Governor’s Commission on School Construction

Interim Summary

April 15, 2025

Introduction

By Executive Order, Governor Janet Mills created the Governor's Commission on School Construction to conduct a comprehensive review of school construction needs throughout the State, with an accompanying report and recommendations due on April 15, 2025 (Appendix A1 - Executive Order). Given the scope and depth of the issues still before the commission, and in consultation with the Governor's Office, the commission is delivering this Interim Summary and will continue working toward delivering a full and final report and recommendations later this year.

The Interim Summary is intended to provide interested parties with information and issues reviewed by the commission thus far. It includes a compilation of data, reports, literature, and statutes, along with preliminary findings and potential strategies, which the commission will further analyze in the months ahead. This summary does not include recommendations. It does contain topics, issues, and suggestions raised to date. New information, analyses, and strategies likely will emerge as the commission's work continues. Additional information about the commission can be found on the Governor's Commission on School Construction webpage: https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/facilities/commission-on-school-construction.

In carrying out its work, the commission is grateful for the support of Governor Janet Mills and her representative, Senior Policy Advisor Joseph Marro. The commission appreciates the support of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and looks forward to the committee's input and guidance in the months ahead. Numerous national, state, and local groups and individuals, including Maine School Superintendents, have contributed generously of their time and expertise. All contributors will be acknowledged in the commission's final report. In the meantime, information provided by contributors can be found in the Appendices section of this summary. This includes timely and useful information from the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI).

Since beginning its work in late 2024, the commission has sought to 1) understand the system of school construction, renovation, and funding, 2) identify the problems associated with the existing approach, and 3) surface potential strategies, solutions, and alternatives to address or solve these problems.

By way of process, the commission reviewed the state of school construction in Maine; sought information from stakeholders; obtained comparative perspectives from national experts; conducted school visits; identified issues; and surfaced potential strategies to address these issues. These strategies—and possibly others—will be examined in the months ahead for the purpose of making recommendations later this year.

The commission continues to seek and encourage input from stakeholders. This includes state, county, and local officials and policy makers, education leaders, teachers, parents, students, and those involved in school design and construction. The door is open for additional promising strategies beyond what has been identified in this Interim Summary. Hopefully, the information below will enable stakeholders to comment even more specifically on issues and potential strategies.

I. Overview

Of Maine's 600 schools, approximately 500 will require replacement or renovation/modernization in the next 20 years. Conservatively, the cost is estimated at **11 billion dollars** assuming 25 schools per year. This estimate does not account for increased costs in construction and materials, nor the likelihood that many renovation projects will not occur on a timely basis, resulting in more costly replacement (Appendix D1).

To put the estimate in perspective, the projected funds needed to replace or renovate Maine schools is approximately equal to the state's entire biennial General Fund budget and 3.5 times as much as the annual amount of property taxes collected in the state. An excellent overview of infrastructure and funding is contained in Appendix C1 - Current State of School Building Infrastructure, Scott Brown and Paula Gravelle, 2025.

Each year, the gap increases between the number of schools in need and those that are either replaced or renovated. The 2024-2025 Major Capital School Construction rating cycle is underway with 97 applicants. In 2017-2018, of the 74 applications received, nine were funded. In 2024, of the 86 schools which applied for School Revolving Renovation Funds (SRRF), 23 were funded (Appendix C2). With the current level of funding and methodology, this trend cannot improve. In fact, it will worsen.

What are the likely consequences?

A recent MEPRI report provides a glimpse into that future. "Maine has a large number of school buildings and a large portion of those were built in the 1950s and 1960s, while some were built decades earlier. Many of these older buildings are not meeting the current safety requirements nor the educational and support services needs of students. As the state can only afford to approve one or a few projects from the priority list each year for state subsidized construction or renovation, other schools on the priority list continue to fall into further disrepair or problems worsen, and additional schools across the state begin to face similar high priority needs." Note: Although more than one project is typically approved, the general thrust of the above statement is accurate. (Appendix C3 - MEPRI Report on Policy and Practices for Funding Maine Public School Construction and Renovation, p.13. 2025).

Despite sound practices and management, the existing facilities approach can only maintain the status quo or, at best, achieve modest improvement. Absent changes, Maine is on a clear path to even higher costs—state and local—and substantial disruption to students, teachers, and communities.

Maine is not alone in this problem. Many states are engaged in similar discussions to address aging infrastructure with limited finances. Although efforts have been made at the federal level to secure additional resources for this nationwide problem, thus far, it remains largely a state and local issue.

It is safe to say that additional funding will be needed. But even if additional funds are forthcoming, realistically, they would not be sufficient to completely resolve the problem. The most likely solution involves an approach that combines strategic targeting of revenue with cost reduction and reconfiguring resources more efficiently and effectively (Appendix E9 - Filardo). Making substantial progress requires a strategic, outcome-driven, interlocking, well-executed, achievable approach that leverages existing and new capacity on a broader scale to best advantage. This includes:

- Stabilizing funding.
- Reducing cost.
- Continuously adapting to and adopting new building methodologies.
- Building and renovating schools more quickly and economically.
- Lessening the burden of a lengthy, costly process on districts, municipalities, and superintendents.
- Seeking and developing new types of partnerships and financing, resulting in both revenue and quality outcomes for students and communities.

The sections below summarize the information, issues, and potential strategies thus far. As the commission continues its work, information will be added and/or modified. Detailed references and resources are included in the Appendices.

II. Background Information and Preliminary Findings

The information in this section identifies—in brief—the issues associated with the existing approach to school construction and renovation in Maine. It reflects the commission's methodology—to first understand and articulate the problems to ensure that proposed strategies or solutions directly address the identified issues.

A. Cost

As mentioned above, over the next 20 years, a conservative estimate of the cost of the existing backlog of Capital Projects and Major Renovations is $11 billion. This estimate is based on today's construction costs per square foot for existing facilities—totaling 27,091,267 square feet (Appendix D1- MDOE Facilities Need Analysis). In 1990, the approximate cost per square foot of construction was $100. Today, it is estimated to be more than $600. The cost directly affects the number of projects that the state can fund annually. For example, in 1992, Brunswick High School cost $19 million to build. In 2019, Edward Little High School/Satellite CTE cost $120 million (Appendix D2 – Cost per square foot). Factors contributing to rising costs, include:

- Escalation for construction materials and labor.
- Substantial and rising soft costs, including architectural/design, engineering, site inspections, surveying, assessments, permitting, legal, financial, furniture, technology, and equipment. Because districts undertake major projects from scratch, each incurs these soft costs.

B. Funding

Background

"Maine uses a combination of state appropriations and financing to help school districts construct or renovate public school buildings (ECS, 2023a). Maine school districts only obtain state funding for capital improvement projects if their school facilities needs are ranked at the top of the state's priority list, and if there are sufficient funds available. Maine also relies heavily on financing school construction and renovation through the sale of bonds and loans, as there is no statewide tax or other revenue source specifically dedicated to fund school construction. State funding for these projects is part of General Purpose Aid supported by a variety of state revenue sources. Maine uses an independent finance authority (Maine Municipal Bond Bank) to administer a majority of the school construction and renovation loans. Forgiveness on loans for school renovations is based on the limits of loan forgiveness set by the fund and the district's state subsidy share. For the most part, Maine relies first on local property tax revenue to fund local school construction and renovation needs, and districts pay interest on loans for those projects. Many school districts fund a portion or all of their own facilities needs from local taxes and pay back construction or renovation loans with interest" (Appendix C3 - MEPRI, Policy and Practices for Funding Maine Public School Construction and Renovation, 2025).

Adequacy and sustainability of funding

State and local funding for school construction and renovation has not kept pace with need or cost. Given existing funding streams, the state funding model, which is, on average, 50% of school construction—is unsustainable. In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, the state debt service principal was $76,449,669.34 and interest was $29,677,394.16.

Debt Service approach

Based on Maine Revised Statutes 20-A, Chapter 606-B: Essential Programs and Services, Debt Service is a component of the Total Cost of Education. Principal and interest costs for approved State-funded major capital projects appear as the "debt service allocation" in each year's Part C budget, which establishes the Total Cost of Education from Kindergarten to Grade 12, the state contribution, the annual

target state share, and the mill expectation for the local contribution (Appendix D3 - Major Capital Improvement - Current Bonded Debt).

The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) FY26 proposed budget in the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program (Program 0308, pages 212-214) totals $1,506,035,653 (General Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds) and represents the state's required 55% of the Total Cost of Education, as defined in statute. Part C of the language document provides additional information on the Total Cost of Education. The Total Debt Service Allocation in FY26 is $114,070,354. This is a component of the $1.5 billion included in Part A of the budget bill.

Pursuant to MRSA 20-A, §15905, the Maine State Board of Education has the authority to approve school construction projects as long as no project approval will cause debt services costs, as defined in section 15672, subsection 2-A, paragraph A, and pursuant to rules adopted in accordance with Resolve 2007, chapter 223, section 4, to exceed the maximum of $150,000,000 currently authorized. Currently authorized projects have the State reaching that $150 million debt service limit in fiscal year 2028 or 2029. As noted above, the current amount of funding for debt service is $114 million.

If all other education costs remained flat, the MDOE would need to request an additional $36 million to fund debt service for projects already authorized by the Maine State Board of Education. As it is part of the Total Cost of Education, and the 55% calculation, Debt Service is a component of the Maine DOE's request each year; however, it is not identified anywhere other than in Part C of each year's budget (Appendix D4).

Lack of funding diversification
The lack of diversification in funding leaves it vulnerable to ups and downs—for example, in the General Fund. This scenario is at odds with the rising, predictable costs associated with aging facilities and the need for sustained, ongoing investment.

C. Renovation and Maintenance

Existing approach
The Maine DOE School Revolving Renovation Fund (SRRF) provides loans to school administrative units (SAUs) to finance project expenditures. A portion of each loan is considered a grant and is forgiven. The forgiveness rate ranges from 30 percent to 70 percent based on the percentage of state subsidy paid to the local SAU. The remaining balance of the loan is paid back over either five or 10 years at a 0 percent interest rate. Loan repayments revolve back into the SRRF and are then used to fund other approved projects (Appendix D5 - Number of Projects Funded).

The maximum loan is capped at $2 million per priority, per school building within any five-year period (Appendix B - Chapter 64). **This $2 million cap does not accommodate larger projects, for example, in the range of $8-12 million, which could enable a substantial upgrade or addition to an existing facility. In addition, no funding in Capital Projects is specifically targeted for maintenance.** These factors contribute to deferred maintenance, ultimately driving costs higher, as uncompleted renovations evolve to more expensive replacement projects. Of the five SRRF statutory funding priorities, the state has been able to partially fund only Priority 1—health, safety, and compliance repairs, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and has not funded the other four priorities, which are 2) repairs and improvements not related to health, safety, and compliance, 3) repairs and improvements related to energy and water conservation, 4) upgrades of learning spaces in school buildings, and 5) other repairs or projects approved by the Commissioner.

Maintenance support
In some areas, **there is a lack of qualified technicians to work on increasingly complex mechanical systems.** This places an additional burden on school administrators and staff as they address malfunctions leading to interruption of operations.

Hazards
Compounding the pervasive maintenance needs among Maine schools, **most schools have not explicitly investigated the presence of certain hazards—**specifically radon, air quality, lead, PCBs, and PFAS. A recent report suggests that a number of schools likely have issues that have not been surveyed (Appendix C3, MEPRI, Summary of Maine School Building Inventory Data, p. 14, 2025).

D. Number of Schools and Enrollment

Maine has a history of many local schools, some in close proximity to one another. For decades, the model worked. But as these facilities age and replacement costs have risen, the model has been stretched to the breaking point.

Maine has more schools serving fewer students than most other states. It ranks eighth among states with the least number of students per school (299 students as compared to the national average of 498 students) and operates 3.4 schools per one thousand students, compared to 2.0 schools nationally (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024).

Public school enrollment in Maine has declined in recent decades and is projected to continue to decline in most areas of the state. Reduced enrollment results in a higher operational cost per square foot. Under-enrollment is most evident in the counties of Knox (21 schools, 40%), Aroostook (42 schools, 38%), Washington (35 schools, 33%), and Hancock (35 schools, 32%). To varying degrees, enrollment also is a challenge in other districts (Appendix C4, MEPRI, Summary of Maine School Building Inventory Data, p. 10, 2025).

Individual school enrollment varies. For example, some high schools have well over 1,000 students, while others have only a few hundred. For many, **small local schools epitomize community connection and pride** and represent generational history. They also can represent shorter commute times for students and parents. Despite the infrastructure problems in some schools, many are valued highly for the expertise and *esprit de corps* among teachers, staff, students, and alumni. As one stakeholder said, “It’s the people, not the building, that makes the school.”

At the same time, **not all schools are able to provide a consistent presence of student support services, such as special education support, school nurses, social work, and computer technology.** In some locations, these services are offered remotely. When schools require renovation or replacement, communities often face the question of consolidation.

To date, disagreement regarding consolidation seems to rest in part on the value of small-local, versus the cost-savings of larger facilities. This divide, however, might not be as clear-cut as it appears. It is likely that both the state and districts will continue to struggle to fully fund school replacement or renovation. **Could consolidation become synonymous with improved offerings, services, or experiences sufficient to offset the intrinsic value of smaller, local schools?** Is it possible to not make the choice win-lose but rather win-win, in terms of student and community needs?

Special Education
Approximately 20% of students in Maine identify as needing special education. This requires sufficient and adaptable space—for teaching, lunch, and supportive services—to accommodate

students with disabilities (both visible and invisible), multi-language learners, or those who face other challenges (Appendix C10).

Pre-K

Maine law requires universal access to pre-K for preschool-aged children in accordance with the following timeline: 60% by the 2024-2025 school year; 80% by 2025-2026; and 100% by 2026-2027 (Appendix B4 - Public Law 2023, chapter 477). As of January 2024, 85% of Maine SAUs offer public pre-K programming, with 51% offering pre-K universally to their catchment area. 42% of public pre-K programs operate 25 or more hours per week. 30% of SAUs are operating pre-K programming in partnership with a community partner, such as Head Start or a childcare program (Appendix C8).

Recruitment and retention of teachers

A recent Educate Maine report stated, "Ultimately, Maine's students are most able to thrive when they have access to consistent, high-quality teachers" (Maine's Educator Workforce Data Landscape, 2024). Although this would seem an obvious statement, the report points out that Maine does not collect data that quantifies the extent of the educator shortage. Even without a centralized database however, gaps have been identified. A 2018 MEPRI report suggested that the underlying elements that plague teacher recruitment and retention nationwide are visible in Maine. These include retirement, compensation, and movement from rural to urban districts. Some areas of expertise are less abundant than others. These include Special Education, STEM fields, World Languages, and Allied Arts (MEPRI, Challenges with Teacher Retention and Staffing Shortages in Maine School Districts, 2019). Although the commission does not have data directly linking teacher recruitment and retention to school buildings in Maine, in most workplaces, the physical environment affects the people in it. Noise, crowding, air quality, functionality, and adequate space and equipment are issues that affect workers universally. **It is important to understand if and how Maine school buildings contribute to the recruitment and retention of teachers today and in the years ahead.**

E. Capacity and Collaboration

Capacity

The **Maine DOE Office of School Facilities consists of three full-time staff members** who receive high marks from superintendents for going above and beyond in terms of knowledge and responsiveness. These three staff manage the Major Capital School Construction Program projects, the SRRF, and the Leased Space Program. Other closely-involved entities include the Maine State Board of Education, the Maine Municipal Bond Bank, and the Department of Administrative and Financial Services and its Bureau of General Services—all of which possess high expertise and commitment to school construction in Maine**. In short, the state is high on expertise but low on capacity to fully plan and implement school construction in Maine.**

Collaboration

Going forward, could existing entities collaborate even more in areas such as master planning, public-private partnerships, development of school design prototypes, procurement, and other activities? Could closer collaboration result in the repurposing of public buildings and grounds no longer needed for their original purpose to K-12 education? For example, do opportunities exist for a public school to be built on the grounds of a post-secondary institution?

F. Process

By regulation, Maine has a 21-step process for school construction that starts with an application and goes through the project audit (Appendix B11). Each step is important and well-managed by the Maine DOE, the Maine State Board of Education, local districts and others. **The average timeline for a new**

school construction project, from placement on the Approved Projects List to project completion, can be 5-6 years. The typical timeline from Referendum to Bond Sale is 1-2 years. This timeline is vulnerable to district staff turnover and rising costs. In addition, the burden on superintendents is substantial, including conceptualizing, coordinating, managing, and implementing major capital projects, taking time away from their primary focus on education.

G. Planning

No statewide capital or master plan exists for the hundreds of schools in Maine. No system exists for district maintenance or capital planning, nor an entity to oversee either component if they existed. Absent statewide master planning, it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish cost projections, need, and priorities. The scenario is compounded by the fact that many districts do not submit applications for funding because they lack the capacity to do so. The missing elements of data and planning contribute to the inability to estimate the size of the problem and how funding is deployed statewide.

H. Design

The emergence of **new building materials and energy efficiency strategies are changing how new buildings and large renovations are being considered** nationwide and in Maine. **This includes adaptable prototypes and model school plans**, which assist in reducing soft costs and shortening the life cycle of projects. In addition, **Universal Design principles hold immense value**, not only for all students with disabilities but also for *all* students, teachers, staff, and the community-at-large. This is a particular area of need in schools constructed before 1990.

I. Standardization of Systems or Components

Districts spend a great deal of time researching and subsequently procuring costly, complex major mechanical, technology and other systems. **These complex systems vary across districts.** In some districts, when these systems malfunction, the on-the-ground expertise is not always resident within districts to resolve the issues quickly.

III. Potential Strategies

The commission is seeking a multi-faceted approach which, over time, will result in sustained improvement to the system of school construction and renovation in Maine. **The potential strategies below reflect information, suggestions, and discussions to date and will be analyzed by the commission in the months ahead leading to final recommendations. They do not reflect agreement or recommendations of the commission at this time.**

A. Funding

1. **Additional funds.**
   New **funding should be targeted strategically**, wherever possible accomplishing multiple objectives related to major projects, renovation, maintenance, and/or efficiency measures.

2. **Funding streams**
   Funding streams should be diversified with consideration to a mix of General Fund, property taxes, dedicated taxes, investment income, grants, lapsed balances/unappropriated surplus, and philanthropic. A combination of one or more of these sources, as used in other states, could better ensure that construction and renovation funding is adequate and stable. (Appendix D6 - Tax Chart).

3. **Debt Service**
   The debt service piece of General Purpose Aid for Local Schools budget could be separated into its own budget program. Decoupling major capital construction funds from Essential Programs and Services would increase transparency and improve information for planning purposes at both the state and local levels regarding how much money is being devoted to construction versus education. Doing so would reduce the appropriation in General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program and increase the appropriation in a new program: General Purpose Aid for Local Schools – Debt Service. The debt service limit should be examined to better ensure future capacity to meet predictable needs.

4. **School Revolving Renovation Fund**
   Consideration should be given to supporting projects in the $8-12 million range. Increased investment in the School Revolving Renovation Fund (SRRF) should include fully funding Priority 1 (Safety & Compliance), with sufficient funds to make progress in the other four priority areas.

5. **Public-Private investment**
   New resource opportunities should be explored via public-private partnerships, including where applicable and desirable, P3, Opportunity Zones, and Substantial Rehabilitation Credit.

6. **Philanthropy**
   Although a small amount of philanthropy occurs via alumni associations, clubs, other groups, and individual donations, **a more-concerted, interconnected approach to attracting philanthropic support for Maine schools should be explored.** This can best occur via a high-level, proactive, centralized resource that works closely with districts and communities to pursue opportunities, including collaborative opportunities among districts. This is not a replacement for state and local resources but rather a way to supplement, advance, and accelerate initiatives.

7. **Maintenance**
   Invest more funds in maintenance and establish floor-value requirements to build support for maintenance, especially in times of hardship. Given the importance of maintenance to reducing costs over the long-term, developing accountability standards in this area should be considered.

8. **Local Contribution**
   Requiring districts to contribute funds, rather than the existing all-or-nothing state funding approach, could increase capacity for more projects. Increased local contribution could be offset in part by reducing upfront planning costs via additional state-level technical assistance. Various options should be considered, including a sliding scale based on district characteristics or the incorporation of an approach similar to the SRRF.

9. **Interest-bearing account**
   Consider an interest-bearing account for funds not used, to which are added funds from the difference between what is bonded and the debt ceiling. Although not a substantial amount of revenue, it would add to the funding mix.

10. **Cash versus debt**
    Establish and/or clarify the rationale regarding a cash-versus-debt strategy for specific purposes, with attention to life-cycle cost savings and the sustainability of the overall approach to funding.

B. Cost Control and Efficiency

This section provides information regarding the need to maximize value from existing and future resources and to achieve greater efficiency. Objectives include reducing state and local costs, duplication of effort, shortening project timelines, and pursuing new funding and financing possibilities.

1. Technical Support and Collaboration

Explore the creation of a robust, transparent, accountable statewide financing, planning, and technical support resource. This could be an inter-departmental entity, planning office bringing together existing resources, quasi-independent authority, or other structure or process for the purpose of offering an integrated package of information, technical assistance, services, and support to districts. This includes leveraging and capitalizing on existing expertise from the Maine DOE, the Maine State Board of Education, financing and infrastructure expertise at the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services and Bureau of General Services, the Maine Municipal Bond Bank, Maine Governmental Facilities Authority, and others. **This entity would direct, coordinate, and/or implement activities and improvements such as:**

a. **Develop a statewide master capital plan** with consideration to life-cycle analysis of school facilities, existing and leading demographic and other data indicators, projected costs, priorities, and goals. Master planning should incorporate the engagement strategies now employed in district planning a statewide level to ensure a close connection to local issues and needs.
b. **Map hazards statewide** and incorporate findings for resolution into statewide master plan.
c. **Support district projects from concept to implementation**, including financing, design, architecture, engineering, site location, construction management, mechanical systems, technology, procurement, energy efficiency, etc. This also could include technical assistance for district-level capital planning.
d. **Develop cost savings prototype and/or model school designs** adaptable to local interests, in compliance with regulatory and code standards, Universal Design, and adaptable to evolving student needs, including Special Education, pre-K, and multi-lingual.
e. **Pre-qualify and bundle architectural, engineering, and standardized systems**, components, technology, and other services.
f. **Provide procurement and technical assistance** to districts for purchasing and maintaining major mechanical, technology, and other complex systems.
g. **Embed best-practice energy efficiency strategies** into both renovation and new school design, including opportunities via grants and partnerships with private sector entities.
h. **Explore new funding and financing possibilities** such as public-private partnerships, rehabilitation tax credits, Opportunity Zones, philanthropic investment, and energy-related grants and partnerships.
i. **Examine if, and how, the 21-step process could unfold more expeditiously.**
j. **Pursue leasing options**, whether via private development or via state facilities to reduce capital outlay and to better manage maintenance expense.
k. **Actively pursue opportunities for collaboration** regarding use of public facilities and grounds, including higher education, state, county, and federal.
l. **Pursue philanthropic opportunities** for greater impact statewide.
m. **Engage related statewide resources**, such as the Maine Connectivity Authority, property management associations for training of school-based maintenance staff, etc.
n. **Remain abreast of leading demographic indicators** to ensure accurate planning as migration patterns change resulting in potential increases in enrollment in the years ahead.

2. Consolidation

Explore incentives that encourage consolidation, especially with state-funded projects. The desired outcome would be schools that offer students statewide a comparable, high-quality experience, and which serve as community resources. **Although some communities might choose to locally fund the type and number of schools they desire and can afford, others will benefit from alternative, cost-effective strategies.** Consolidation strategies should result in net value-add characteristics, even as individual aspects important to individuals and/or families might change. It is also important to identify

whether and how the number of school units result in cost savings or allow for more efficient use of school construction funds.

3. **Maintenance**

Higher investment in maintenance is an important aspect of overall cost control. This is easier said than done. As districts grapple with urgent funding needs, it is understandable that maintenance is deferred. Several areas have emerged for continued consideration.

- Explore the procurement and use of comparable mechanical and other complex systems across districts to facilitate easier maintenance and lower associated costs.
- Devote a portion of facility cost to maintenance through at least the first half of the bond, with adjustments made in reimbursement for lapses that cannot be justified.
- Explore a "cost of ownership" approach.
- Increase Maintenance Technician/Property Management expertise perhaps through alliances with Career and Technical Education (CTE), adult education, and/or community colleges.
- Support statewide efforts to train and support school-based maintenance technicians, such as the Maine DOE support for the state maintenance association's annual summer conference.

4. **Design**

Design plays a central role in virtually all aspects of construction, maintenance, and the teaching and learning experience. Whether stand-alone or prototype, **existing design standards need to be preserved**. In addition, the following areas must be examined to bring all school facilities, over time, to a comparable functionality, student and teaching experience, and community use:

- **Flexible, adaptable spaces** to accommodate varying student needs and enrollment changes.
- **Expanding universal and inclusive design strategies** to benefit students, teachers, staff, and community members (Appendix C10).
- **Benchmarks** for **size and shape** of spaces, along with standardized design elements.
- Alignment with the **Governor's Executive Order (11/26/2019)** for state government to "lead by example and invest in renewable energy, increase energy efficiency and resiliency, encourage waste reduction, and strive to reduce operational costs" (Appendix B6). This includes zero carbon/pollution reductions, long-term energy cost savings, building materials, air quality, exterior envelope, and use of native plants.
- The role of **outdoor spaces** in student learning, experience, and during emergencies.
- **Practical needs assessment** for the designs of the future.
- **Relationship between the physical environment, healthy eating practices and behaviors, and health.** This includes cooking equipment for fresh foods, multiple seating options, access to technology (especially if the space is used during non-mealtime).
- Ability to use cafeteria or other spaces for **community events** if desired.

5. **Technology**

In new construction, embed robust, adaptable technology infrastructure, both hard-wired and wireless. This includes learning management systems, capacity for hybrid teaching and learning, security, and emergency communications. It includes the capacity to adapt and support special needs and equipping all students—including CTE—with the technology skills that enable them to compete, whether they transition directly to the workforce or to higher education. Every state-funded school project now includes a technology consultant for equipment, infrastructure, and data security—an area that requires review to ensure sustainability.

6. **Quality**

Evaluate construction quality and performance at the one-year mark and again at year-two or later, such that any deficiencies can clearly be attributed to specific contractors or subcontractors and therefore inform the pre-qualification process for subsequent projects.

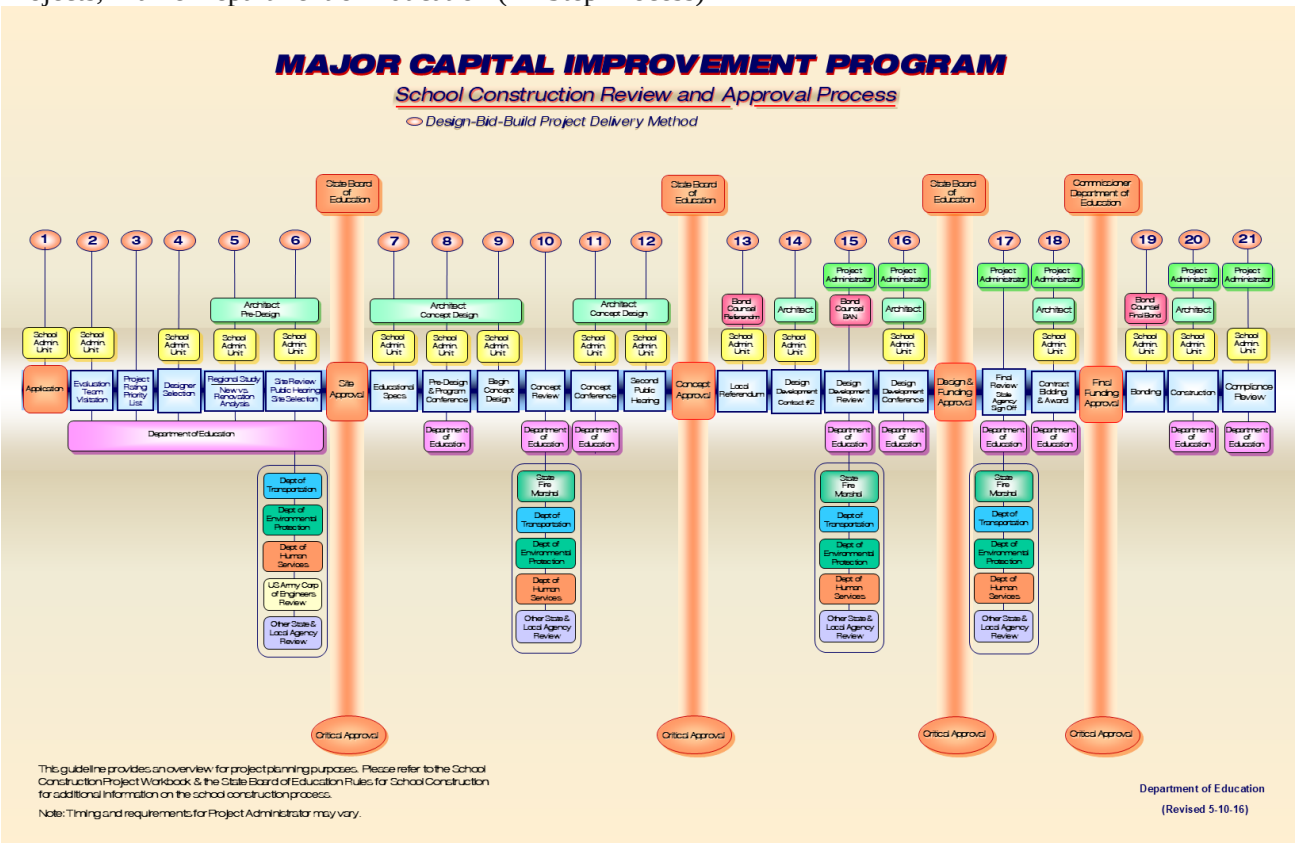
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Authorizing Legislation

1. Executive Order link
2. Commission webpage link

APPENDIX B
Statutes and Regulations

1. Rule Chapter 60
2. Rule Chapter 61
3. Rule Chapter 64
4. Public Law 2023, chapter 477
5. General Purpose Aid for Local Schools Program 0308, pages 212-214
6. Executive Order, An Order for State Agencies to Lead By Example Through Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, and Sustainability Measures, 2019
7. Educational Specifications, Maine Department of Education
8. Public School Standards & Guidelines for New School Construction & Major Renovation Projects, Maine Department of Education
9. Space Allocation Guidelines, Maine Department of Education
10. Major Capital Improvement Program, School Construction Review and Approval Process, Capital Projects, Maine Department of Education (21-Step Process)



APPENDIX C

Maine Reports and Presentations

1. Overview: Current State of School Construction and School Construction Funding *presentation*, Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities, Maine Department of Education and Paula Gravelle, Director of School Finance, Maine Department of Education link
2. Maine DOE School Revolving Renovation Fund *presentation*, Anne Pinnette, Division Coordinator, School Revolving Renovation Fund, Leased Space Program, and Capital Planning, Maine Department of Education link
3. Policy and Practices for Funding Maine Public School Construction and Renovation Report, MEPRI (2025) link
4. Summary of Maine School Building Inventory Data, MEPRI (2025) link
5. Maine DAFS Associate Commissioner for Tax Policy *presentation*, Dr. Michael Allen, Associate Commissioner of Tax Policy, Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services link
6. Maine DOE Education Specifications *presentation* link
7. Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education, Maine Department of Education, 2024 link
8. Maine Educator Workforce Data Landscape, Educate Maine, 2024 link
9. Challenges with Teacher Retention and Staffing Shortages in Maine School Districts, MEPRI, 2019 link
10. Special Education and Universal Design *presentation*, Erin Frazier, State Director of Special Services Birth to 22, Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education, Maine Department of Education (*slide presentation below*)

a.

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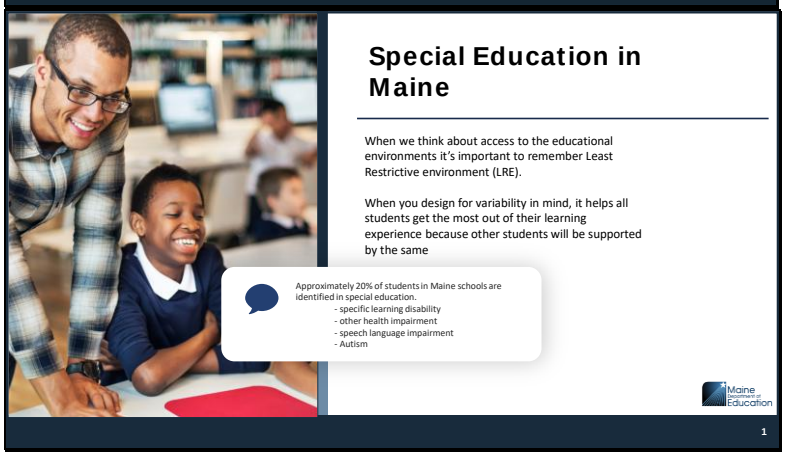
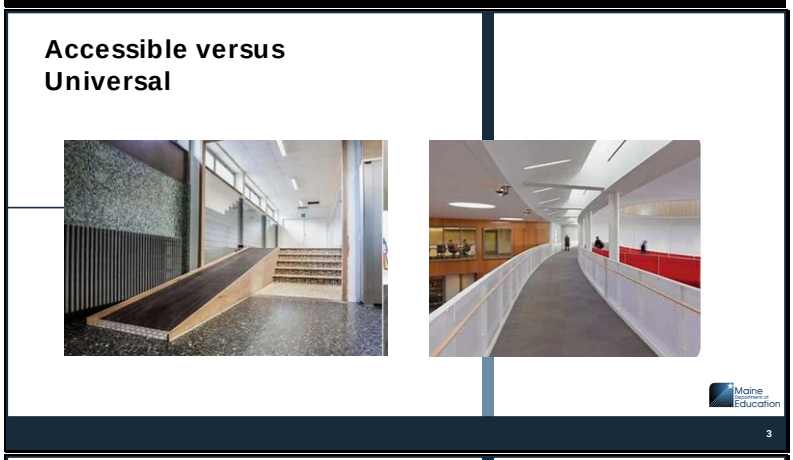


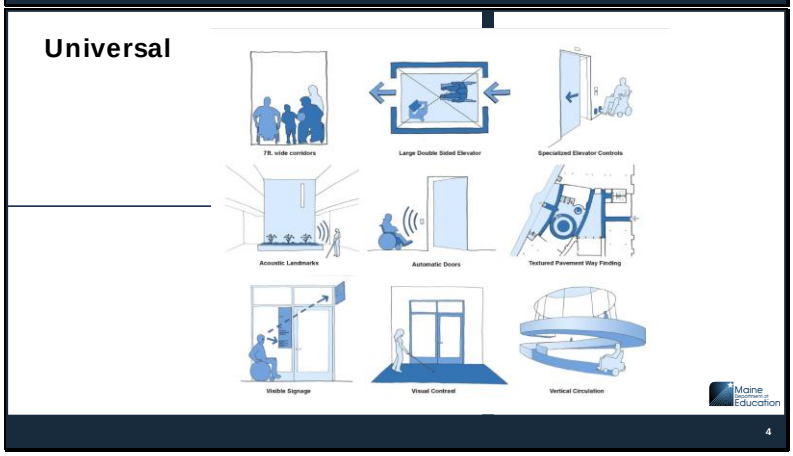
c.


Universal Design
Technical & Best Practices
1. Equity in use
2. Flexibility
3. Simple and intuitive
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for error (minimize negative outcomes)
6. Low Physical effort
7. Size and space for approach
2

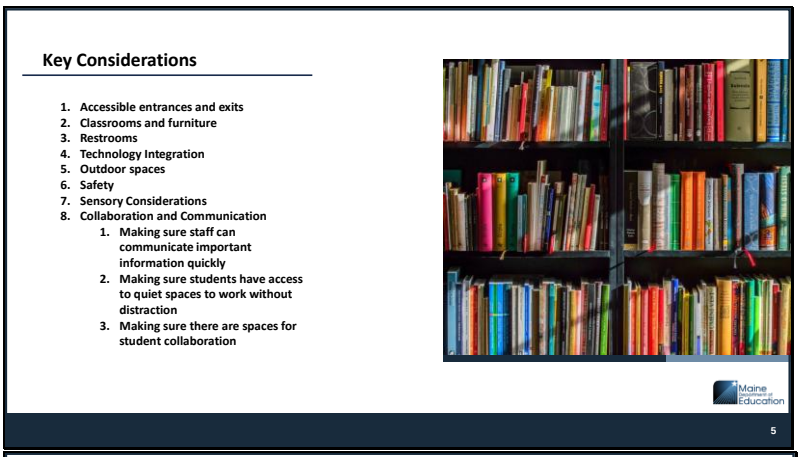
d.


Accessible versus Universal
Maine Department of Education
3

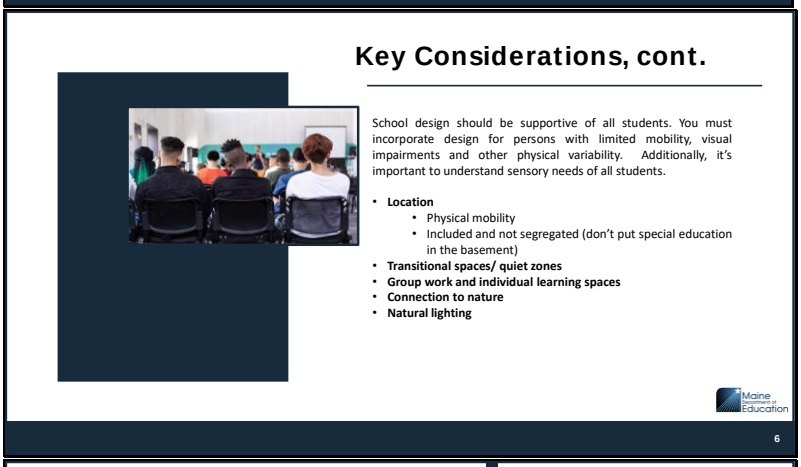
e.


Universal
Maine Department of Education
4

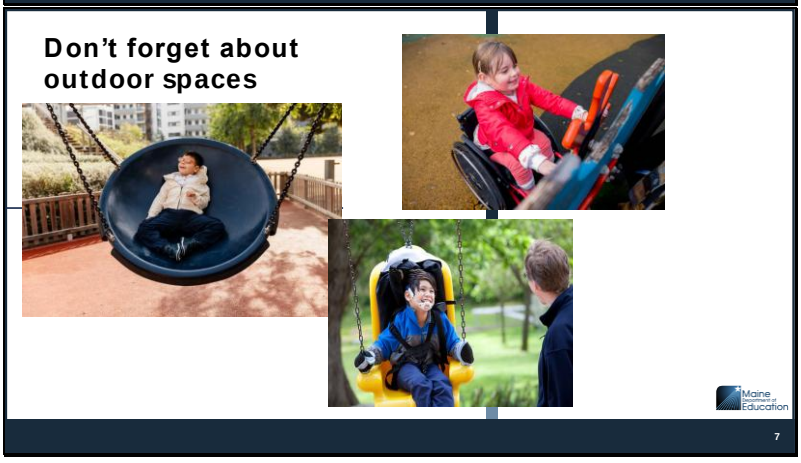
f.


Key Considerations
1. Accessible entrances and exits
2. Classrooms and furniture
3. Restrooms
4. Technology Integration
5. Outdoor spaces
6. Safety
7. Sensory Considerations
8. Collaboration and Communication
1. Making sure staff can communicate important information quickly
2. Making sure students have access to quiet spaces to work without distraction
3. Making sure there are spaces for student collaboration
Maine Department of Education
5

g.


Key Considerations, cont.
School design should be supportive of all students. You must incorporate design for persons with limited mobility, visual impairments and other physical variability. Additionally, it's important to understand sensory needs of all students.
Location
Physical mobility
Included and not segregated (don't put special education in the basement)
Transitional spaces/ quiet zones
Group work and individual learning spaces
Connection to nature
Natural lighting
Maine Department of Education
6

h.


Don't forget about outdoor spaces
Maine Department of Education
7

APPENDIX D

Maine Data

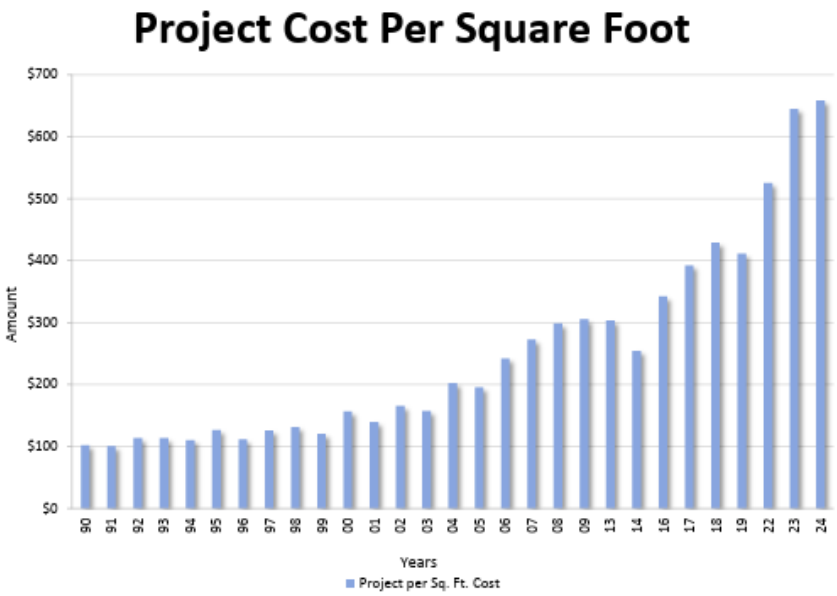
1. Facilities Needs Analysis, Maine DOE

FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS

Public School and CTE Needs Identified by the Maine School Building Inventory

	School Buildings	Square Footage	Estimated Cost	Estimated Total
New Construction and Significant Renovation Needs - *Schools constructed between 1804 and 1950 -*	**83**	**4,190,617**	**$660/s.f.**	**2,765,807,220**
Modernization thru Renovations and Updates of Codes, Energy Systems, Health & Safety, and Programming Improvements *Schoool constructed between 1951 and 1975 -*	**273**	**15,771,906**	**$440/s.f.**	**$6,939,638,640**
Modernization thru Light Renovations and Upgrades of Codes, Energy Sytems, Health & Safety, and Programming Improvements *School Constructed betweem 1976 and 2000 -*	**141**	**7,128,744**	**$220/s.f.**	**$1,568,323,680**
				$11,273,769,540

2. Cost Per Square Foot



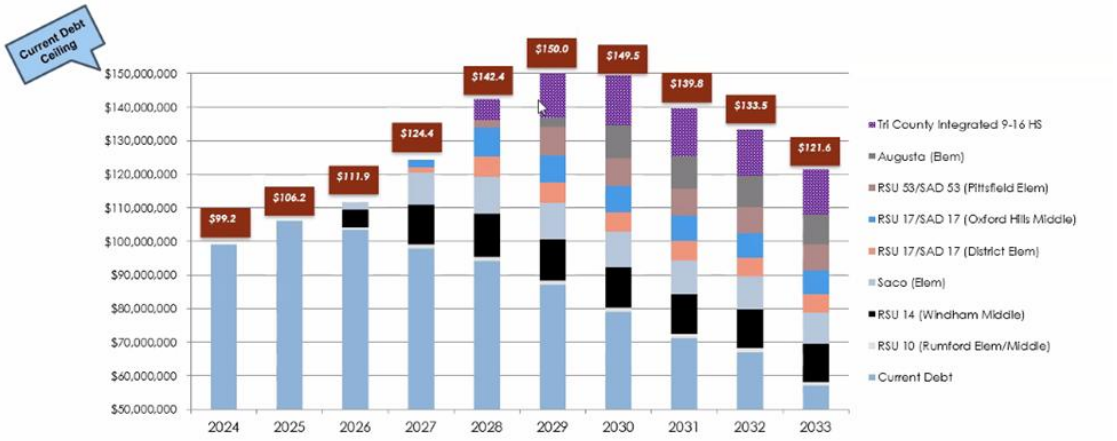
3. **Major Capital Improvement – Current Bonded Debt**

Major Capital Improvement – Current Bonded Debt

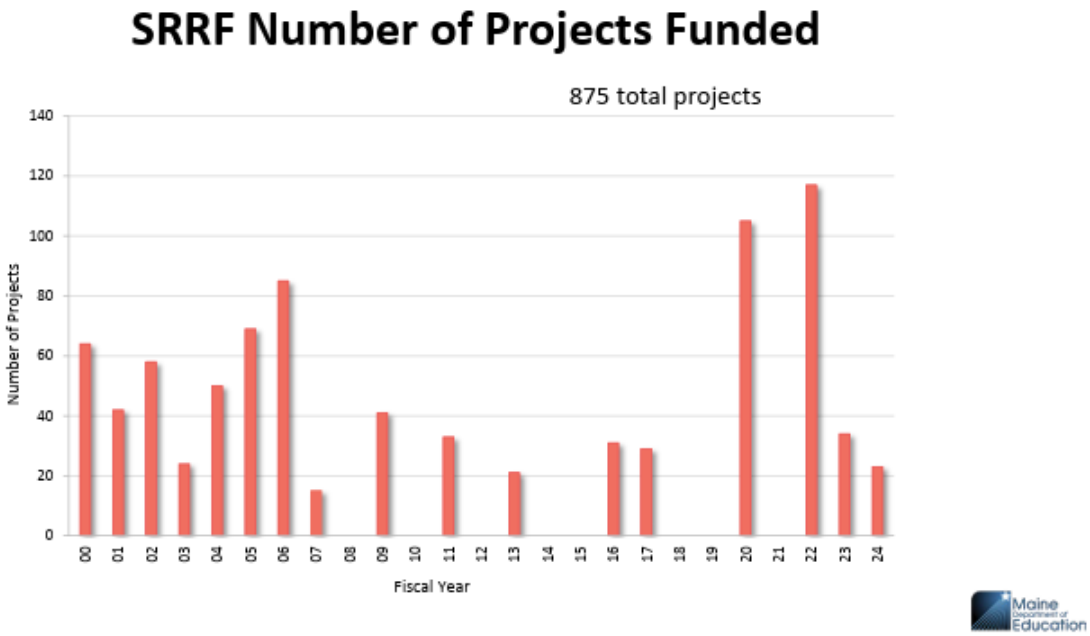
STATE OF MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR
BEGINNING WITH FY 2025

FISCAL YEAR		PRINCIPAL	INTEREST	TOTAL
2025	Grand Total	$76,449,669.34	$29,677,394.16	$106,127,063.50
2026	Grand Total	$75,950,557.29	$27,584,180.74	$103,534,738.03
2027	Grand Total	$72,650,854.26	$25,132,646.23	$97,783,500.49
2028	Grand Total	$71,533,352.22	$22,605,369.77	$94,138,721.99
2029	Grand Total	$66,550,555.33	$20,490,662.45	$87,041,217.78
2030	Grand Total	$60,464,436.33	$18,626,726.27	$79,091,162.60
2031	Grand Total	$54,472,520.39	$16,874,728.02	$71,347,248.41
2032	Grand Total	$51,939,322.58	$15,140,682.36	$67,080,004.94
2033	Grand Total	$43,595,786.09	$13,486,104.80	$57,081,890.89
2034	Grand Total	$43,595,786.09	$11,882,432.41	$55,478,218.50
2035	Grand Total	$43,595,557.09	$10,306,234.43	$53,901,791.52
2036	Grand Total	$43,595,557.09	$8,695,488.36	$52,291,045.45
2037	Grand Total	$42,095,173.70	$7,101,470.28	$49,196,643.98
2038	Grand Total	$41,128,085.75	$5,539,407.67	$46,667,493.42
2039	Grand Total	$30,724,683.34	$4,175,120.77	$34,899,804.11
2040	Grand Total	$25,413,213.04	$3,119,773.88	$28,532,986.92
2041	Grand Total	$18,725,800.15	$2,292,472.59	$21,018,272.74
2042	Grand Total	$18,725,800.15	$1,583,719.65	$20,309,519.80
2043	Grand Total	$11,877,899.73	$969,167.76	$12,847,067.49
2044	Grand Total	$9,096,344.35	$493,956.79	$9,590,301.14
2045	Grand Total	$5,876,344.35	$138,670.67	$6,015,015.02
	Total Currently Bonded Debt	$908,057,298.66	$245,916,410.06	$1,153,973,708.72

4. **Current Debt Ceiling**

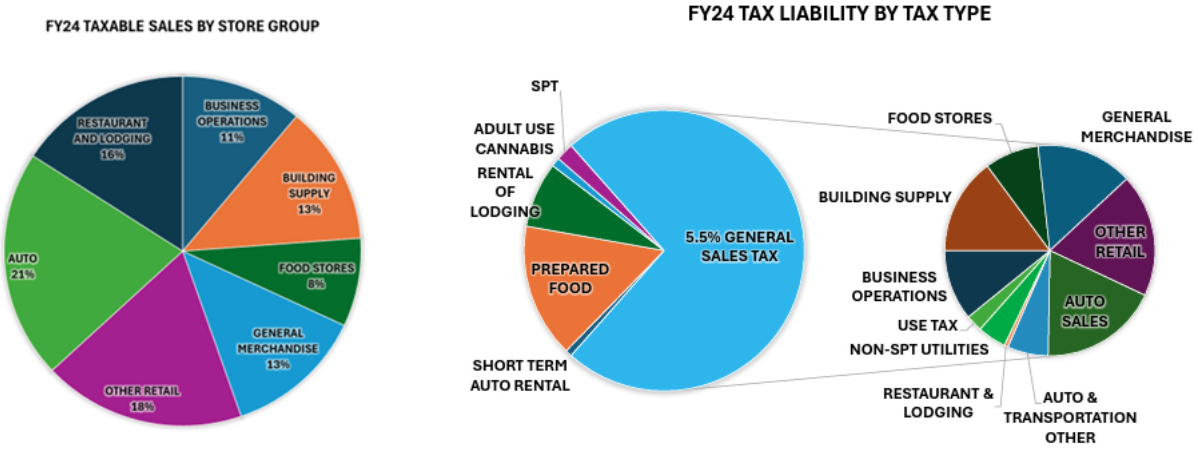


5. **School Revolving Renovation Fund – Number of Projects Funded**



6. **Sale & Use Tax Revenue**

Sources of Sale & Use Tax Revenue



APPENDIX E

National and State Reports, Data, and Presentations to the Commission

1. **Education Commission of the States (ECS)**
   https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-school-accountability-systems-2024/

2. **National Association of State Boards of Education** (NASBE)
   https://www.nasbe.org/getting-to-the-core-of-school-finance/

3. **Education Commission of the States (ECS)**
   https://www.ecs.org/k-12-funding-toolkit-a-strategic-guide-for-states/

4. **American Institutes for Research (AIR):**
   - School Funding Evaluation Focuses on Equity for Students and Taxpayers
   - Long Story Short: How Can School Finance Ensure an Equitable and Adequate Education for All?

5. **Maine Department of Education (DOE):**
   - School Facilities Funding Background & Examples
   - Capital Construction Policies
   - School Construction Revenue Sources

6. **Learning Policy Institute (LPI)**
   https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/event/webinar-emerging-topics-education-finance

7. **Brailsford & Dunlavey**

https://p3resourcecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/A-Guide-To-K-12-P3-Partnerships.pdf

8. **Chris Duncombe**, Principal, Education Commission of the States (ECS), *presentation* link

9. **Mary Filardo**, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund (CSF), *presentation* link

10. **Prince George's County Public Schools**, Maryland Officials, *presentation* on Public-Private Partnership (P3)
    - Jason Washington, Associate Superintendent of Supporting Services
    - Shawn Matlock, Director of the Office of Alternative Infrastructure, Planning, and Development
    - Lindsay Stowell, Managing Director of Higher Education Advisory at Rieth Jones Advisors

11. **Eric Berman**, MSA, CPA, CGMA, Partner – Government Advisory Services, Eide Bailly, LLP, formerly Deputy Comptroller of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *presentation* on School Building Authorities