

Adequacy Issues Related to Educational Facilities

Partnership Program (Adequacy Report Draft, page 40)

1. Districts' requests for Partnership Program funding typically exceed the new General Revenue the program receives each year. Until now, the Program has been sustained by carryover funding from the original \$456 million the General Assembly provided in 2007. That funding has been depleted, and the Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation estimates there could be a \$65 million funding shortfall for the 2015-17 funding cycle. The problem has been exacerbated by the fact that about \$16.3 million that previously supported the Partnership Program has been redirected to the Public School Employees Health Insurance Plan.
2. There has been some concern expressed about the disparities in the condition of school facilities from one district to another. One group testified that disparities occur because wealthy school districts can afford to build beyond the level deemed adequate by the Partnership Program rules. These districts use local property wealth to provide better facilities when poorer districts have trouble just raising the local share for the basic facilities funded by the Partnership Program.
3. Open-enrollment charter schools are not eligible for Partnership Program funds. Charter school advocates have argued that the state should establish a facilities funding assistance program to ensure these public schools are able to provide an adequate and equitable education.