

# Bond Case Briefs

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## The IRA and Public Schools.

Public school buildings in the United States are crumbling. National school infrastructure received a D+ rating from the American Society of Civil Engineers in 2021, and in more serious cases, learning environments have become toxic. Given the segregated and unequal nature of public schooling, building quality is closely tied to racial and class-based inequalities, with schools in lower-income communities confronting the most serious health and safety consequences. In addition to these unsafe working environments for teachers and students, a [recent study](#) by scholars at the Harvard School of Education found that schools are one of the largest consumers of energy within the US public sector, consuming energy equivalent to eighteen coal-fired power plants or fifteen million cars each year. This is both costly and necessitates involving schools within the broader project of decarbonization.

Indeed, schools are an essential arena for the Biden administration's new green industrial policies. While a cottage industry has formed around assessing whether Biden's industrial policies—specifically the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—are commensurate to the scale of the problems they set out to address, it's imperative to survey how IRA programs might look on the ground if applied to their fullest strength. How would IRA programs affect public education finance—specifically school facilities and infrastructure? And how would these financial flows challenge the present state of educational inequality and segregation?

Perhaps because the American Rescue Plan—the Biden administration's pandemic relief package—included \$122 billion in funding for schools, the IRA was not billed as a piece of education legislation, nor did schools take center stage in either the negotiating process or messaging around the policy. But the IRA holds major implications for public schools. While details on these policies are still forthcoming, I examine how two IRA flagship programs—the direct pay Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)—could function within existing public-school infrastructure projects. A [report](#) from Aspen Institute's education arm summarizes thirteen policies in the IRA that school districts could benefit from, of which the ITC and GGRF stand out for their novelty and impacts.

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### **Phenomenal World**

by David I. Backer

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