CHARTER SCHOOL
FACILITIES INITIATIVE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY LANDSCAPE IN MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 2013

Colorado League of Charter Schools
focus on achievement

MAPSA
Michigan Association of Public School Academies

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMIES, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools publish this report, entitled *"An Analysis of the Charter School Facility Landscape in Michigan,"* detailing the status of charter school facilities in the state.

In spring of 2012, the above organizations worked to collect evidence that would accurately portray both the adequacy of charter school facilities[1] and the average amount of operating funds spent on facilities. Collectively, the results described in this report provide evidence that charter school students in Michigan do not have access to the same facilities and amenities compared to traditional public school students in the state.

In order to ensure that the policy recommendations of this report are research-based and supported by reliable data, Hutton Architecture Studio—a leader in educational facilities architecture—consulted on the project to provide a set of reasonable expectations for school facilities' size and amenities (see Appendix B for detailed description). The Colorado League of Charter Schools ("the League") is the pioneering organization behind the creation and development of the Charter School Facilities Survey. The League worked closely with the Michigan Association of Public School Academies ("MAPSA") to collect the data used to produce this report. A set of recommendations for ways in which Michigan could address any facilities-related issues is provided by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Given the alignment of the Facilities Initiative and the goals and data needs of the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Charter Schools Program (CSP), ED procured additional state surveys, including Michigan. The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research (AIR) [1] is subcontracting with the Colorado League of Charter Schools to collect the research and data on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education for Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey.

This report is based on survey, enrollment, and operating revenue data collected for the 2011-2012 school year[2]. All results presented in this report are based on data from the 67 percent of Michigan's brick and mortar charter schools[3] that completed all or part of a comprehensive facility survey. Participating schools were not representative of the Michigan charter sector with respect to size of enrollment, authorizer type and catchment area, so readers are cautioned when drawing inferences on those subjects from this report. Participating charters, however, are representative of the state's charter sector as far as percent of minorities and low-income students served, grade levels served and per-pupil operating revenue.

1 "Adequacy" for school facilities was derived from local, regional and national school construction data, as well as best practices in new charter school construction.
2 Enrollment and per-pupil funding were obtained from the Michigan department of education.
3 No online charter schools were included in this survey as standards for those facilities have not yet been explored.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional standards and national new school construction data (see School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for the years 2001-2012 at www.peterli.com/spm/resources/rptsspm.shtm).

Key findings include:

1. Michigan's public charter schools spend operating funds on facilities[4], while traditional public schools do not.

- The median charter school in Michigan **spends $971 of operating revenue** per student per year on facilities costs. For the average charter school facility in Michigan, with an enrollment of 396 students, this translates into $384,516 annually—**enough to hire more than eight[5] additional teachers (FTE)**.

2. Michigan charter school facilities are small compared to industry standards.

- **Over 66 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed have facilities that are smaller than the regional standards for gross square feet per student (see Appendix B). Michigan charter schools are likely to have smaller classrooms or facilities that lack one or more specialized instructional spaces, such as a dedicated library, science lab, gymnasium, or music room.

4 Schools were asked to provide the prior years' utilities, maintenance fees, and any other assessed fees in the survey. These amounts were than subtracted from the annual payments for rent, lease, mortgage, or bonds.

5 The cost of a teacher was based on a weighted average of total cash compensation costs for all teachers working in charter schools that participated in the Michigan Association of Public School Academies' 2011-2012 Compensation and Benefits Survey Report (page 58).

3. Charters spend more to provide low-income students with federally-subsidized meals.

- **51 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed lack federally-approved kitchen facilities. These facilities are required to provide federally-subsidized free and reduced price meals to students from low-income families. Charter schools that want to participate in the federally-subsidized meal program tend to find other ways to provide this service, which often has additional costs.

4. Few Michigan charter schools are able to utilize unused district-owned facilities or land even when nearby facilities or parcels are vacant.

- **Less than 9 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed reported having use of a district-owned facility.
- **Less than 13 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed reported having use of district-owned land.

5. In the future, facilities related challenges may worsen as additional operating funds are needed to accommodate a growing number of charter school students.

- **Over 12,000**[6] charter school students in Michigan are being waitlisted due to lack of space.
- **88 percent** of the surveyed Michigan charter schools plan to increase their enrollment by 2016. The average school surveyed that plans to increase enrollment has a current enrollment of 538 students and plans to increase enrollment by 54 percent (or 291 students) between 2012 and 2016. However, 49 percent of these growing schools report that they do not have adequate space to serve their anticipated 2016 enrollment.
- **49 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools that have identified a future growth plan, report that they will construct or acquire additional space in the next five years.

6 School leaders were asked to provide the number of age appropriate students that remained on their waitlist following October 1st of the current academic year. While it is possible that some students remained on more than one charter school waitlist, this information was not collected in a way that would capture that information.

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INTRODUCTION

Charter School Facilities Initiative Background

In the summer of 2007, the Colorado League of Charter Schools ("the League") launched its Facilities 2010 Task Force. The Task Force was established to identify prominent shortcomings in the charter school capital landscape and develop a blueprint of public policy and private sector changes leading to a comprehensive, long-range system of adequate public school facilities or facility funding sources that are accessible to charter schools. At the direction of the Task Force, the League developed a comprehensive Charter School Facilities Survey in partnership with a national leader in school facilities, Paul Hutton, AIA, of Hutton Architecture Studio, and local experts in school planning, Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., and Allen Balczarek.

In April 2008, the first report of the Colorado results was published. As a result of the report, the League was able to successfully obtain more capital construction funds for charter schools, make legislative changes that required school districts to include district authorized charter schools in bond election discussions, and provide for the inclusion of charter schools as eligible applicants in the Colorado Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program, a competitive grant program that provides funding to school districts and charter schools for capital construction projects.

Charter School Facilities Initiative Partnership

Seeing the success of the Colorado facilities initiative, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools ("the Alliance") partnered with the League to use the Colorado facilities survey model in other states to assess the charter facilities landscape across the country. In 2010-2011 the League worked with Georgia, Indiana, and Texas to pilot the initiative across multiple states simultaneously. Following the success of this multi-state initiative, data collection was started in late 2011 in New York and Tennessee.

Given the alignment of the Facilities Initiative and the goals and data needs of the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Charter Schools Program (CSP), ED procured additional state surveys, including Michigan. The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research (AIR) [1] is subcontracting with the Colorado League of Charter Schools to collect the research and data on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education for Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey.

In 2012, the League worked in conjunction with the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) to collect and analyze the data used to produce this report. All charter schools were asked to complete the Charter School Facilities Survey and allow a charter support organization (CSO) representative to conduct an onsite measurement of the facility and educational spaces. One hundred and ninety five (195) cases[7] or 67 percent of Michigan's brick and mortar charter schools participated in some or all of the data collection effort.

It is worth noting that the facilities of the Michigan charter schools that participated in the survey differed from those charter schools that either declined to participate or never started the survey process. Participating charter schools had larger average enrollments (435 students compared to 312). The participating schools also underrepresented the proportion of charter schools authorized by school districts and overrepresented the proportion authorized by institutions of higher education. Finally, the participating school sample underrepresented the proportion of schools in rural areas of Michigan.

Charter Schools in Michigan

Michigan's charter school statute was enacted in 1993, and the first group of Michigan charters opened in 1994. Growth was initially limited by a cap of 150 university-authorized schools. In 2012, Public Act 277 lifted the cap on charter schools in the state. In the 2011-2012 school year, 255 charter schools with over 119,000 students (approximately seven percent of Michigan's K-12 enrollment) operated throughout Michigan. The number of charter schools increased to 276 in 2012-2013, as 31 new charters were opened and 10 existing schools were closed.

There are a total of 32 authorizers in Michigan, comprised of 21 school districts and 11 higher education institutions. Management organizations run 61 percent of the charter schools in Michigan. Sixty-four percent of Michigan charter schools are located in urban areas, 25 percent are in suburban areas, and 11 percent are in rural areas.

In 2011-12, 71 percent of Michigan's charter school students were eligible for free or reduced price meals, and 64 percent belonged to at least one ethnic minority group.

7 Some charter schools have multiple campuses, such as an elementary and a middle school, that are not on the same site. Others can have multiple campuses, whether related or not, on the same site. A case in this study, therefore, refers to a facility and the number of facilities does not necessarily reflect the number of schools in the state.

Charter School Facilities in Michigan

School operators regularly report in the Michigan Association of Public School Academies' (MAPSA) annual needs survey that facilities funding is the single largest challenge in starting and sustaining a public charter school. This challenge puts charter schools at a disadvantage when compared to traditional public schools. Michigan charter law, as with most states across the country, places the burden of obtaining and paying for facilities on individual charter schools. As a result, charter schools have struggled to find suitable and affordable facilities. Even after more than 15 years of academic success with economically disadvantaged and minority students, Michigan charter schools are limited in their ability to address long waiting lists or expand their programs due to a lack of adequate space.

Following the Colorado model, all Michigan charters schools were asked to complete an extensive and thorough survey about their facilities (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the survey). MAPSA led this data collection effort and provided supplemental data on school enrollment, student demographics, and funding. The survey and measurement data was collected between January and March, 2012.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data. See School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for the years 2001-2012 at www.peterli.com/spm/resources/rptsspm.shtm.

Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into these standards (see Appendix B). To ensure accuracy in data collection and interpretation, the League consulted with two industry experts; Paul Hutton, an architect and a leader in school facilities design and planning, and Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., an expert on charter schools, facilities planning, research, and bond planning and implementation.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding #1: Michigan's public charter schools spend operating dollars on facilities, while traditional public schools do not.

Unlike traditional public schools in Michigan, public charter schools spend per-pupil operating revenue to cover the costs of their facilities. Most districts finance new school facilities through bonds that are repaid with revenue from local property taxes and not operating dollars. However, Michigan charter schools do not receive access to these local property taxes. As a result, charter schools across Michigan spend operating dollars, raise private dollars, or borrow money from banks to pay for their facilities and other capital projects. After paying for their facilities, charters often have significantly less operating funds than comparable traditional public schools.

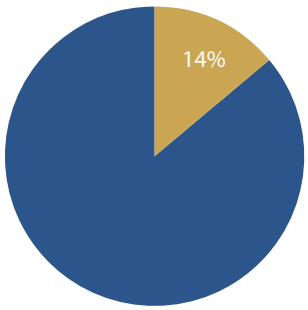
Results from the facilities survey and Michigan's 2011-2012 per-pupil revenue data indicate the following:

- The median charter school in Michigan spent $971 out of its per-pupil operating revenue on facilities costs in 2011-2012, which is roughly 14 percent of their operating budget. Traditional public schools do not spend any of their per-pupil operating revenue on their facilities.
  - In this analysis facility costs do not include maintenance fees, utilities costs, or any other fees assessed by local districts, as those are paid by both traditional and charter public schools.

Although, the amount a school spends on its facility differs depending on whether the school owns or rents.

- For the **66 percent** of Michigan charter schools that rent their facilities, the median per-pupil facilities cost is $850 annually.
- For the **29 percent** of charter schools that own their facility, the median per-pupil cost is $971 annually.

Median Facilities Costs as a Percentage of Per-Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) for Charter Schools 14%



Adding to this financial burden is the fact that nearly 44 percent of Michigan charter schools that participated in the facilities survey report that they have undertaken a major capital project[8] in the last five years. A total of at least $154 million has been spent by these schools on renovating, repairing, or expanding existing facilities or on the purchase of new land or new buildings. Over 28 percent of these schools have used operating funds to help finance these projects or acquisitions. Per-pupil operating revenue is also one of the likely sources for up-front funds needed in initiating a long-term bond program, further reducing funds available for classroom instruction.

8 A major capital project is defined as any project that carried an expense of $20,000 or more.

Key Finding #2: Charter school facilities are smaller than regional standards.

Results from the Facilities Survey found that Michigan charter school buildings and classrooms are considerably smaller than the standards used for this study (see Appendix B). This is true even for charter schools that have recently constructed new school buildings.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into these standards (see Appendix B).

- **Over 66 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed are in facilities that are at least 20 percent smaller than the standard for gross square feet per student (see Appendix B for table of size standards).
- **68 percent** of surveyed charter schools are on sites that are more than 20 percent smaller than the standard.
- **30 percent** of surveyed charter schools have classrooms that were found to be at least 20 percent smaller than regional size standards (see Appendix B).

When overall facility size is small it is often due to a lack of one or more dedicated specialized instructional spaces, such as a dedicated library, gymnasium, science lab, or computer lab. This conclusion is supported by findings from the Michigan Charter School Facilities Survey and is presented on page 10 of this report. To address this challenge, charters often find other ways to provide students with the educational services offered by traditional public schools. In some cases this is done by using classrooms and other instructional space for multiple purposes.

Michigan charter schools are 20 percent smaller than state and regional standards.

Key Finding #3: Charters spend more funds to provide low-income students with federally-subsidized meals.

Kitchen facilities are commonly considered a "given" in public school buildings. In the world of charter schools, however, kitchen facilities are a luxury that many charter schools do without. Whether they are located in a new school building or a commercial facility that has been converted into functional educational space, the cost of adding a federally-compliant kitchen is often prohibitive when paid for out of operating revenues. Schools without federally-approved kitchen facilities that want to provide a free and reduced price lunch program tend to seek other sources for meal service.

- **Over 51 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed lack federally-approved kitchen facilities that would allow the school to provide subsidized onsite meals to students from low-income families.

On average, 71 percent of enrolled students at Michigan charter schools are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. According to MAPSA, schools without federally-approved kitchen facilities that want to provide a free and reduced price lunch program typically seek other sources for meal service, such as external catering companies. These outside services often cost more than the federally-subsidized reimbursement rate. Charter schools often find other ways of covering this additional expense. Sometimes this is done through fundraising, other times operating funds are used to cover this expense.

Key Finding #4: Few Michigan charter schools are able to utilize unused or underutilized district-owned facilities or land.

Few Michigan charter schools are able to utilize district-owned facilities or land, even when nearby facilities or parcels are vacant.

- **Less than 9 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools have use of a district-owned facility.
  - Of the Michigan charter schools that do not have use of a district-owned facility, 21 percent report there is a vacant, district-owned facility nearby[9].
  - Over 33 percent of Michigan's charter schools also reported the presence of at least one nearby district facility that is significantly underutilized[10].
- **Less than 13 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools have use of district-owned land.
  - Nearly 23 percent of Michigan charter schools report there is unused district-owned land nearby.

9 School leaders were asked "To the best of your knowledge, is there a vacant district facility nearby?" and "To the best of your knowledge, is there a district facility nearby that is significantly (30 percent or more) underutilized?" No operational definition of "nearby" was given.

10 Significantly underutilized is defined as a facility that is at least 30 percent unused, as judged by the respondent.

Key Finding #5: As Michigan charter schools grow, facility challenges may worsen.

Allowing charter schools equitable access to facilities resources may help to meet the growing demand for new and expanding schools.

- **Over 12,000**[11] **students** are on waitlists to attend an existing charter school in Michigan.
  - It is possible that some students are on waitlists for more than one charter school, meaning some students are represented more than once in this 12,000 waitlist number. Unfortunately there was no way to account for potential duplicates for the purpose of this survey.

- **88 percent** of the surveyed Michigan charter schools plan to increase their enrollment by 2016. The average school surveyed that plans to increase enrollment has a current enrollment of 538 students, and plans to increase enrollment by 54 percent (or 291 students) between 2012 and 2016. However, 49 percent of these growing schools report that they do not have adequate space to serve their anticipated 2016 enrollment.

- **49 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools that have identified a future growth plan, report that they will need to construct or acquire additional space in the next five years.

- **66 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools are in facilities that they do not own and for which they pay rent. Without facilities resources, these rental payments will continue to come out of operating funds, while charters that purchase their facility have finite future obligations.

11 School leaders were asked to provide the number of age appropriate students that remained on their waitlist following October 1st of the current academic year. While it is possible that some students remained on more than one charter school waitlist, this information was not collected in a way that would capture that information.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Specialized Instructional Spaces

Most instruction during the school day takes place in generic classrooms; however, specialized instructional spaces such as science labs, libraries, and music rooms are an important part of a comprehensive educational program. Michigan charter schools have a limited number of these types of spaces and, even when present, they frequently do not meet the accepted standards.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into these standards (see Appendix B).

- **Over 41 percent** of Michigan charter schools surveyed do not have a dedicated library space. Of those that do, over 67 percent are smaller than national and regional standards (see Appendix B).
- **Half (50 percent)** of the surveyed Michigan charter middle and high schools do not have dedicated science laboratories. Of those that do, 60 percent are smaller than national and regional standards (see Appendix B).
- **Nearly half (49 percent)** of surveyed Michigan charter schools do not have dedicated music rooms. Of those that do, 56 percent are smaller than national and regional standards (see Appendix B).
- **55 percent** of surveyed Michigan charter schools do not have a dedicated gymnasium. Of those that do, 39 percent are smaller than national and regional standards (see Appendix B).

School Environment

Recent studies conducted by Unile and Tschannen-Moran,[12] Tanner,[13] and Duran-Narucki[14] demonstrate a link between the quality of the physical environment within a school facility and students' educational outcomes. Facility characteristics that are believed to have an impact on student learning are: acoustics, windows, natural day light, thermal comfort, and indoor air quality. The facilities survey asked Michigan charter school leaders to rate their schools on these aspects. Selected relevant findings follow:

- **More than 27 percent** of Michigan charter school respondents reported they were forced to cancel one or more student contact days over the last three years due to facilities-related issues, such as heating and air conditioning problems, burst or frozen pipes, etc. This does not include weather-related damage to a school.

- **33 percent** of Michigan charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'the roof rarely leaks, if ever.'

- **35 percent** of Michigan charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'most classrooms are air conditioned.'

- **27 percent** of Michigan charter school respondents strongly disagree or disagree that, 'most of the school's windows have insulated glass (thermal pane).'

In addition, over 58 percent of Michigan charter school buildings were built prior to 1970 and building deterioration is a likely concern. Further, 22 percent of Michigan charter school respondents report having at least some modular classrooms.

12 Cynthia Uline, Megan Tschannen-Moran, (2008) "The walls speak: the interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement", Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 46 Iss: 1, pp.55 – 73.
13 C. Kenneth Tanner, (2009) "Effects of school design on student outcomes", Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 47 Iss: 3, pp.381 - 399.
14 Valkiria Durán-Narucki (2008). "School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model." Journal of Environmental Psychology, Vol 28 Iss: 3, pp 278-286.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Michigan's public charter schools currently serve about eight percent of the state's public school students, and are poised to serve an even larger percentage in the coming years. The Facilities Survey shows that 88 percent of Michigan's public charter schools plan to increase their enrollment over the next five years.

An increase in equitable facilities funding would allow public charter schools to allocate more operational dollars toward core educational concerns and enhance their ability to provide a well-rounded educational experience for Michigan's public charter school students.

Based on experiences in other states, there is no one simple way to resolve the facilities challenges that charter schools face. A report by The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools': *A New Model Law for Supporting the Growth of High-Quality Public Charter Schools*, provides a menu of eight solutions that Michigan may consider to help mitigate these challenges:

1. **A per-pupil facilities allowance that annually reflects actual average district capital costs.**
2. **A state grant program for charter school facilities.**
3. **A state loan program for charter school facilities.**
4. **Equal access to tax-exempt bonding authorities or allowing charters to have their own bonding authority.**
5. **A mechanism to provide credit enhancement for charter schools.**
6. **Equal access to existing facilities funding programs available to traditional public schools.**
7. **Right of refusal to purchase or lease at or below fair market value a closed, unused, or underused public school facility or property.**
8. **Prohibition of facility related requirements that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.**

Not all of these solutions are equal in their importance. The most important solutions are those that provide revenue directly to public charter schools for their facilities expenses. Points #1, #2, and #6 above provide facility revenue options for Michigan to consider. While not as critical as revenue, the other policy solutions listed above (#3, #4, #5, #7, and #8) may prove helpful to Michigan charter schools and should also be seriously considered. It is important to note that the states that have helped public charter schools the most with their facilities challenges have enacted both revenue policies and non-revenue policies.

Michigan currently provides little facilities support to public charter schools. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' *Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Charter School Laws* report (which analyzes and ranks each state public charter school law against the model law), Michigan law only addresses one of the eight facilities components in the model law:

- Michigan law provides that charters sponsored by school districts can access district bond levy funds for facilities (as determined by their charter agreement). It also provides that all charter schools are eligible to access tax-exempt financing and technical assistance through the Michigan Public Educational Facilities Authority's bond and loan programs.

Michigan could better support the likely growth of its public charter school sector over the next few years by helping charters with their facilities challenges in the following ways:

- **Provide direct funding to public charter schools for their facilities costs:** One option is for the state to provide an annual per-pupil facilities allowance that reflects average capital costs across the district. For example, Washington D.C. provides public charter schools with approximately $2,800 in per-pupil facilities funding. A second option is to create a state grant program for public charter school facilities. For example, Indiana law established the charter school facilities assistance program to make grants and loans to public charter schools. Charter schools may use these grants and loans for constructing, purchasing, renovating, or maintaining the school's facility. Indiana charter schools may also use these funds to pay first semester costs for new facilities projects, whereby reducing common school fund debt for public charter schools. Indiana provided $17 million to this program in 2011.

- **Allow public charter schools to borrow additional dollars at lower rates:** One option is to create a state loan program for public charter school facilities. Utah law established a charter school revolving loan fund that supports charter schools that are constructing, renovating, or purchasing new facilities. This fund is capitalized at $6,000,000. Washington D.C. also has such a fund which is currently capitalized at over $30,000,000. However, without an equitable facilities allowance, which charter schools use to cover debt service payments, these loan funds can be of limited value.

  A second option is for the state to directly allocate a certain amount of bond financing for charter schools. For example, Connecticut has provided $20 million in bond financing to support public charter school facilities, through a competitive application process.

  A third option is for the state to create a mechanism to provide credit enhancement for public charter schools. Colorado, for example, provides a mechanism for limited credit enhancement for eligible, highly rated bond transactions for public charter schools by using the state's moral obligation to back $400 million in debt. In addition, Texas allows open-enrollment public charter schools that have an investment grade rating and meet certain financial criteria to

apply to have their bonds guaranteed by the Permanent School Fund. This has resulted in charter bonds being backed by the full, faith, and credit of the state, putting public charter schools on par with school districts and allowing them to achieve higher ratings.

- **Improve access to surplus district space:** It is hard for Michigan public charter schools to access surplus district school buildings in the state. Michigan should follow the lead of such states as Indiana in changing that reality. Indiana law requires school districts to provide a list of buildings that are closed, unused, or unoccupied for a period of two years to the state department of education and make them available for lease or purchase to any public charter school. If a public charter school wishes to use a school building on the list, the school district must lease the building for $1 a year for a term at the public charter school's discretion or sell the building for $1. The public charter school is required to use the building for classroom instruction no later than two years after acquiring the building. If during the term of the lease, the public charter school closes or ceases using the school building for instruction, the building will be placed again on the state department of education's list.

Michigan is in a unique position at this time, as it is currently re-evaluating how it distributes resources to public schools across the state. While the options from the model law outline above should prove helpful during that process, Michigan has an opportunity to consider more fundamental changes to the ways in which it supports high-quality public charter schools and their facilities challenges. These opportunities include:

- Creating a statewide facilities authority for all public schools that would approve and finance all capital projects.
- Allowing students from a district to take a proportional share of the local bond issue (or millage money) to whatever public school they attend (district or charter).
- Bundling all state and local funding (including local facilities funding) into one foundation allowance for each student (with no earmarks for any special purposes) and letting individual schools decide how to spend their finances.

The results of the 2011-2012 Michigan Charter School Facilities Study indicate that Michigan charter schools face challenges in obtaining equitable access to facilities and facilities financing. By ensuring equitable access for all Michigan public schools, charter schools could widen programming options, increase the quality of the educational experiences, and increase the number of available seats.

APPENDIX A

Methodology

Questionnaire Development

A critical first step to gathering the best possible set of objective data and information about charter school facilities and facility needs was to develop a comprehensive questionnaire.

To accomplish this, the Colorado League of Charter Schools commissioned Hutton Architecture Studio. The firm's principal architect, Paul Hutton, AIA, has designed a variety of schools and is known for his creative, cost effective, and environmentally conscious facilities. Hutton has designed numerous new charter schools and charter school additions. Wayne Eckerling, Ph.D., a former assistant superintendent with the Denver Public Schools with responsibilities for supervision of charter schools, educational planning, and research, was also selected to assist in the design of the survey and analysis of the data. In addition to his public school facilities expertise, Dr. Eckerling has experience with general obligation bond planning and implementation.

The draft questionnaire was reviewed by the League's facility task force, League staff, and others with expertise in school construction and educational policy. A draft questionnaire was then field tested with a small group of charter schools to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of the items. Further revisions to the questionnaire were made based on the feedback from all participating Colorado schools and survey results. The revised base survey and state-specific questions were then administered in Georgia, Indiana and Texas. Extensive feedback was solicited from these states' Charter Support Organizations and schools, resulting in further revisions to the Colorado League of Charter Schools' base survey.

Topics addressed include the following:

- Demographic information including grades served, year of inception, and number of students on the waiting list.
- Future facility plans.
- Shared use information.
- Facility information including year of construction and site size.
- Facility ownership, financing, and annual payments.
- Facility and classroom size and information technology resources.
- Facility amenities such as gymnasiums, lunch rooms, libraries, and playgrounds.
- Facility adequacy, condition, and maintainability.
- Facility funding.

The questionnaire includes more than 145 items with some requiring multiple responses.

Michigan Survey Procedures

The Colorado League of Charter Schools' base questionnaire was revised to address Michigan-specific issues through a collaborative effort of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Mr. Hutton, and Dr. Eckerling. To ensure both timely and accurate responses, the Michigan Association of Public Charter Schools and their consultants assisted schools with completing the questionnaires. Submitted questionnaires were reviewed again for accuracy and completeness. Follow-up was done with the schools as necessary. While the completed questionnaires are the primary source of information for this study, information from the Michigan Department of Education was used to provide data on pupil membership, per-pupil funding and free and reduced price lunch eligibility.

APPENDIX B

School Facility Standards

This section provides information about the standards used in this report. These standards were derived from more than a decade of published regional and national new school construction data, and local school facility data. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design is also factored into the standards as are site, facility and classroom standards used in a number of states. The standards are intended to be neither excessively generous in allocating space nor unnecessarily limiting to charter school opportunities. For the purposes of being conservative, charter schools facilities and classrooms were reported to be smaller than national and regional standards if their size was less than 80% of the reported standard.

The process for developing facility standards began with published regional and national new school construction data and comparable local facility data for gross building square footage[15]. This data is typically based on enrollments that average between 600 and 1,200 students. Since many charter schools may not reach these levels of enrollment even when their program capacity is realized and a few may even exceed these enrollments, the standards were extended to account for a much broader range of enrollments while at the same time taking into account minimum sizes necessary for a base level of educational adequacy. Standards were also compared to some state and district standards to verify validity. Standards for schools with enrollments of 200, 500, and 800 students are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Total School Facility Standards (gross square feet per student)

	200 Students	500 Students	800 Students
Grades K-5	149	130	112
Grades K-8	153	139	125
Grades K-12	163	154	144
Grades 6-8	156	151	144
Grades 6-12	177	170	163
Grades 9-12	190	183	176

15 National and regional data were acquired from the School Planning & Management's (2001-2012, individually) Annual School Contraction Reports. Local data was acquired through district building and planning reports.

Site standards were derived from the gross square footage standards described above by taking into account the fairly consistent relationship between building and site size. Again, particularly for smaller enrollments, educational adequacy was also taken into account. Again, derived standards were then compared to those used in other states and districts, including a representative sample of urban, suburban, and rural school districts, to ensure their validity. Site size standards are shown in Table 2 for three different enrollment levels.

Table 2. School Site Standards (acres)

	200 Students	500 Students	800 Students
Grades K-5	4.4	7.6	13.2
Grades K-8	5.1	11.5	16.5
Grades K-12	5.2	12.1	18.1
Grades 6-8	4.6	10.9	16.7
Grades 6-12	5.1	12.3	18.8
Grades 9-12	5.7	13.7	12.2

General classroom standards are shown in Table 3. These standards were derived from standards used in other states and districts as well as best practice based on professional experience with charter and public school design. Adjustments were made for Montessori and Expeditionary Learning programs to reflect that larger classrooms are required to implement these educational programs.

Table 3. General Classroom Standards (square feet per student)

Grade K	41
Grades 1-3	34
Grades 4-5	29
Grades 6-8	30
Grades 9-12	31

Standards for specialized instructional spaces like libraries, computer rooms, science labs, art rooms, music rooms, special education classrooms, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms also were developed based on a review of state and district standards as well as best practices in school design. Many of the standards below are based on formulas to accommodate the potential for smaller or larger enrollments, as previously outlined, and then take into consideration educational adequacy. Some of these standards are shown below. Lunch room standards assume three lunch periods.

Table 4. Specialized Instructional Spaces

	Elementary	Middle	High
Gymnasium	3,000 SQ FT	5,400 SQ FT	7,300 SQ FT
Science Lab/Class	40 SQ FT / Student	44 SQ FT / Student	48 SQ FT / Student
Art	38 SQ FT / Student	44 SQ FT / Student	50 SQ FT / Student
Library	SQ FT = 500 + (2.5* enrollment)		
Lunch Room	SQ FT = 4.75* enrollment		SQ FT = 4.9* enrollment

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