CHARTER SCHOOL
FACILITIES INITIATIVE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY LANDSCAPE IN RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 2013

COLORADO LEAGUE of CHARTER SCHOOLS
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National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools publish this report, entitled "*An Analysis of the Charter School Facilities Landscape in Rhode Island*," detailing the status of charter school facilities in the state.

In winter of 2013, 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 by charter schools on facilities. Collectively, the results described in this report provide evidence that charter school students in Rhode Island do not have access to the same sized facilities, facilities amenities and/or funding 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, Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc., a leader in educational facilities architecture, consulted on the project to provide a set of reasonable standards for school facilities' size and amenities. These standards were derived from published regional and national new school construction data found in the School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for 2001 through 2012[2], in conjunction with the standards specified in the Rhode Island Department of Education's School Construction Regulations. (For more details on the standards used in the analysis, see Appendix B). The Colorado League of Charter Schools ("the Colorado League") is the pioneering organization behind the creation and development of the Charter School Facilities Survey. The Colorado League worked closely with the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools ("the Rhode Island League") to collect the data analyzed to produce this report. A set of recommendations for means by which Rhode Island could address these 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 in the state of Rhode Island. The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research ("AIR") [1] has subcontracted with the Colorado League of Charter Schools to collect the research and data on behalf of ED since October of 2011. To date, this has included data collection and research of charter school facilities in seven states: Arkansas, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

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 See School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for the years 2001-2012 at (http://www.peterli.com/spm/resources/rptsspm.shtm).

This report is based on survey, enrollment, and operating revenue data collected for the 2012-2013 school year[3]. All results presented in this report are based on data from all 20 of Rhode Island's charter school[4] facilities for which all or part of a comprehensive facility survey was completed[5].

Key findings include:

1. Rhode Island charter schools spend six percent of per-pupil revenue on facilities.

- The typical (or median) charter school in Rhode Island spends $729 out of its per-pupil operating funds on its facility.

2. The process of State Housing Aid Reimbursement is not effective for charter schools.

- While 61 percent of charters responding to the survey reported having undergone a major capital project within the previous five years, only 37 percent of them reported State Housing Aid Reimbursement as a source of funding for these projects.
- When asked why charter schools had not submitted an application for Housing Aid reimbursement, nearly half of responding schools cited that "the timing of the application process did not align with when the school wanted/needed Housing Aid Reimbursement."

3 Enrollment data was collected from the Rhode Island Department of Education and provided to the Colorado League by the Rhode Island League. The Rhode Island League worked with each charter school leader to calculate each facility's per-pupil funding amounts (see Appendix A for more details).
4 There are 16 charters in Rhode Island, two of which have multiple sites resulting in a total of 20 facilities.
5 All 20 facilities had complete measurement data. Eighteen of the 20 facility administrators completed the online portion of the survey.

3. Rhode Island charter school facilities are smaller than prescribed standards.

- Results from the Facilities Survey found that Rhode Island charter school buildings, sites, and classrooms are considerably smaller than the public school facilities standards (i.e., at least 20 percent smaller) used for this study (see Appendix B).
  - **Only 30 percent** of charter school facilities meet or exceed grade level standards.
  - **Only 25 percent** of charter school sites meet or exceed grade level standards.
  - **Only 47 percent** of charter school classrooms meet or exceed grade level standards.

4. Rhode Island charter school facilities lack federally-approved kitchens.

- **67 percent** of Rhode Island charter school facilities lack federally-approved kitchen facilities, challenging these charter schools to find other means of providing free and reduced price meals for qualifying students.

- Charter schools in Rhode Island serve an **average of 65 percent low income students**.

5. Shared space situations for Rhode Island charter schools are less than ideal.

- Fewer charter schools in a shared space have plans to remain in the facility for more than five years, compared to charters that do not share space (33 percent, compared to 73 percent, respectively).
- Charter schools in shared space situations also report having issues with program implementation (43 percent), school culture/climate (43 percent), and adequate access to specialized learning spaces such as gymnasiums (100 percent), athletic fields (71 percent), and libraries (71 percent).

Eighty-nine percent of Rhode Island charter schools would like to expand their enrollment over the next five years, but few have capacity in the current facility to do so. Without access to equitable funding assistance these charters will be limited in their capacity to expand or may continue to seek out the same kinds of facilities available to them now, resulting in the continued inequity in facility size and amenities for charter school students in Rhode Island.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Charter School Facilities Initiative Background

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

In April 2008, the first report outlining the results of the Colorado survey was published. As a result of that report, the Colorado 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 local bond election discussions, and provide for the inclusion of charter schools as eligible applicants to 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

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

Given the alignment of the Facilities Initiative with the goals and data needs of the U.S. Department of Education's ("ED") Charter Schools Program (CSP), ED procured additional state surveys, including Rhode Island. The National Charter School Resource Center at American Institutes for Research ("AIR") [1] has subcontracted with the Colorado League to collect the research and data on behalf of the ED since October 2011. To date, AIR has subcontracted for the data collection and research of charter school facilities in seven states: Arkansas, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

In 2013, the Colorado League worked in conjunction with the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools ("the Rhode Island League") to collect the data used to produce this report. All charter schools were asked to complete the Charter School Facilities Survey and allow a Rhode Island League representative to conduct an on-site measurement of the facility and all educational spaces. The results presented in this report are based on data from 18 of Rhode Island's 20 charter school facilities[6] (or 90 percent of charter facilities) for which all or part of the comprehensive facility survey was completed.

Charter Schools in Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Charter School statute was enacted in 1995, and the first charter school, The Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy (now the Academy for Career Exploration), opened its doors in 1997. There are currently 16 public charter schools, across 20 sites, in the state of Rhode Island. Rhode Island charter schools serve approximately 5,000 students (or 3.5 percent) of the state's public school population.

The Rhode Island Board of Education is the sole authorizer in the state. Eighty-five percent of Rhode Island charter schools are independently operated, with the remaining 15 percent operating as a network of schools. Seventy percent of Rhode Island charter schools are located in urban areas, 25 percent are in suburban areas, and 5 percent are in rural areas.

In 2012-2013, 70 percent of all Rhode Island charter school students were eligible for free or reduced price meals (FRM), with the average charter school's student body consisting of 65 percent FRM students. Similarly, 72 percent of all students attending Rhode Island charter schools belong to at least one ethnic minority group, with the average charter school's student body consisting of 67 percent ethnic minorities.

Rhode Island Charter School Facilities

School operators regularly report, in the Rhode Island League's annual needs surveys, that facilities funding is the single largest challenge in starting and sustaining a public charter school. Rhode Island's charter law, similar to the law in most states across the country, places the burden of obtaining and paying for facilities on individual charter schools. As a result, charter schools struggle to find suitable and affordable facilities. This challenge puts charter schools at a disadvantage when compared to traditional public schools.

6 Facilities, not charters, are the unit of analysis in this study. Charters that have multiple campuses represent the number of facilities that are run by the charter.

To assess the true extent of the facilities issue for charter schools in the state, all Rhode Island charters schools were asked to complete an extensive and thorough survey about their facilities (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the survey). Under the direction of the Colorado League of Charter Schools, the Rhode Island League led the data collection effort and provided supplemental data on school enrollment, student demographics, and funding. The survey and measurement data were collected during February and March, 2013.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data found in the School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for the years 2001-2012 (see http://www.peterli.com/spm/resources/rptsspm.shtm), as well as standards specified in the Rhode Island Department of Education's School Construction Regulations.

Judgment based on extensive 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

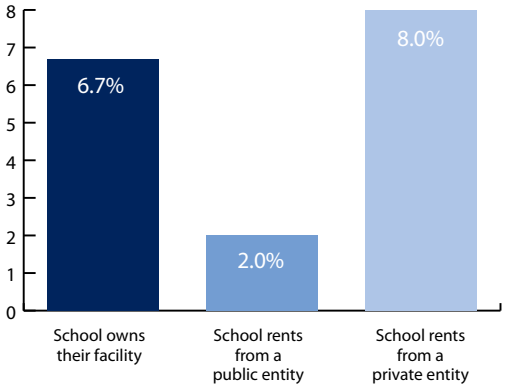
Key Finding #1: The typical Rhode Island charter school spends six percent of its per-pupil revenue on its facility.

The typical (or median) charter school in Rhode Island spends $729 of per-pupil revenue operating funds on its facility. The reported amounts spent on facilities varied greatly among the 17 facilities for which facilities revenue and expenditure data was provided, ranging from zero ($0) to over $2,300 per pupil[7]. The typical 2012-2013 per-pupil revenue (not including categorical funds) for Rhode Island charter schools was $13,507[8]. Charter schools that own their school facility tend to pay slightly less than charter schools that rent from a private entity, and charter schools in a facility provided by a public entity (e.g., a school district or another government entity) pay the least. Respective average per-pupil facilities costs for these scenarios are outlined below:

- Schools that own their facility spend an average of $939 per pupil.
- Schools that rent from private entities pay an average of $1,087 per pupil.
- Schools that rent from a public entity[9] pay an average of $234 per pupil[10].

Figure 1 outlines the corresponding percentages of Per-Pupil Revenue (PPR) charters are spending on facilities based the charters' facilities arrangements.

Figure 1
Average Percentage of PPR Spent on Facilities, by Ownership Type



7 Facilities costs did not include items such as utilities, maintenance, or other expenses that would also be incurred by traditional public schools. When these items were reported to be included in rental payments, they were subtracted from the reported annual rental payment.

8 Note that the median value for the total cost per pupil and the median value for the per-pupil revenue (PPR) are not from the same school. Therefore, the median percent of PPR spent on facilities cannot be arrived at by dividing the two. The median percent spent on facilities is based on actual amount spent and received by the median school—the school in the middle of the distribution on spending, when lined up from lowest to highest.

9 Public entities for the purposes of this study can include districts, municipalities, cites, or states.

10 Note that one charter actually paid no rent and this does pull down the average cost for this group of schools.

Key Finding #2: The process of State Housing Aid Reimbursement is not effective for charter schools.

Sixty-one percent of Rhode Island charter schools have undergone some type of major capital project (defined as a project over $20,000) in the last five years. In total, an estimated $28 million was spent on these capital projects, with the typical (or median) project costing $760,000. Sixty-four percent of charter schools that underwent a capital project reported using per-pupil revenue (PPR) and reserve funds generated from PPR as a source of funding for these projects.

Only 37 percent of Rhode Island charter schools that underwent a major capital project reported that funds from the State Housing Aid Reimbursement Program were accessed to help fund the project(s). For those who received Housing Aid Reimbursement, the awards ranged from $365,000 to over $4.7 million.

The top three reasons cited by charter school administrators for not applying for the State Housing Aid Reimbursement program were:

- **46 percent** responded that "[t]he timing of the application process did not align with when the school wanted/needed Housing Aid Reimbursement,"
- **31 percent** responded that "[t]he application process is too cumbersome or confusing", and
- **31 percent** responded that "[t]he size of the reimbursement percentage does not warrant the effort required to complete the application."

Other reasons for not applying included restrictions on eligible capital needs (23 percent), prohibitive costs associated with meeting RIDE Space Allowance Guidelines (23 percent), and inability to secure financing for the facility (23 percent). In addition, 67 percent of responding schools disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "The state housing aid reimbursement percentage received by charter schools is equitable compared to the percentage received by traditional school districts."

Key Finding #3: Rhode Island charter school facilities are smaller than prescribed standards.

Results from the Facilities Survey found that Rhode Island charter school buildings, sites, and classrooms are considerably smaller than the standards (i.e., more than 20 percent below standard) used for this study[11].

- **Only 30 percent** of charter school facilities meet or exceed grade level standards.
- **Only 25 percent** of charter school sites meet or exceed grade level standards.
- **Only 47 percent** of charter school classrooms meet or exceed grade level standards.

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 Rhode Island Charter School Facilities Survey, and the evidence is presented on page 10 of this report. To address this challenge, Rhode Island charters often find other means to provide students with the education services offered by traditional public schools. In some cases, this is done by using classrooms and other instructional space for multiple purposes, in others the charter rents even more space to provide services. For example, three Rhode Island charter schools rent additional off-site gymnasiums and/or athletic fields. These charters pay an average of $4,467 extra per year for renting this space and an additional $2,500, on average, to transport the student to the off-site facilities.

Rhode Island charter school facilities are smaller than prescribed standards.

11 These standards 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).

Key Finding #4: A majority of Rhode Island charter school facilities lack full-preparatory, federally-approved kitchens.

On average, **65 percent of students** attending a Rhode Island charter school qualify for free or reduced price meals. Yet, a majority of Rhode Island charter schools do not have a full-preparatory, federally-approved kitchen in which to prepare hot meals that qualify for reimbursement under the National School Lunch Program.

- **67 percent** of Rhode Island charter school facilities lack federally-approved kitchen facilities.

However,

- **94 percent** report having dedicated space and equipment for keeping food warm, and
- **94 percent** report having dedicated space and equipment for keeping food cold.

Without the ability to prepare meals on-site, charter schools that provide meals to students often contract with third-party vendors to bring in prepared food. Given the proportion of charter schools reporting space and equipment to keep food warm or cold, it can be assumed that most Rhode Island charter schools are following this approach to provide meals to their qualifying students. These outside vendors' services often cost more, per meal, than the federally-subsidized reimbursement rate. Charter schools wanting to participate in the National School Lunch Program must find other ways of covering the difference in cost. According to anecdotal evidence[12], charters sometimes pay for the extra expense through fundraising; other times, operating funds are used to cover this expense.

12 Anecdotal evidence was provided by experience from the Colorado League and reports from other schools and CSOs across the country heard during several conferences and events. No official data has been collected on the actual difference in cost or how the schools make up for that difference.

Key Finding #5: Shared space situations for Rhode Island charter schools are less than ideal.

Thirty-nine percent of charter school administrators in Rhode Island report that their school shares space with another entity. Two charters share a facility with each other, and the remaining charter schools in shared facility situations are sharing space with private entities (i.e., non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations). Currently, no Rhode Island charter schools are sharing space with a traditional public school.

There were a number of reported concerns and benefits associated with sharing space. However, for the most part, sharing a facility does not appear to be an ideal situation. Commonly reported concerns are highlighted below:

- Charter school leaders in shared spaces were less likely to report that they "*intend to stay in the current facility*" for more than four years:
  - **33 percent** of charter schools that share space plan to stay in the current facility for five or more years, compared to 73 percent of schools that do not share space.

- Administrators report shared space interferes with implementation of the school's design and culture within the school:
  - **43 percent** were concerned with "implementing the school's curriculum/educational program given the amount of exclusive space that it has been allocated"; and
  - **43 percent** were also concerned with "maintaining a school climate that is consistent with the school's mission and is conducive to learning" in a shared space.

- Administrators in shared space facilities also reported that their students did not have adequate access to many important amenities:
  - **100 percent** of schools sharing space disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school has adequate access to a gymnasium;
  - **57 percent** disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school has adequate access to the lunchroom;
  - **71 percent** reported inadequate access to an athletic/play field; and
  - **71 percent** reported inadequate access to a library.

The most commonly cited benefit to sharing space was that it reduces facility-related costs (50 percent).

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS

Specialized Instructional Spaces

As mentioned previously, Rhode Island charter schools' small facilities, as compared to standards and traditional public schools, are typically the result of operating without one or more specialized instructional space(s). While most instruction during the school day takes place in generic classrooms, specialized instructional spaces, such as science labs, libraries, and music rooms, are an important part of a comprehensive educational program. Rhode Island charter school facilities have a limited number of these types of spaces, and, even when present, the spaces frequently do not meet the standards utilized in this study.

The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data and standards outlined in the RIDE guidance. Judgment based on the professional experience with charter and public school design of Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc. was also used when appropriate. (See Appendix B for more information).

- **50 percent** of Rhode Island charter school facilities lack a dedicated library.
  - **Only 10 percent** of reported library facilities meet or exceed size standards.
- **75 percent** of Rhode Island secondary charter facilities lack a dedicated science lab.
  - **None** of the science lab facilities meet standards for size and amenities.
- **20 percent** of Rhode Island charter school facilities lack **both** an art and a music room.
  - **30 percent** of facilities lack a dedicated art classroom.
  - **45 percent** of facilities lack a dedicated music classroom.

School Environment

Recent studies conducted by Uline and Tschannen-Moran,[13] Tanner,[14] and Durán-Narucki[15] 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 Rhode Island charter school leaders to rate their schools on these aspects. Selected relevant findings are cited below:

- Building deterioration was one area that Rhode Island charter administrators often reported as a problem with their school site:
  - **39 percent** of Rhode Island charter school administrators disagreed with the statement, "[t]he roof leaks rarely, if ever."
  - **33 percent** also disagreed that "[t]he site does not exhibit regular drainage problems such as standing water."
- **At least 30 percent** of charter school administrators reported that noise from other areas of the school was a disruption to instruction inside the general classrooms:
  - **39 percent** agreed that noise from corridors disrupted instruction,
  - **44 percent** agreed that noise from gymnasiums, auditoriums, and lunchrooms was disruptive, and
  - **29 percent** agreed that noise from within specialized instructional spaces was disruptive to general classroom instruction.
- Temperature regulation was another issue that charter school administrators frequently reported as an issue:
  - **33 percent** disagreed or strongly disagreed that "the temperature in the classrooms is generally comfortable throughout the school year," and
  - **39 percent** disagreed or strongly disagreed that "the temperature throughout the building is generally comfortable throughout the school year."

13 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.
14 C. Kenneth Tanner, (2009) "Effects of school design on student outcomes," Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 47 Iss: 3, pp.381 – 399.
15 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.

In addition, over 44 percent of Rhode Island charter school buildings were built prior to 1970, and 67 percent of charter school facilities were not originally constructed as schools. The cost of renovations, repairs, and maintenance is a likely concern for these schools, a conclusion supported by a recent report published by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education—*Public Schoolhouse Assessment, FY 2013*.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rhode Island's public charter schools currently serve about three 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 89 percent of Rhode Island's public charter schools plan to increase their enrollment over the next five years.

By helping public charter schools meet their facilities challenges, Rhode Island lawmakers would enable them to allocate more operational dollars toward core educational concerns and enhance their ability to provide a well-rounded educational experience for their 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 Rhode Island 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.**

Rhode Island 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*, Fourth Edition report (which analyzes and ranks each state public charter school law against the model law), Rhode Island law only addresses two of the eight facilities components in the model law.

- Rhode Island law provides that a school district may access state aid for reimbursement of school housing costs for district-sponsored charter schools at the same rate as the district while independent charter schools, not sponsored by a school district, receive a 30% reimbursement of school housing cost compared to the district reimbursement rate of anywhere between 35% to 95% based on the wealth of the community.

- Rhode Island law provides that charter schools can access bonding support through the Rhode Island Housing and Education Building Corporation.

Rhode Island could 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:

- **Increase state facilities funding for charter schools:** Amend current law to ensure that the rate of reimbursement for state housing aid to independent charter public schools is fair and equal to that of traditional school districts.

- **Improve access to surplus district space:** It is difficult for Rhode Island public charter schools to access vacant district school buildings in the state. The state could opt to foster district public school and charter public school collaboration via laws that incentivize the use of vacant district public school facilities by charter public schools.

The results of the 2013 Rhode Island Charter School Facilities Study indicate that Rhode Island charter schools face challenges in obtaining equitable access to facilities and facilities financing. By ensuring facilities equity for all Rhode Island public schools, public 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 ("the Colorado League") commissioned Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc. One of the firm's principal architects, 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 Colorado League's facility task force, Colorado 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.

Rhode Island Survey Procedures

The Colorado League of Charter Schools' base questionnaire was revised to address Rhode Island specific issues through a collaborative effort of the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, Mr. Hutton, and Dr. Eckerling. To ensure both timely and accurate responses, the Rhode Island League of 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 was procured by the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools from the Rhode Island Department of Education and was used to provide data on pupil membership and free and reduced price lunch eligibility. Steven Nardelli, Executive Director of the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools, worked with the leadership of each charter school to determine the per-pupil funding, using information from the Rhode Island Department of Education, listed below, and the following equation:

Equation 1: Total Revenue

TOTAL REVENUE = Total state revenue + total local revenue

Equation 2: Per-pupil Revenue

PER-PUPIL REVENUE = Total revenue / # of students enrolled on October 1st

APPENDIX B

School Facility Standards

This section provides information about the standards used in this report. The standards cited throughout this report were derived from published regional and national new school construction data found in the School Planning and Management's Annual School Construction Reports for the years 2001-2012 (see http://www.peterli.com/spm/resources/rptsspm.shtm). Facility guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Education was also incorporated. Judgment based on professional experience with charter and public school design was also factored into the standards as was 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.

Gross square footage standards were based first on published regional and national new school construction data and comparable local facility data for gross building square footage[16]. This data is typically based on enrollments that average between 600 and 1200 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. When available, standards were also compared to state and/or 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	157	142	118
Grades K-8	163	151	132
Grades K-12	172	164	152
Grades 6-8	176	168	153
Grades 6-12	185	182	177
Grades 9-12	195	192	188

16 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	4.0	8.5	11.5
Grades K-8	4.75	10.75	15.25
Grades K-12	4.75	11.0	16.25
Grades 6-8	4.75	11.0	13.0
Grades 6-12	4.75	11.25	13.25
Grades 9-12	4.75	11.25	13.25

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	46
Grades 1-6	37
Grades 7-8	32
Grades 9-12	32

Standards for specialized instructional spaces like libraries, computer rooms, science labs, art rooms, music rooms, special education classrooms, gymnasiums, and lunch rooms were also 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	48 SQ FT / Student	53 SQ FT / Student
Art	44 SQ FT / Student	48 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

Charter School Facilities Initiative: An Analysis of the Charter School Facility Landscape in Rhode Island, was prepared by the Colorado League of Charter Schools and National Alliance for Public Charter Schools on behalf of the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools.