

Re-Visioning School Facility Planning and Design for the 21st Century

Creating Optimal Learning Environments

California Department of Education
School Facilities Planning Division

Executive Summary

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Prepared by

Center for Cities & Schools, University of California, Berkeley



Re-Visioning School Facility Planning and Design for the 21st Century, Creating Optimal Learning Environments: Roundtable Proceedings Report was developed by the Center for Cities and Schools, University of California, Berkeley, under the direction of Kathleen J. Moore, Division Director, California Department of Education, School Facilities Planning Division.

Notice

The guidance in *Re-Visioning School Facility Planning and Design for the 21st Century, Creating Optimal Learning Environments: Roundtable Proceedings Report* is not binding on local educational agencies or other entities. Except for the statutes, regulations, and court decisions that are referenced herein, the document is exemplary, and compliance with it is not mandatory. (See *Education Code* Section 33308.5.)

The Re-Visioning School Facility Planning and Design for the 21st Century Roundtable was developed and facilitated in partnership with the:

Center for Cities & Schools, University of California, Berkeley

<http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/>

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The Center for Cities & Schools is an action-oriented think tank of the Graduate School of Education and the College of Environmental Design, located in the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California, Berkeley.

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Core Purpose of the California Department of Education

The core purpose of the California Department of Education is to lead and support the continuous improvement of student achievement, with a specific focus on closing the achievement gap.

School Facilities Planning Division

Mission

To provide the children of California with safe and educationally appropriate facilities and transportation services.

Values

- Responsive quality service for our clients
- Educational specifications and curricula that drive the design of school facilities
- Facility design that promotes the educational, physical, and personal development of students
- A safe and healthy school environment for all students and staff
- Teamwork and proactive planning
- The concept of local control
- Encouragement of the maximum community use of all schools

Guiding Principles

Facilities and Transportation: We work to ensure that all students are provided with safe, healthy, accessible, and educationally advantageous learning environments.

Service: We are readily available to provide to our clientele and colleagues authoritative and responsive service.

Interpersonal Relations: We appreciate our clients and peers, the diversity of experiences, the marketplace of ideas, and our unique perspectives.

Law and Regulations: We administer and champion the state standards outlined in the California *Education Code*, *Vehicle Code*, and *California Code of Regulations, Title 5* and *Title 13*, helping school districts through our comprehensive planning, analysis, and training.

Leadership: We actively bring new information, best practices, and cutting-edge ideas to our clients and partners.

A Message from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

I would like to thank all the participants who attended the *Re-Visioning School Facilities Planning and Design for the 21st Century: Creating Optimal Learning Environments* roundtable hosted by the California Department of Education. Your comments and feedback over two intense days has been invaluable to our process of exploring what an optimal learning environment should look like.

I am very pleased to introduce the report that follows. The report satisfies one of the key purposes of the roundtable, which was to identify best practices that strengthen the relationship between schools and communities in an effort to close the achievement gap between segments of our students. With the impact of the learning environment on student achievement well documented, this discussion was imperative.

Discussions of school design principles at the roundtable resulted in the following key recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish a state vision and guiding principles on the role of school facilities in supporting student achievement and closing the achievement gap.

Recommendation 2: Incorporate the new vision and principles into the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5*.

Recommendation 3: Increase collaboration among state agencies to aid local educational agencies in the design of 21st century learning environments.

Recommendation 4: Increase state focus on standards and policy governing the modernization of existing schools to provide a 21st century learning environment to a greater number of students.

Recommendation 5: Review and restructure the linkage between school facility finance and design.

It is my hope that you take the time to review this document in its entirety. I am confident that you will have a renewed sense of importance for the work each of you do in developing optimal learning environments. They are essential for the 21st century needs of students in California.



JACK O'CONNELL

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Executive Summary

In October 2008, a diverse group of researchers, education administrators, state policy leaders, design professionals, teachers, and students convened in Sacramento, California, for the *Re-Visioning School Facility Planning and Design for the 21st Century* roundtable.

California's schools need a clear vision for facilities planning and policy to curb alarming dropout rates, accommodate growing enrollments, and provide educational environments responsive to the rapidly changing nature of learning, communities, and necessary workforce skills. Developed by the School Facilities Planning Division of the California Department of Education (CDE) in partnership with Center for Cities & Schools at the University of California, Berkeley, the roundtable explored the historical, contemporary, and visionary future contexts of school facilities in California to advise the state on policy change. This report is a summary and analysis of the roundtable proceedings. It also serves as a guide for further reevaluation of school facilities planning and design policy in the state of California.

Over the course of the two-day event, participants critically engaged topics ranging from emerging technologies and educational programming trends to the relationship between school design and learning and sustainability. Nationally recognized principles of high-quality school design were used to provide a framework for critical analysis and to inspire participants in crafting state policy recommendations:

- Design for the educational program
- Design for adaptability
- Integrate technology
- Promote health and sustainability
- Enhance safety and security
- Connect to community
- Support a small school culture
- Accommodate student diversity
- Support the teacher as professional

The roundtable was structured as a “public research” event. That is, participants worked in a variety of forums, including:

- Panel presentations
- Large-group discussions
- Individual workbooks
- Action teams
- Creating posters as an action team and compiling “report-outs”

The analysis of roundtable processes, discussions, and outcomes brought together the participants’ expertise in a variety of related fields — design, policy, research, management, and teaching. A set of findings and recommendations for CDE policy change resulted from the roundtable.

Recommendation 1:

Establish a state vision and guiding principles on the role of school facilities in supporting student achievement and closing the achievement gap.

Recommendation 2:

Incorporate the new vision and principles into the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5*.

Recommendation 3:

Increase collaboration among state agencies to aid LEAs in the design of 21st century learning environments.

Recommendation 4:

Increase state focus on standards and policy governing the modernization of existing schools to provide 21st century learning environments to the greatest number of students.

Recommendation 5:

Review and restructure the linkage between school facility finance and design.