

Preliminary Report: Lessons Learned from the National Summit on School Design

School Size

Areas of Agreement

- The “best” size is a function of context and culture
- The goal is high quality relationships among participants

Challenges

- Determining the quality of relationships we want
- Identifying what size will get those relationships
- Distributing resources and programs equitably across small schools
- Smaller schools may lead to higher capital costs

Opportunities

- “best” school size for strong relationships can be achieved in a variety of ways
- Thinking creatively about size opens the door to discussing many innovations in teaching and learning

Trade-offs

- Smallness vs. diversity of students
- Smallness vs. breadth of programs and resources

Best Practices

- Small learning communities, school-within-a-school to achieve smallness
- Using alternative spaces (e.g. storefronts, floors of buildings) for smaller groupings
- Museum Schools
- Thomas Jefferson School (VA)
- The Met School

Technology

Areas of Agreement

- The issue is becoming less about infrastructure of schools (e.g. wiring) and more about integrating technology into a flexible learning environment
- Require rethinking of assumptions about school size, design of learning spaces

Challenges

- Technology can be seen as an add-on, not as essential
- Expensive (hardware, maintenance, training)
- Avoid assumptions that all new high-tech products enhance learning

Opportunities

- Can improve equity – connecting kids to resources and outside world (distance learning)
- Wireless doesn't require design changes
- Can add technology without redesign

Trade-offs

- Time and cost pressure vs. need to maintain, replace and train.
- Increased access vs. risks of unfiltered information (requires more attention to critical selection)

Best Practices

- Think Quest
- Zoo School
- Texas Instrument Hand Held Response System

Trends in Learning

Areas of Agreement

- Community-based learning
- Smaller learning communities
- Differentiated instruction and differentiated learning environments
- Project-based learning

Challenges

- Equity in applying the trends
- Conflict with prevailing/traditional views of instruction
- Conflict with meeting state and federal regulations

Opportunities

- Using community as an educational resource

Trade-offs

- Community involvement vs. maintaining complete control

Best Practices

- Zoo School (MN)
- Applied Technology Center (OR)
- Buchtel Partnership with National Inventors Hall of Fame (OH)

Location & Siting

Areas of Agreement

- Jeffersonian equity I.e. all contingents must get what they need
- Schools can serve to integrate, and act as the heart and hub of the community
- Process for siting decision must be transparent and involve all stakeholders

Challenges

- Must consider the *elephant in the room* (the segregated nature of communities)
- Innovative visions are stifled by existing standards, regulations, habits, and apathy
- Local governments require location of schools inside development zones
- Limited land space forces communities to select sites unsuitable for schools
- Schools can become drivers of sprawl, worsening first challenge

Opportunities

- Re-use of old school buildings and adding to older school sites (building up)
- Schools can be catalysts for community revitalization
- Co-located schools to give students real-world experience

Trade-offs

- Replacing or renovating older buildings to improve functionality vs. preserving history and a sense of community identity.
- Co-locating with outside entities can blur school mission and create unsustainable dependence

Best Practices

- Economic integration - Wake County, NC
- Voluntary desegregation and open enrollment - Lynn & Cambridge Schools, MA
- Group process, dispelling apathy - Natroni County, Wyoming
- Reuse - Hip Hop High, Seattle; Hudson, MA; and John Jay HS, OH
- Co-locating - Reggioemilia, Italy

Finance

Areas of Agreement

- Bonds are a typical way to raise school funds
- Creative partnerships to use space/land/equipment
- Tap donors

Challenges

- Turf wars, control and power
- Strings attached by private donors

Opportunities

- Partnerships
- Private donations
- Consolidation of districts and schools
- Finding new, more palatable mix of taxes

Trade-offs

- Housing developers – give/get
- Build in phases
- Federal grants and tax credits come with strings

Best Practices

- Tourism tax
- Developers donate small/unbuildable parcels.
- Cumberland County, NC partnership with recreation centers, libraries and parks
- Bowie, MD contentious consolidation

Public Process

Areas of Agreement

- Involve entire community from the outset, including students and quiet voices
- Community identifies educational vision before considering building
- Open and transparent process to engender trust

Challenges

- Resistance to change
- Funding, time, energy and leadership to sustain momentum
- Breaking down barriers – cultural, racial, socio-economic
- Broadening the public's horizon to embrace new possibilities
- Ensure the public's voice is heard

Opportunities

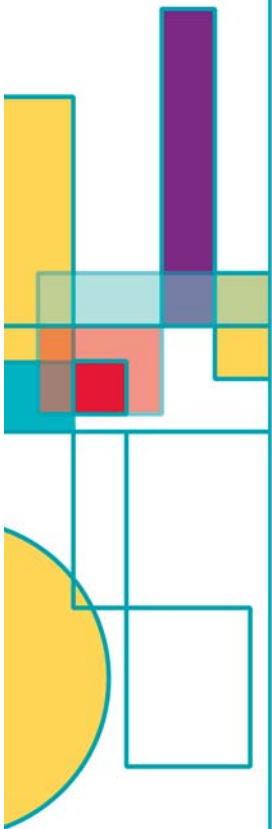
- Creating strong supportive community
- Tapping local talent and expertise in decision making

Trade-offs

- Time – public engagement is slow and messy
- Upfront cost vs. long term benefit

Best Practices

- Atlanta partnerships
- Concordia of New Orleans
- Building Educational Success Together (BEST) 21st C. School Fund
- KnowledgeWorks partnership with Harwood Institute in Ohio
- Franklin Conference in Philadelphia



Quality of School Environment

Areas of Agreement

- Good design matters
- Schools need to be designed with flexibility in mind
- Local context and conditions should be respected/honored in the design
- Design should be cost effective in the long run
- It is not just about school design

Challenges

- Shortage/costs of building materials
- Funding policies favoring new construction
- Pace of technological change

Opportunities

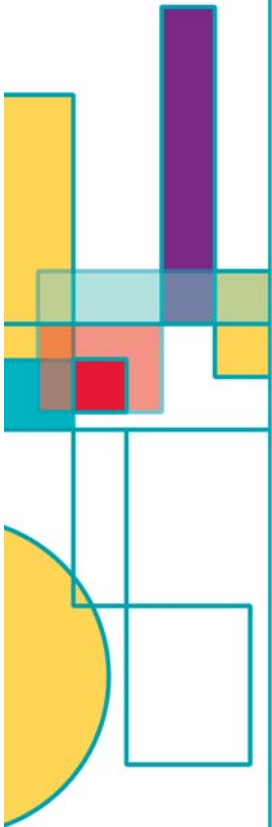
- Adaptive re-use
- Preservation
- Pace of technological change

Trade-offs

- Ownership
- Time – public engagement is slow and messy
- Higher initial costs vs. life cycle

Best Practices

- Zoo School - Minnesota
- Crow Island
- High Tech High in San Diego
- Savannah College of Art and Design



School – Community Relations

Areas of Agreement

- Design (accessible vs. “walled”) can effect the type of relationship between school and community (dynamic vs. closed)
- Open relations by including a broad range of activities beyond the academic and serving a broad range of people

Challenges

- Stakeholder disagreements on purposes of schools
- To be good partners, districts have to be willing to change habits, attitudes and the way school spaces are organized and allotted

Opportunities

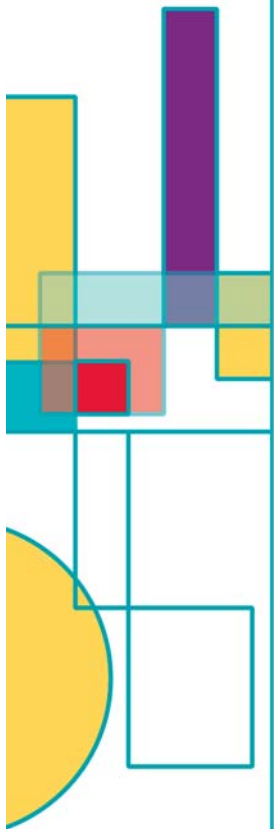
- School space can be valuable resources (potential found space) for community development and enrichment
- Community spaces can be useful as educational spaces
- Think of community in terms of “community of interest” as well as in terms of immediate neighborhood

Trade-offs

- Increased partnership and opportunities vs. clear boundaries and responsibilities.

Best Practices

- Tenderloin School (CA)
- The Met School (RI)
- Akron (school – Urban League – Museum partnership)



Flexibility of Space

Areas of Agreement

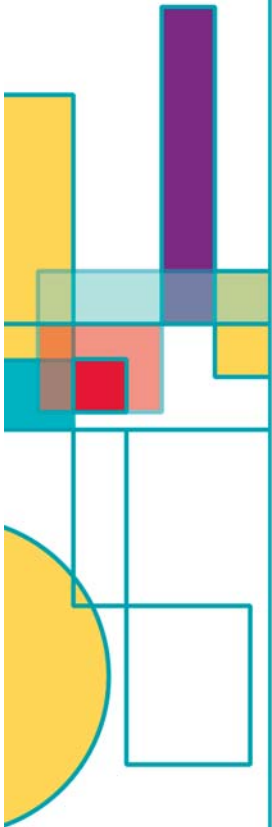
- Flexibility of furniture, equipment and space configuration is important to support different uses

Challenges

- Overcoming traditional design in the mind of the public
- Time pressure to work on immediate need while working on long term goals
- Understand that “use is design.” Designers need to pay attention to and respect how users adapt to and reconfigure spaces to increase function

Best Practices

- Work on parallel time tracks to meet immediate needs in order to buy time to improve flexibility in the long term
- Create feedback loop between designers and users. Take video of how users adapt and reconfigure spaces, both to train other users how to take advantage of flexibility and to inform designs on how to adapt future designs for real-world



Traditional vs. Alternative Space

Areas of Agreement

- Partnership with community. Involve community and students in the planning
- Make use of underutilized space

Challenges/Opportunities

- Meet needs of people with special needs
- Engaging the community; put social justice on the table
- Security
- Funding streams tied to traditional models, prescribed nomenclature and vertical relationship between state, county and district

Trade-offs

- Lose of school identity and traditions
- Perceived greater security risk
- Challenge to traditional educational models
- Students confront real-world issues earlier than in a traditional setting
- Educators needs more training to put this into practice
- Lose of turf, power and tradition
- Lose of the comprehensive school to areas that are more focused

Best Practices

- Clark County Community College and schools
- Moore Square School, Raleigh, NC
- Malvern, PA pre-school and senior center
- "City as high school"
- Community Campus, Portland, OR. Recreation, Boys and Girls Club, elementary school, public library and housing authority



**National
Summit
on
School
Design**

Thank You

**Send thoughts, reactions to:
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