



NATIONAL HYBRID SCHOOLS

**FACILITIES
SURVEY 2023**

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November 2023

Introduction

The hybrid schools sector has been growing over time in the United States. Some of the many reported reasons for this growth include the schedule flexibility the model allows, the smaller environments, and the more cohesive curricula these schools can offer compared to larger, more conventional schools. Another reason for hybrid schools' growing popularity, especially among middle income families, is their comparatively low cost. This is enabled both by hybrid schools' lower personnel costs, and also by their lower facilities costs, which is the subject of this study.

Even though hybrid schools typically need their facilities for fewer days than conventional, five day schools, facilities still represent a large cost to hybrids. With much lower tuitions than conventional private schools, and without the guaranteed per student funding that comes with conventional public school or charter school students, private hybrid schools often have less ability to secure physical space.

The other side of this is that hybrid schools typically do not need as much space as other schools, nor for as much time. Hybrid schools are, on average, smaller operations, and they usually do not need a space the full working week. Due to their relatively smaller size compared to conventional schools, this also means hybrid schools can often be located in facilities that might not work for their 5-day counterparts (in particular churches or other rental spaces a few days per week, for example). However, as hybrid schools grow in popularity, this also means they increasingly face regulatory issues from state and local entities, including issues around their physical facilities. Some schools in Georgia, for example, faced a conflict with their local fire marshal over whether they should be able to operate with their church's certificate of occupancy, or whether they should be forced to pay to gain a certificate of occupancy as a "school." Such conflicts may become more likely as the hybrid schools sector continues to grow and more local regulators and school districts take notice of them.

Background of This Report

Each spring the National Hybrid Schools Project conducts a special topic survey as a follow-up to the annual National Hybrid Schools Survey. In 2022, we surveyed hybrid schools about their teachers: their education, training, work experiences, and opinions on several topics. This year's report is the first to specifically explore the kinds of facilities hybrid schools use: their ages, characteristics, amenities, and ownership status. In May of 2023, a subset of hybrid school leaders who responded to the annual survey were asked to complete an electronic survey answering questions about their hybrid schools' physical facilities. Hybrid school leaders were sent an email with the survey link. In addition, school leaders at the 2023 National Hybrid Schools Conference were provided a link to the survey. In total, 41 hybrid schools from 15 states provided responses for this report.

Key Findings

This report is based on responses collected during the 2022-2023 school year. Key findings include:

- ◆ **Key Finding #1: Hybrid schools tend to have been in their current facilities for only a few years, and have typically moved at least once during their history.**
- ◆ **Key Finding #2: Most hybrid schools have options for physical education and recreation, as well as some kind of kitchen and library amenities.**
- ◆ **Key Finding #3: Few hybrid schools own their own buildings.**
- ◆ **Key Finding #4: Hybrid school leaders are overwhelmingly satisfied with their current facilities.**
- ◆ **Key Finding #5: Despite being satisfied with their current facilities, fewer than half of hybrid schools believe those facilities will be able to handle their needs in five years.**
- ◆ **Key Finding #6: Hybrid schools use a variety of methods to acquire funding to cover their facilities needs.**

These results are discussed in more detail below.

01 General School Information

The tables below depict the school represented by respondents to this survey. The typical responding school was a small, religious hybrid school located in a suburban area (similar to the profile of hybrid schools in general), though a number of private secular hybrid schools, charter hybrid schools, and other public hybrid schools also responded.

Table 1: School Type, Percent

Public	9.0
Charter	9.0
Private, religious	60.6
Private, non-religious	21.2

Table 2: Urbanicity, Percent

Urban	21.9
Suburban	59.4
Town	6.3
Rural	12.1

Table 3: Enrollment, Percent

0-99	42.4
100-199	24.2
500-999	12.1
1,000+	3.0

02 Hybrid Schools Facility Characteristics and Conditions

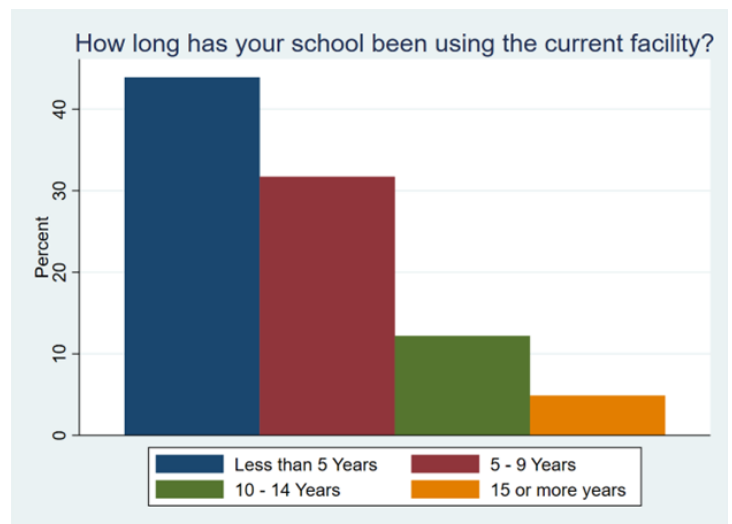
Though they are often meant to serve a particular local community, and to stay there long-term, hybrid schools often do change facilities. And despite being small, hybrid schools typically report having some kind of library, access to kitchen space, and to own or have access to some kind of gymnasium, athletic fields, and playground.

Key Finding #1. Hybrid schools tend to have been in their current facilities for only a few years, and have typically moved at least once during their history.

"How long has your school been using its current facility?"

Figure 1 clearly shows that most hybrid schools have been in the current facilities for less than a decade (77.5 percent). On average, smaller hybrid schools of all kinds reported being in the current facilities for fewer years than did older hybrid schools.

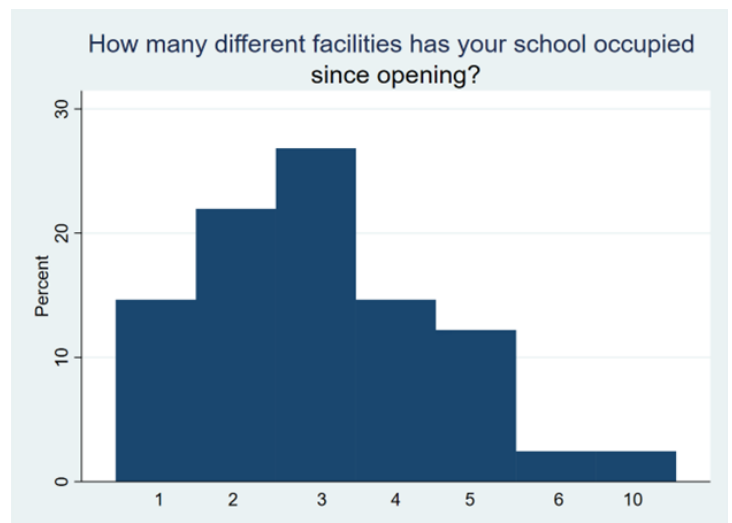
Figure 1



"How many different facilities has your school occupied since opening?"

Though most hybrid schools have relatively short histories, most have also moved at least once. Only around 15 percent of hybrid schools have been in the same facility for their entire existence. Over half of the responding schools reported being located between 1 and 3 buildings during their existence, though some had been in as many as 10 different locations over time.

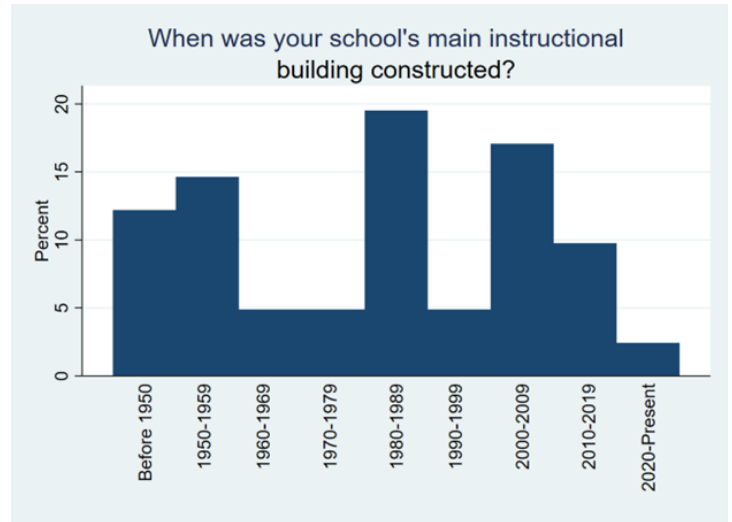
Figure 2



"When was your school's main instructional building constructed?"

A plurality of hybrid schools' facilities were constructed in the 1980s, and nearly 60 percent were built in 1980 or later.

Figure 3



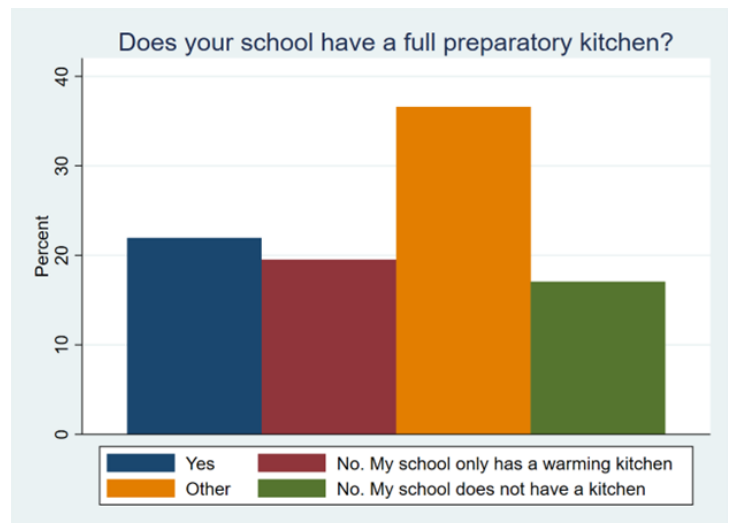
Key Finding #2: Most hybrid schools have options for physical education and recreation, as well as some kind of kitchen and library amenities.

"Does your school have a full preparatory kitchen to prepare hot and cold meals?"

Just over 20 percent of hybrid schools responded that they had a full kitchen. An additional 23 percent reported having a warming kitchen, while over 38 percent said that they did not have a kitchen at all.

Other responses included answers such as the school has a kitchen but they do not use it because of their rental agreement, or they rent space from a church which has a kitchen, but the school does not use those facilities. One school reported having a full kitchen but using it only for warming and for cooking lessons. Another reported having a kitchen, but it was only for staff use.

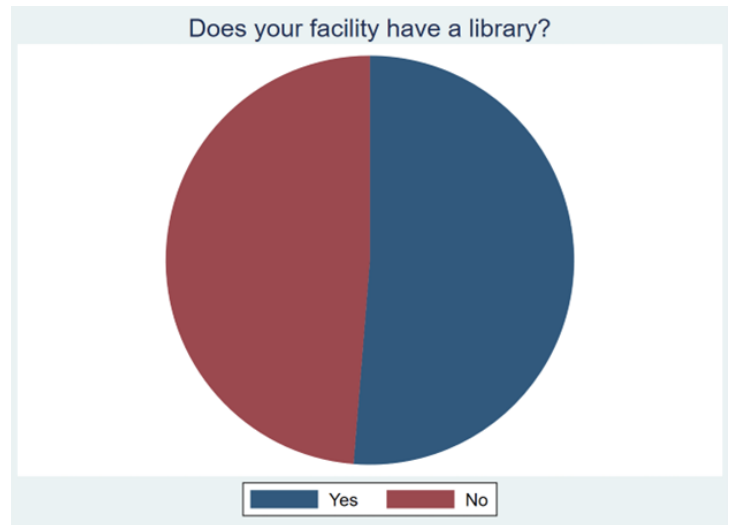
Figure 4



"Does your facility have a library?"

Most hybrid schools have some library space, but clearly not all.

Figure 5

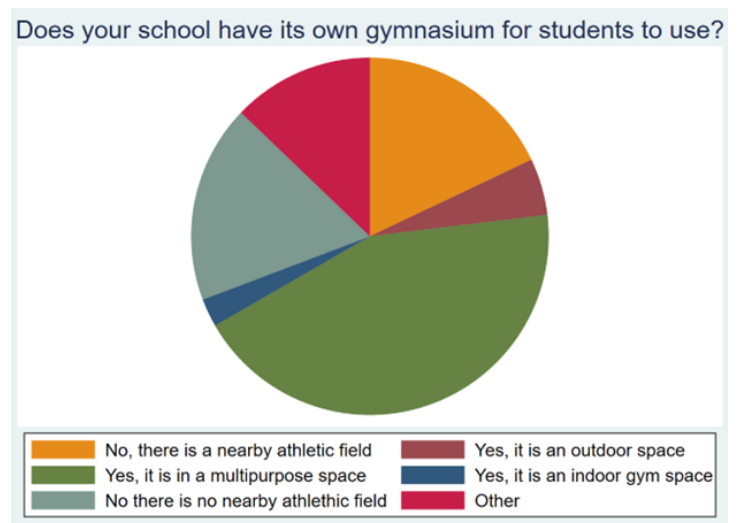


"Does your school have its own gymnasium for students to use?"

64.1 percent of hybrid schools reported having some space, either indoor or outdoor, for gym activities, although over 20 percent reported not having any such space, nor any space that they could use nearby.

Some hybrid schools reported other arrangements: One school said they used a grass field at the church that houses them (which is not technically an athletic field). Another reported that their school operates over multiples campuses. Some of those have green spaces at their host locations, and one has a dedicated athletic field.

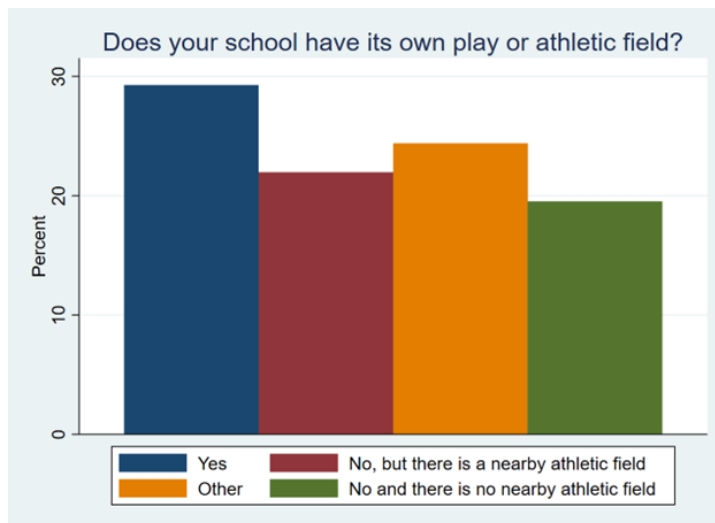
Figure 6



"Does the school facility have its own play or athletic field(s)?"

Schools were also asked specifically about field space, as opposed to gym space. Over half of schools said they had some kind of athletic fields available, either fields they owned themselves or nearby fields they could use. Some schools reported unique arrangements: one school shares a turf field with another organization. Another reported: "We hike on a nearby trail daily and provide other outdoor and physical activities but have no dedicated field."

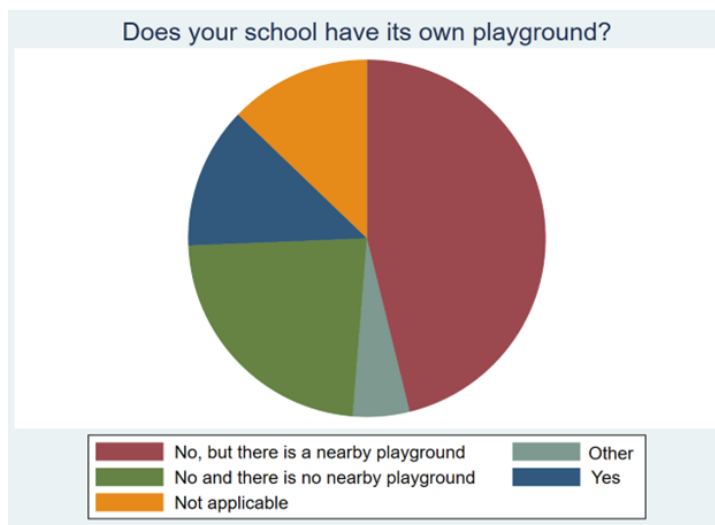
Figure 7



"Does your school facility have its own playground?"

Finally, a plurality of hybrid schools reported that they did have playgrounds for students. However, in many cases they do not, and there is no nearby playground for them. Some of these schools reported instead having indoor play areas. Also, in some cases the schools in this report served older students, and did not see a need for a playground.

Figure 8



03 Facility Ownership, Maintenance, and Renovation

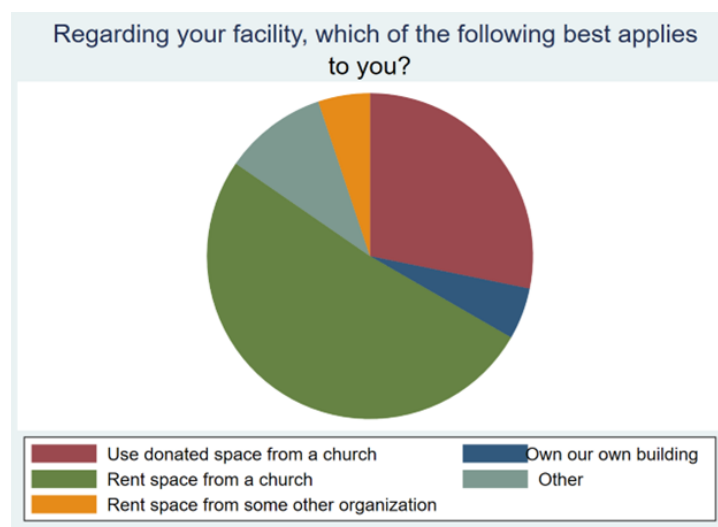
Some hybrid schools own their own buildings, but this is somewhat rare. Most common is for a school to rent (or be donated) space. Regardless of their current facilities situation, responding hybrid schools were all content with their current buildings for the moment.

Key Finding #3. Few hybrid schools own their own buildings.

"Regarding your facility, which of the following best applies to you?"

Private hybrid schools (both secular and religious) are likely to rent their spaces, usually from a church. (Most conventional public and charter schools report owning their own space). Despite not owning their space, just over a quarter of hybrid schools reported being able to use donated space.

Figure 9



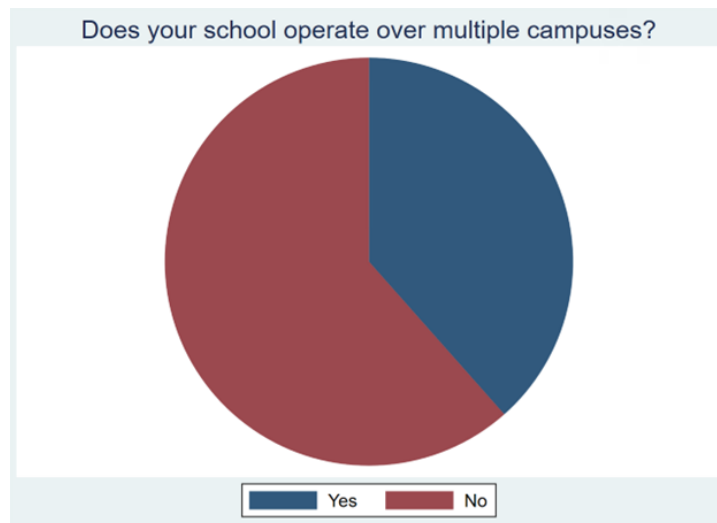
"Does the school share its facility with another group (co-location or shared use of multi-tenant areas where the school has its own space while other occupants share the same property in proximity)?"

In some cases, hybrid schools share rental spaces with other groups. This makes sense, as the hybrids are not always able to financially support a space for an entire working week, especially if they are private and reliant on (relatively low) tuition payments to fund their operations. None of the conventional public or charter school hybrids in this report said they shared space with other groups. But nearly half of private religious hybrids and of private secular hybrids said that they did.

"Does your school operate over multiple campuses?"

In some other cases, a single school operated over multiple campuses.

Figure 10



Key Finding #4: Hybrid school leaders are overwhelmingly satisfied with their current facilities.

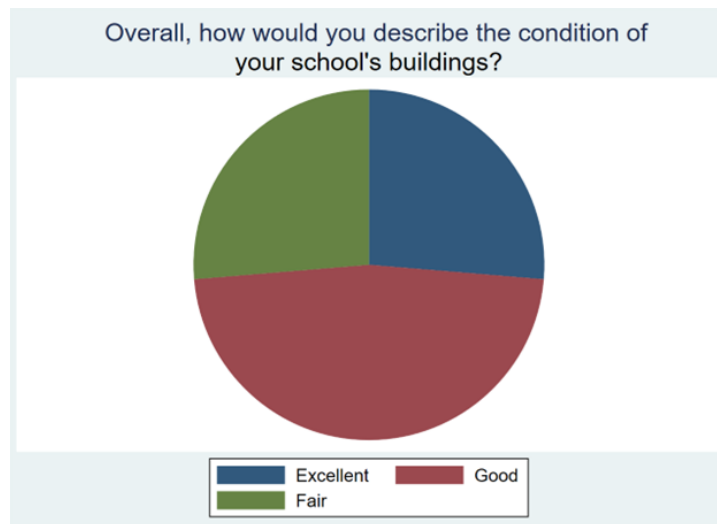
"Overall, how would you describe the condition of your school's buildings?"

Whatever their ownership/donation/rental situation, hybrid schools report being happy with their facilities. No hybrid schools of any kind rated their facilities as “poor.” In fact most hybrid schools– nearly 75 percent– rated their current facilities as “good” or “excellent.”

"How long has it been since the major renovation of your main instructional building?"

Last, a plurality of these schools (39.47 percent) reported major renovations within the past 5 years.

Figure 11



04 Facility Ownership, Maintenance, and Renovation

The hybrid schools sector appears to still be growing, and the schools recognize that this will have an effect on their facilities needs over time. As far as their current buildings, hybrid schools employ a variety of strategies to make themselves financially stable.

Key Finding #5: Despite being satisfied with their current facilities, fewer than half of hybrid schools believe those facilities will be able to handle their needs in five years.

"Does your school's current facility have adequate space for your projected enrollment over the next five years?"

42.1 percent of hybrid schools reported having adequate space for the next 5 years. This was especially true of private religious hybrid schools (55.6 percent). But most conventional public and charter hybrids, and 43 percent of secular private hybrids said they did not expect to have adequate space in the next five years.

Figure 12

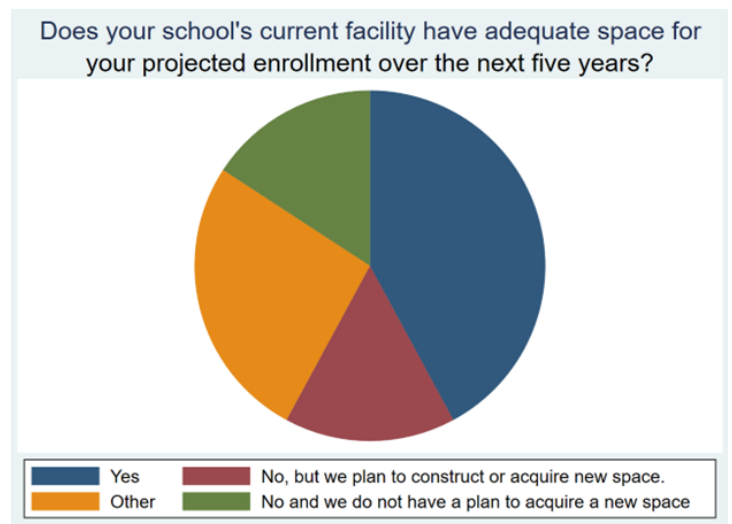
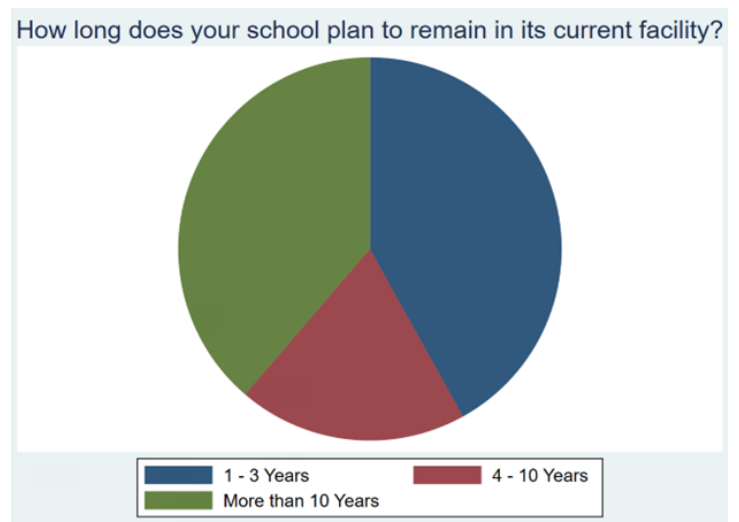


Figure 13



"How long does the school plan to remain in its current facility?"

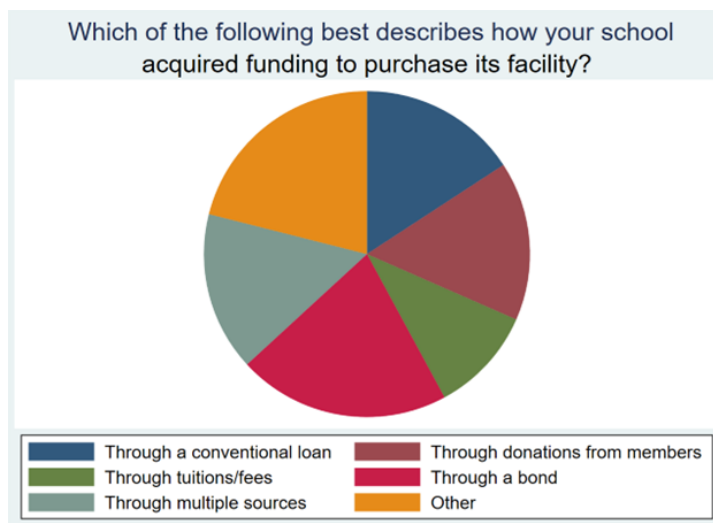
This lack of space may be a problem in many cases, as over half of hybrid schools said they planned to be in their same location for four years or more.

Key Finding #6: Hybrid schools acquire funding to cover their facilities needs in a variety of ways.

Figure 14

"Which of the following best describes how your school acquired funding to purchase/renovate its buildings?"

Finally, and importantly, these schools have very different funding models for their facilities, based on their school type. Private schools use loans, donations, and tuition to fund their buildings, while conventional public and charters use per student funding from public sources. Some schools also used bonds for this financing. One school reported a VELA micro grant as the funding they needed to acquire their facility.



Conclusion

As a high-level summary of the results, The average hybrid school:

- ◆ Rates its facility as "good";
- ◆ Has been in its current facility 5 years or less, and has been in at least 3 different locations since opening;
- ◆ Is in a facility built in 1980 or later;
- ◆ Probably rents its space from a church;
- ◆ Has an athletic field and multipurpose space available;
- ◆ Does not have its own playground but can access one nearby;
- ◆ Does have some kind of library space;
- ◆ Has accessible kitchen space but does not cook meals there;
- ◆ Funds its facility needs from a variety of sources.

The growth of the hybrid schools sector means that more students are available to help grow existing and new schools around the country. But this growth may also present challenges. As noted in the Introduction to this report, hybrid schools' new visibility has meant that government regulators are becoming more interested in their operations, and this may influence the flexibility these schools have had in selecting and using particular buildings. Growth itself also means that facilities which are viable in 2023 may not be viable in a few years. Both the policy and financial evolution of this sector as it relates to hybrid schools' physical facilities (as well as other issues) are matters the National Hybrid Schools Project will continue to monitor.

Notes

National Hybrid Schools Survey 2023: <https://www.kennesaw.edu/coles/centers/education-economics-center/docs/2023-hssurvey-report.pdf>

Wearne, E. (2020). Defining hybrid homeschools in America: Little platoons. Lexington Books.

Wearne, E. (May 14, 2021). "The Growth of the Hybrid Homeschool Movement." City Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.city-journal.org/the-growth-of-the-hybrid-homeschool-movement>.

Wearne, E., & Thompson, J. (2022). Hybrid schools teachers survey. National Hybrid Schools Project, Kennesaw State University, March, 2022.

For more details on this story, see here: <https://ij.org/press-release/institute-for-justice-calls-on-cobb-county-to-stop-crackdown-on-learning-pods-hybrid-education/>

Wearne, E., & Thompson, J. (2022). Hybrid schools teachers survey. National Hybrid Schools Project, Kennesaw State University, March, 2022.

Questions were based on the National Charter Schools Facility Questionnaire: <https://omb.report/icr/202011-1855-001/doc/105918600>

