



NSBA 2021 Talking Points

Building Stronger School Infrastructure

NSBA supports federal investments that will lead to modernized school infrastructure that provides safer, healthier, and more effective learning environments for students. A June 2020 report from the Government Accountability Office found that 54 percent of school districts across the country must replace or update major systems in more than half their buildings. Many students and educators are learning and working in school facilities 50 years or older, with asbestos, contaminated water, mold, and other conditions that impact student success. Experts estimate that the average school building is roughly 44 years old. Combined with the impact of the pandemic forcing social distancing, providing building safeguards, and related issues, the need to improve school infrastructure is at a tipping point. The 2016 State of Our Schools Report found that state and local governments spend \$46 billion less than what is required to update and maintain their school facilities. Students and staff need modern, well-designed, and safe school buildings with resources that improve learning and facilitate student achievement and feature energy-efficient green building designs. As NSBA encourages public school transformation, transforming the infrastructure that supports improved and equitable learning must be prioritized.

NSBA's position on Building Stronger School Infrastructure

- President Biden has proposed funding in the American Jobs Plan (AJP) to address school infrastructure needs. The AJP proposes to modernize high-poverty schools by providing \$100 billion to communities. Half of this overall investment would be for direct school construction and modernization grants, and the other half would support local bond initiatives. NSBA urges Congress to include school infrastructure as part of any new legislation at least at the levels in the AJP and to also support the AJP's proposed investments in removing lead pipes.
- NSBA encourages Congress to pass the Reopen and Rebuild America's School Act (H.R. 604 and S. 96) to support the construction and modernization of schools in underserved communities. This legislation would address many priorities for safe and healthy learning environments that facilitate interactive classroom instruction, build capacity for experiential learning and skills development, engage our students and communities as cornerstones for civic participation, and promote efficiencies within school district operating budgets.¹
- Congress should encourage infrastructure tax incentives such as reinstating advance refunding into the federal tax code to help school districts and other municipal bond issuers secure significant savings in finance costs for capital improvement projects. NSBA urges Congress to pass the bipartisan LOCAL Infrastructure Act (S. 479) to reinstate advance refunding.

¹ NSBA supports this measure but opposes the inclusion of provisions that would impede local governance and authority regarding labor requirements and urges Congress to uphold the right of school boards to pursue the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivering education and related services, including contracts with outside providers.