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ENGEO
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SCHOOL PROJECTS: BONDS, CODES, APPROVALS

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

- **School Bond and Funding**
- **Key Codes and Updates**
- **Claire Lilienthal Elementary School**
- **ENGEO Makes School Approvals Simple**

School Bond & Funding to Watch

In November 2024, California voters approved Proposition 2, authorizing $10 billion in state bonds to support facility upgrades for K–12 schools and community colleges. This funding prioritizes seismic retrofits, energy efficiency improvements, and modernization projects critical to creating safe and sustainable learning environments[1].

In addition to this state bond, local school districts have collectively approved over $45 billion in bond measures for upgrading aging educational infrastructure across California[2].

In November 2024, voters in San Francisco passed Proposition A, a $790 million bond aimed at funding major capital improvements across SFUSD facilities. This funding enables the district to carry out school modernizations, enhance structural safety, upgrade essential systems, improve security, expand outdoor learning spaces, advance technology infrastructure, and support student nutrition programs[3].

Staying Ahead of School Codes and Updates

California's building standards for schools are evolving, and staying informed is essential for districts and project teams planning modernization or new construction projects. The 2025 California Building Standards Code (Title 24), adopted by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC), will take effect January 1, 2026.[4]

Among the codes that will take effect January 1, 2026, CALGreen, Part 11[5] and Energy Code, Part 6[6] are particularly important for sustainability and net-zero goals. While the CBSC sets these regulations, the Division of the State Architect (DSA) helps schools comply by issuing guidance, bulletins, and interpretations, reviewing project submittals, and conducting inspections. For more information and updates, see DSA Resources[7], DSA Publications[8], and the California Department of Education School Facilities Planning site.[9]

What's Changing for Seismic Design

California's most recently updated building code, which becomes effective on January 1, 2026, includes important changes to Site Class definitions and seismic design parameters, which will impact how the ground beneath school buildings is evaluated for earthquakes. All new school projects (new design or retrofit) and permits issued on or after the effective date must comply.

In practice, this update means that collecting shear-wave velocity measurements, a method to determine how fast seismic waves travel through the soil, will now be much more common. Using this data leads to more efficient foundation design, optimized ground improvements, enhanced building safety, and reduced risk of costly delays or retrofits. Not collecting this information will result in code-imposed conservatism in the seismic design spectra, which could impact the building cost.

Our team of experts can help select cost-effective means of properly collecting shear-wave velocity data during the geotechnical exploration. We use shear wave velocity testing and ASCE 7-22/ASCE 41-23 provisions to guide safe, compliant designs. We apply advanced modeling to optimize foundations and reduce retrofit risks.

Our proven results, like cutting retrofit costs by 50 percent at Claire Lilienthal Elementary, make us a trusted partner for school safety and efficiency.

Project Highlight - Claire Lilienthal Elementary School

PROJECT SAVINGS

Cost Savings

50 percent

Accelerated Completion in

5 months

The San Francisco Unified School District elected to perform a voluntary seismic retrofit at Claire Lilienthal Elementary School and engaged ENGEO to perform a geologic hazard assessment, prepare construction drawings and specifications for strengthening the soil below existing and new footings, and provide quality control and quality assurance during construction. The ground-improvement work resulted in an increased level of safety for the students, teachers, and faculty while maintaining the historic and cultural significance of the building.

ENGEO also performed testing and observation services associated with the school modernization project. The scope of work included construction of new footings, widening existing footings, and thickening existing shear walls. ENGEO performed geotechnical inspections of the subgrade for the new footings. The ground improvement achieved the project performance criteria, reduced construction costs by 50 percent, and accelerated project completion to less than 5 months.

Upon finishing the project, ENGEO was awarded the CalGeo 2020-2021 Outstanding Project Award and the 2021 ASCE San Francisco Outstanding Project of the Year Award.

ENGEO Makes School Approvals Simple

Securing timely approvals is one of the biggest challenges for school projects in California. Success often depends on a combination of experience, technical expertise, and strong working relationships to help projects move forward smoothly.

Our 32 Geotechnical Engineers and 11 Certified Engineering Geologists work collaboratively to deliver reports that completely integrate Engineering Geology and Geotechnical Engineering that are approved on first submittal for review by the Division of State Architect and California Geological Survey (CGS).

ENGEO's Advantage

- Geotechnical Engineers + Certified Engineering Geologists under one roof
- Trusted by CGS
- Reports aligned with CGS Note 48
- First-round approvals = fewer delays

Download Our K-12 SOQ -->

REFERENCES

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[7]California California Department of General Services. (n.d.). *DSA Resources*. https://www.dgs.ca.gov/DSA/Resources

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