CASE STUDY

How Data Share is helping Boston Public Schools create a transparent and responsible public facilities maintenance

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BACKGROUND

The Facilities Department at Boston Public Schools (BPS) is crucial for ensuring that each building is functional, safe, and conducive to learning. In 2022, as BPS undertook its first facilities condition assessment (FCA), district leaders began using Data Share to gather, analyze, and track the data collected. They chose Data Share because it allowed for ongoing updates and continuous monitoring of facility conditions, says Brian Forde Jr., chief of operations.

"A key objective was to make this information accessible both internally and externally, with varying levels of detail based on the intended audience," Forde says. "Internally, Data Share would serve as a critical tool for identifying and prioritizing short-term and long-term projects, including preventive maintenance initiatives, and play a crucial role in assisting with budget requests. Externally, it would provide transparency by sharing relevant facility condition data with the public."

Simplifying and improving decision-making

The data collected in Data Share has helped the BPS facilities team develop a more holistic, data-driven strategy for creating modern, accessible spaces for students, Forde says. The team uses the data to pinpoint and prioritize critical infrastructure needs, allowing for more efficient planning and resource allocation.

"We access the data daily to support our business needs," Forde says. "It's integral in our daily decision-making processes, whether we're looking up building-specific information or gathering insights for projects. It helps us stay aligned and make informed, data-backed decisions across multiple areas of our operations."

Forde and his team use the information from Data Share to set goals, targets, and KPIs. "It helps us establish clear benchmarks for performance, track progress, and ensure that we're aligning our efforts with overall strategic priorities. By using the data, we can set measurable goals and ensure we're on track to meet them efficiently."

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Customer: Boston Public Schools

Location: Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Vitals: Metropolitan public school district with:

- More than 48,000 students
- 125 buildings covering about 11.5 million square feet
- 583 facilities maintenance staff members

Results: With Data Share, Boston Public Schools has been able to:

- Simplify infrastructure decisions with data-backed insights
- Reduce costs and increase buying for funding requests
- Increase transparency and improve community engagement

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Increasing buy-in for funding requests

When it's time to request new funding, the BPS facilities maintenance team can easily access comprehensive, up-to-date data to justify those requests. And because Data Share has already proven to help cut costs by optimizing maintenance efforts and resource allocation, those funding requests are more justified and viewed more favorably.

For example, the BPS team has used Data Share to create more effective preventive maintenance schedules, allowing them to significantly reduce the frequency of emergency maintenance needs and accompanying costs.

Enhancing transparency and community engagement

As a public school system, BPS aims to share its building projects and conditions with the local community. Data Share makes that easier, by enabling a transparent, public-facing dashboard that offers easily accessible, real-time information on the condition of district facilities and ongoing projects.

This has allowed BPS to create a new level of transparency among their community, that fosters more trust and accountability.

"Since going live with the new dashboard, we've noticed an increase in visits and higher community engagement," Forde says. "The more detailed and comprehensive data now available has sparked greater interest and interaction from the public, allowing for a more transparent and accessible way to track our building conditions and projects."

The dashboard allows citizens to see exactly what is happening with long-term projects and how decisions are being made, which has raised important questions about prioritization and funding allocations. As a result, community members are more informed and engaged in the decision-making process, particularly when it comes to the long-term planning of projects like facility upgrades or preventive maintenance.

Boston citizens are using the information the Data Share dashboard to ask questions and share their concerns, which has prompted the district to reevaluate some of its decisions and ensure that long-term projects align with the actual needs of the community. This kind of engagement has encouraged more open conversations between the district and its residents, making the planning process more collaborative, Forde says.

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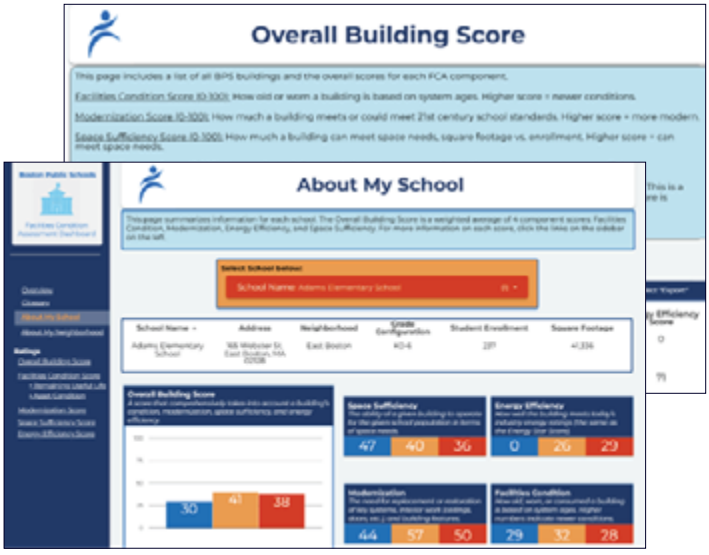

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