Summary of Model Policies in Support of High Performance School Buildings for All Children by BEST

All policy recommendations are in bold. A point to note: The original document specified which level—district or state—each policy falls under. It may be worthwhile to think about which level would be most effective for Chicago and Illinois.

I School Facilities and Community Planning

A. Goals & Objectives
   1. To ensure that the district undertakes regular public educational facility planning
   2. To coordinate with municipal land use and community planning
   3. This should be done with broad public participation

B. Policies
   1. **Facilities Master Plan** (long term, at least 10 years). The FMP should take into account the policies in this document as well as include and utilize information on the following:
      a) What the district hopes to achieve educationally:
         i. Educational vision, mission, goals, standards, and guidelines
         ii. Educational instructional programs and services
      b) Enrollment information:
         i. historical and projected enrollment data
         ii. enrollment capacity of existing schools
         iii. utilization data
      c) Analysis of
         i. community—current and projected demographics, land usage, transportation plans, residential and commercial development, private schools
         ii. schools—facility inventory and assessment of building conditions; assessment of facility needs
      d) implementation logistics
         i. list of options for addressing facility needs
         ii. potential source of funding
   2. **Capital Improvement Plan** is the basis for planning the specific activities that will result in expenditures for the capital improvement. Includes a realistic budget based on reliable data. The CIP sets priorities, establishes timelines and the sequence of the projects, cost estimates for each project, and the potential sources of funding.
   3. **Coordinated Municipal & School District Planning** is a comprehensive community plan that coordinates with educational facility plans. This could include plans for services such as transportation, parks and recreation, senior citizen outreach and programming, and health care. The logic behind a comprehensive plan is to effectively and efficiently use

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1 Prepared by Caitlin Kearney, University of Chicago intern for Grand Boulevard Federation, 27 July 2010
funds by streamlining them, utilizing existing space, and avoiding overlap of services.

4. **Public Engagement in School Facility Planning and Design** entails an open, public process when making decisions regarding facilities. The logic behind this is two-fold: first, it increases the likelihood of public support for a project. Second, the community is a key resource for knowledge that plays a role in school planning.

II Schools as Centers of Communities
A. Goals & Objectives
   1. Create schools that are a center of their community to offer stability to an otherwise changing space
   2. Utilize space in creative ways to avoid consolidation/closures based on utilization criteria as the demographics of the community change

B. Policies—need to eliminate policy barriers that make community schools difficult to achieve and replace them with flexible policies that allow for such schools.
   1. **Site Selection for New School Construction** should support and enhance neighborhoods and communities. They should be accessible by both students and the general population by both foot and public transit.
   2. **Elimination of minimum size standards for evaluating existing and new sites** will allow for flexible planning that takes into account existing infrastructure and unique qualities of each community.
   3. **Specific legislation outlining procedures for shared space use and joint development** of public schools should be put in place in order to create a foundation for cooperative relationships among public entities such as libraries or governmental offices and public schools.
   4. **Create incentives to maintain public schools within existing communities.**

III Public School Facilities Management
A. Goals and Objectives
   1. Ensure that public school facilities are managed so that they meet adequate standards for health, safety, instruction, services, environmental responsibility, and efficiency. To meet this goal, each state needs to know the condition of their school facilities as well as the elements and determining actors in meeting the state’s educational curriculum or outcomes.

B. Policies
   1. **Public School Facility Database** is a statewide facility database with basic building information on the condition, design, utilization and expenditures of all public school facilities, including public charter schools. As this database provides vital information for facilities planning, it is key that the data elements, the collection methodology, the accuracy, and the timeliness of the information are maintained. The database should be public to provide information to parents, children, and taxpaying community members as well as to hold public officials accountable.
2. **School Building Space Standards** establish adequate space standards for school facilities, including public charter schools. These standards should be *flexible* enough to meet the diverse educational program and service needs of students, teachers, and the community. These standards should be based on factors such as projected enrollment above capacity, the number of un-housed students, overcrowded schools, age of school and its condition, etc. These standards will assist in prioritizing capital improvement projects.

3. **Environmental Design and Construction Standards** establish and support school design and construction standards that incorporate environmental goals. The logic is threefold: to be environmentally responsible, to be economically efficient, and to provide access to materials that promote student achievement, such as lighting and acoustics.

4. **Maintenance Planning** establishes a process for ongoing maintenance in schools. The plan should have annual revisions and/or updates, and the department of education should verify that these plans are being implemented.

5. **Maintenance Standards** should establish criteria or indicators for evaluating the condition and level of maintenance of public school facilities, including public charter schools, on a regular basis to ensure the health and safety of children and adults in schools and on school grounds. In other words, maintenance standards are meant to evaluate the implementation of the maintenance plan.

6. **Technical Assistance** should be provided by the state to districts in developing plans and implementation procedures and processes in order to effectively and efficiently plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain the public school sites and buildings within their jurisdiction and sphere of responsibility. This assistance is necessary because many school board members are not trained or experience in school facilities planning or management.

7. **School Facilities Oversight** establishes and enforces policies and procedures that protect public investment in school facility construction, operation, and maintenance. State should implement policies to ensure that funds are being utilized effectively, efficiently, and legally. These policies should cover ethics, standards of conduct and should address waste, fraud and abuse, *reporting mechanisms and consequences*.

### IV Public School Facilities Funding

**A. Objectives & Goals**

1. Ensure that there are stable and sufficient funds for public school facilities
2. Ensure that the funds are allocated equitably and efficiently
3. Ensure the proper balance between state and local funding

**B. Policies**

1. **Capital Outlay Funding** requires states to establish and implement plans to ensure long-range and stable funding streams or mechanisms that will
support the needs of the school districts as identified in each school district’s Educational Master Plan, Comprehensive Maintenance Plan, and Capital Improvement Program. A guaranteed source of funding allows districts to design and implement meaningful long-term plans. States should acknowledge that “market place costs” are not held constant. There should be mechanisms to adjust or account for changing market conditions as close to the time of actual bidding as possible. While guaranteed state funding may seem impossible, following are a few options that some states are utilizing:

- a) State general fund, state general obligation bonds, dedicated sales tax, lottery income or gambling revenue, the tobacco settlement, and some smaller specialized sources
- b) Many states will guarantee local bonds or will issue state bonds, which require repayment by the locality.
- c) At least one state has a revolving loan fund for maintenance and renovation projects.
- d) A few states approve the issuance of a large state general obligation bond and then district apply for the funds as their projects proceed through the approval process. To ensure fairness in the application process, there should be a deadline and not a first-come-first-serve policy.

2. **Facility Funding according to Need** dictates that the State should define the scope and form of the funding relationship between the State and the local school district that is based on what is fair and equitable and accounts for the fiscal effort and fiscal capacity of the local school district. Sliding scales based on wealth of a district for states aid and match requirements should be in place. *(Is it possible to mandate similar policies within CPS? Then need to rethink how need is defined?)*

3. **Flexible School Facility Procurement and Financing** offer alternative methods for contracting capital improvement projects beside a design-bid-construction sequence. This flexible policy would also allow for alternative funding methods such as public-private partnerships, public-public partnerships, impact fees, excise taxes, transfer taxes, and others. The state should take charge of passing any legislation necessary to accommodate these alternative methods.

4. **Project Budgeting for Existing Buildings** should be reevaluated to eliminate policies biased towards building new schools as opposed to renovating old ones. These biases generally exist in the form of a 2/3 rule—if renovation costs exceed 2/3 (or other predetermined percentage) of building a new school, a new school will be built.