



Timothy P. Cahill
Chairman, State Treasurer

Katherine P. Craven
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors, Massachusetts School Building Authority
From: Katherine P. Craven, Executive Director
Date: September 29, 2010
RE: 2010 Needs Survey Update

The MSBA is nearing completion of the 2010 Needs Survey of approximately 1,775 public schools in 327 districts across Massachusetts. After an on-site assessment phase that spanned 13 weeks, the MSBA and its consultant STV, Inc. undertook an intensive quality review process to identify and resolve any data discrepancies. In addition, to ensure that the Needs Survey data was as accurate as possible, we invited each superintendent to access the Needs Survey database, review the data collected at the schools in their districts and notify the MSBA if they discovered any errors. Superintendents from 171 districts took advantage of this opportunity during a two-week period beginning August 27, 2010.

With the quality review process in the final stages of completion, the MSBA has begun an in-depth analysis of the data collected during the Needs Survey. Each school was rated on three basic attributes: building conditions, general physical environment and space utilization.

- Building Conditions Score — this is analogous to the 2006 Needs Survey rating and was calculated by looking at the condition of 7 site and 18 building systems.

- General Physical Environment — Schools received a rating for the conditions that affect the physical learning environment such as daylighting, classroom size, maintenance practices, accessibility, technology, open floor plans and the presence of appropriate core spaces. (library, gym, cafeteria).
- Space Utilization —Each school received a rating for space utilization as compared against the average for schools across the Commonwealth. The MSBA considered a number of factors, including gross square feet (GSF) per student, students per classroom, the percentage of temporary and non-traditional classrooms in use and the number of lunch seatings, among other criteria, to develop a rating for each school.

Our analysis reveals the following preliminary findings:

1. **The condition of the approximately 1,775 Massachusetts schools is generally good.** The data gathered during the Needs Survey was used to rate each school's major building systems on a scale of 1 to 4.
 - Over 80% of Massachusetts schools received a rating of 1 or 2, meaning that they are generally in good condition with few building systems that may need attention.
 - Since its creation in 2004, the MSBA has expended over \$7.2 Billion on school construction and renovation grants that have improved school facilities in cities, towns and regional school districts in every region of the Commonwealth.
 - Less than 2% of Massachusetts schools received a rating of 4, meaning that the building may need substantial work.

- Of the 62 schools that were rated a 4 during the previous Needs Survey, the MSBA has provided funding to 9, 19, including 4 Wait List projects, are currently in the MSBA's capital pipeline and 6 are closed. A large percentage of the remaining schools were not designated as priority schools in the Districts' Statements of Interest.
- **The majority of Massachusetts school buildings provide a good physical environment in which to learn.** Each school was assigned a rating of 1 to 4 based on an evaluation of the physical learning environment.
- Over 90% of Massachusetts schools received a rating of 1 or 2, meaning that the overall physical environment is good.
- Less than 2% of Massachusetts schools received a general environment rating of 4, meaning that the building does not provide a positive environment for teaching and learning. Many of the schools in this category have one or more of the following conditions:
 - high numbers of interior classrooms that lack appropriate levels of daylighting,
 - open floor plans and/or
 - significantly undersized classrooms

2. **The majority of schools fall within a normal range for space utilization.** Each school was assigned a rating of Average, Above Average or Below Average based on how its use of space compared to other schools in the Commonwealth.
- Nearly 23% of Massachusetts Schools received a Below Average rating, meaning that they generally have higher GSF per student and lower

student to classroom ratios than average. In addition, these schools have very few, if any, temporary or non-traditional classrooms.

- Less than 8% of Massachusetts schools earned an Above Average rating, meaning that they may high numbers of temporary or non-traditional classrooms, unusually small classroom sizes, lower GSF per student and higher student to classroom ratios than average.
- Since the 2006 Needs Survey, more than 80 schools have closed or consolidated. The highest number of closings occurred in Region 6 (Southeastern Massachusetts, the Cape and Islands) where 36 schools have closed in the last 5 years. Regions 1 and 2 in Western and Central Massachusetts also saw high numbers of school closings.
- School personnel identified over 1,300 classrooms that are no longer being used for education. Assuming an average classroom size of 750 to 800 square feet, this figure represents more than 1 million square feet of classroom space that is currently used for storage, district administration, municipal offices or private programs.

3. **The majority of schools in Massachusetts received an average rating for maintenance.** Each school was rated in three maintenance areas: general cleanliness, routine systems maintenance and capital maintenance. An average rating means that school facility personnel are putting forth at least the minimal effort required to clean the building, maintain the systems and address capital repairs.

- 74% of schools received average ratings in all three maintenance categories.

- Only 37 schools received exemplary ratings across the board, while 12 schools were rated below average in cleanliness, routine systems maintenance and capital maintenance.
- Maintenance practices were inconsistent within districts and bore little relationship to community wealth.

Although these findings represent some of the most significant information gleaned from the 2010 Needs Survey, the MSBA is compiling a comprehensive report of the Needs Survey findings that will be available in the coming weeks.