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Charter School Facilities: The Pursuit for Equity

Expert Presenters:

Jim Griffin, former president, Colorado League of Charter Schools, and current president, Momentum Strategy and Research

Ricardo Soto, senior vice president, legal advocacy, and general counsel for special education and facilities, California Charter Schools Association
An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24 hrs.
Charter School Facilities: The Pursuit for Equity
August 1, 2013
Presented by Jim Griffin
Role of the Charter School Facilities Initiative

• The Charter School Facilities Initiative (CSFI) will improve policy and practice by collecting and disseminating comprehensive state and national level data regarding the landscape of charter school access to quality facilities.
Participating States

2007: Colorado
2010: Indiana, Georgia, & Texas
2011: New York, & Tennessee
2012: Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, & New Jersey
2013: Arkansas¹, California¹,², Rhode Island, South Carolina

1. Not yet analyzed
2. Currently collecting survey portion only
Goals

• Support improved policy and practice through industry leading data

  – National dataset allowing cross state analysis.

  – State level reports allowing for localized policy changes.
Ultimately, the CSFI will support individual state efforts and serve to build a national database of charter school facility data.

- 12 completed states include over 1,000 charter schools
- With additional states could reach over 1,500 by the end of 2013
- If two additional states are added in early 2014, the sample will be nationally representative of the US charter school facilities sector
Findings Continue to Support First Trend Report
Charter Schools are Spending Significant Percentages of Operating Dollars on their Buildings

Figures based on annual budgets and facility costs
Charters Renting from Private Owners are Paying the Highest Percentage of PPOR on their Facilities
Percent of Operating Budget Spent on the Facility Does Not Differ between Urban, Suburban & Rural Charters

- Urban: 10.2%
- Suburban: 10.6%
- Rural: 9.8%
Too few charter school facilities meet industry standards

Percent of Facilities to Meet or Exceed Standard

- CO: 10.3%
- GA: 22.2%
- ID: 10.0%
- IN: 24.0%
- MA: 10.3%
- MI: 21.0%
- NJ: 19.7%
- NY: 23.8%
- RI: 30.0%
- SC: 25.5%
- TN: 12.9%
- TX: 19.5%
Overall Facility Size Tends to be Small for Charter Facilities because,

- Classrooms tend to be small
- Charters do without one or more specialized instructional spaces
Percent of charter school classrooms to meet or exceed grade level standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of charter school classrooms to meet or exceed standard
A Lower Percentage of Urban & Suburban Classrooms meet Grade Level Size Standards than their Rural Counterparts

Average percent of general classrooms meeting grade level size standards within each charter school facility.
Percent of Charter Schools with No Computer Labs* by State

*Neither rooms nor mobile computer labs
A Higher Percentage of Urban & Suburban Charters Do without Computer Labs* in the Facility

29.7% Urban
32.5% Suburban
16.1% Rural

*Neither rooms nor mobile computer labs
Secondary Schools with No Access to a Gym

- CO: 33.8%
- GA: 31.8%
- ID: 25.0%
- IN: 50.0%
- MA: 46.0%
- MI: 23.3%
- NJ: 0.0%
- NY: 20.0%
- RI: 33.3%
- SC: 41.7%
- TN: 53.3%
- TX: 49.6%
No Difference in the Percent of Secondary Facilities going without Gyms, by Location

- Urban: 41.0%
- Suburban: 40.9%
- Rural: 41.7%
Few Charter Schools have Kitchen Facilities Compliant with NSLP Guidelines.

Percent of charter schools that responded “Yes” to having a Federally compliant kitchen in their facility.
A Higher Percentage of Urban Charter Facilities Lack Compliant Kitchens, Compared to Suburban & Rural Facilities

- Urban: 44.3%
- Suburban: 36.2%
- Rural: 35.0%
More to Come in 2013

Do classroom size, kitchens facilities, and access to gyms and computer labs relate to school performance outcomes for charter schools?

Do lower performing charter schools spend less on their facility than higher performing charter schools?
Want to Know More?

• Visit our website www.facilitiesinitiative.org

• Contact Jessica Johnson:
  jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org
  (303) 989-5356
  725 S. Broadway
  Denver, CO 80209
Charter School Facilities
Facility Planning

• Understanding Facilities Needs
  – Developing a Facilities Needs Assessment

• Understanding Your Typical Charter Facilities Options:
  – Proposition 39 Facilities
  – Leasing existing space in communities
  – Newly developed charter school-Adaptive Reuse

• Private Site Acquisition – What To Look For
  – Setting Parameters: Working with a Real Estate Professional
  – Due Diligence: Working with an Architect

• Bond Construction/Leveraging Prop. 39
The three key elements are:

- **School Profile**: a general description of the school, including mission and vision, grade levels served, number of students served, target community and key elements & benefits of charter school.

- **Search Area**: A detailed description of target community, including site selection parameters, map for search area, and desired assets.

- **Type/Size of Facility Desired**: Based on space calculation necessary to meet envisioned program.
Facility Needs Assessment: School Profile

A school profile communicates the essence of the school in a concise manner:

**Great Western Charter School**

The Great Western Charter School aims to prepare students with the tools necessary to enter and graduate from the best universities in the nation. The mission of the school is to enable students to be productive 21st Century critical thinkers by using literature as a gateway to the development of higher order critical thinking skills. Students will graduate from the school as fabulous scholars ready for a lifelong love of learning. The school will **serve 400 students** in grades **9-12**, primarily targeting the community of **Northeast Los Angeles** and will open in **September 2012**.
Facility Needs Assessment: Establishing a Search Area

- Determine what community the school will serve and where charter school facility will be located
- Establish clear NSEW boundaries: Ex.: 10 Freeway on the North, Jefferson Ave. on the South, Crenshaw Blvd. on the West, Western Ave. on the East
- Use a map to highlight desired area
- Additional criteria desired: near a park, away from freeways
Facility Needs Assessment: Space Program Calculation

- Enrollment/Loading Factor = core classrooms needed

- Core Classrooms needed x 700 (for ES, MS)- 800 (for HS) square feet = total classroom square feet

- Total classroom square feet + additional required space: office space, library, gymnasium or multipurpose room, specialty classrooms = total square feet

- Total square feet + 25% for circulation and support areas = total square footage required

| Enrollment | 400 |
| Loading Factor | 25:1 |
| Core Classrooms Needed | 16 |
| Square Footage of Classrooms | 800 |
| Total Classroom Square Footage | 12,800 |
| Office Space Square Footage | 1000 |
| Additional Specialty Classrooms (2) | 1600 |
| Multipurpose Room | 1000 |
| Subtotal | 16400 |
| 25% additional for circulation and support areas | 4100 |
| Total | 20500 |
Great Western Charter School
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- **Search Area:**
  - 10 Freeway on the North, Jefferson Ave. on the South, Crenshaw Blvd. on the West, Western Ave. on the East
- **Proximity near park desired**

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CA Charter School Facility Options

There are three main options that CA charter school developers have for facilities:

• Space on an existing district campus via Proposition 39

• Use of existing space in a community facility

• Adaptive Reuse or Conversion of commercial, retail, manufacturing space into a charter school facility
The Proposition 39 initiative (Prop. 39) was passed by CA voters in November 2000, and took effect for charters in Fall 2003. Under this initiative:

- School districts are obligated to provide charter schools with equitable facilities to district facilities.

- School districts are required to provide “reasonably equivalent” facilities to eligible charter schools, regardless of authorization, that serve at least 80 in district students.

- Today more than 200 schools apply for Prop. 39 on an annual basis.

- Prop. 39 is a great way to get a low cost facility!
  - Pro Rata Costs
  - % Oversight Fee
Use of Existing Community Space

Charter schools have had success partnering with existing community organizations to locate schools in facilities that are suitable to be used for educational purposes.

- Charters have commonly located in Recreation centers, underutilized private or religious schools, and local college campuses.

- Sites are often these spaces are readily available, need little or no physical improvement and are affordable via a lease.
Charter School Facilities: Adaptive Reuse

- Many charter schools have successfully converted existing buildings into permanent charter school facilities by repurposing existing commercial, retail or industrial buildings that have outlived their former lives.
- This option is attractive, as permanent facilities are created affordably, within the fabric of the community.
- Adaptive Reuse often revitalizes and energizes the immediate areas where they are developed.
When assessing any Community or Private Space it is important to consider several factors, including:

1. Location
2. Physical Condition and Suitability
3. Zoning
4. Code Compliance
Often the first person you will engage in your search for a new school site is a Real Estate Professional. When working with this individual, remember the following:

- Utilize your Facilities Need Assessment to guide the broker’s search.
- Have the broker look for facilities with potential for reuse
- Discuss parameters regarding costs, lease term requirements prior to commencement of search
- Broker should personally deliver viable listings, with offers to visit sites
- Once suitable site is found, begin to conduct “due diligence.”
Due Diligence: Working with an Architect

• When evaluating a site, it is important to perform the proper “due diligence,” meaning *homework* and *research* has to be done before committing to a deal.

• No one is better at assisting a developer in their due diligence than a qualified architect.

• An architect will walk through the site and provide feedback on scope of work needed to bring building up to code and make it useable for charter school purposes.

• An architect will additionally provide guidance regarding technical reports or plans that may be required for a potential site.
Other Factors/Considerations

• Cost and Time

• Experience

• The Planning and Development Process can be a lengthy endeavor, requiring anywhere from 3 months to 2 years for project completion, so be patient.

• Unforeseen challenges may occur along the way, but with proper preparation and expertise, no facilities challenge is insurmountable.
Examples of Successful Charter School Development

Frederick Douglass HS, South Los Angeles
Reuse and Addition to existing parochial

AMLA, Huntington Park
Conversion of defunct sock factory
Leveraging Public School Resources

- State and Local Policies/Programs that Charter Schools Can Leverage
  - Bond Money
    - State Bonds – dedicated to support development of charter school facilities
    - Local Bonds – some school districts have included charter schools in their bond measures
  - Charter School Facility Funding Programs
    - Charter School Facility Incentive Grant Program
    - State Programs
  - Excess School Property
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Required Reading from *Education Week*:

**Most Charters Don’t Have Sufficient Room to Grow, Study Says**
More than half of charter schools are located in facilities that will be too small to allow for their current rate of growth in five years. The findings are part of a survey by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

**Help for Charters in Race for Space**
Efforts are growing to assist charter schools in finding and affording facilities, challenges that remain big obstacles to the sector’s continued expansion.