

## HOW CAN CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOL BUILDINGS BE FIXED AND MAINTAINED?

- The State should require that every child has a safe, adequate facility (clean, functioning bathrooms; adequate classroom space; outdoor space to exercise; heating, cooling, and electrical outlets that work; and access to technology) in which to learn.
- Adequate funds should go to fix and maintain all schools. Schools in the worst condition should be given funds first.
- The State must be accountable for fixing known health and safety hazards **IMMEDIATELY!** If school districts do not respond to problems, the state must step in. There can be no excuses or arguments over who is responsible.
- California must inspect its schools, as other states do, to identify schools that need repairs. Inspections must take place regularly to catch safety and health hazards early.
- California must identify school district and state officials who are responsible for maintaining school facilities and make it easier for teachers, parents, students, and community members to report problems.
- California must develop a system of reporting school conditions to members of the community.

References are available at:  
[www.ucla-idea.org](http://www.ucla-idea.org)



# The Crisis in California's School Buildings

*California's dilapidated, overcrowded schools expose students to unsafe and unsanitary conditions, limit their learning, and disrespect communities.*

## RAMPANT AND UNCHECKED DISREPAIR

- 42% of California's schools have at least one building in bad condition. More than half the schools are old enough to need basic plumbing, ventilation, and heating repairs.
- 32% of California teachers say their classroom temperature interferes with learning; 27% report problems with cockroaches, rats, or mice; 17% complain that the bathrooms at their schools are either dirty or closed.
- California schools have molds, and allergens from mites, animals, and insects. Over a third of elementary schools have old lead paint.
- Many students are taught in portable classrooms that are built with toxic materials. These classrooms have poor ventilation, which increases health risks.
- Students of color and those living in poverty are far more likely to endure these shocking conditions.

## DO BAD FACILITIES CAUSE PROBLEMS?

- Students learn less in dilapidated school buildings. Temperature, noise level, and other environmental factors all impact student performance.
- Rundown facilities reduce teachers' effectiveness and weaken their commitment to teaching. When physical conditions improve, so does the teaching.
- Mold from dampness and humidity leads to asthma, coughing, and headaches. Pest infestations contribute to asthma and allergies. Exposure to lead-based paint causes developmental disorders. Even small levels of chemicals such as formaldehyde and benzene are toxic.
- Schools with dirty or locked bathrooms force students to "hold it" all day. One California school with 4000 students has only two usable toilets.
- Poor students and students of color disproportionately attend schools with deteriorating buildings.
- Forcing students to attend decaying schools tells them that they are not valued. Poor conditions can lead to anger, shame, not caring, and promote fighting between students.

## WHY ARE CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOLS SO RUNDOWN?

- The state has few requirements for school upkeep, unlike the health and safety codes it sets for restaurants, hair salons, and nursing homes. For example, there are no requirements that school toilets be kept open or sanitary.
- California makes local school boards responsible for maintaining schools. If local districts cannot or do not fix the problems, the state does not step in, even when the state knows that serious problems exist.
- California does not keep track of the condition of school buildings, so it cannot make realistic plans for fixing and preventing problems with facilities.
- All of the above have allowed Californians to let the state's schools deteriorate and avoid spending the dollars that well-maintained school buildings require.



***REMEMBER! SCHOOL CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT ONLY 10% OF CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IMPACT OVER 600,000 BOYS AND GIRLS--EVERY DAY***