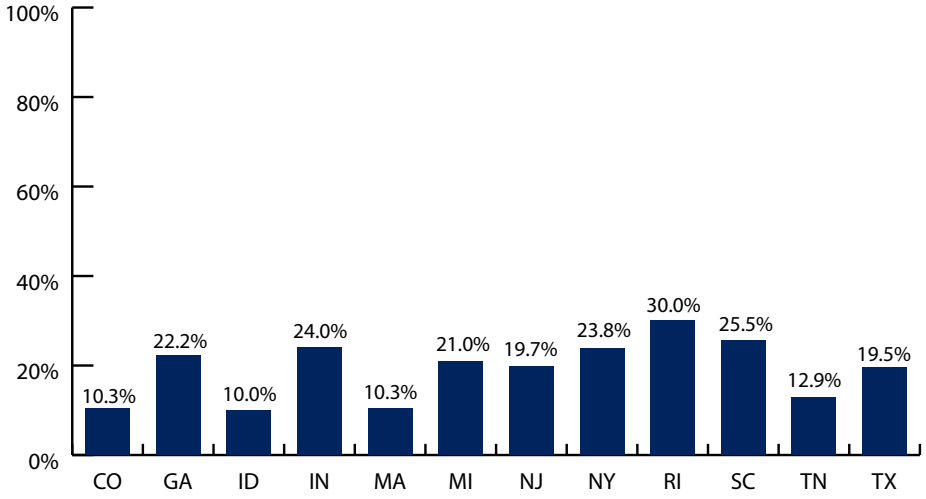
CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY SIZE

When compared to traditional public school standards and practices for new school construction, charter schools across the 12 states surveyed exhibited similar trends in at least five areas: generally smaller facility sizes, generally smaller classroom sizes, lack of a federally-approved kitchen facility, limited access to gymnasiums, and a lack of one or more specialized instructional spaces (e.g., libraries, computer labs, or art and music rooms). The following are the key findings from the multi-state analysis:

Key Finding #1: Few charter schools meet the standards for overall facility size

Using measurements of the overall square footage per student, only between 10 and 34 percent of charter schools in each state meet grade level standards (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of Charter School Facilities Meeting General Square Footage Standards across 12 States

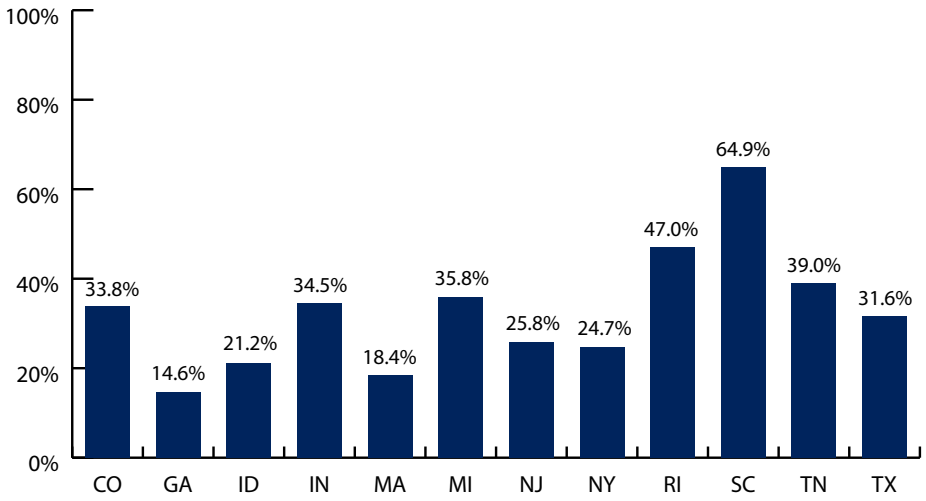


As noted in the method section, the standards for this report are being set by capital construction data from traditional public schools over the last 10 years. As traditional public school buildings are generally built for larger enrollment size than that of the average charter enrollment, there are not standards for traditional public schools for facilities that serve under 400 students. While overall square footage per student standards were extrapolated from the larger enrollment models for school facilities with enrollments of 100, 200, and 300, charter schools facilities are still not meeting them and may, in fact, be inappropriate by which to judge the charter facilities.

Key Finding #2: Few charter school classrooms meet grade level standards, based on square footage per student

When grade level and instructional design[4] are taken into account, results from the survey indicate that between 14.6 and 64.9 percent of charter school classrooms in each state are meeting or exceeding standards (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percent of Charter School Classrooms Meeting Grade Level Standards across 12 States



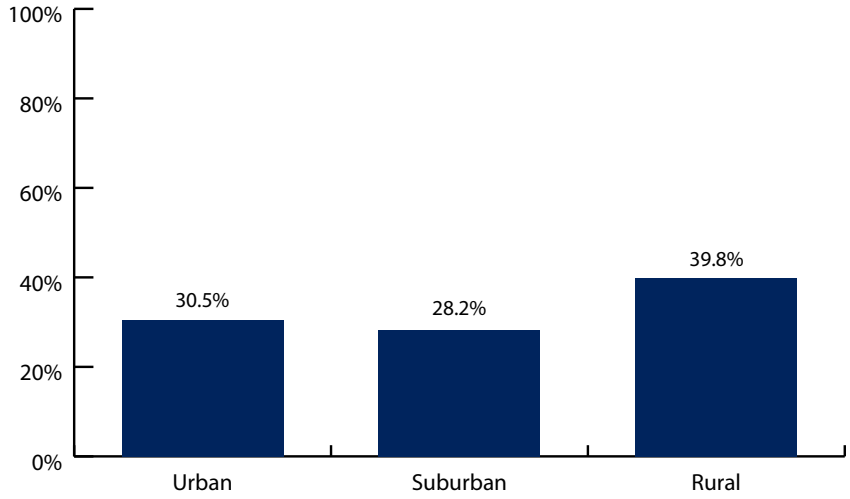
Unlike general facilities size, the standards for classroom size tend to be more closely tied to research based practices on teacher to student ratios—building classrooms to support the ideal number of students per teacher[5]. Though there was slight variation in grade level classroom standards across states (see Appendix C), the standards were typically within two or three square feet of each other. Fortunately, a greater percentage of charter school classrooms meet grade level size standards than did overall facilities, but a great number of charter classrooms are still too small.

4 School administrators reported whether the school's instructional design required specific space requirements, such as Montessori or STEM. Schools that identified specific designs were held to publish standards for those designs.

5 School Planning & Management's Annual School Construction Reports for 2000-2012.

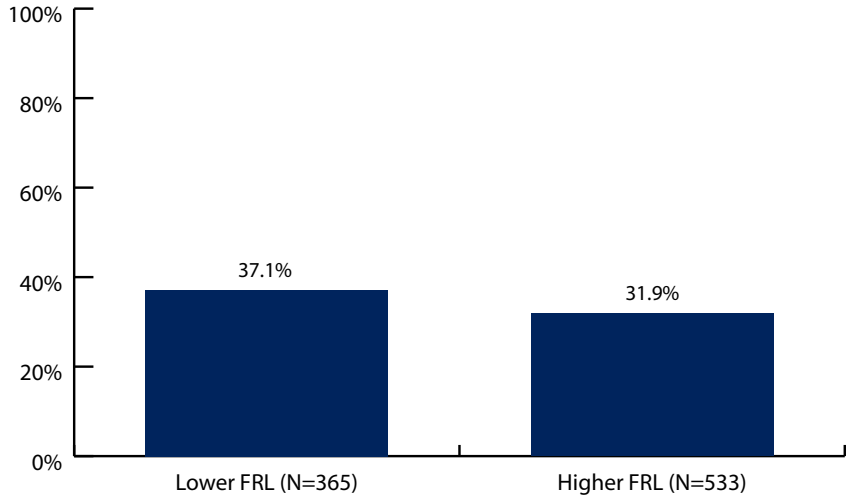
When comparing the percent of classrooms to meet standards by location, a higher percentage of rural charter schools have classrooms meeting grade level size standards (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Urban, Suburban, Rural – Percent of Charter School Classrooms Meeting Grade Level Standards across 12 States



When looking at higher FRL charter facilities (facilities serving higher than the sample's average FRL percentages) and lower FRL charter facilities (those serving below average percentages of FRL students), low FRL facilities were more likely to have classrooms that met grade level size standards (Figure 4).

Figure 4. High and Low FRL Schools – Percent of Charter School Classrooms Meeting Grade Level Standards across 12 States



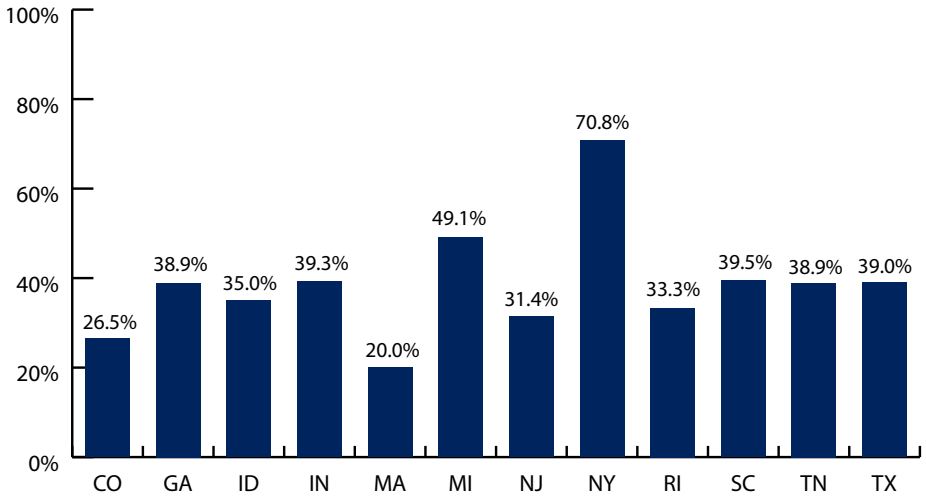
Given the tendency for rural charter schools to serve lower percentages of FRL students than urban schools, the findings presented in Figures 3 and 4 are constant with one another.

Key Finding #3: A majority of charter schools lack federally-approved kitchen facilities

In a majority of states (11 out of 12), fewer than 50 percent of charter schools have a kitchen facility that qualifies the school to prepare meals on-site and also meets federal standards for the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program. New York, with over 70 percent of charter schools having qualified kitchens, is the only state with significantly more than half of all charters having full service kitchen facilities—likely due to the fact that a great majority of New York City charter schools reside in district owned school facilities (see Figure 5). Instead, most charter schools possess warmers and refrigeration units to keep food (prepared by outside vendors) hot or cold. On average, 73.2 percent of charter schools in each state have a warmer (ranging from 45.2 percent in Idaho to 100 percent in Tennessee) and 82.4 percent have a refrigeration unit (ranging from 47.6 percent in Idaho to 100 percent in Tennessee).

While not explicitly asked about in the facilities survey, anecdotal evidence from school builders and charter school leaders suggests that adding a qualifying kitchen or bringing existing kitchen facilities up to National School Lunch Program standards is very expensive; therefore, school leaders opt not to pursue the costly endeavor.

Figure 5. Percent of Charter Schools with a Full-Preparatory, Federally-Compliant Kitchen Facility across 12 States



It should be noted that schools are not required to prepare food on-site to receive federal reimbursement for free and reduced priced meals. Schools purchasing meals from vendors that have federally-approved kitchens may also obtain reimbursement. However, vendors' meals may cost more than the federal reimbursement rate[6] and may leave charter schools to make up the difference.

It was also observed that a higher percentage of urban charter schools (Figure 6) and charter schools with higher percentages of FRL students have federally-approved kitchen facilities (Figure 7)—compared to their suburban and rural and lower FRL counterparts.

Figure 6. Urban, Suburban, and Rural – Percent of Charter Schools with a Full-Preparatory, Federally-Compliant Kitchen Facility across 12 States

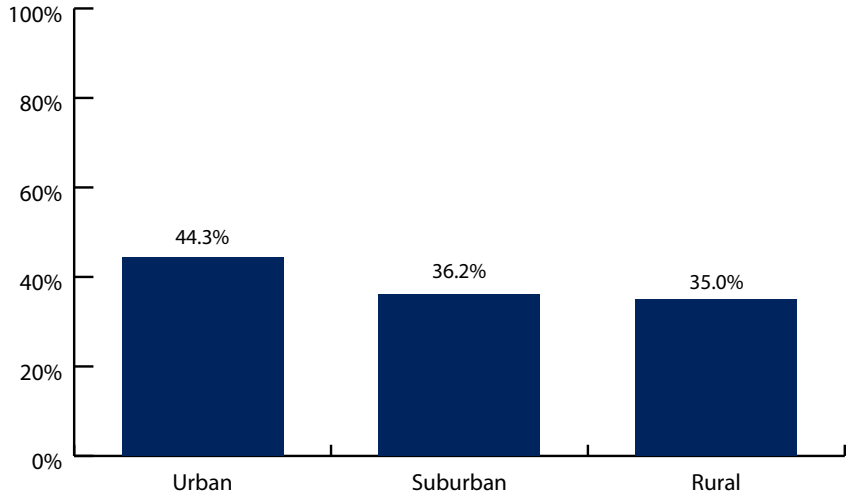
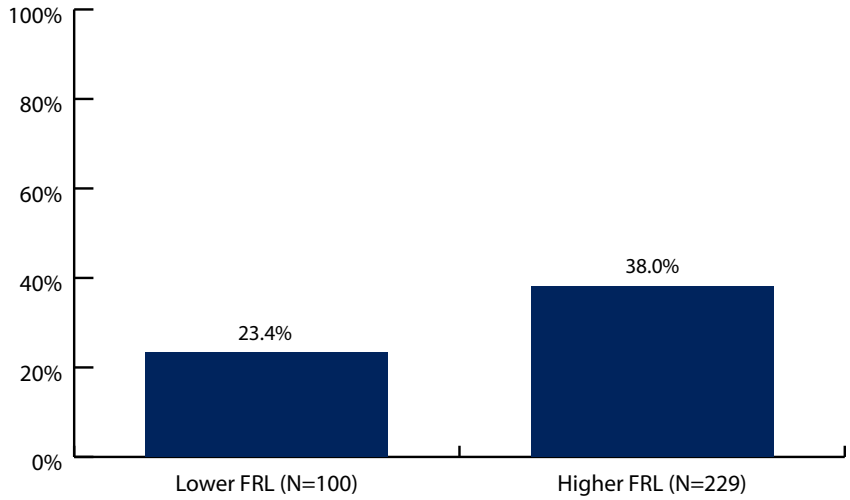


Figure 7. Higher and Lower FRL Schools – Percent of Charter Schools with a Full-Preparatory, Federally Compliant Kitchen Facility across 12 States



6 The reimbursement rate was approximately $2.70 for free lunch in 2011-12, depending on school demographics.

Although higher FRL charter schools were more likely to have a full-preparatory kitchen (Figure 7), over 60 percent still did not. When facilities do not have kitchens, charters are limited in their capacity to offer subsidized meals. The fact that over 60 percent of the higher FRL charters do not have the ability to provide meals on-site is a concern for two reasons: 1) these charters may be spending additional dollars to purchase meals from off-site vendors, or 2) they may be opting to provide no meal services to their most disadvantaged students.

Key Finding #4: Many secondary charter schools lack access to a gymnasium

New Jersey was the only state surveyed in which 100 percent of its charter middle schools and high schools had either a gymnasium on-site or had access to a nearby gymnasium. The other eleven states' charter high schools did not fare as well (Figure 8).

In New York, 20 percent of secondary schools lacked access to a gymnasium, while in Indiana, Tennessee, and Texas roughly 50 percent of charter secondary schools did not have access to a gymnasium. Figure 8 shows the percentage of secondary charter schools that lacked access to a gymnasium in each of the 12 states, while Figures 9 and 10 display the percentages of urban and rural and higher and lower FRL secondary schools that lacked access to a gym. Neither comparison shows a very strong difference.

Figure 8. Percent of Secondary Charter Schools without Access to a Gymnasium across 12 States

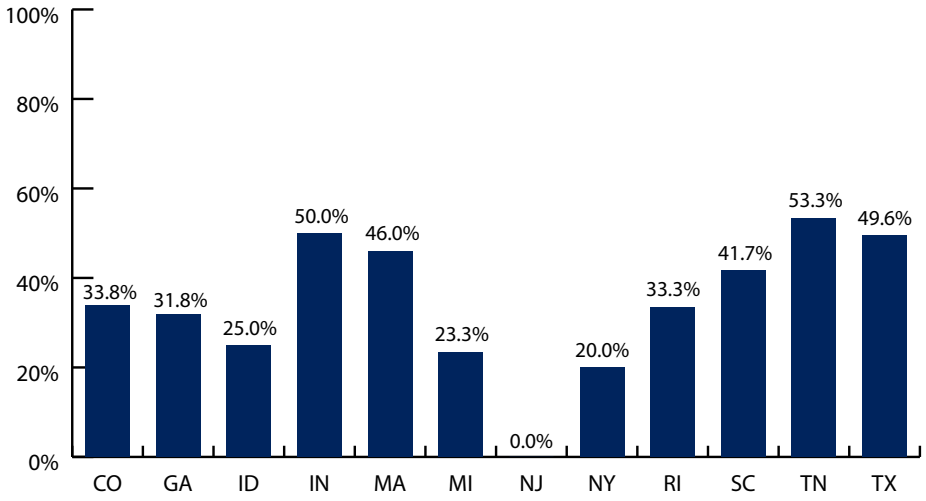


Figure 9. Urban, Suburban, and Rural – Percent of Charter Schools without Access to a Gymnasium across 12 States

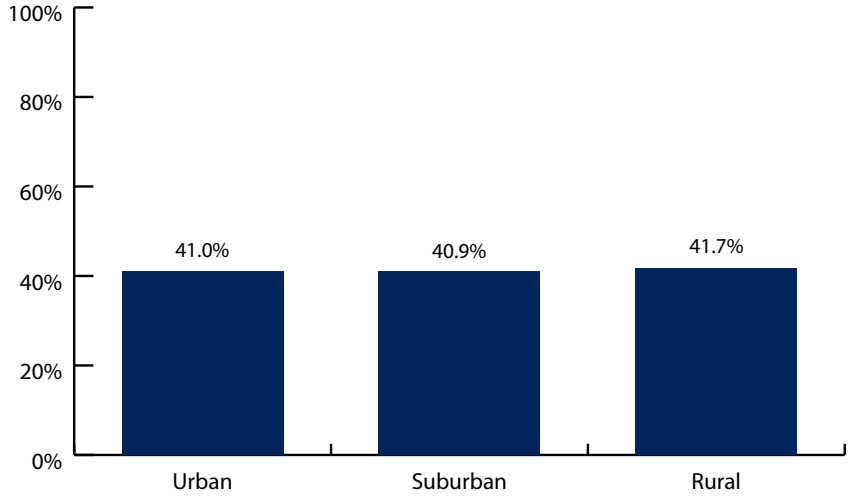
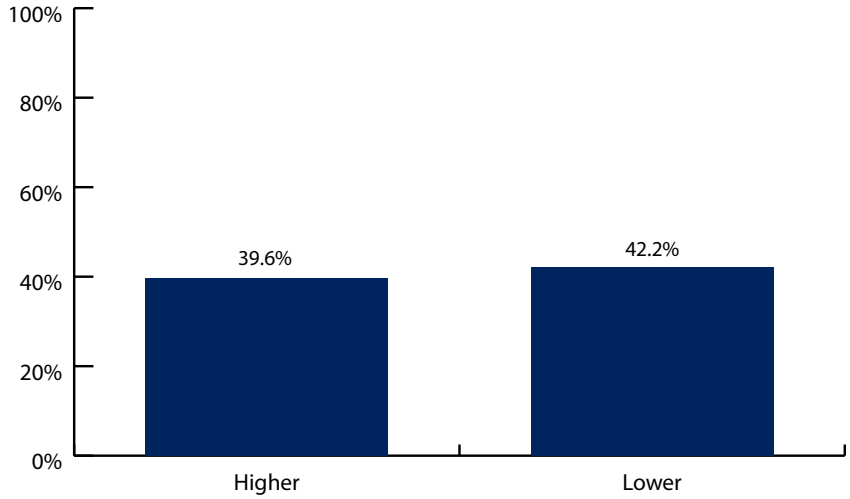


Figure 10. Higher and Lower FRL – Percent of Charter Schools without Access to a Gymnasium across 12 States



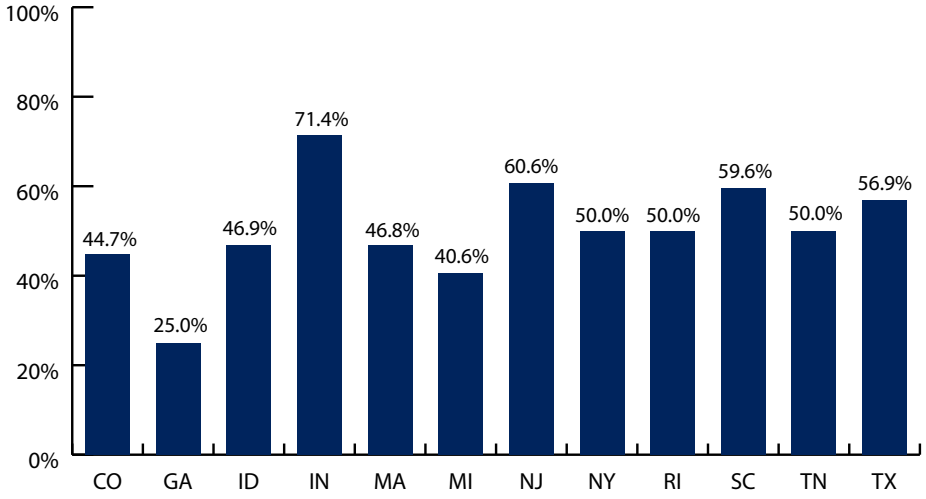
Secondary schools without access to gymnasiums are limited in the physical fitness activities they can offer and the times throughout the school day they can offer them. In some states, such as Massachusetts, charter schools without an on-site gymnasium will rent one at another location, sometimes requiring the school to provide transportation to get students there.

Key Finding #5: Many charter schools lack at least one specialized instructional space

As mentioned in Key Finding #1, when charter school facilities are small it is often due to the lack of one or more specialized instructional spaces, such as libraries, science or computer labs, and art or music classrooms. The following figures depict the percent of charter schools in each state that lack dedicated spaces for libraries (Figures 13, 14, and 15), computer labs (Figures 16 through 21), secondary science labs (Figures 22, 23, and 24), and art and music classrooms (Figures 25, 26, and 27).

DEDICATED LIBRARY SPACES

Figure 11. Percent of Charter Schools without a Dedicated Library across 12 States



Dedicated libraries were defined as any space that was clearly separated (whether by walls or partitions) and identified by school staff as the library. Books lining hallway walls or bookshelves in the corner of a room, without partitions, were not considered a library for the purposes of this study. In cases where partitions were used, the area enclosed by the partition(s) was measured and recorded as the library[7].

Georgia had the lowest percentage of charter school facilities to lack a dedicated library space for their students, while Indiana had the highest percent of charter facilities without library spaces. When looking across locations, urban charter facilities were reported to lack dedicated libraries more often (56 percent) than rural charters (46 percent).

7 If the partitioned space was within another room, such as a common area or an auditorium, the square footage of the library was subtracted from the square footage of the other space.

Figure 12. Percent of Charter Schools without a Dedicated Library in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Charter Schools across 12 States

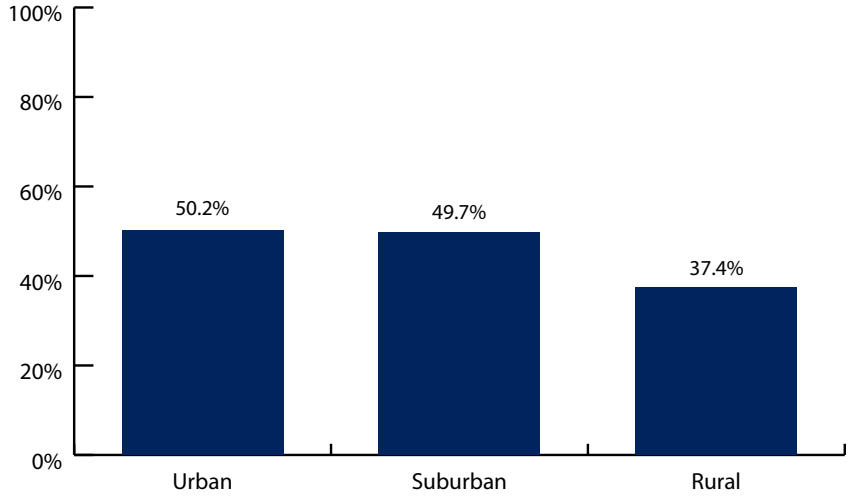
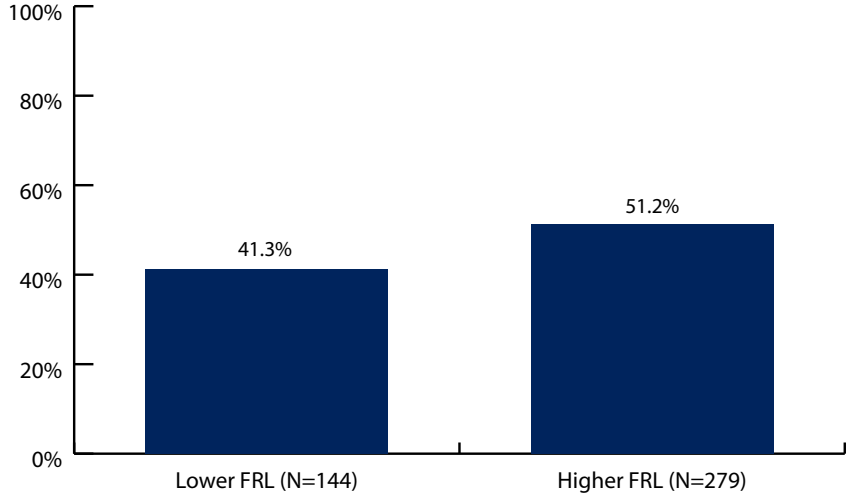


Figure 13. Percent of Charter Schools without a Dedicated Library in Higher and Lower FRL Charter Schools across 12 States

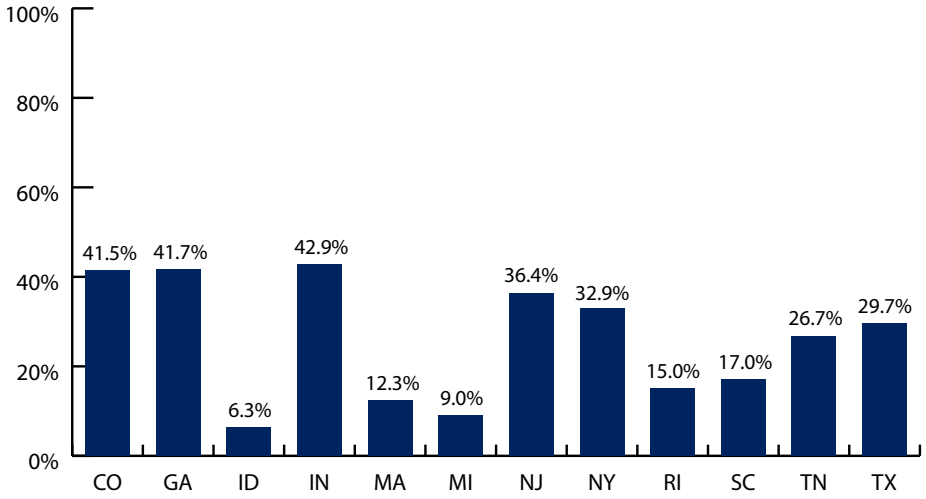


Again, charter school facilities in urban and suburban areas, and schools serving the highest percentages of FRL students tended to have the highest percentage of charters without dedicated library spaces; when compared to rural charter schools and charter schools serving below average percentages of FRL students.

COMPUTER LABS

As with the library spaces, computer labs were defined as any space that was enclosed by walls (permanent or temporary) and identified by school staff as a computer lab. As many charters have met with space limitations, the survey also inquired about whether the school had a mobile computer lab either in addition to or instead of a dedicated computer lab space.

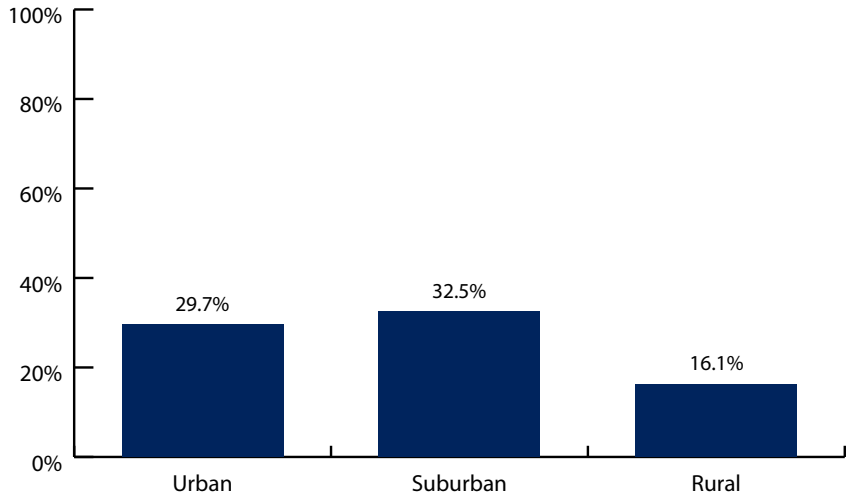
Figure 14. Percent of Charter Schools with Neither a Dedicated Computer Lab nor a Mobile Computer Lab across 12 States



Note: No data on mobile computer labs was collected in CO, GA, IN, and TX. Thus, the figures for these for states likely overstate the percentage of charter schools that lack access to some type of computer lab.

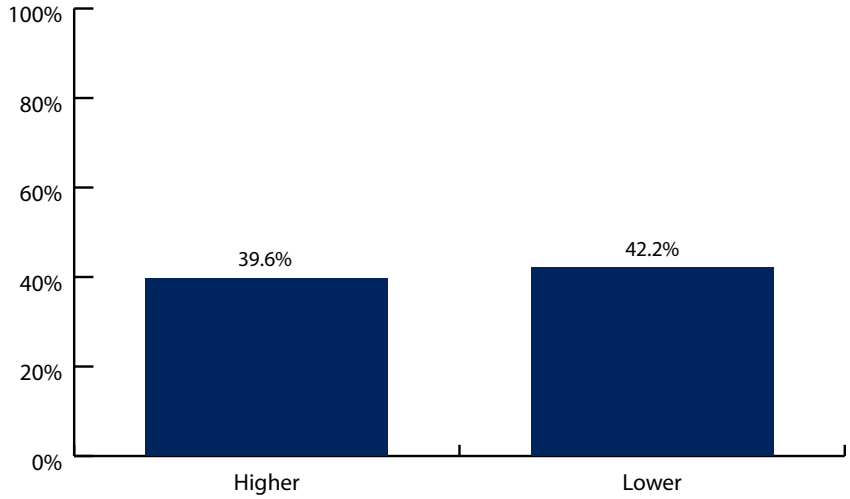
Even with the addition of two more states in the sample, Idaho continued to have the lowest percentage of charter schools report having neither a mobile nor a physical computer lab space, at six percent. Indiana charter schools reported having neither most often, at 43 percent. Sixteen percent of rural charters had neither type of computer lab in their facilities and 30 percent of urban facilities lacked computer labs (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Percent of Charter Schools with Neither a Dedicated Computer Lab nor a Mobile Computer Lab for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Charter Schools across 12 States



Note: No data on mobile computer labs was collected in CO, GA, IN, and TX. Thus, the figures for these for states likely overstate the percentage of charter schools that lack access to some type of computer lab.

Figure 16. Higher and Lower FRL – Percent of Charter Schools with Neither a Dedicated Computer Lab nor a Mobile Computer Lab across 12 States



Note: No data on mobile computer labs was collected in CO, GA, IN, and TX. Thus, the figures for these for states likely overstate the percentage of charter schools that lack access to some type of computer lab.

SECONDARY CHARTER SCHOOL SCIENCE LABS

Figure 17 shows the wide variation in the percentage of secondary charter schools in each state that do not have at least one dedicated science lab in the facility, with Idaho reporting the least at nearly 30 percent, and Tennessee reporting the most, at 78 percent.

Figure 17. Percent of Secondary Charter Schools without a Dedicated Science Lab across 12 States

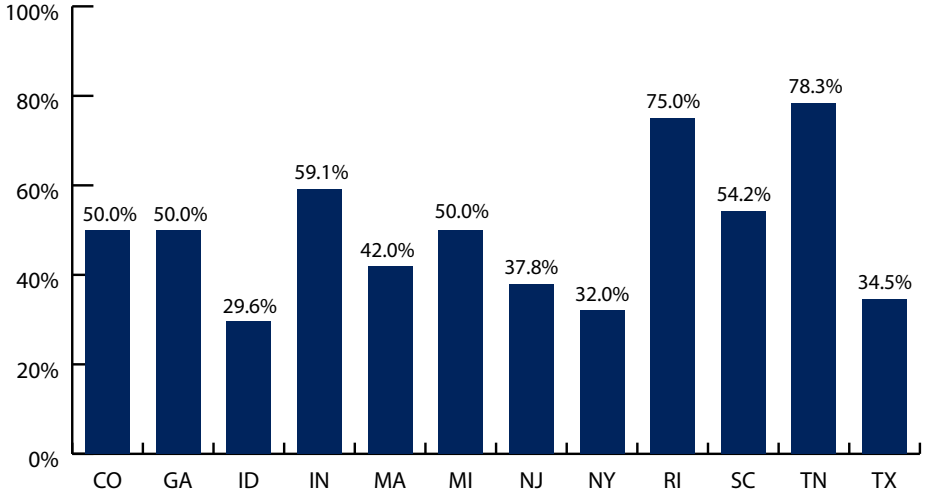


Figure 18 shows there are a higher percentage of suburban charter schools without dedicated science labs in their secondary schools. This is also the case for those charter schools with a higher number of FRL students (Figure 19).

Figure 18. Percent of Urban, Suburban and Rural Secondary Charter Schools without a Dedicated Science Lab, across 12 States

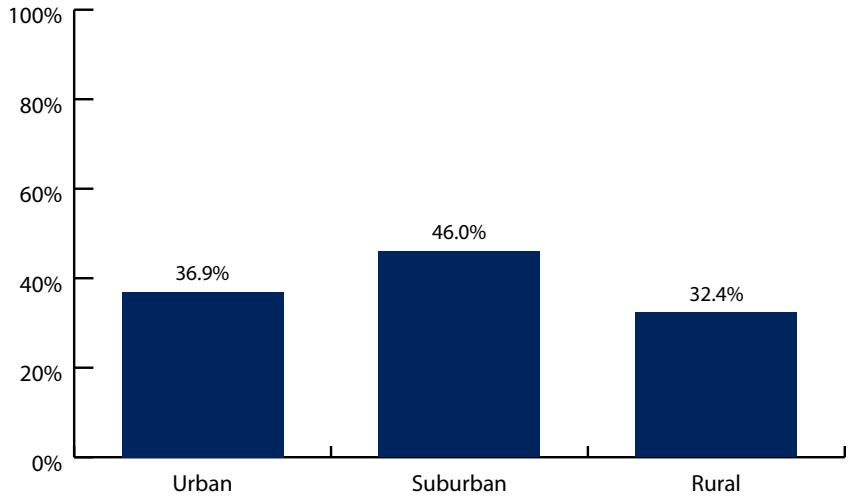
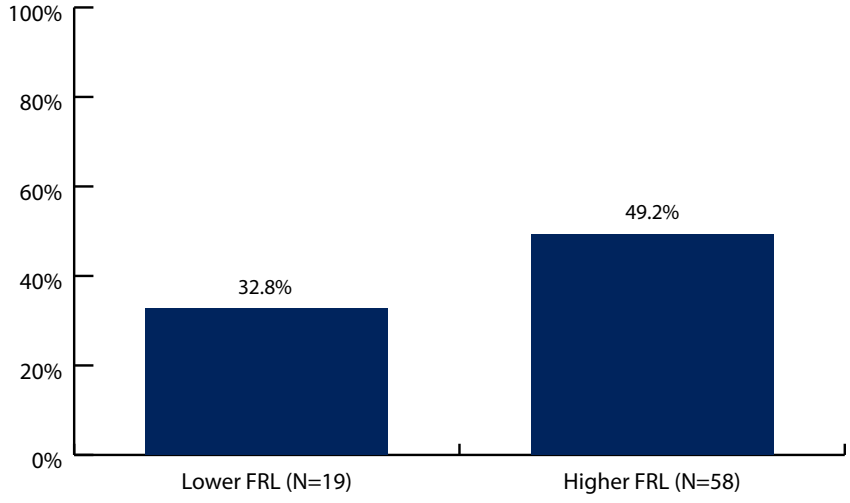


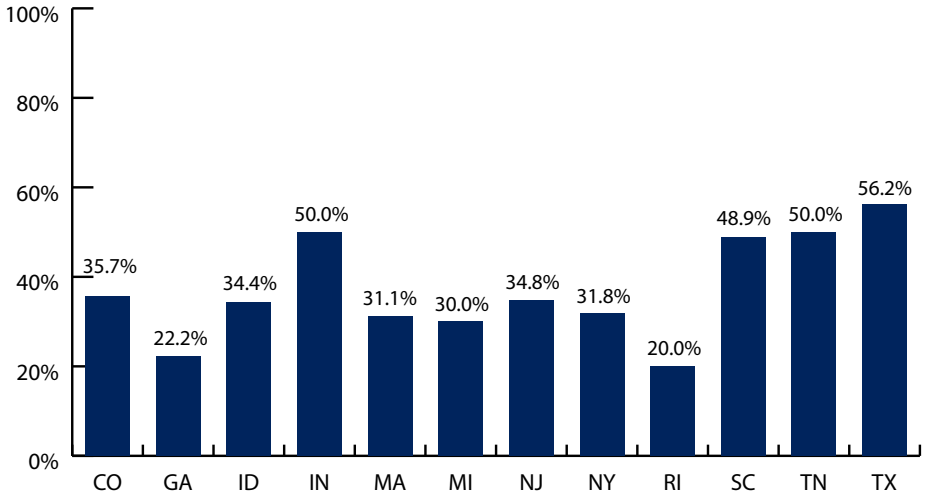
Figure 19. Higher and Lower FRL – Percent of Secondary Charter Schools without a Dedicated Science Lab across 12 States



ART AND MUSIC CLASSROOMS

Lastly, Figure 20 illustrates the percentage of charter schools in each state that had neither a dedicated art nor a dedicated music room. In four of the 12 states (Indiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) approximately fifty percent of charter schools had neither. Whether these schools conducted art or music lessons in other instructional spaces could not be determined by the data collected in the facilities survey.

Figure 20. Percent of Charter Schools with Neither an Art nor a Music Classroom across 12 States



Figures 21 and 22 reveal that urban charter schools and charters with the highest percentage of FRL students are least likely to have either an art or music classroom.

Figure 21. Percent of Urban, Suburban and Rural Charter Schools with Neither an Art nor a Music Classroom, across 12 States

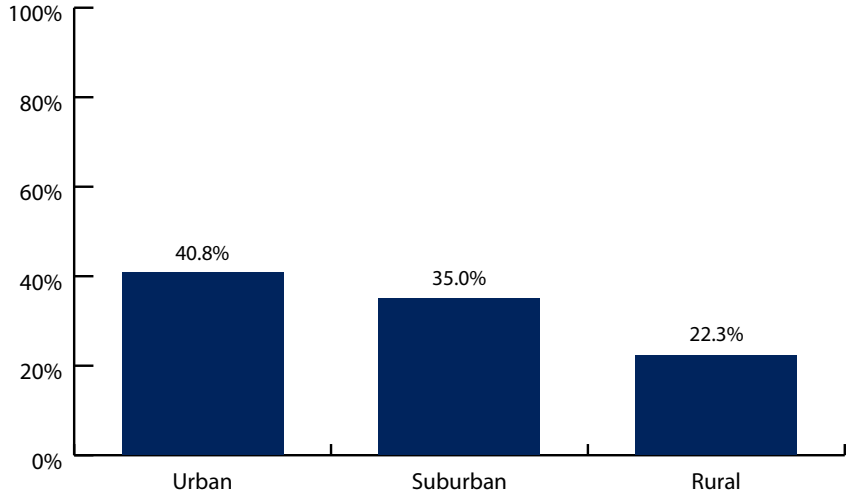
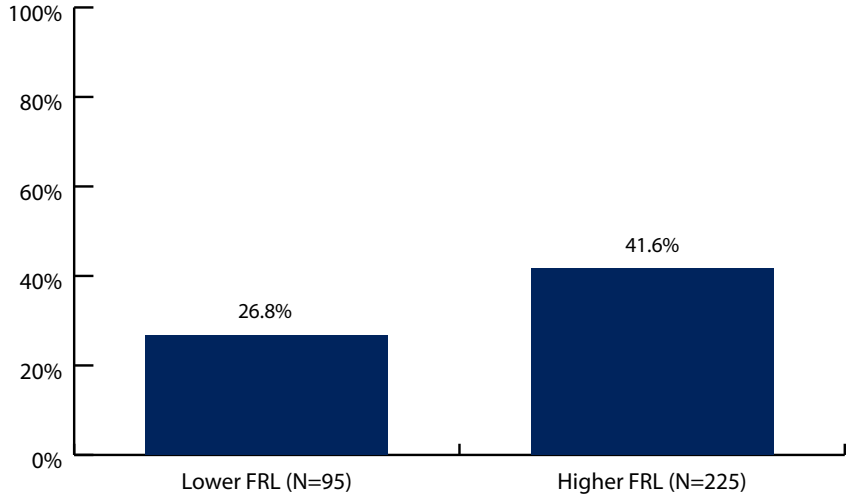


Figure 22. Percent of Higher and Lower FRL Charter Schools with Neither an Art nor a Music Classroom across 12 States



CONCLUSIONS ON CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY SIZE

When compared to local and regional standards and practices for traditional district facilities, charter school facilities often appear smaller. Small facilities translate into classrooms that tend to be smaller than traditional public school classrooms and school facilities that lack one or more specialized instructional spaces—especially for urban charter schools and charter schools that server higher percentages of FRL students (higher than 60 percent). However, because such a small proportion of charter schools across the 12 states meet or exceed overall gross square feet per student standards for the general facility, the CSFI research team has begun to question the validity of using traditional public school standards for charter schools. Future research into the nature of charter school efficiencies should be explored.

One factor that could contribute to the smaller size of charter school facilities is cost—particularly for urban charters where space is at a premium. Because charter schools pay for facilities out of per-pupil operating funds, charter boards may choose to limit expenses by renting or purchasing buildings that are smaller and less equipped than traditional schools.

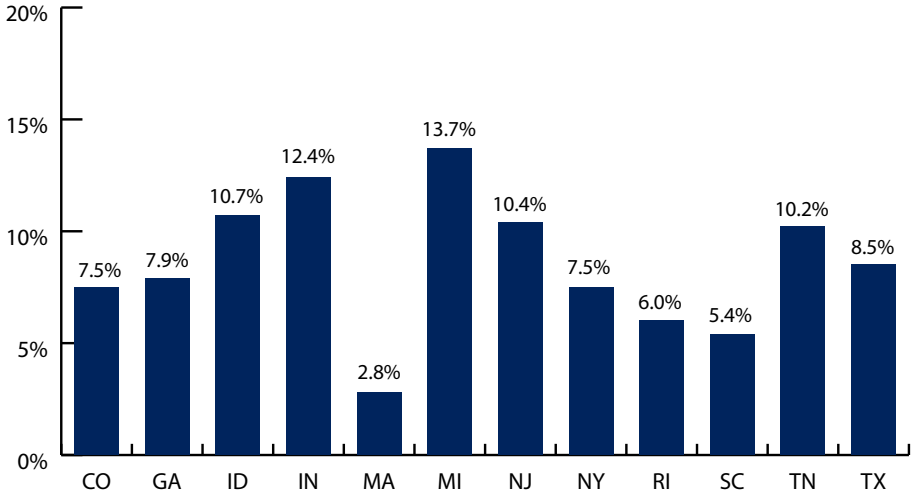
The next section (Charter School Facilities Spending) explores how much charter schools are spending on facilities. It also provides facilities spending information based on who owns the facility: the school, a school district, or a private entity.

CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES SPENDING

Percent of Dedicated Operating Revenue Spent on Charter School Facilities

On average, charter schools spend 10 percent of their Per-Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) on facilities. These figures include the costs associated with renting and owning the facilities. In some instances schools are able to "rent" facilities from school districts at little or no cost (for example $1 per year) and these cases are included in the analysis presented in Figure 23.

Figure 23. Total Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of Per-Pupil Operating Revenue across 12 States



Note: For Michigan, Rhode Island, and South Carolina median Total Facilities Expenditures were reported due to a large distribution in the data.

In Massachusetts, where charters receive an annual per-pupil facilities allocation of nearly $900 per student, the average percentage of PPOR spent on facilities was the lowest, at nearly three percent. In Michigan, where no routine facility allotments are given to charters, the average percent of PPOR spent on facilities is the highest, at nearly 14 percent. At the time of the surveys in each state, Colorado was the only other state where charters received routine per-pupil funds specifically to subsidize facilities. Though the size of the allotment was much smaller than Massachusetts, Colorado's percentage is still considerably lower than six of the 12 states for which the data exists.

Interestingly, the percent of PPOR spent on facilities was less than one percentage point different between urban, suburban, and rural charter schools (Figure 24) and between higher and lower FRL charter schools (Figure 25).

Figure 24. Urban, Suburban, and Rural – Total Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of Per-Pupil Operating Revenue across 12 States

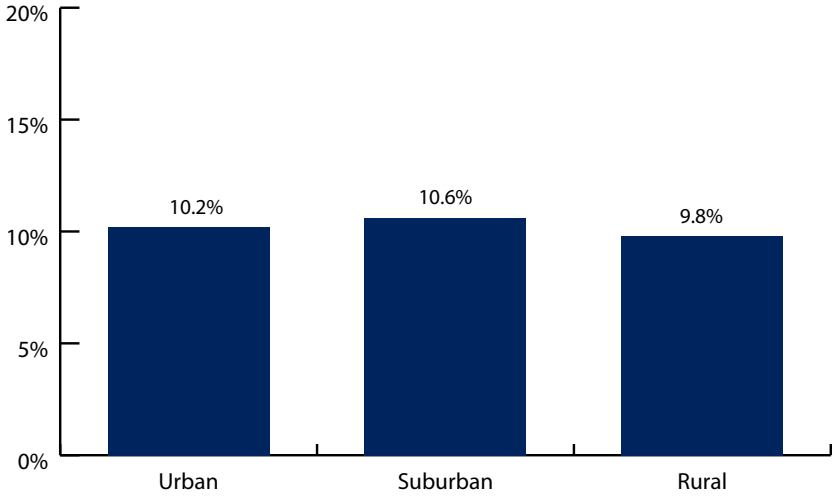
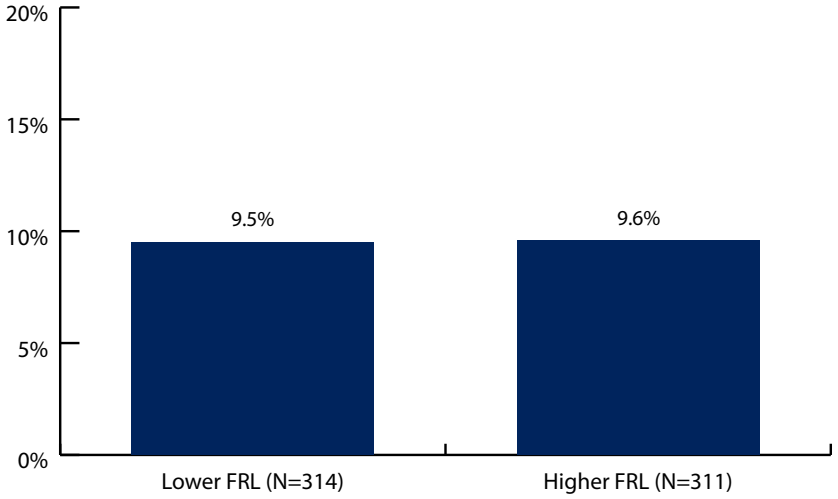


Figure 25. Higher and Lower FRL – Total Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of Per-Pupil Operating Revenue across 12 States

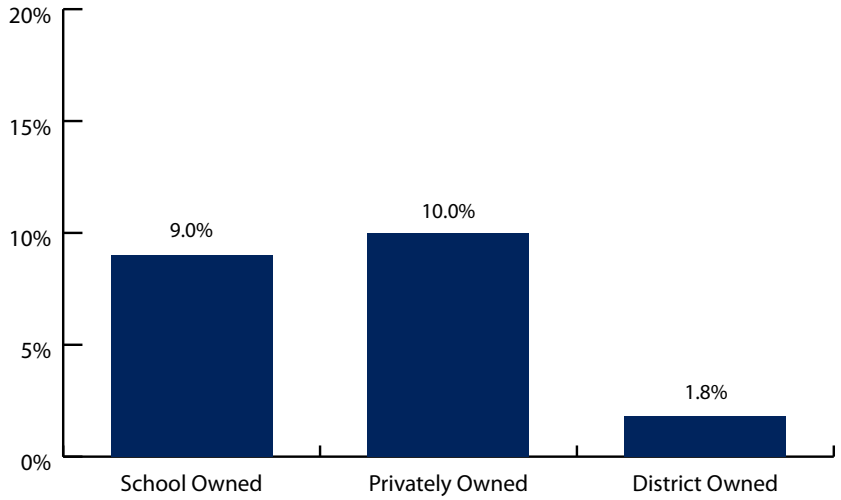


However, when the facilities cost data is disaggregated by ownership type the same differences presented in the last trend report hold true (Figure 26).

The following series of figures show the relative percentage of PPOR spent by ownership type. **School owned** refers to charter school facilities that are owned by the school itself or a non-profit foundation or building corporation established on behalf of the school. **District owned** refers to charter school facilities that are owned by a school district[8]. **Privately owned** facilities are those that are owned by either a for-profit or a not-for-profit entity. These entities may or may not provide additional services to the charter but all of these charters schools pay rent for the use of the facility[9].

Figure 26 provides the weighted average for facilities spending as a percentage of PPOR for the total sample by ownership type. On average, charter schools that rent their facility from a private organization spend more (10 percent) than schools that own their facility (nine percent). Charter schools that rent the facility from a school district, however, only spend about two percent of their PPOR on rent.

Figure 26. Average Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of PPOR, by Ownership Type across 12 States



8 Some districts provide facilities to charter schools with rental "payments" of $0 or $1 annually. These cases are still considered in the group of charters that rent and their "payments" are represented accordingly.

9 There were also some cases where two or more entities shared ownership of the school's facility. These facilities were not included in this analysis, as there was no consistent trend in the types of entities that tended to co-own (e.g., school and district, district and state, school and non-profit organization).

Table 3 shows the percentage of charter facilities classified under each ownership type across each of the 12 states studied thus far and figures outlining the percent of PPOR spent in each state, by each ownership type in Appendix E.

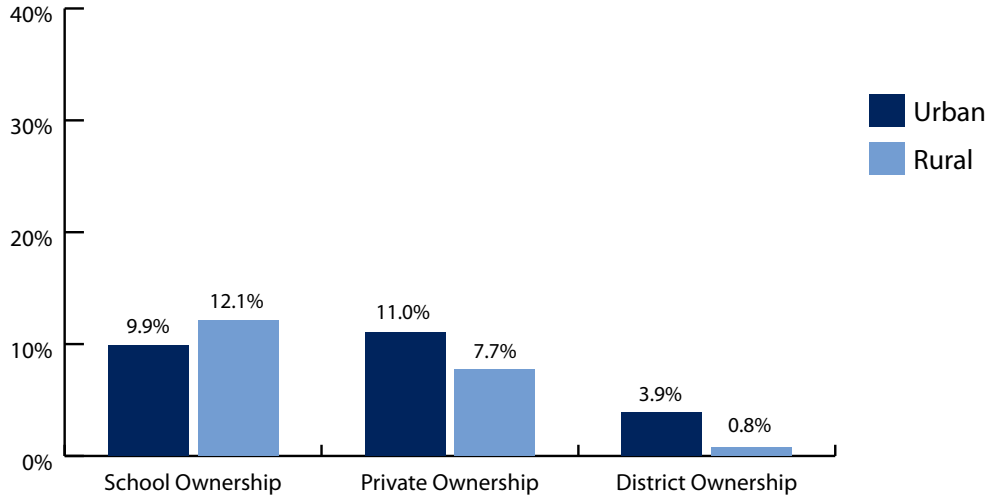
Table 3. Percentage of Facilities in each State Owned by the Charter School, a Private Entity, or a School District[a]

State	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
School Owned	45.6%	22.9%	34.1%	20.0%	33.3%	40.6%	18.0%	7.0%	30.0%	15.6%	11.1%	35.7%
Privately Owned	32.0%	51.4%	41.5%	80.0%	58.3%	49.1%	72.0%	39.5%	45.0%	38.4%	50.0%	44.5%
District Owned	10.7%	25.7%	17.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	8.0%	42.6%	0.5%	25.6%	16.7%	6.0%

a. Not all states will add up to 100 percent because facilities owned by more than one of these entities, or *mixed ownership* facilities, are not included in this table.

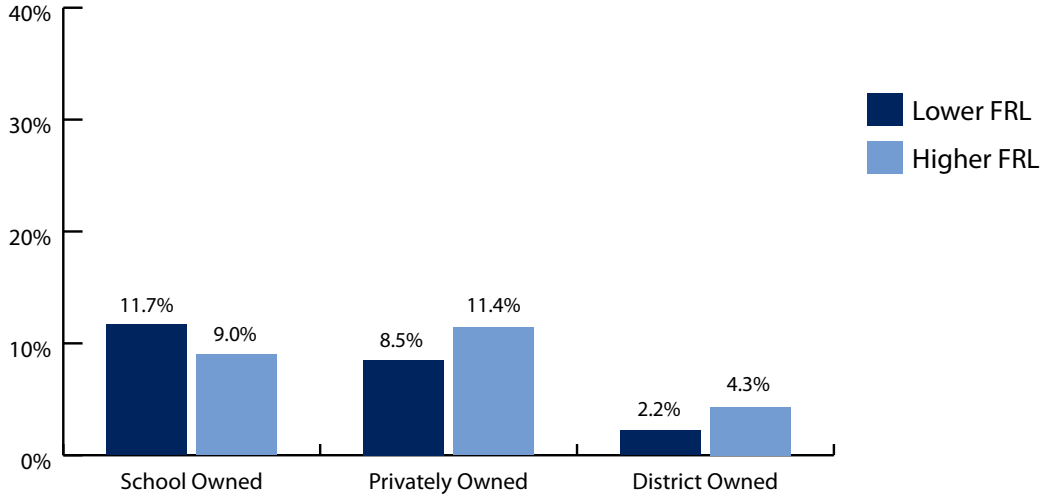
Figure 27 cross compares the average percentage PPOR being spent by charter schools by ownership type and geographic location. Rural charters that own the facility pay 2.2 percentage points more than urban charters that own the facility, while urban charter schools that rent from either a private entity or a school district pay over three percentage points more than their rural counterparts.

Figure 27. Urban, Suburban, Rural – Average Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of PPOR across 12 States



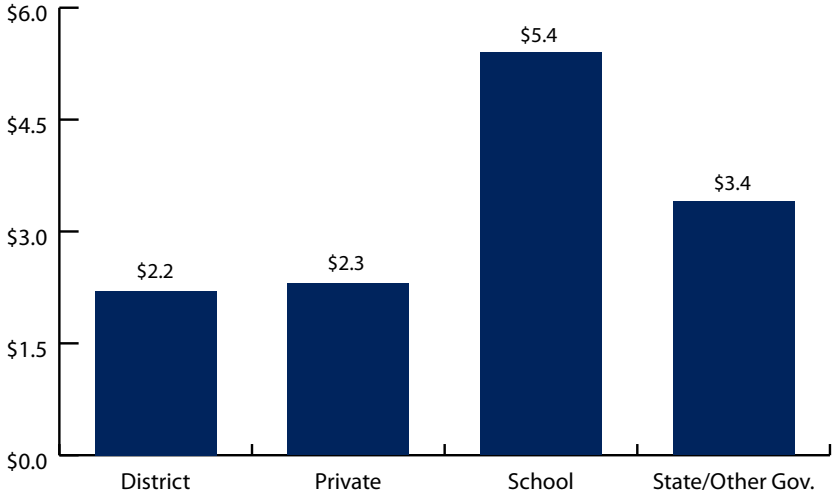
Similarly, charter schools serving higher than average percentages of FRL students (above the sample average) pay a higher percentage of the schools PPOR in both rental situations, but pay a lower percentage of PPOR when the facility is owned by the school (Figure 28).

Figure 28. Higher and Lower FRL – Average Facilities Expenditures as a Percent of PPOR across 12 States



It should be noted that charters renting from districts often have other facilities costs, including those associated with major renovations and repair work. However, even when considering the costs associated with capital projects over a five-year period, charter schools in facilities owned by school districts have incurred fewer costs than charters that rent from private organizations, own their own facility, or rent from the state or other governmental organization (Figures 29).[10]

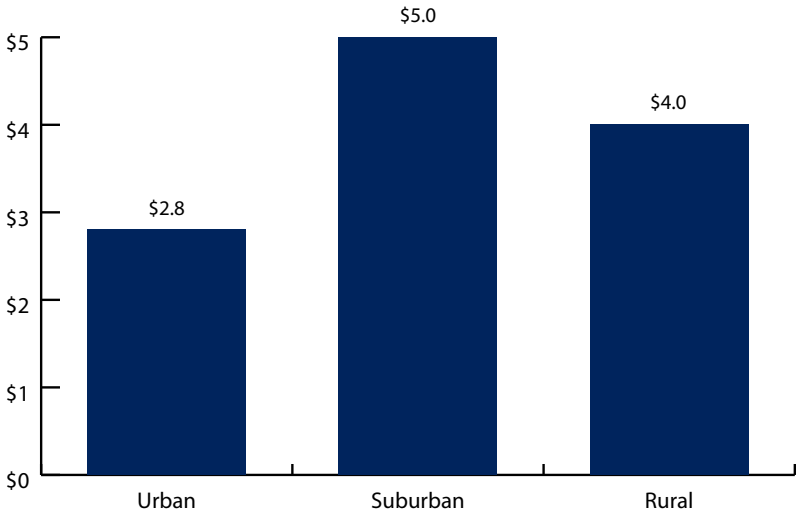
Figure 29. Average Capital Project Spending (in Millions) over Five Years, by Ownership Type



10 Charter school administrators were asked to report whether the facility had undergone any major capital projects (projects costing over $20,000) in the past five years. They were then asked to provide the amount spent on those projects, and from what sources. Given states completed the survey at different times, the five-year period represent the five years prior to each schools' participation in the survey, not necessarily 2007-2012.

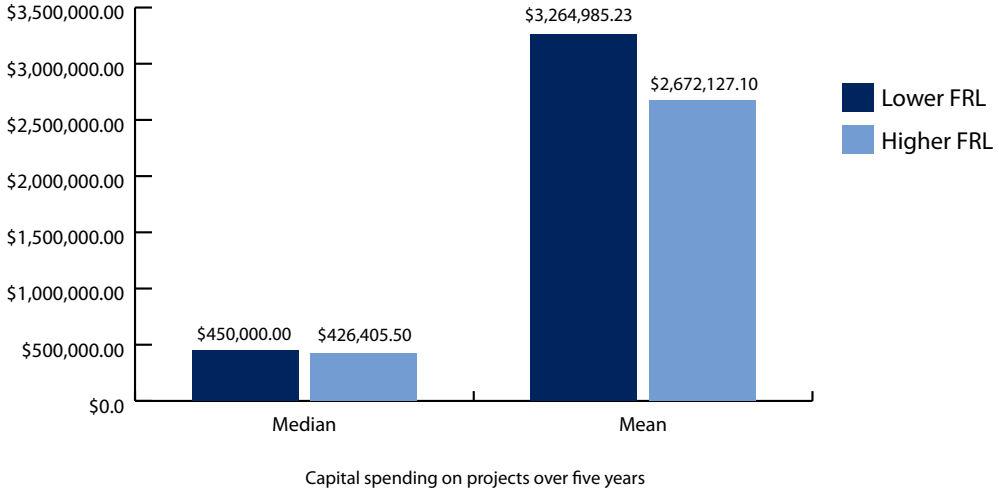
On average charter schools in suburban areas spent more over the previous five-year time period than did urban or rural charter schools in the sample (Figure 30), and charters serving a lower than average percentage of FRL students spent more than charters serving higher than average percentage of FRL students (Figure 31).

Figure 30. Average Capital Project Spending (in Millions) over a Five year Period[a], by Urban, Suburban, and Rural



a. The five-year period was relative to each participating state, including the five years prior to survey completion.

Figure 31. Average Capital Project Spending (in Millions) over Five Years, for Higher and Lower FRL Charter Schools



CONCLUSIONS ON CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES SPENDING

Most charter schools are spending a significant proportion of their operating budgets on facilities. With the exception of charter schools in district facilities, the average charter school is spending over 10 percent of their operating funds—funds that could otherwise be spent on hiring additional teachers or purchasing curricular materials—on their facility. Additionally, charter schools are spending millions of dollars on capital projects to construct, purchase, renovate or repair their facilities.

The results from the 12 states surveyed thus far seem to suggest that schools with access to district facilities spend far less on both annual rental payments and costs associated with capital projects. Yet, as shown in Table 3, charter schools housed in district facilities are the minority in every state, except New York.

How are charter schools paying for this? Do all funds come from per-pupil revenue alone? Can charter schools access the same facilities related grants and loans as traditional school districts?

These are the types of questions the Charter School Facilities Initiative is seeking to answer. The following section (Charter School Access to Facilities Funding) outlines whether state and local government agencies are providing charter schools the same access to the programs that are in place to assist traditional school districts with their capital needs.

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCESS TO FACILITIES FUNDING

Sources of Funding for Charter School Capital Projects

LOCAL TAX INITIATIVES

Public school districts with capital needs (constructing, repairing, or renovating school buildings) hold elections asking constituents to approve tax increases in order to fund specific capital projects. Charter schools, also publicly funded schools, are unable to do this and often have no access to voter approved tax revenues to help fund their capital needs. In fact, five of the 12 states that have participated in the Charter School Facilities Initiative have specific statutory regulations that do not allow charters to access local tax revenue to fund facilities or capital projects.

For the other seven states, districts can include charters' facility needs in their bond, mill levy, or sales tax referenda requests. However, results from the CSFI surveys suggest that this rarely occurs. Table 4 outlines a) whether state law allows charters to access local tax revenue, b) whether the authorizing district, or district of residence, has proposed a tax initiative for facility projects in the last five years (from when the survey was administered), and c) the percentage of charter schools that were asked to participate in the tax initiative, when held.

Table 4. Charter School Access to Local Tax Revenue for Facilities Funding, by State:

State	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
State Law Allows for Charter School Access to Local Tax Revenues	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Local Facilities Tax Initiative has been Proposed to Voters[a]	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	—	No	—	—	—	Yes	No	—
Tax Initiative[b]	69%	3%	6%	—	—	—	—	—	—	4%	—	—

a. Initiatives must have been held in the charter school's authorizing district or district of residence, if authorized by an entity other than the district in which the charter is located.

b. Percent represents only charter schools that were in a district that did have a local facilities tax initiative.

Of the seven states that allow for charter schools to access local tax revenue, two states had no districts with charter schools in their boundaries pursue a tax initiative. Of the four states where tax initiatives were proposed, very few charters were invited to participate in three of them.

Colorado is the only state in which a majority of charter schools were invited to participate in a local tax initiative, when their authorizing district proposed one[11].

STATE FACILITIES FUNDING SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Each of the 12 states has at least one statewide facility-related funding support program in which charter schools are eligible to apply. State facilities funding support for charter schools can include: state grant programs, state loan programs, state, regional, and local bonding authorities, and/or credit enhancement programs. While each state does provide charter schools the opportunity to participate in one or more facilities funding support programs, the number to benefit from these programs appears to be limited (see Table 5).

Table 5. Charter School Access to State Facilities Funding Support, by State

State	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
State Law Allows For Charter School Access to State Facilities Funding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes[c]	Yes	Yes
No. of Charter School Facilities Reported to have Receiving State Funding[a]	4	22	1	6	5	0	0	20	3	0	1	0
State Survey[b]	106	36	51	35	63	200	69	172	18	49	31	193

a. Includes any state facilities funding support received in the five years preceding the facilities survey.

b. The number of participants in the survey, rather than the number of schools reporting to have applied for support, is used because many schools appear to have skipped this section.

c. In South Carolina, statute exists that provides for a facilities grant, however, at this time the program has yet to be funded.

Table 5 outlines the number of charter schools that reported receiving some type of support from the state for facilities-related funding. It should be noted that while these results appear to suggest that very few charters actually benefit from the state programs, the researchers are not confident that all the data was captured accurately. Unfortunately, a large number of school facilities skipped this section in the survey. It cannot be assumed that school administrators skipped the questions because they did not apply for assistance. Therefore, these results may under estimate the number of charter schools to have benefited and/or applied.

11 It should be noted that Colorado's survey was conducted in fall of 2008, prior to the economic downturn; therefore, the percent of districts going to the voters and the percent of charters to be included when districts did go to the voters may not reflect district behavior in a thriving economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND MODEL LAWS

HOW STATEWIDE POLICIES MAY IMPACT CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES OUTCOMES

There are many options for addressing charter school facility challenges at the state level. However, resolving charter school facilities challenges remains a complex issue. A 2012 report by The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, *A New Model Law for Supporting the Growth of High-Quality Public Charter Schools*, provides a menu of eight possible solutions to help ease charter school facilities challenges:

1. **A per-pupil facilities allowance that annually reflects actual average district capital costs.**
2. **A state grant program for charter school facilities.**
3. **A state loan program for charter school facilities.**
4. **Equal access to tax-exempt bonding authorities or allow charters to have their own bonding authority.**
5. **A mechanism to provide credit enhancement for charter school facilities.**
6. **Equal access to existing facilities funding programs available to traditional public schools.**
7. **Right of refusal to purchase or lease at or below fair market value a closed, unused, or underused public school facility or property.**
8. **Prohibition of facility related requirements that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.**

States and local governments can provide revenue and other capital assets directly to public charter schools in order to ensure they have adequate facilities. Items #1, #2, and #6 above provide facility revenue options that can be considered. While not as critical as revenue, the other policy solutions listed above (#3, #4, #5, #7, and #8) may also prove helpful to charter schools.

Accordingly, individual states have addressed the facilities challenges facing charter schools in different ways. (See Appendix E for a detailed description of how some states have implemented different Model Laws). Table 6 reviews the model law policies and practices in each of the participating states at the time the Facilities Survey was administered. A check mark indicates that the law is in place. A check minus indicates that the law is in place but that either the implementation of the law is weak or that there is still a gap between what is provided and what is needed.

Table 6. Review of Model Law Related Legislation in Place in Each State (at the time the survey was administered) from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools:

State	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
1. An annual per-pupil facilities allowance that reflects actual average district capital costs	✓-				✓						✓-	
2. A state grant program for charter school facilities		✓		✓				✓				
3. A state loan program for charter school facilities				✓								
4. Equal access to tax-exempt bonding authorities or allow charters to have their own bonding authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓-	✓	✓	✓-	✓
5. A mechanism to provide credit enhancement for charter school facilities	✓			✓								✓
6. Equal access to existing programs available to traditional public schools									✓-			✓-
7. Right of refusal to purchase or lease at or below fair market value a closed, unused, or underused public school facility or property		✓		✓				✓		✓		
8. Prohibition of facility related requirements that are stricter than those applied to traditional schools								✓-				

Changes in the number of state model law provisions within a state appear to help reduce the facilities challenges experienced by charter schools within that state. Partly as a result of the data available on charter school facilities and spending, Colorado has addressed additional model law provisions over the past few years. Since the publication of *Shortchanged Charter Schools* in 2008, over 20 Colorado charter schools have been awarded funding through the BEST grant program (a competitive state grant program open to all public schools, including charter schools that meet certain eligibility requirements). BEST funding can be used for an assortment of capital needs, with five charter schools opening brand new facilities as a result of BEST awards. Additionally, through an annual legislative appropriation charter schools have access to the Charter School Capital Construction Funding. Funding through the Charter School Capital Construction program is available on a per-pupil basis and may be used to for a variety of charter school capital needs including construction, demolition, remodeling, financing, purchasing or leasing of land, buildings or facilities. With backing from the Colorado League of Charter Schools, the appropriation to the Charter School Capital Construction Funding in the 2012 legislative session was increased from five to six million dollars. Finally, due to state policy changes since 2008 Colorado charter schools have been better able to access empty or underutilized district facilities.

CONCLUSIONS ON POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND MODEL LAWS

As this report demonstrates, states continue to struggle with helping public charter schools resolve their facilities-related challenges. Even the states with relatively broad sets of policy solutions in place (such as Colorado) still have unresolved charter school facilities issues. However, an increasing number of states realize that they have to address these issues in order to create high-quality charter school sectors. As states continue to implement the policy recommendations and model laws discussed in this report, charter schools should be able to widen their programming options, increase the quality of student educational experiences, and provide more seats to help reduce the number of waitlisted students.

APPENDIX A

School Facility Standards

The process for developing facility standards began with published regional and national new school construction data and then incorporated each state's standards, when available. This data is typically based on enrollments that average between 500 and 1200 students. Since many charter schools may not reach these levels of enrollment even when their program capacity is realized and a few may even exceed these enrollments, the standards were extended to account for a much broader range of enrollments while at the same time taking into account minimum sizes necessary for a base level of educational adequacy. Standards were also compared to some state and district standards to verify validity. Standards for schools with enrollments of 200, 500, and 800 students are shown in the table below. Standards were modified for schools with identified educational programs including Montessori, Expeditionary Learning, Arts, and STEM.

Overall Facilities Size Standards (Square Feet Per Student)

		Grades K-5	Grades K-8	Grades K-12	Grades 6-8	Grades 6-12	Grades 9-12
Colorado	200 Students	146	151	162	177	192	159
	500 Students	130	138	153	170	186	152
	800 Students	113	125	144	164	179	144
Georgia	200 Students	155	160	166	176	183	169
	500 Students	138	146	156	169	177	159
	800 Students	122	132	147	163	172	149
Idaho	200 Students	149	153	163	156	177	190
	500 Students	130	139	154	151	170	183
	800 Students	112	125	144	144	163	176
Indiana	200 Students	161	164	171	181	192	168
	500 Students	138	146	160	174	186	158
	800 Students	115	128	148	167	179	148
Massachusetts	200 Students	172	177	182	185	193	201
	500 Students	146	156	169	171	185	194
	800 Students	121	135	157	157	176	187
Michigan	200 Students	149	153	163	156	177	190
	500 Students	130	139	154	151	170	183
	800 Students	112	125	144	144	163	176
New Jersey	200 Students	166	168	170	172	177	184
	500 Students	142	149	159	161	171	179
	800 Students	117	130	149	149	164	173
New York	200 Students	171	176	176	181	185	190
	500 Students	146	155	165	171	178	184
	800 Students	120	135	154	157	171	179
Rhode Island	200 Students	157	163	172	176	185	195
	500 Students	142	151	164	168	182	192
	800 Students	118	132	152	153	177	188
South Carolina	200 Students	156	159	166	167	178	188
	500 Students	135	144	156	157	171	182
	800 Students	115	128	146	148	165	176
Tennessee	200 Students	155	158	166	166	179	191
	500 Students	134	142	156	156	172	185
	800 Students	114	126	146	148	166	179
Texas	200 Students	157	160	166	169	178	188
	500 Students	135	144	156	159	172	182
	800 Students	113	128	146	150	165	176

APPENDIX B

Site Standards

Site standards were derived from the gross square footage standards described above by taking into account the fairly consistent relationship between building and site size. Again, particularly for smaller enrollments, educational adequacy was also taken into account. Again, derived standards were then compared to those used in other states and districts to ensure their validity. Site size standards are shown in the tables below for three different enrollment levels

Site Standards (Acres) used for each state

		Grades K-5	Grades K-8	Grades K-12	Grades 6-8	Grades 6-12	Grades 9-12
Colorado	200 Students	4.5	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.5
	500 Students	10.0	12.0	12.3	12.3	12.5	13
	800 Students	14	17.5	19.3	18.8	19.3	20.3
Georgia	200 Students	3.8	4.8	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3
	500 Students	8.5	11	12.3	12	12.5	12.5
	800 Students	12	15.8	18.5	18.3	19.5	19.5
Idaho	200 Students	4.4	5.1	5.2	4.6	5.1	5.7
	500 Students	7.6	11.5	12.1	10.9	12.3	13.7
	800 Students	13.2	16.5	18.1	16.7	18.8	12.2
Indiana	200 Students	6.3	7.5	7.3	7.0	6.5	6.3
	500 Students	13.5	16.5	16.8	16.3	15.8	15.0
	800 Students	18.0	23.3	24.8	24.5	24.0	23.3
Massachusetts	200 Students	3.9	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5
	500 Students	8.2	10.4	10.6	10.6	10.8	10.9
	800 Students	10.9	14.3	15.7	15.6	16.5	16.9
Michigan	200 Students	4.4	5.1	5.2	4.6	5.1	5.7
	500 Students	7.6	11.5	12.1	10.9	12.3	13.7
	800 Students	13.2	16.5	18.1	16.7	18.8	12.2
New Jersey	200 Students	4.2	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.4
	500 Students	9	12.1	12.4	12.2	12.4	13.2
	800 Students	11.9	17	18.5	18.2	19.1	20.4
New York	200 Students	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.3	3.8	4.0
	500 Students	8.0	8.0	8.8	7.3	7.8	7.0
	800 Students	10.5	11.0	13.0	10.8	13.5	14.8
Rhode Island	200 Students	4.0	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
	500 Students	8.5	10.75	11.0	11.0	11.25	11.25
	800 Students	11.5	15.25	16.25	13.0	13.25	13.25
South Carolina	200 Students	4.5	5.3	5.3	5.5	5.0	5.0
	500 Students	9.8	13.0	13.3	13.3	12.3	12.5
	800 Students	13.3	18.5	19.8	20.0	18.8	19.3
Tennessee	200 Students	4.2	5.1	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.7
	500 Students	9.0	11.4	11.6	11.5	11.5	11.5
	800 Students	12.2	16.2	17.3	17.2	17.7	17.8
Texas	200 Students	5.0	6.0	5.8	5.3	5.5	5.5
	500 Students	10.5	13.3	13.3	12.0	13.0	13.3
	800 Students	14.0	18.8	20.0	18.3	20.0	20.5

APPENDIX C

General Classroom Standards

General classroom standards, based on square footage per student, are shown in the table below. These standards were derived from standards used in other states and districts and standards established by the any local data and/or standards, as well as best practice based on professional experience with charter and public school design. Adjustments were made for Montessori and Expeditionary Learning programs to reflect that larger classrooms are required to implement these educational programs.

General Classroom Standards (Square Feet per Student) used for each State

State	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
ECE/Pre-K	58	58	NA	52	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45
Kindergarten	41	41	41	39	50	41	45	45	46	41	41	41
Grades 1-6	35	35	34	32	37	34	39	35	37	32	33	33
Grades 7-8	30	30	29	29	34	29	35	30	32	29	30	29
Grades 9-12	32	32	30	30	34	30	31	30	32	29	30	29

APPENDIX D

Specialized Instructional Space Standards

Standards for specialized instructional spaces like libraries, computer rooms, science labs, art rooms, music rooms, special education classrooms, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms were developed using a process similar to the one used for general classrooms. Many of the standards below are based on formulas to accommodate the potential for smaller or larger enrollments, as previously outlined, and then take into consideration educational adequacy. Some of these standards are shown below. Lunch room standards assume three lunch periods.

Standards used for Specialized Instructional Spaces: Gymnasiums, Science Labs, Art Classrooms, Libraries and Lunch Rooms

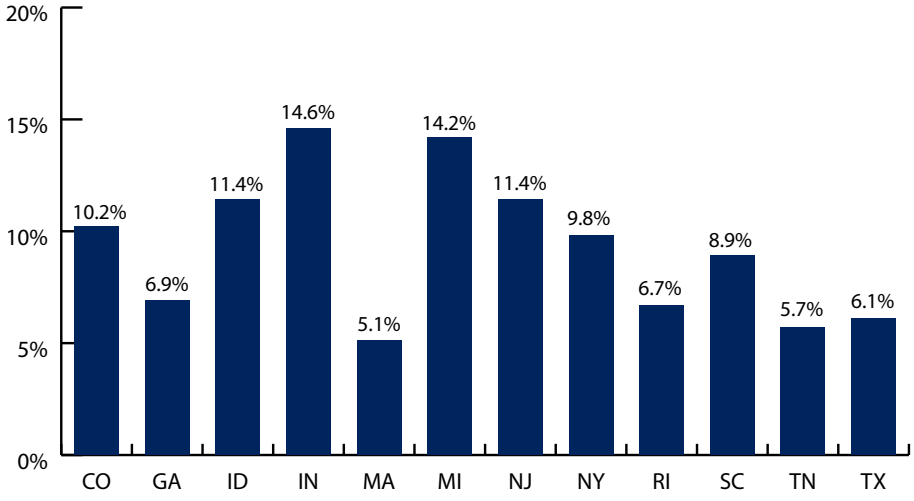
	CO	GA	ID	IN	MA	MI	NJ	NY	RI	SC	TN	TX
Gymnasium (total sq.ft)												
Elem.	3,000	4,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Middle	8,680	9,000	5,400	7,000	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400
High	9,912	12,000	7,300	10,000	7,300	7,300	7,300	7,300	7,300	7,300	7,300	7,300
Science lab (sq.ft./student)												
Elem.	38	45	40	40	40	40	40	42	40	40	40	40
Middle	40	50	44	42	48	44	54	50	48	44	44	48
High	44	56	48	44	52	48	54	50	53	48	48	54
Art classroom (sq.ft./student)												
Elem.	35	40	38	35	40	38	30	40	44	40	38	40
Middle	40	48	44	46	50	44	35	45	48	46	44	48
High	46	56	50	50	50	50	43	45	50	52	50	56
Library												
Elem.	NA	NA	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	1000sf or (25* (FTE/10))	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	500sf + 3.39* enrollment	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	500sf + (2.5* enrollment)	(1400sf + (4* (FTE - 100)) * .75
Middle				1200sf or (25* (FTE/10))			500sf + 3.89* enrollment					(3000sf + (3* (FTE - 500)) * .75
High				1200sf or (25* (FTE/10))			500sf + 4.99* enrollment					(7500sf + (2* (FTE-2000))* .75
Lunch room												
Elem.	NA	NA	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.75 sf* (1/3 enrollment)	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)	750sf or 5* enrollment, whichever is larger	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.75 * enrollment	3.33 * enrollment	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.75sf * (1/3 enrollment)
Middle												
High			4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)			4.9 * enrollment		4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)	4.9sf * (1/3 enrollment)

Note: There were no prescribed standards used in Colorado or Georgia at the time of the study.

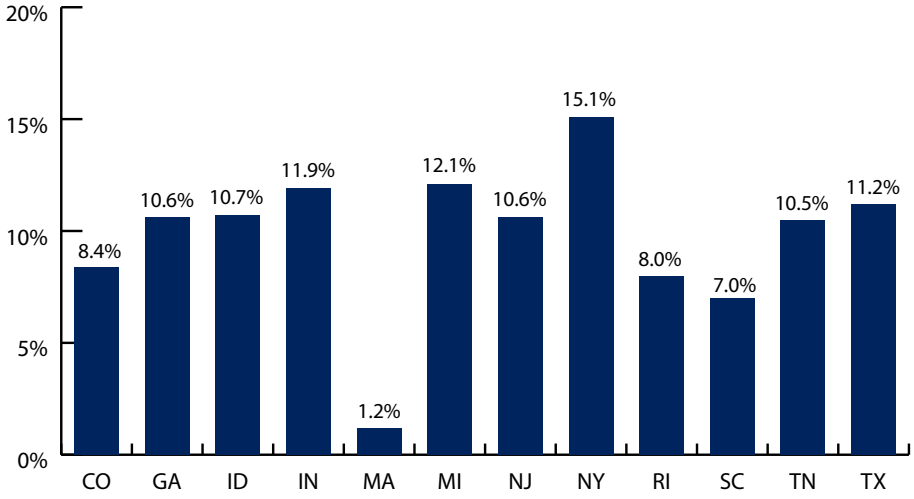
APPENDIX E

Average Percentage of Charter Schools' PPOR Spent on Facilities by Ownership Type and State

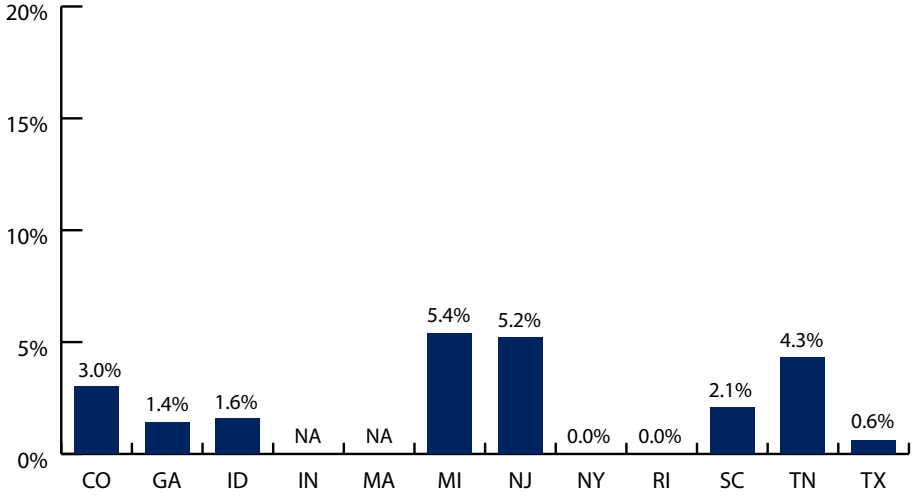
Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of PPOR – School Ownership



Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of PPOR – Private Ownership



Facilities Expenditures as a Percentage of PPOR – District Ownership



APPENDIX F

Examples of How the Model Laws Have Been Implemented

PROVIDING DIRECT FACILITIES FUNDING TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ON A PER-PUPIL BASIS

Washington D.C. provides public charter schools with approximately $2,800 in per-pupil facilities funding. Massachusetts law requires the state department of education to provide, subject to appropriation, funding to charter schools for a portion of the per-pupil capital needs component included in the charter tuition amount (for fiscal 2012 the per-pupil capital needs component was $893). Tennessee law provides a small amount of per-pupil facilities funding (approximately $215 to $315 per student).

PROVIDING GRANTS AND LOANS TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS TO SUPPORT THEIR FACILITIES COSTS

Utah law provides a charter school revolving loan fund that provides loans to public charter schools for the costs of constructing, renovating, and purchasing public charter school facilities. This fund is capitalized at $6,000,000. Washington D.C. also has such a loan program which is currently capitalized at over $30,000,000. Indiana law established the charter school facilities assistance program to make grants to public charter schools (the state contributed $17 million to this program in 2011).

ENHANCED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL ACCESS TO BONDS

Connecticut has provided $20 million in bond financing to support public charter school facilities, dispersed through a competitive application process. Michigan law provides that charters sponsored by school districts can access district bond levy funds for facilities (as determined by their charter). Michigan law also provides that all charter schools are eligible to access tax-exempt financing and technical assistance through the Michigan Public Educational Facilities Authority's bond and loan programs. New Jersey law provides charter schools access to tax-exempt bonds from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Idaho law provides that public charter schools are eligible for tax-exempt facilities financing using Nonprofit Facilities Revenue Bonds issued by the Idaho Housing and Financing Association. Massachusetts law allows charter schools to access tax-exempt bond financing for capital projects through the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency. Colorado law provides that the Educational and Cultural Facility Authority may issue bonds on behalf of charter schools.

CREATING A MECHANISM TO PROVIDE CREDIT ENHANCEMENT FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES

Colorado provides a mechanism for limited credit enhancement for eligible, highly-rated bond transactions for public charter schools by using the state's moral obligation to back $400 million in debt. In addition, Texas allows open-enrollment public charter schools that have an investment grade rating and meet certain financial criteria to apply to have their bonds guaranteed by the Permanent School Fund. This has resulted in charter bonds being backed by the full, faith, and credit of the state, putting public charter schools on par with school districts and allowing them to achieve higher ratings.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO SURPLUS DISTRICT SPACE

Indiana law requires school districts to provide a list of buildings that are closed, unused, or unoccupied for a period of two years to the state department of education and make them available for lease or purchase to any public charter school. If a public charter school wishes to use a school building on the list, the school district must lease the building for $1 a year for a term at the public charter school's discretion or sell the building for $1. The public charter school is required to use the building for classroom instruction no later than two years after acquiring the building. If during the term of the lease, the public charter school closes or ceases using the school building for instruction, the building will be placed again on the state department of education's list.

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Charter School Facilities Initiative: Initial Findings from Twelve States was prepared by
the Colorado League of Charter Schools and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.