

SCHOOL FACILITIES: HOW CAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BETTER MANAGE THE BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY USE?





“With more than one-sixth of the entire U.S. population inside K-12 public school buildings each weekday, **school facilities have a major impact on the health and performance of students and staff alike.** They send a tangible signal of a community’s willingness and ability to provide an excellent and equitable education to all its students. Our extensive public education infrastructure also impacts the social and natural environment of their communities.”

– From *State of Our Schools: America’s K–12 Facilities* – a publication of the 21st Century School Fund, Inc., U.S. Green Building Council, Inc., and the National Council on School Facilities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr Philip Lanoue is the **2015 AASA National Superintendent of the Year**, as well as the **2015 Georgia Superintendent of the Year**. Dr. Lanoue served as principal for 18 years in four high schools in Massachusetts and Vermont, his home state, where he was named the **Vermont NASSP Principal of the Year**. Lanoue is one of the **nation’s top 50 educational innovators** in digital learning as named by Converge magazine. He is an Adjunct professor at the University of Georgia, and he was a leading contributor in designing one of the nation’s top Professional Development School Districts in partnership with UGA. He is currently head of **PDL Consultants**, a consulting firm focusing on developing and supporting district and school leaders as well as on bringing together research and practice in designing and monitoring school improvement initiatives.

Dr Philip Lanoue:

The 2015 National Superintendent of the Year now leads educational consulting firm PDL Consultants.



INTRODUCTION

Given the intense instructional focus across the country to improve student achievement, the conversations around creating, maintaining, and sharing public school buildings often get little attention. However, **research reflects strong evidence that healthy environments for children support their ability to engage in school and has a positive impact on their academic performance.** Additionally, sharing space with service organizations can provide community agencies with valuable space in providing support services for children.

While school districts have become strong users of student data on achievement, they typically lag in the use of data to monitor and assess the effectiveness of school operations. In particular, the use of school facilities remains of great interest by most members of the community because schools are considered a community asset and many believe they should be fully accessible for community use. **Yet, school districts often struggle to put in place policies and systems that help manage the balance between the facility use required for school programs and the expectations of accessibility by the community** – all while ensuring there are adequate resources to maintain the facilities for everyone.

This paper outlines the challenges of school districts in facilities management and provides a contemporary solution to assist schools in leveraging their school building assets. **Facilitron**, a new provider of facility management and data solutions for public schools and colleges **helps school districts develop systems to effectively monitor the total operations in their use of facilities to meet both the school and community needs.** With new solutions, schools and communities are better positioned to share resources to support students, parents and members of their community.

ABOUT FACILITRON:

Headquartered in Silicon Valley, FACILITRON[®] is a leading provider of Facility Management and data solutions for public schools and colleges. Facilitron's one-of-a-kind cloud-based District Operating System includes a scheduling and reservation platform, work management system, and participant registration system. Facilitron empowers public schools, colleges and municipalities to manage and monetize their facilities – consolidating communications, calendars, usage and financial data in one place.

CURRENT CHALLENGES IN THE USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Maximizing Facility Use for School Programs

Many questions get raised when schools request resources for additional classrooms, or office space, or when they rely on portable spaces to meet the demands to accommodate expanding school programs. And reversely, other school districts struggle with declining enrollments and the use of unneeded building space. Student enrollment shifts, often as a result of a less static family housing environment or shifts in the workforce, have created challenging imbalances in school building use. **These shifts in building use become even more challenging when decisions are predicated on historical views, limited building use information and personal preferences.**

Sharing School Facilities with the Community

In a published paper, [*Joint Use of Public Schools*](#), the Center for Cities and Schools from Berkeley California projects a growing need for community use of school facilities to help create and sustain active, healthy communities and vibrant neighborhoods. However, **school districts often do not have the systems in place to share facilities and balance their use with school programs.** Furthermore, school districts and the community do not share a common understanding of school facility use with its advantages and liabilities.

Developing Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Developing effective policies and procedures around facility use varies greatly across this country due to school use philosophies, district size, school and community history, resources and many times trust within the community. And often facility use policies and procedures are the least priority with school boards due to the enormity of policy changes alone required by Federal and State rule changes. **Changing the status quo where some organizations have access and others do not or when some organizations pay for building use while others do not can become a significant distraction without well developed policies.**

Limiting School District Liability

The increase in liability for schools has grown exponentially often to the point that districts shy away from outside groups using facilities simply because it is too “risky”. In addition, many districts do not have adequate facility use policies to ensure equal

Work Cited Available Online:
[21st Century School Fund and Center for Cities & Schools *Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract*. Washington, DC](#)



access regardless of the group's mission. Community use of facilities with **outdated or vague policies create community disagreements and can open the door to discrimination litigation.**

Budgeting Resources for Personnel and Maintenance

The resources in schools for instructional use as well as for school operations continue to dwindle. **School districts are challenged to allocate resources to maintain facilities** when critical resources are needed for instructional and support services for children. In many cases, schools see facility use as a drain on the system's resources due to the personnel needed to maintain systems as well as the wear on school facilities with limited resources for repair and renewal.



WHY CHANGE?

School districts understand the need for systems where data drives decisions to get the intended results and helps to maximize the use of their resources. Therefore, the **ability to maximize school building use by internal and external stakeholders** through the use of data-driven systems, policy development and community participation **creates many new opportunities for districts to improve operations while emerging as a key aspect of their community's infrastructure.**

In addition, **the use of data-driven systems** in decision making **ensures a new level of understanding and transparency for the community**, helping them to understand the liabilities and costs incurred by districts for facility usage. In a time of tight finances, developing new systems to share building use may not only provide additional resources for other programs, but creates a healthy culture of support and collaboration with their communities.

*"Not only has facility scheduling become **more transparent and equitable** for external and internal users, the collection of fees has been very consistent."*

—Ken Spencer, Director of General Services, Napa Valley Unified School District (Calif.)

THE SOLUTION

Facilitron, a provider for facility management and data solutions, **helps school districts and schools manage the scheduling of their facilities including managing external rental requests from the community - at no cost for the software and support.**

Through a unique partnership strategy, Facilitron helps school districts find solutions to the challenges of **maximum internal building use, building rentals, and facility maintenance** – all while giving districts full control over when and how they want to use their facilities.

How – Data Centered and Driven

With **Facilitron**, districts are provided software tools and training to support and interpret their own internal and external building usage data using district specific analysis protocols. Not only will districts be able to more effectively develop day to day facility usage schedules, they will have **critical data on building use to assist in planning for systems repairs and renewals.**

How – Effective Policies and Procedures

Effective building use and maintenance policies create a needed consistency in maintaining buildings equitably across systems – but only if effectively monitored. **Facilitron** helps align data systems to policies providing a high level of transparency to the system in both facility use and facility maintenance. In addition, **monitoring systems can provide critical information in assessing policy effectiveness** and provides relevant and timely information to easily make adjustments.

How – Limit Liability

With the **Facilitron** management systems, districts are able to **ensure equity in both access and pricing** at every school across the system as well as consistency in its application of policies – **thus reducing liability.** In addition, **Facilitron** ensures renters provide critical information on their organization including insurance and activity types, their adherence to school policies and impact on facilities.

How – Needed Systems with Less Resources

The **Facilitron Management System** employs the use of complex data systems that distill critical information for district analysis and does not require personnel for record

More than simple reporting:

Facilitron provides valuable business intelligence through custom reporting that allows admins to quickly gain insight on efficiency improvement or resource-saving opportunities.



keeping, scheduling and other tasks associated with manual type systems. Districts are provided guidance in setting fee structures that have consistency – all through a **unique partnership where districts do not pay for software and data analysis features**. *Facilitron* also shifts the responsibility of bill collection and communications away from school personnel so they can perform other needed tasks.

How – Easy to Access and Use

District personnel can access information at any time through *Facilitron's* cloud-based solution that integrates the reservation system and the work management systems for creating and automating requests, projects and work orders. For community members, the **easy-to-use interface reduces time and often frustration** in scheduling school facilities for their organization's use.

How – Generates Critical Resources

School facilities are one of the biggest assets in any district and an asset that can be leveraged to help offset critical cost in maintenance or in supporting other needed programs. With *Facilitron*, districts can create a uniform fee structure that is consistent with the market and **creates the potential of adding needed dollars to school budgets**.

IT IS A NEW DAY

Seeking new and creative solutions is paramount for schools to maximize time and resources in leveraging their assets. A *Facilitron* partnership is a unique partnership that provides school districts with needed data for decisions on usage, maintenance and system renewals as well as shifts time-consuming tasks such as verifying nonprofits status and insurance, collecting payments and loading and monitoring schedules away from key personnel. With a willingness to seek new solutions, **school districts can better leverage their assets and overlap resources to benefit education and their community – making it a new day!**

"It's like having my own staff."

–Cheryl Galloway, Gilroy Unified School District (Calif.)

A *Facilitron* partnership allows districts to off-load time consuming tasks such as:

- Verifying non-profit status
- Verifying insurance
- Loading internal schedules
- Collecting payments
- Issuing refunds
- Answering renter questions and communicating availability to renters

...and more

GET STARTED with *Facilitron*[®]

To learn more or schedule a demo, call **800-262-2972** or email us at GetStarted@Facilitron.com
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