

Build Safe and Healthy Schools



Buildings and facilities are the foundation of every learning environment.

When school buildings and facilities are healthy, safe, and contemporary students are better able to learn; staff can better provide relevant, effective instruction and services. With a strong foundation, we can expect stronger student outcomes.

Why is it important?

Safe and healthy schools and facilities are critical for the well-being of students and staff. Prioritizing this involves improving the school construction formula, supporting a straightforward majority vote for school bonds, expanding access to the small school modernization grant program, dedicating more resources to essential staff training, and actively involving students, families, and community members in the decision-making process. These measures are crucial to establishing and maintaining educational settings that foster safety and well-being for all.

01 Student and Staff Well-being

Building safe and healthy schools ensures students and staff feel safe and supported. A safe, healthy building generates an increased focus on teaching and learning. ¹

02 Upgrading School Facilities

Updating standards for school construction is crucial to ensure safe, modern facilities that can be maintained by in-house facility and maintenance staff.

03 Supporting School Bonds

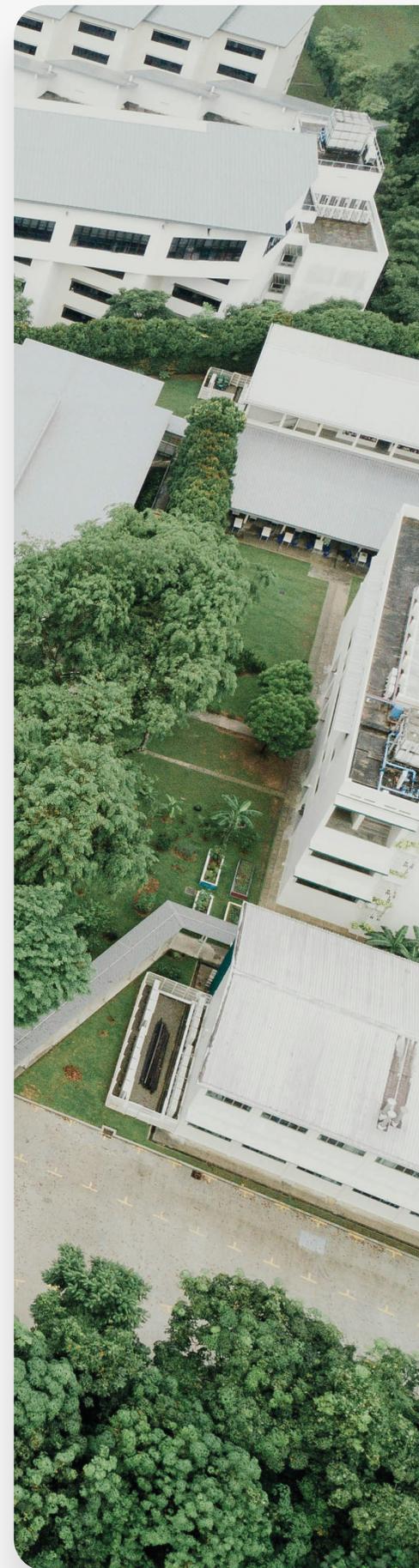
Facilitating the passage of school bond measures with a simple majority vote is critical for enabling state support and community investment in education. It means communities can invest in their schools and create better learning environments. ²

04 Modernizing Small Schools

Enhancing access to the small school modernization grant program is essential for enabling smaller school districts to upgrade their facilities, especially when many of these school districts are unable to pass bonds.

05 Securing Training for Staff Members

Providing training for our staff following the Washington Association of Maintenance and Operations Administrators (WAMOA) guidelines, specifically focusing on leadership in facilities management and staying current with best practices, is crucial to secure the upkeep of schools.





06 Student, Parent, and Community Involvement

When students, parents, and community members are part of the process, schools can better meet their needs and preferences and have their buy-in to help support and grow. ³

07 Creating a Positive Learning Environment

Safe and healthy schools create a positive learning environment where students can thrive. This encompasses physical safety and fostering an atmosphere where everyone feels supported and valued.

08 Enhancing Academic Success

When students feel safe and healthy at school, it positively impacts their academic success. Students in such environments are more likely to attend school regularly and actively engage in learning. ⁴

09 Community Investment

Funding in safe and healthy schools is an investment in the community's future. Well-maintained schools enhance educational outcomes and attract families, bolstering local economies.

10 Preparing for Future Challenges

In today's world, schools must be prepared for various challenges, including emergencies and health crises. Ensuring that schools are safe and healthy equips them to be resilient and adaptable in facing unforeseen challenges.

What can school board members do to advocate for building safe and healthy schools?

- ✔ Meet with your superintendent to familiarize yourself with the needs of the school(s) in your district.
- ✔ Connect needs to impacts on teaching and learning.
- ✔ Schedule meetings with legislators who represent your district.
- ✔ Share connections between safe and healthy schools, equitable education, and teaching and learning. Include data from the [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#).
- ✔ Engage students and staff in the advocacy process. Students and staff can also meet with legislators and provide testimony during the legislative session. They can do this by sharing their stories, videos and photos with legislators or inviting them to visit their facilities so they can see for themselves.

For additional recommendations on effectively and persuasively communicating the importance of building safe and healthy schools to legislators:

✉ Please contact us at strategicadvocacy@wssda.org

Supporting Research

¹ Barrett, P., Treves, A., Shmis, T., Ambasz, D., & Ustinova, M. (2009). The Impact of School Infrastructure on Learning A Synthesis of the Evidence. Washington DC; World Bank Group.

² Wansley, L. (2023) Why school bonds are important, Kickstart Your Campaign. Available at: <https://kickstartyourcampaign.com/why-school-bonds-are-important/> (Accessed: 06 December 2023).

³ Family-school-community partnerships. Family-School-Community Partnerships | National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). (n.d.). <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/training-technical-assistance/education-level/early-learning/family-school-community-partnerships>

⁴ Central, C., Murray, J., Luna, J., & Poiner, J. (2023, June 12). Children learn best when they feel safe and valued. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/children-learn-best-when-they-feel-safe-and-valued>