

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY LANDSCAPE IN IDAHO

SEPTEMBER 2012



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE IDAHO CHARTER SCHOOL NETWORK, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools publish this report entitled “*An Analysis of the Charter School Facility Landscape in Idaho*,” detailing the condition of charter school facilities in the state.

In spring of 2012, these organizations worked to collect evidence that would accurately portray both the adequacy of charter school facilities and the average spending for facilities out of charter schools’ operating budgets in Idaho. Collectively, the results described in this report provide evidence that charter school students in Idaho do not have access to the same facilities and amenities compared to traditional public school students.

In order to ensure that the recommendations of this effort were research-based and supported by reliable data, Hutton Architecture Studio—a leader in educational facilities architecture—consulted on the project to provide a set of reasonable expectations for school facilities’ size and amenities (see Appendix B for detailed description). The Colorado League of Charter Schools (“the League”) is the pioneering organization behind the creation and development of the facilities survey. The League worked closely with the Idaho Charter School Network to collect the data to produce this report. The Facilities Initiative caught the attention of the U.S. Department of Education who is currently funding four state reports, including Idaho. The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research (AIR)¹ is subcontracting with the Colorado League of Charter Schools to collect the research and data on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education for Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey.

This report is based on survey, enrollment, and operating revenue data collected for the 2010-2011 school year². Results are based on data from the 96 percent of Idaho’s charter schools that completed all or part of a comprehensive facility survey. Participating schools were representative of the state’s charter sector as far as size of enrollment, percentage of minorities and low income students served, grade levels served and per-pupil operating revenue.

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- 1 “Adequacy” for school facilities was derived from local, regional and national school construction data, as well as best practices in new charter school construction.
 - 2 Enrollment and per-pupil funding were obtained from the Idaho Department of Education.



Key findings include:

1. Idaho's public charter schools spend operating funds on facilities, while traditional public schools do not.

- On average, charter schools in Idaho spend \$549 per student from designated per-pupil funding operating revenue, each year, on facilities costs³. For the average charter school facility in Idaho, with average enrollment of 310 students, this translates into \$170,190 annually—enough to hire more than five⁴ additional teachers (FTE).

2. Charters do not have access to local facilities financing resources.

- 68 percent of surveyed charter schools reported that the district the school resides in has held a general obligation bond in the last five years, however, zero percent of Idaho charter schools have ever been included in the fund request and only 25 percent were ever notified that the district was holding the election in the first place.

3. Idaho charter school facilities are small compared to industry standards.

- 80 percent of Idaho charter school facilities are at least 20 percent smaller than the standard for gross square feet per student (see Appendix B). Students in Idaho charter schools are likely to attend classes in smaller classrooms and/or facilities that do not have specialized instructional spaces such as a library, science lab, art, or music room that are part of a comprehensive educational program.

3 Schools were asked to provide the prior years' utilities, maintenance fees, and any other assessed fees in the survey. These amounts were then subtracted from the annual payments for rent, lease, mortgage, or bonds.

4 Using the salary schedule in Idaho for a second year teacher with a bachelor's degree.

4. Charters spend more to provide low-income students with federally-subsidized meals.

- Over 65 percent of charter schools surveyed lack federally approved kitchen facilities that qualify the school to provide federally-subsidized free and reduced price meals for students from low-income families. Schools that want to participate in the federal subsidized meal program must find other ways to provide this service, which often cost the school additional money.

5. As Idaho charter schools grow, facility challenges may get worse. More operating funds may be needed to address facility issues, and the growing number of charter school students may not benefit from the quality facilities that other public school students have come to expect.

- 67 percent of the surveyed Idaho charter schools plan to increase their enrollment by 2016, but more than 50 percent of these growing schools report that they do not have adequate space to serve their likely 2016 population.
- 57 percent of Idaho charter schools that have identified a future growth plan, report that they will construct or acquire additional space in the next five years.
- More than 50 percent of Idaho charter schools are in facilities that they do not own and for which they pay rent. These rent payments will go on forever without assistance to purchase or build a facility or gain access to a vacant or underutilized district school.

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INTRODUCTION

Charter School Facilities Initiative Background

In summer 2007, the Colorado League of Charter Schools (“the League”) launched its Facilities 2010 Task Force. The Task Force was established to identify prominent shortcomings in the charter school capital landscape and develop a blueprint of public policy and private sector changes leading to a comprehensive, long-range system of adequate public school facilities or facility funding sources that are accessible to charter schools. At the direction of the Task Force, the League developed a comprehensive Charter School Facilities Survey in partnership with a national leader in school facilities, Paul Hutton, AIA, of Hutton Architecture Studio, and local experts in school planning, Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., and Allen Balczarek.

In April 2008, the first report of the Colorado results was published. As a result of the report, the League was able to successfully obtain more capital construction funds for charter schools, make legislative changes that required school districts to include district authorized charter schools in bond election discussions, and provide for the inclusion of charter schools as eligible applicants in the Colorado Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program, a competitive grant program that provides funding to school districts and charter schools for capital construction projects.

Charter School Facilities Initiative Partnership

Seeing the success of the Colorado facilities initiative, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (“the Alliance”) partnered with the League to use the Colorado facilities survey model in other states to assess the charter facilities landscape across the country. In 2010-2011 the League worked with Georgia, Indiana, and Texas to pilot the initiative across multiple states simultaneously. Following the success of this multi-state initiative, data collection was started in late 2011 in New York and Tennessee.

The League worked in conjunction with the Idaho Charter School Network to collect and analyze the data used to produce this report. All charter schools were asked to complete a survey and allow a charter support organization (CSO) representative to conduct an on-site measurement of the facility and all educational spaces. Fifty-one cases⁵ (41 schools), or 96 percent of Idaho charter schools participated in some or all of the data collection effort. Included in the participating schools were 8 on-line charter schools, one was a hybrid school (both brick & mortar facility and an on-line learning component) and a charter school vocational program that has eight facilities tied to eight traditional public high schools. Unless specifically stated to the contrary, the results presented in this report include data only from the 32 brick and mortar charter school facilities.

5 Some charter schools have multiple campuses, such as an elementary and a middle school, that are not on the same site. Others can have multiple campuses, whether related or not, on the same site. A case in this study, therefore, refers to a facility and the number of facilities does not necessarily reflect the number of schools in the state.

Charter Schools in Idaho

Idaho's charter school statute was enacted in 1998, and the first group of Idaho charters opened in the fall of 1999. Initially the statute limited the number of charter schools that could be approved annually, to 12. In 2004, the charter law in Idaho was revised to create the provision for the Public Charter School Commission and the cap on charter growth shrank from 12 to 6 per year. Currently, 43 charter schools with nearly 18,000 students (approximately 5 percent of Idaho's K-12 enrollment) operate throughout Idaho.

There were a total of 16 Idaho authorizers in the survey sampling; 15 local education agencies (or LEAs) and one independent statewide authorizer. Forty-four percent of currently operating Idaho charter schools are authorized by an LEA, the remaining charter schools are authorized by the independent state authorizing board. None of the charter schools in Idaho are managed by an educational management organization. Thirty-eight percent of the charter schools are located in urban areas, 36 percent in suburban areas, and 26 percent in rural areas.

In total, 35 percent of Idaho's charter school students are eligible for free or reduced priced meals, and 17 percent belong to at least one ethnic minority group.

Charter School Facilities in Idaho

Charter school operators report time and again, in annual needs surveys, that facility funding is the single biggest challenge in starting and/or sustaining a school. Idaho law does not provide new or existing charter schools with access to local public school facilities or facilities funding. Therefore, charter schools are at a disadvantage when compared to other public schools in the state. Idaho's law, as with most states across the country, puts the burden of both obtaining and paying for facilities on the charter schools themselves. As a result, charter schools have struggled to find suitable and affordable facilities. Even after more than a decade of academic success, Idaho charter schools are limited in their ability to address long waiting lists or expand their programs by the availability of facility space or funds to build or purchase larger facilities.

Following the Colorado model, all Idaho charters schools were asked to complete an extensive and thorough survey asking about their facilities (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the survey). The Idaho Charter School Network led this data collection effort⁶, and provided supplemental data on school enrollment, student demographics and funding. The survey and measurement data were collected between January and March, 2012.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into these standards (see Appendix B). To ensure accuracy in data collection and interpretation, the League consulted with two industry experts; Paul Hutton, an architect and leader in school facilities design and planning and Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., an expert on charter schools, facilities planning, research, and bond planning and implementation.

6 Nils Peterson led the data collection work on behalf of the Idaho Charter School Network.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding #1: Idaho's public charter schools spend operating dollars on facilities, while traditional public schools do not.

Charter schools are among the few public schools in Idaho that must spend per-pupil operating revenue to cover the costs of their facilities. Most districts finance new school facilities through bonds that are repaid with revenue from local property taxes that are separate from operating dollars. However, charter schools do not receive access to these local property taxes for capital projects. As a result, charter schools across Idaho must spend operating dollars on their facilities needs, raise private dollars or borrow money from banks. In many cases, this results in a drop in the funding available for operating expenses to a level significantly below comparable school revenue.

Results from the facilities survey and Idaho's 2011-2012 per-pupil revenue data indicate the following:

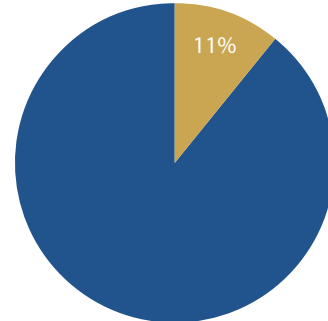
- On average, public charter schools in Idaho spend \$542 per student from designated per-pupil operating revenue on facilities costs, while traditional public charter schools spend none of their per pupil operating revenue on facilities⁷.
 - Two Idaho charter schools rent facility space from their school district at a rate of \$1.00 per year. After removing those cases from this analysis, the average charter school per-pupil facilities cost increases to \$602.
 - Charter schools that own their building pay slightly more per-pupil (\$605 per-pupil) versus charter schools that rent space from a private organization (\$567 per pupil).

7 In this analysis facilities costs do not include maintenance fees, utilities costs, or any other assessed fees by districts, as those are paid by both traditional and charter public schools.

Adding to the financial burden is that 58 percent of Idaho charters have undertaken a major capital project⁸ in the last five years, for a total of nearly \$8.2 million spent on renovations, repairs, additions to existing facilities and new land or building purchases. Over 35 percent of these schools have used operating funds to help finance these projects. Per-pupil operating revenue is also one of the likely

sources for the up-front funds needed to initiate a long-term bond program, further reducing the funds available for classroom instruction.

Average Facilities Costs as a Percentage of Per-Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) for Charter Schools 11%



Key Finding #2: Charters do not have access to local facilities financing resources.

Within districts that either authorize or house a state authorized charter school, voters have approved \$584 million for districts' capital needs⁹, between 2005 and 2009. However, charter schools have not been provided with any of these local facilities related funds, rather they must use funds from their per-pupil operating budgets and/or take out loans to pay for their capital needs (see section above for total amount spent over the last five years).

- **68 percent** of surveyed charter schools reported that the district the school resides in has held a general obligation bond in the last five years, however,
- **Zero percent** of Idaho charter schools have ever been included in the fund request and only 25 percent were ever notified that the district was holding the election in the first place.

⁸ A major capital project is defined as any project that carried an expense of \$20,000 or higher.

⁹ Data obtained from the Idaho State Department of Education Bond Levy Equalization Report (2010).

Key Finding #3: Charter school facilities are smaller than industry standards.

Results from the survey found that Idaho charter school buildings and classrooms are considerably smaller than the standards used for this study (see Appendix B). This is true even for charter schools that have recently constructed new school buildings.

- **80 percent** of Idaho charter school facilities are at least 20 percent smaller than the standard for gross square feet per student (see Appendix B for table of size standards).
- **77 percent** of charter schools are on sites that are more than 20 percent smaller than the standard.
- **More than 30 percent** of classrooms were found to be at least 20 percent below the standard.

When total facility size is too small, charter schools are challenged to provide the same quality instructional spaces that are enjoyed by other public school students; such as a library, computer labs, or a space exclusively used for a gymnasium or lunch room. This is especially the case when the regular classrooms are meeting or exceeding the standard.

Even when these specialized instructional spaces are present, they frequently do not meet the size standard outlined in Appendix B of this report. Results from the 2012 Idaho Facilities survey bear this out and are reviewed on page 9 of this report.



**Charter schools in Idaho
are 20 percent smaller
than Idaho Standards**

Key Finding #4: Charters spend more to provide low-income students with federally-subsidized meals.

Kitchen facilities are commonly considered a “given” in public school buildings. In the world of charter schools, however, kitchen facilities are a luxury that many Idaho charter schools do without. Whether located in a new school building or a commercial facility that has been converted into functional educational space, the cost of adding a federally compliant kitchen is prohibitive when taken out of operating expenses. Without a formal, federally approved kitchen, charter schools struggle financially to meet the needs of low-income students.

- **Over 65 percent** of Idaho charter schools surveyed lack federally approved kitchen facilities that would allow the school to provide onsite meals that qualify for federally-subsidized free and reduced price meals for students from low-income families.

The average Idaho charter school serves 40 percent free and reduced priced meal eligible students. According to the Idaho Charter School Network, schools without federally approved kitchen facilities that want to provide a free and reduced lunch program must seek other sources for meal service, such as external catering, often at costs far in excess of the federally subsidized rates. Charter schools must find a way to cover that extra cost. Sometimes this is done by fundraising, but often this is done using operational funds.



Key Finding #5: As Idaho charter schools grow, facility challenges may get worse.

- **67 percent** of the surveyed Idaho charter schools plan to increase their enrollment by 2016, potentially adding over 2000 seats to the existing, brick-and-mortar charter school sector. However, more than 50 percent of these growing schools report that they do not have adequate space to serve their likely 2016 population.
- **57 percent** of the schools that have identified a future plan report that they intend to construct or acquire additional space in the next five years.
- **More than 50 percent** of Idaho charter schools are in facilities that they do not own and for which they pay rent. These rent payments will go on in perpetuity without assistance to purchase or build a facility or gain more access to unused or underutilized district facilities.



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Specialized Instructional Spaces

Most instruction during the school day takes place in generic classrooms, however, specialized instructional spaces such as science labs, libraries, and music rooms are an important part of a comprehensive educational program. Idaho charter schools have a limited number of these types of spaces and, even when present, they frequently do not meet accepted standards.



- **Nearly half (47 percent)** of Idaho charter schools do not have a dedicated library space. Of those that do, only three percent meet national and regional size standards for school libraries.
- **Only 22 percent** of Idaho charter schools have dedicated classrooms for providing art instruction, and 34 percent have neither an art room nor a music room.

School Environment

Recent studies conducted by Unile and Tschannen-Moran,¹⁰ Tanner,¹¹ and Duran-Narucki¹² demonstrate a link between the quality of the physical environment within a school facility and students' educational outcomes. Facility characteristics that are believed to have an impact on student learning are: acoustics, access to views through windows, presence of natural day lighting, thermal comfort, and indoor air quality. Questions within the survey asked Idaho charter school leaders to rate their schools on these aspects. Selected relevant findings follow:

- **33 percent** of Idaho charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'the roof rarely leaks, if ever.'
- **56 percent** of Idaho charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'the site does not exhibit regular drainage problems such as standing water.'
- **56 percent** of Idaho charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'most classrooms/instructional spaces have windows that operate (open and close).'
- **26 percent** of Idaho charter school respondents strongly agree or agree that, 'Noise generated from other classrooms or corridors is disruptive in the classrooms,' and 'Noise from the gym, auditorium, or lunchroom impacts learning in classrooms.'
- **15 percent** of charter schools reported that they were closed for one or more student contact days, due to facilities related issues, over the last three years.

In addition, 20 percent of charter school buildings were built prior to 1970 and 22 percent of schools have at least some modular classrooms. For these schools deterioration is a likely issue.

10 Cynthia Uline, Megan Tschannen-Moran, (2008) "The walls speak: the interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 46 Iss: 1, pp.55 – 73

11 C. Kenneth Tanner, (2009) "Effects of school design on student outcomes", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 47 Iss: 3, pp.381 - 399

12 Valkiria Durán-Narucki (2008). "School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol 28 Iss: 3, pp 278-286.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Idaho's public charter schools currently serve about five percent of the state's public school students, and are poised to serve more in the coming years. The survey shows that 67 percent of Idaho's public charter schools plan to increase their enrollment over the next few years.

More equitable facilities funding would allow public charter schools to allocate more operational dollars toward core educational items and enhance their ability to provide a well-rounded educational experience for Idaho's public charter school students.

Based on experiences in other states, there is not one simple way to resolve charters' facilities challenges. 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 solutions that Idaho may consider to meet these 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.**

Not all of these solutions are equal in their importance. It is most critical for states to provide revenue to public charter schools for their facilities expenses. Points #1, #2, and #6 above provide facility revenue options for Idaho to consider. While not as critical as revenue, the other policy solutions listed above (#3, #4, #5, #7, and #8) may be helpful for Idaho charter schools—providing support to meet facilities challenges—and should be seriously considered as well. It is important to note that the states that have helped public charter schools the most with their facilities challenges have enacted both the revenue policies and the policies that provide support in facilities acquisition and financing.

Idaho currently provides little facilities support to public charter schools. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' *Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Charter School Laws* (which analyzes and ranks each state public charter school law against the model law), Idaho law only addresses two of the eight facilities components in the model law:

- 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.
- Idaho law gives school districts the authority to authorize the transfer or conveyance of any surplus district-owned property to various public entities including charter schools, but doesn't give charters the right of refusal to purchase or lease surplus space.

Providing public charter schools access to affordable and adequate facilities in the following ways can better support the likely growth of the Idaho public charter school sector over the next few years:

- **Provide direct funding to public charter schools for their facilities costs:** One option is to provide a per-pupil facilities allowance that annually reflects actual average district capital costs. For example, Washington D.C. provides public charter schools with approximately \$2,800 per-pupil for facilities. A second option is to create a state grant program for public charter school facilities. For example, Indiana law established the charter school facilities assistance program to make grants and loans to public charter schools for the purpose of constructing, purchasing, renovating, maintaining, and paying first semester costs for new facilities projects, and reducing common school fund debt for public charter schools. Indiana provided \$17 million to this program in 2011.
- **Provide loans to public charter schools for their facilities costs:** One option is to create a state loan program for public charter school facilities. 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 fund which is currently capitalized at over \$30,000,000.

- **Enhance public charter school access to bonds:** 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. One option for enhancing public charter school access to financing would be to provide public charter schools with access to the Idaho School Bond Guarantee Act. For example, Connecticut has provided \$20 million in bond financing to support public charter school facilities, dispersed through a competitive application process.
- **Create a mechanism to provide credit enhancement for public charter school facilities:** Colorado, for example, 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 up to \$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 AAA rating.
- **Improve access to surplus district space:** As mentioned above, Idaho law gives school districts the authority to authorize the transfer or conveyance of any surplus district-owned property to various public entities including charter schools, but can improve this practice by giving charters the right of refusal and offer to purchase or lease surplus space. For example, 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. There is already some precedent of such practices in Idaho. Currently, four charter high schools lease space for very modest rates from the districts in which they are located.

- **Improve access to existing state programs for traditional public school facilities:** The Idaho Bond Levy Equalization Support Program provides that all school districts are eligible to receive additional state financial assistance for the cost of annual bond interest and redemption payments made on bonds passed on or after September 15, 2002 (based on a calculated index). It also provides that all school districts are eligible to receive no less than ten percent of the interest cost portion of the annual bond interest and redemption payment. This program could be changed to also provide a small margin of compensation for high interest rates paid by public charter schools for conventional commercial loans or public market bonds.

The results of the 2011-12 Idaho Charter School Facilities Study indicate that students attending Idaho public charter schools are not currently housed in facilities equitable to traditional public school facilities and that public charter schools are spending an average of 11 percent of their operational funds on buildings rather than on teachers or other classroom purposes.

By ensuring facilities equity for all Idaho public schools, public charter schools could widen programming options, increase the quality of the educational experience for students, and increase the number of seats available to waitlisted students.



APPENDIX A

Methodology

Questionnaire Development

A critical first step to gathering the best possible set of objective data and information about charter school facilities and facility needs was to develop a comprehensive questionnaire.

To accomplish this, the Colorado League of Charter Schools commissioned Hutton Architecture Studio. The firm's principal architect, Paul Hutton, AIA, has designed a variety of schools and is known for his creative, cost effective, and environmentally conscious facilities. Hutton has designed numerous new charter schools and charter school additions. Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., a former assistant superintendent with the Denver Public Schools with responsibilities for supervision of charter schools, educational planning, and research, was also selected to assist in the design of the survey and analysis of the data. In addition to his public school facilities expertise, Dr. Eckerling has experience with general obligation bond planning and implementation.

The draft questionnaire was reviewed by the League's facility task force, League staff, and others with expertise in school construction and educational policy. A draft questionnaire was then field tested with a small group of charter schools to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of the items. Further revisions to the questionnaire were made based on the feedback from all participating Colorado schools and survey results. The revised base survey and state-specific questions were then administered in Georgia, Indiana and Texas. Extensive feedback was solicited from these states' Charter Support Organizations and schools, resulting in further revisions to the Colorado League of Charter Schools' base survey.

Topics addressed include the following:

- Demographic information including grades served, year of inception, and number of students on the waiting list.
- Future facility plans.
- Shared use information.
- Facility information including year of construction and site size.
- Facility ownership, financing, and annual payments.
- Facility and classroom size and information technology resources.
- Facility amenities such as gyms, lunch rooms, libraries, and playgrounds.
- Facility adequacy, condition, and maintainability.
- Facility funding.

The questionnaire includes more than 145 items with some requiring multiple responses.

Idaho Survey Procedures

The Colorado League of Charter Schools' base questionnaire was revised to address Idaho-specific issues through a collaborative effort of the Idaho Charter Schools Network, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Mr. Hutton, and Dr. Eckerling. To ensure both timely and accurate responses, the Idaho Charter Schools Network and their consultant, Nils Peterson, assisted schools with completing the questionnaires. Submitted questionnaires were reviewed again for accuracy and completeness. Follow-up was done with the schools as necessary. While the completed questionnaires are the primary source of information for this study, information from the Idaho Department of Education was used to provide data on pupil membership, per-pupil funding and free and reduced price lunch eligibility.

APPENDIX B

School Facility Standards

This section provides information about the standards used in this report. These standards were derived from more than a decade of published regional and national new school construction data, and local school facility data. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into the standards as are site, facility and classroom standards used in a number of states. The standards are intended to be neither excessively generous in allocating space nor unnecessarily limiting to charter school opportunities.

The process for developing facility standards began with published regional and national new school construction data and comparable local facility data for gross building square footage¹³. This data is typically based on enrollments that average between 600 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 Table 1.

	200 Students	500 Students	800 Students
Grades K-5	149	130	112
Grades K-8	153	139	125
Grades K-12	163	154	144
Grades 6-8	156	151	144
Grades 6-12	177	170	163
Grades 9-12	190	183	176

¹³ National and region data were acquired from the School Planning & Management's (2001-2012, individually) Annual School Construction Reports. Local data was acquired through district building and planning reports.

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, including a representative sample of urban, suburban, and rural school districts, to ensure their validity. Site size standards are shown in Table 2 for three different enrollment levels.

Table 2. School Site Standards (acres)			
	200 Students	500 Students	800 Students
Grades K-5	4.4	7.6	13.2
Grades K-8	5.1	11.5	16.5
Grades K-12	5.2	12.1	18.1
Grades 6-8	4.6	10.9	16.7
Grades 6-12	5.1	12.3	18.8
Grades 9-12	5.7	13.7	12.2

General classroom standards are shown in Table 3. These standards were derived from standards used in other states and districts 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.

Table 3. General Classroom Standards (square feet per student)	
K	41
Grades 1-6	34
Grades 7-8	29
Grades 9-12	30

Standards for specialized instructional spaces like libraries, computer rooms, science labs, art rooms, music rooms, special education classrooms, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms also were developed based on a review of state and district standards as well as best practices in school design. 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.

Table 4. Specialized Instructional Spaces			
	Elementary	Middle	High
Gymnasium	3,000 SQ FT	5,400 SQ FT	7,300 SQ FT
Science Lab/Class	40 SQ FT / Student	44 SQ FT / Student	48 SQ FT / Student
Art	38 SQ FT / Student	44 SQ FT / Student	50 SQ FT / Student
Library	SQ FT = 500 + (2.5 * enrollment)		
Lunch Room	SQ FT = 4.75* enrollment		SQ FT = 4.9* enrollment

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was prepared by the Colorado League of Charter Schools and the
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools on behalf of the Idaho Charter School Network.