

## Executive Summary

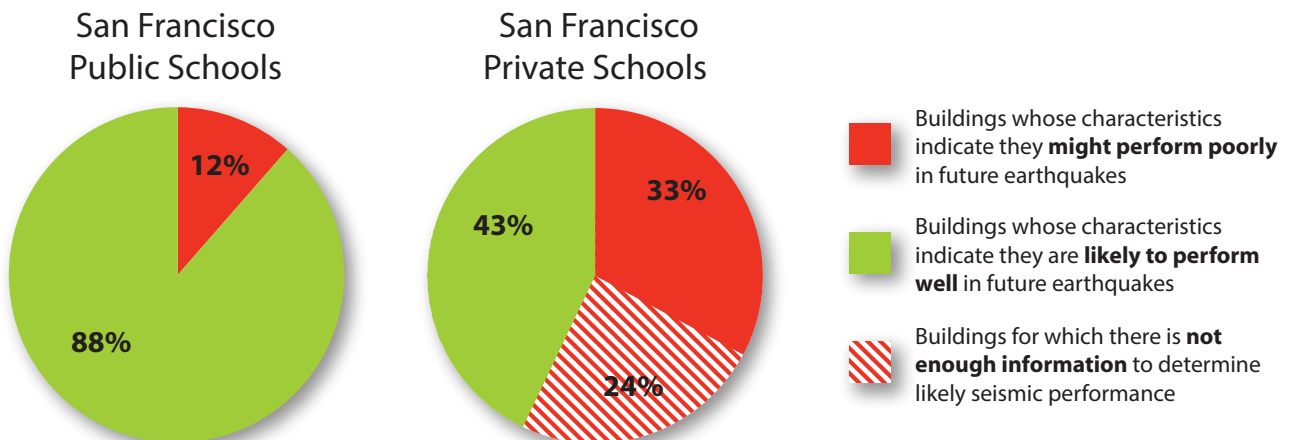
While most San Francisco parents assume that all schools are required to be safe in earthquakes, this is not, in fact, the case. Public and private school buildings are subject to different laws regulating their construction. Since the early 1930s, public schools in California have been subject to special design requirements, regulations, seismic retrofit programs, and quality control measures that have not applied to private school buildings. Over the years, the regulations covering private school buildings have been significantly less stringent and, unfortunately, there is evidence that some private school buildings in San Francisco will pose risks in future earthquakes.

The Private Schools Earthquake Safety Working Group was formed by the City, as part of the Earthquake Safety Implementation Program’s Task A.6.f, to study this issue. It met for over a year, with publicly-noticed meetings open to all, and particular effort made to encourage private school representatives to attend. The Working Group found the following:

- ☒ 43 percent of all San Francisco private school buildings have characteristics that indicate they are **likely to perform well** in future earthquakes.
- ☒ 33 percent of all San Francisco private school buildings have characteristics that indicate they **might perform poorly** in future earthquakes.
- ☒ For 24 percent of all San Francisco private school buildings, the Working Group does **not have enough information** to determine their likely seismic performance.

Further, San Francisco’s private school buildings appear to have approximately double the risk of its public school buildings in future earthquakes, as shown in Figure A.

**Figure A. Comparison of the earthquake risk of San Francisco public and private school buildings.**



According to a survey conducted by the Working Group, parents of San Francisco school children are largely unaware that private school buildings are likely to perform more poorly in future earthquakes than public school buildings. Most parents believe that the government requires all schools to be safe in earthquakes.

Schools, buildings used to educate future generations, hold a special place in society. Approximately one-third of San Francisco school children attend private school, the highest rate in the State. Therefore, the risk of private school buildings in the City represents a major piece of the risk to schools in San Francisco. All San Francisco school children deserve to attend schools in buildings that are likely to be safe in future earthquakes. The recommendations in this report are a key step to making that happen.

## **Key Recommendations**

As such, the Private Schools Earthquake Safety Working Group recommends that the City and County of San Francisco pass an ordinance requiring the following:

1. All private school buildings in the City should be evaluated for their seismic risks.

This action would inform school administrators, staff, parents, and the City about the earthquake risks of private schools in San Francisco. This information might motivate some schools to take action to reduce the risk of school buildings and would allow schools to consider earthquake risk in their long-term capital planning activities. Evaluation results would also inform City policy and emergency planning, and would allow parents to consider earthquake risk in their decision making about schools. Also,

2. The evaluations should identify buildings with unacceptable risks of collapse and other life safety risks, as well as indicating the likelihood that buildings will be usable following future earthquakes.
3. The legislative process for this ordinance should be initiated within three months of the receipt of this report. All evaluations should be completed within three years of the effective date of the ordinance.
4. The City should develop training, outreach, and assistance programs to help school building owners and operators to comply with this mandate.
5. The Earthquake Safety Implementation Program should prepare a report that describes the findings of these evaluations in non-technical terms and post it on its website.
6. The Earthquake Safety Implementation Program should analyze the results of the required evaluations with respect to emergency response plans, earthquake resilience and recovery goals, and related public policy issues.