



Missouri Visioning Project Sub-Committee Report

Physical Resources Sub-Committee

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES & KEY ISSUES

1. Guiding Principle: Children learn best in a clean, safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning.

Key Issue 1 - Varying age, construction and design of existing school district facilities creates a barrier for a safe and secure environment for Missouri students. Educators across the country are making great attempts to improve the performance of students in their school buildings. One focus is to reduce or eliminate any barrier that may have a negative effect on student achievement. In a study entitled *School Facility Conditions and Student Academic Achievement*, written by Glen Earthman in 2002, he outlines that there is a direct correlation between the conditions of school facilities and student performance. He explains that in cases where students attend school in buildings that are substandard, these children are negatively impacted in their academic achievement (Earthman, 2002). Based on this fact, Missouri schools must focus on our facilities and work to improve the physical surroundings of the learning environment.

There are numerous reports and studies that show a correlation between the quality of school facilities and students performance. Most show that conditions and quality of school facilities do have an effect on the performance of students. Many studies identify building age as a contributing factor in student achievement. Other research goes beyond the scope of building age and takes into consideration other factors. Among the characteristics of older facilities identified as being significant when factored into student achievement were the presence or absence of HVAC systems, indoor air quality, acoustics and lighting. An example of the affect of building quality on student performance is a report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which estimates that more than 10 million school days each year are missed by students because of attacks related to asthma (Earthman, 2004). The installation of quality HVAC systems would additionally correct any indoor air quality conditions that exist, thus reducing absenteeism, which can ultimately lead to lower scores on achievement tests.

Allan Ornstein, an educational professor at St. John's University, has researched school facilities and has established five stages of school facility conditions. Ornstein labels the first 20 years of a facilities life as "normal," meaning that the facility should maintain its original appearance with relatively little maintenance. The second ten years of a facility's life requires frequent replacement of the original equipment. Furnaces and HVAC units, restroom fixtures and kitchen equipment are the most frequently replaced equipment in a school facility. Ornstein suggests that a third stage, during years 30-40, most all of the original equipment should have been replaced. Between the years of 40 and 50 most school facilities face rapid deterioration, meaning that roofs, windows, flooring and the overall structure of the facility is compromised. The final stage in a school facility's lifespan is abandonment, replacement, or reconstruction, which occurs after the age of 60 (Ornstein, 1994). A 2008 analysis of data provided by the Missouri United School Insurance Council, shows that the median age of

Missouri school facilities is 34.6 years. Using the work of Ornstein, half of Missouri's schools are currently or within five years of "accelerated deterioration" (Brown, 2008). This appears to be an alarming number.

In recent years, security of school buildings has been of greater concern. Older facilities pose several challenges such as controlling access to certain areas of high activity during school hours, as well as supervision in those high risk areas. Parking lots at many older facilities limit supervision and movement. Also, older designs limit "line of sight" in hallways and other areas that require supervision. Ken Trump, from the National School Safety and Security Services, believes school design and its surrounding campus can play a significant role in facilitating school safety measures. He emphasizes that school officials should work closely with architects when designing new facilities or remodeling older ones to assure that security concerns are properly addressed (Trump, n.d.).

There are many challenges Missouri schools face in improving student performance. One of those challenges is aging and inadequate facilities that are creating a barrier for some schools to improve at or above desirable measures.

References:

Brown, L., Cook, P., Mayo, M., & Redus, B. (2008). A Policy Analysis Regarding the Financing and Construction of New Facilities for Missouri Public Schools. Unpublished manuscript, St. Louis University.

Earthman, G.I. (2002). School facility conditions and student academic achievement. Retrieved August 13, 2007, from http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?date=1056660585&article=1011&content=idea&preview_mode=

Earthman, G.I. (2004). Prioritization of 31 criteria for school building adequacy. Retrieved April 14, 2007, from http://www.schoolfunding.info/policy/facilities/ACLUfacilities_report1-04.pdf

Trump, K. (n.d.). Architecture, Design and School Crime Prevention. Retrieved July 11, 2011, from <http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/school-design.html>

Key Issue 2 - Crisis management plans should be developed for both natural and man-made events that bring together all school district, local, county and state resources. A safe and secure learning environment is a key aspect of teaching and student achievement. Families trust schools to keep their children safe during the day. Children and youth rely on and find great comfort in the adults in our systems to protect them. The vast majority of schools remain safe havens for our nation's youth. School may be touched either directly or indirectly by a crisis of some kind at any time. It is very important that teachers and staff know how to help their students through a crisis and return them home safely. Knowing what to do when faced with a crisis can be the difference between order and chaos. Schools and districts are at risk for many different types of crises and each district has their own definitions of what constitutes a crisis.

"A crisis is an event that is extraordinary. It cannot be predicted. A crisis is any event that affects the emotional stability of students and/or staff and disrupts the educational process. Crises range in scope and intensity from incidents that directly or indirectly affect a single student to incidents that impact the entire community." *US Department of Education*

Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, fires, and tornadoes can strike a community with virtually no warning. School shootings, threatened or actual, are extremely rare but are devastating when they occur. In order for our students to be ready to learn our schools and districts need to be ready to handle crises and to keep our

children and staff out of harm's way. Taking the appropriate action in a crisis can save lives, prevent injury and minimize property damage.

“Knowing how to respond quickly and efficiently in a crisis is critical to ensuring the safety of our schools and students. The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved – from top to bottom – should know the drill and know each other.” *Margaret Spellings*

Threats to our national, state and community security present the need for preparedness on a much broader scale and require the cooperation and collaboration of all public and governmental agencies. Preparedness has taken on new meaning; planning for emergency management has become much more complex.

School must plan differently than they have in the past. Schools must remain aware of the threat of violence and about protecting the safety of students. On the flip side schools must also balance the need for secure school facilities with the need to maintain an open space for learning. Crisis planning has to be customized to communities, districts and buildings to meet unique local needs. Crisis plans also need to address state and local school safety laws.

Schools are overwhelmingly safe environments for children. Best practices recommend that all school districts have a crisis/emergency management plan. This requires the collaboration of state and local policymakers, those who administer and manage schools, law enforcement, and other emergency responders in planning and preparedness. Planning allows emergency management teams to develop procedures more objectively and thoroughly. Schools should frequently review and update their school safety and emergency response plans to ensure they are up to date. Schools should make students, parents and staff aware of the school safety and emergency response plans and make the plans available on the schools website's. Inclusion of various stakeholders from the school and the community is important in the development of the crisis/emergency management plan. Safety must be a community-focused effort – community engagement is a requisite. Developing a thorough Emergency Management Plan will benefit all stakeholders when faced with any type of crisis/ emergency.

Key Issue 3 - School district facilities must be healthy, clean and inviting to support the educational mission of the district. Educational reform has focused primarily on what is taught and how it is taught. As a result, curricula, instructional strategies and instructional materials have been improved. What has received little attention is the physical environment in which education occurs. While teachers and teaching are the key considerations when trying to optimize student learning, it must be remembered that teaching and learning do not occur in a vacuum. A growing number of studies are linking student achievement and behavior with the physical attributes of facilities. Better academic outcomes were associated with schools that have better physical environments. Schools must be places that physical environments reinforce, not deter, the educational process.

Studies are discovering that the quality of the school facility is a factor in teachers leaving education. Districts are finding that they cannot attract and retain “highly qualified” teachers because they do not want to work in outdated, unattractive facilities. School systems are also finding that parents are much more discerning about which school their child will attend, including the physical appearance of the school. Several studies have linked the basic health of both students and teachers to the school physical environment in which they learn and teach.

The physical environment in which education is delivered must be a high priority. A clean and well-maintained school facility supports healthy learning. Healthy schools promote health and well-being of occupants, save

energy and have better indoor air quality. Studies also show that improving school indoor environmental quality improves attendance, academic performance and productivity.

Despite the importance of school buildings to the quality of teaching, learning, health, many of our state's public school buildings are in poor condition and are poorly maintained. A national analysis of the physical condition of America's schools indicates that 75% of this nation's schools need to spend money on "repairs, renovations and modernizations to put the school's onsite buildings into good overall condition." The US EPA has estimated that up to half of all schools have problems with indoor environmental quality. 60% of all children endure health and learning problems due SOLELY to the conditions of their schools. In low socio-economic communities, public school facilities have significant deficiencies.

Schools are major consumers of energy and resources. Building improvements are a very important way to improve environmental stewardship, save energy and reduce pollution. Schools that implement energy saving strategies – from following building design to using energy efficient building components to behavioral change – can significantly reduce energy, resulting in major environmental and cost savings benefits. Many schools across the nation are recognizing the long term cost savings and environmental benefits of implementing LEED certified greening initiatives within their schools. School buildings represent a significant investment of community resources – we should be careful stewards of these resources by ensuring that schools are designed, built, renovated and maintained in the most cost effective manner.

Schools can help improve the quality of the environment for children and at the same time contribute to better environmental conditions for the community. School buildings play a critical role in the lives of children, teachers and neighborhoods and directly affect student and teacher health. The physical learning environment has a positive impact on student achievement and teaching quality.

Key Issue 4. - Statewide minimum standards do not exist to guide the construction of new facilities and the educational feasibility of existing facilities in a 21st Century environment. The physical make up of a building used for education is like no other place on earth:

- It is a place of business: educating our children;
- It is a manufacturing plant: where young minds are molded and filled with knowledge to lead us into the future;
- It is a place of art and music: which our children participate in to expand their minds and hearts;
- It is a place of agriculture: where our children can learn and put into practice the concepts that feed and clothe our nation and much of the world;
- It is a sports arena: where our children learn team work and how to deal with loss and how to be a gracious winner.

So why should we think that just any building would do to meet all of these uses and at the same time meet the needs of a 21st Century education. There is more at stake here than the size of a classroom, hallway or principal's office. Together with good space planning, school buildings should have:

- LEED standards followed;
- Technology hook ups with an eye to the future;
- Air quality systems that lessen the spread of cold and flu virus; and
- Better conditions for children with asthma or allergies.

School facilities should have comfort standards including:

- Atmosphere controls for each classroom;
- Ergonomic desks, chairs and tables;
- Correct lighting; and
- Facilities that allow every student to have their own computer.

School buildings should be safe, starting with construction, where all phases of the building process meet or exceed codes and standards. Building should include:

- Video camera security with expanded storage capacity;
- Secure door entry systems
- State-of-the-art fire alarms;
- Provide security from intruders;
- Be storm resistant (i.e. Joplin School District); and
- Free of all types of pests.

2. Guiding Principle: Schools must provide essential infrastructure for the effective and evolving use of emerging technology in learning environments.

Key Issue 1 - Access to emerging technology and broadband connectivity to the Internet is essential to ensure Missouri students are able to compete in a 21st Century world. In today's society, technology is touching almost every aspect of our lives and it is continuously growing every day. Teachers and administrators must design programs that provide students with a competitive edge to pursue the career of their choice. We must start by updating our facilities; curriculum and software so teachers can include technology in all their classrooms.

It is of utmost important to get parents and community leaders support for the technology program, because of the high cost associated with the program. There has to be an ongoing commitment to this program because it requires updating of equipment, training and support for continued success. However, it is crucial that parents understand how technology is going to help students be better prepared for college and the workplace.

Key Issue 2 - Teachers must have access to and participate in professional development activities that focus on integration of instructional technology into the classroom. We need to provide teachers and administrators with the technology teaching tools needed to ensure they are prepared to help improve student's achievements. Technology Professional Development for teacher is ongoing and varied. Technology alone won't transform education. To inspire students, educators must integrate technology into teaching and learning, both inside and outside of the classroom.

3. Guiding Principle: All children must have a safe and secure route or transportation available to ensure access to educational opportunities.

Key Issue 1 - Reduction of state funding has resulted in districts and bus contractors postponing repairs and/or replacement of buses. The reduction of state funding has resulted in districts and bus contractors postponing repair and/or replacement of buses. Needs and expectations:

- Each school district has unique routing conditions with many consequences that cost lots of money.
- Parents who work depend upon the school bus to get their children to school.
- Free transportation for school is an expectation of the general public.

Precedents have been set over time that school districts will supply the needed transportation. All the school districts are feeling the repercussions of the huge reduction in State funding of transportation. Districts are not replacing buses as often as they have in the past. Here are few:

- Maintenance and Repairs – the costs of keeping and aging fleet of buses operating soon outweigh the cost of a new bus. You wind up spending as much or more to hold onto that bus a little longer because the expense is happening in stages instead of all at one time so it doesn't hurt the budget as much. So, now you have invested money in parts and labor for that aging bus and in the end you still have to replace it. This is false savings but a reality when you don't have the funds available to replace the bus.
- Safety – each parent has the expectation that once their child steps onto the school bus they are safe. Ageing buses are not reliable and will expose children and the drivers to additional risk. Due to the lack of funding for transportation, many districts are pushing back the distance from a school where the buses will start picking up students, leaving students that have always had access to a bus stranded.
- Mileage – It is not the size (i.e. 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A) of the district that dictates the number of miles and amount of gas that is invested in bus routes. It is the system of the streets, roads and highways located within the boundaries of the district.
- Gas – Whether you use gasoline, diesel, or other, school districts, like the general public, are victims of the oil companies, Wall Street and their whims. There is no way to anticipate where the price of fossil fuel will go at any given time.
- Insurance – Insuring a fleet of buses and all that entails varies from carrier to carrier but is something that a district cannot do without. No matter the carrier the rates always seem to go up not down, with no recourse but to pay up and hope you never have to use it.
- Contracting for busing – contract busing has pitfalls all of its own. All the costs mentioned above will be passed on by the contract to the district. As well as the costs for drivers, their benefits, and administrative costs. You may have some negotiating room but not much.

Key Issue 2 – The lack of adequate sidewalks, manned crossings and traffic congestion creates unsafe routes to school.

Traffic Congestion – to help reduce the cost of transportation some districts have widened the boundary that qualifies a child to ride the school bus. Every child inside this boundary must now be transported to their school building by other means. Many parents, as a matter of personal convenience, already drive their children to school but now you have added a substantial number of additional vehicles to this mix each morning and afternoon. Widening the boundary may save some money in the transportation budget but it has now added the hazard of larger numbers of children being let off at school by parents and adding to an already existing traffic problem.

Sidewalks – City codes dictates where sidewalks are placed. Some cities and towns put sidewalks on just one side of the street. School Districts need to work with their City Councils on a plan to restore, maintain and build sidewalks in all residential areas. By cooperating with each other they can make sidewalks a priority for the safety of all who would use the sidewalks not just the children. In our smaller towns, building sidewalks probably has not been nor will it ever be a real priority to the City Council. It is likely to be more of a priority for the homeowner. Many sidewalks have deteriorated or are completely gone from older parts of towns. The City Councils must be encouraged to work with property owners to repair the sidewalk structure in their towns. Many cities/towns have allowed new subdivisions to be built without sidewalks. This situation needs to be rectified.

Safe crossings – How many intersections does a child encounter each day on their way to and from school? Is it feasible to have a crossing guard at each intersection? Probably not! Make transportation available not just for

the children that live outside of an arbitrary boundary but to all the children in the district. This is the logical solution, but probably not going to happen soon. School districts will need to work with local law enforcement and the community around the school to make the residential crossings safer.

4. Guiding Principle: Schools are an integral part of the community and must be positioned as an asset to the community.

Key Issue 1 - Merging community needs with school security, safety, liability and maintenance. Schools are at the heart of local communities and must be positioned as an asset to the local communities. Research indicates that student achievement and the health, safety and economic security of all community members can be enhanced when communities have close links with their schools.

There are many opportunities for schools to partner with communities in an effort to work together and share the use of school facilities. Examples of these include:

- school facilities being used as community recreation/sporting facilities;
- providing information technology centers for community use;
- using school facilities for community events/meeting spaces;
- schools facilities being used as storm/emergency shelters;
- sharing libraries or resource centers; and
- sharing performing arts centers.

Schools can pursue these opportunities with a number of community partners, including:

- local councils;
- healthcare providers;
- emergency response teams;
- law enforcement agencies;
- sport and recreation providers;
- higher education and other training providers;
- faith-based organizations; and
- not-for-profit organizations.

Schools and their communities can work closely with local councils to share school facilities, which will enhance community development. Significant benefits as a result of partnerships based around shared facilities include:

- greater community involvement in school activities and children's learning;
- financial savings as a result of sharing the operating and maintenance costs of large facilities;
- better access for communities and schools to state-of-the-art facilities;
- increased opportunities for collaborative partnerships between schools and communities;
- stronger social networks between schools and communities;
- more positive perceptions of local schools and communities because these partnerships foster a sense of school pride; and
- improved school security and reduced vandalism as a result of the increased use of school premises out of school hours.

3. School district facilities must be healthy, clean and inviting to support the educational mission of the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify alternative sources of funding for school facilities and construction projects. Missouri is one of the few states in which financing the construction of school facilities falls entirely on the shoulders of local property taxpayers. As assessed valuations decrease or new laws are enacted which exempt property from taxation, the ability for school districts to fund school facility construction and improvements is significantly impaired. School construction pools could lower the property tax burden and provide the needed assistance for new school facilities.

2. School facilities need to accommodate the latest technology to support instructional activities and security issues. Broadband access should be available to all students. Research indicates that over half of Missouri's school buildings are in excess of 30 years of age. Due to this fact, districts have been left with the responsibility of retrofitting aging buildings to accommodate the ever increasing use of instructional technology. Standards should be established which guide the construction of new facilities and the retrofitting of existing facilities to ensure they are technology friendly.

With regard to the ever increasing pressure for on-line state achievement testing and the integration of instructional technology into the classroom, it is crucial that our school districts and communities have adequate technology, infrastructure and bandwidth to ensure all Missouri students have equal opportunities for educational success.

3. School facilities must provide a safe and secure environment for Missouri students. It is essential that school districts create a climate that is conducive to the educational mission of the school district and the State of Missouri. School districts must utilize the technology available ensure that parents send their children to a safe and secure environment for their education. Research shows that school districts with an electronic security presence have seen a decrease in violence and bullying. Minimum standards for buildings and buses need to be established for the monitoring of students through cameras and other electronic means.

4. School districts should develop a strategic alliance with communities on the use of school facilities. School facilities are the heart and soul of many communities and efforts should be made by school districts to ensure that school facilities may also serve a broader purpose in the community.

5. The state transportation funding formula needs to reflect current funding trends and student needs. With the state transportation funding formula severely underfunded, efforts need to be made to ensure that the transportation dollars are being utilized to meet critical transportation needs of at-risk students as well as students located in sparsely populated areas.

6. All school districts must review and update their school safety and emergency response plans. School districts need to have an up-to-date crisis/emergency management plan. This requires the collaboration of state and local policymakers, those who administer and manage schools, law enforcement, and other emergency responders in planning and preparedness.

7. School districts must continually reassess the utilization and energy efficiency of their school facilities. All school districts should prepare a long range educational facilities master plan, with annual revisions and updates including the optimal utilization of existing facilities. Public school buildings can be designed, constructed or renovated, operated and maintained using "green building" or "sustainable design" concepts. School districts should develop and implement energy management plans that will ensure responsible and efficient use of natural resources.

8. Statewide minimum constructions standards for school facilities need to be developed. State law currently requires school districts to employ an architect and/or engineer for all construction projects to ensure that new construction follows code requirements. Although the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides some guidance on space requirements for various grade levels and programs, many of the decisions regarding construction of new facilities are left to the architect/engineer and the school district with no statewide guidance available. Minimum standards for construction of school facilities need to be developed to ensure that all Missouri students will experience the same basic level of school facilities.

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