

# Coming Up Short

Maintenance and operations spending by school districts continues to hover around historic lows, even as facility needs escalate.

By Joe Agron

**A**s the nation's school buildings age and deteriorate, spending on maintenance and operations (M&O) remains paltry, especially when compared with historical figures.

According to *American School & University's* 35th annual Maintenance

and Operations Cost Study, the median school district spends 7.58 percent of total district expenditures (TDE) on M&O. The amount is about even with what was allocated last year, and more than 2 percent lower than the 9.59 percent of budget spent 10 years ago (see chart, "M&O expenditures over the decade," p. 30)—reflecting

the rather low priority many school districts place on the condition of facilities where children learn.

## Compiling the numbers

To arrive at data for the latest M&O Cost Study, a detailed questionnaire was mailed in October

TABLE 1

## Maintenance & Operations Costs

(Expressed in **median** dollars per student)

	Nat'l Median	<1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	>3,500 students
<b>Total Payroll</b>	<b>\$367.25</b>	<b>\$377.38</b>	<b>\$370.52</b>	<b>\$359.85</b>
Custodial**	\$262.51	\$270.49	\$265.30	\$240.15
Maintenance**	\$78.18	\$65.12	\$74.84	\$90.82
Grounds**	\$22.44	\$23.07	\$28.96	\$15.47
<b>Outside Contract Labor</b>	<b>\$26.01</b>	<b>\$19.09</b>	<b>\$26.67</b>	<b>\$40.51</b>
<b>Total Utilities</b>	<b>\$233.05</b>	<b>\$277.90</b>	<b>\$221.29</b>	<b>\$216.90</b>
Gas**	\$73.17	\$92.31	\$80.95	\$41.78
Electricity**	\$129.40	\$145.21	\$117.52	\$136.82
<i>Gas &amp; Electricity (subtotal)</i>	<i>\$200.25</i>	<i>\$221.05</i>	<i>\$197.73</i>	<i>\$177.89</i>
Other Fuels	\$10.71	\$20.47	\$4.86	\$7.48
Other Utilities	\$32.02	\$41.08	\$31.68	\$28.75
Trash Collection/Disposal	\$7.50	\$10.84	\$6.52	\$6.16
<b>Total Equipment &amp; Supplies</b>	<b>\$57.24</b>	<b>\$75.00</b>	<b>\$65.93</b>	<b>46.84</b>
Custodial/Maint. Equip. & Supplies**	\$46.30	\$62.39	\$46.37	\$29.81
Grounds Equip. & Supplies**	\$7.35	\$9.05	\$12.50	\$4.53
<b>Other</b>	<b>\$33.52</b>	<b>\$115.50</b>	<b>\$29.04</b>	<b>\$46.86</b>
<b>Total M&amp;O*</b>	<b>\$717.07</b>	<b>\$864.87</b>	<b>\$713.45</b>	<b>\$710.96</b>
<b>Total District Expenditures (TDE)</b>	<b>\$9,454</b>	<b>\$9,548</b>	<b>\$9,944</b>	<b>\$8,910</b>
<b>M&amp;O as % TDE</b>	<b>7.58%</b>	<b>9.01%</b>	<b>7.17%</b>	<b>7.98%</b>

\*Calculated from subtotals (in bold).

\*\*Based on fewer responses than the total due to schools that combine some of these categories.

2005 to chief business officials at the nation's public school districts asking them to document their institutions' M&O costs, including salary/payroll, outside contract labor, utilities, gas, electricity, trash collection/disposal, maintenance and grounds equipment and supplies, and other costs, as well as additional maintenance practices.

Data for the report is broken out on a national level and by district enrollment, with budgeted expenditures for M&O identified per student and per square foot for the 2005-06 school year. Categories used in the survey questionnaire:

•**Per student:** Based on total district enrollment (average daily attendance as of October 2005).

•**Per square foot:** Based on total gross area of all district buildings maintained, including corridors, offices and common space.

## While school districts spend a median 7.58 percent of total budget on M&O, colleges allocate 11 percent.

•**Total district expenditures (TDE):** Amounts for the 2005-06 school year.

•**Total maintenance and operations (M&O) expenditures:** Including salaries, benefits, outside contracts, utilities, gas, electricity, trash collection/disposal, equipment and supplies, etc., for custodial, maintenance and grounds.

•**Custodial:** Those individuals responsible for building upkeep and cleaning.

•**Maintenance:** Those individuals who perform skilled jobs, such as electrical, HVAC or plumbing repair.

•**Grounds:** Those individuals responsible for landscape upkeep and maintenance.

•**Payroll:** Including benefits.

•**Average salary:** Annualized, excluding benefits.

•**Outside contract labor:** Those hired for specialized jobs to maintain or repair building systems or equipment, such as HVAC maintenance or repair.

•**Other utilities:** Including water, telephone, etc.

•**Other:** Most often identified as insurance, clerical costs, equipment

TABLE 2

## Maintenance & Operations Costs

(Expressed in **median** dollars per square foot)

	Nat'l Median	<1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	>3,500 students
<b>Total Payroll</b>	<b>\$2.08</b>	<b>\$1.71</b>	<b>\$2.14</b>	<b>\$2.37</b>
Custodial**	\$1.47	\$1.13	\$1.47	\$1.71
Maintenance**	\$0.43	\$0.06	\$0.40	\$0.67
Grounds**	\$0.14	\$0.17	\$0.15	\$0.12
<b>Outside Contract Labor</b>	<b>\$0.17</b>	<b>\$0.09</b>	<b>\$0.16</b>	<b>\$0.33</b>
<b>Total Utilities</b>	<b>\$1.31</b>	<b>\$1.25</b>	<b>\$1.16</b>	<b>\$1.43</b>
Gas**	\$0.39	\$0.43	\$0.45	\$0.29
Electricity**	\$0.72	\$0.58	\$0.63	\$0.85
<i>Gas &amp; Electricity (subtotal)</i>	\$1.10	\$1.06	\$1.06	\$1.20
Other Fuels	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.03	\$0.05
Other Utilities	\$0.16	\$0.15	\$0.16	\$0.19
Trash Collection/Disposal	\$0.04	\$0.05	\$0.03	\$0.05
<b>Total Equipment &amp; Supplies</b>	<b>\$0.33</b>	<b>\$0.34</b>	<b>\$0.34</b>	<b>\$0.29</b>
Custodial/Maint. Equip. & Supplies**	\$0.24	\$0.30	\$0.23	\$0.19
Grounds Equip. & Supplies**	\$0.03	\$0.02	\$0.06	\$0.03
<b>Other</b>	<b>\$0.20</b>	<b>\$0.46</b>	<b>\$0.14</b>	<b>\$0.31</b>
<b>Total M&amp;O Budget*</b>	<b>\$4.09</b>	<b>\$3.85</b>	<b>\$3.94</b>	<b>\$4.73</b>
<b>Total District Expenditures (TDE)</b>	<b>\$57.46</b>	<b>\$44.58</b>	<b>\$57.62</b>	<b>\$62.50</b>

\*Calculated from subtotals (in bold).

\*\*Based on fewer responses than the total due to schools that combine some of these categories.





repair and rental, and travel.

As you compare data, keep in mind that all costs are affected greatly by numerous factors including age and overall building condition, climate, the labor market in your area, as well as other aspects over which school administrators have limited control. In addition, the figures provided are not intended to be “ideal” amounts for M&O allocations; they are only reflections of actual spending by institutions.

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The median per-student cost of gas increased more than 33 percent from last year.

### Privatization practices

The percentage of school districts contracting out maintenance and operations services:

Nat'l Median	< 1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	> 3,500 students
14.6%	16.0%	10.0%	15.1%

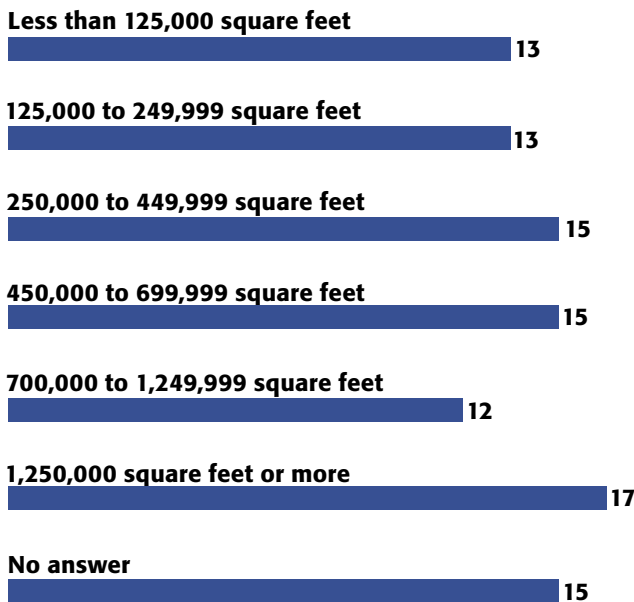
### Square-footage data

Median amount of square feet (SF) and acreage maintained at school districts:

	Nat'l Median	<1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	>3,500 students
SF maintained per full-time custodial worker	25,173	26,650	25,167	22,772
SF maintained per full-time maintenance worker	100,720	106,113	116,272	80,240
Acres maintained per full-time grounds worker	40	23	43	37
SF maintained per building	57,243	29,500	60,214	66,100
SF of building maintained per student	174.66	237.56	187.97	136.31

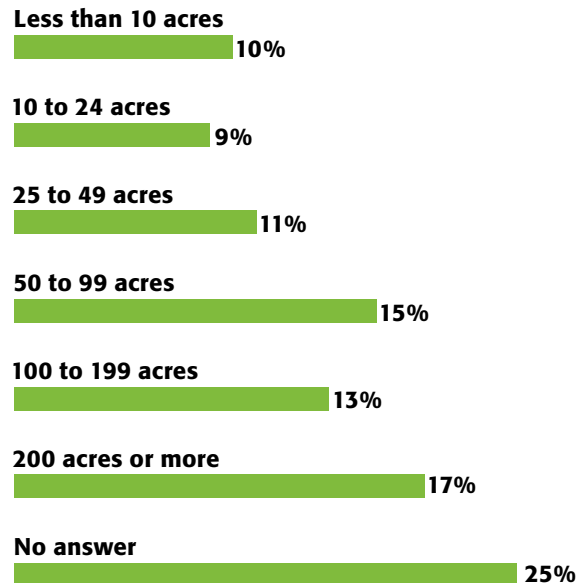
### Total gross area of buildings maintained

(including corridors and other common office areas of all district buildings) by survey respondents



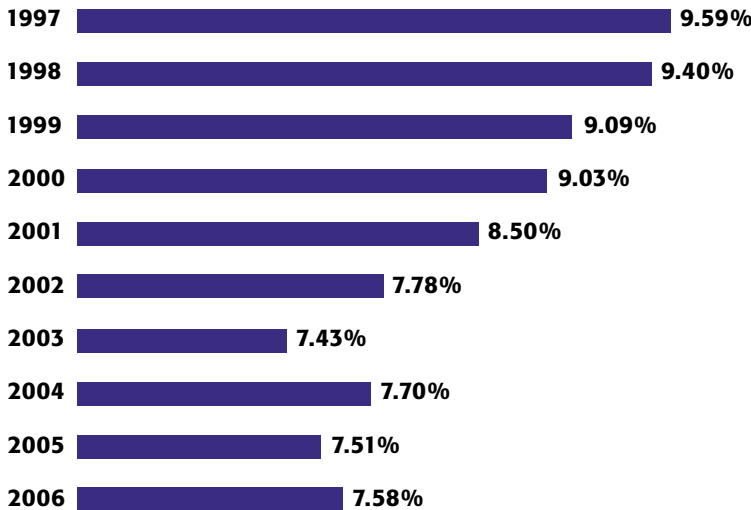
### Total gross area of grounds maintained

(by survey respondents)



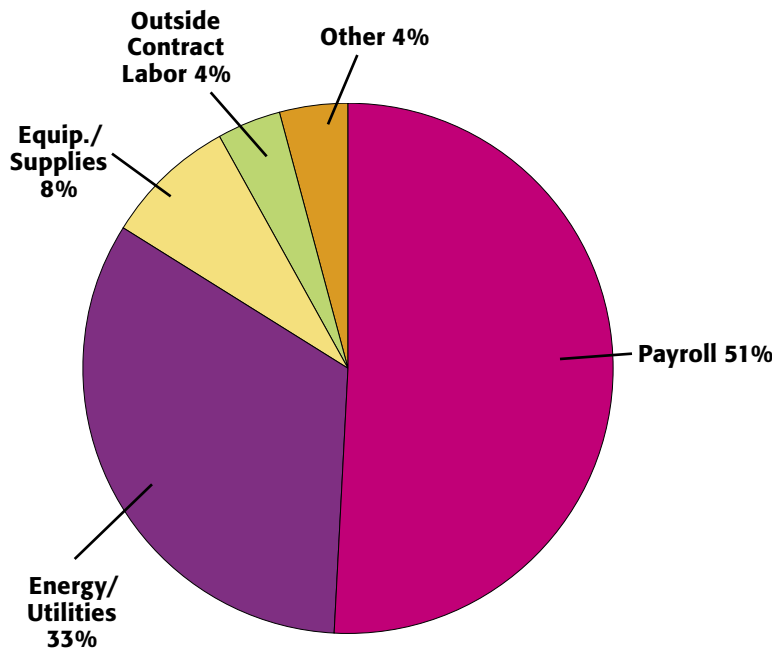
## M&O expenditures over the decade

Spending by school districts on maintenance and operations as a percentage of total district expenditures over the past 10 years:



## How the M&O budget is split

(based on median dollars per FTE student)



## Salary data

Median salary for custodial and maintenance personnel at school districts:

	Nat'l Median	< 1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	> 3,500 students
Custodial	\$27,401	\$21,517	\$28,240	\$31,413
Maintenance	\$35,000	\$32,505	\$32,948	\$40,891

Gas and electricity account for more than 82 percent of the total utility spending for school districts.

## Noteworthy points

Among some of the findings of the 35<sup>th</sup> annual M&O Cost Study:

- While school districts spend a median 7.58 percent of total budget on M&O, colleges allocate 11 percent.

- The median size of responding institutions is 1,881 students (7,701 at districts with more than 3,500 students; 1,860 at districts with 1,000-3,499 students; and 545 at institutions with fewer than 1,000 students).

- The national median 2005-06 total M&O expenditure for school districts is \$1.8 million. For systems under 1,000 students, the median total M&O expenditure is \$460,000; for districts with 1,000-3,499 students, the median total M&O expenditure is \$1.7 million; and for systems with more than 3,500 students, the median total M&O expenditure is \$6.5 million.

- The median number of buildings maintained in a school district is seven (three in systems with less than 1,000 pupils; six in districts with 1,000-3,499 students; and 23 for systems with more than 3,500 pupils).

- The median school district spends \$492,163/yr. for utilities and \$94,000/yr. for custodial/maintenance equipment and supplies. Gas and electricity account for more than 82 percent of the total utility spending for school districts.

- The median per-student cost of



# 35TH ANNUAL M&O COST STUDY ■

gas increased more than 33 percent from last year.

•The mean public school district has 39 full-time custodial, 15 full-

time maintenance and six full-time grounds personnel.

•The median amount of square feet maintained per custodian remained

fairly constant at 25,173 from 25,444 square feet last year. Square feet maintained per maintenance worker, however, jumped to 100,720 from 87,931 square feet last year. Acres maintained per grounds worker dropped slightly to 40 from 41 last year.

•Transportation-program costs increased across most categories, with the median school district spending 4.9 percent of its total budget (4.4 percent last year) and \$439 per student (\$374 per student last year) on transportation.

•The percentage of school districts outsourcing M&O services dropped to 15 percent from 17 percent last year. ■

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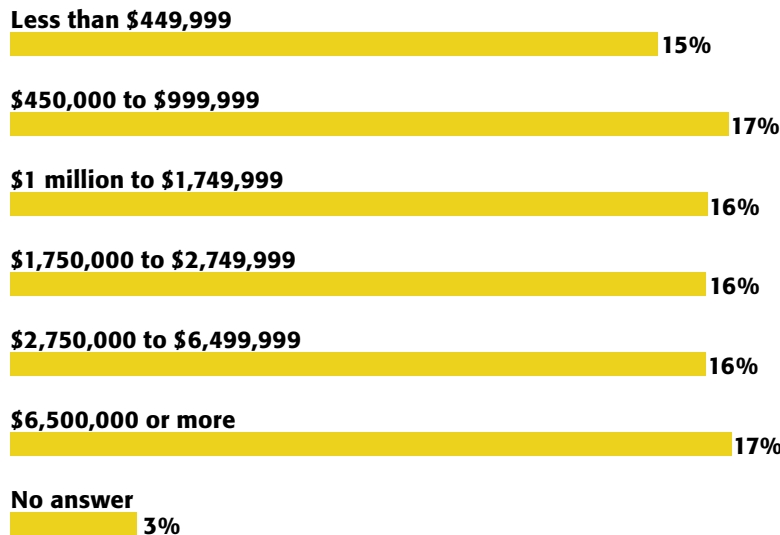
## Personnel breakout

Average number of full-time custodial and maintenance personnel at school districts:

	Nat'l Mean	< 1,000 students	1,000-3,499 students	> 3,500 students
Custodial	39	4	15	93
Maintenance	15	2	3	36

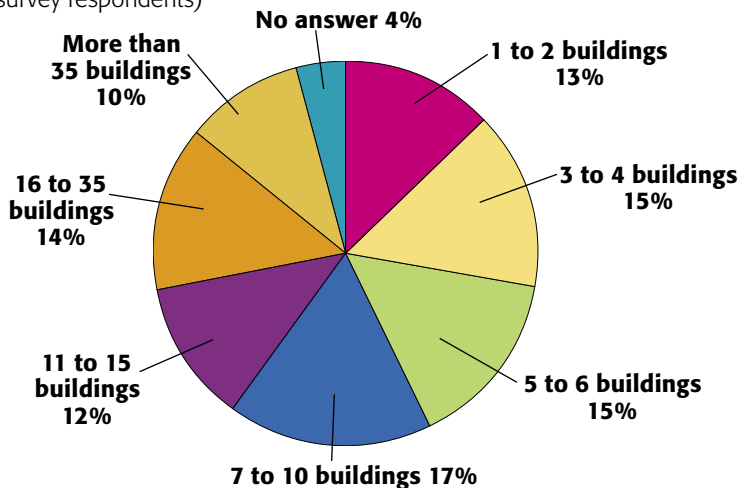
## Total maintenance and operations expenditures

(per survey respondents)



## Total number of buildings in district

(of survey respondents)



## Transportation costs

Median cost of transportation per student and as a percentage of total district expenditures:

