



Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities

Arkansas School Facility Assessment

An Assessment of the Assessment

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Preamble “ - - to ensure that adequate facilities and substantially equal facilities are, and will continue to be provided for Arkansas’ school children.”
Act 1181 of 2003

At first glance, **An Assessment of an Assessment** may appear to be some form of word-play, but that is exactly where we are at this point of the Arkansas’ educational facilities study. A final report titled “**Arkansas Statewide Educational Facilities Assessment – 2004**” has been presented to the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities in accordance with Act 1181 of 2003 (Appendix B). That Final Report responded to all mandates. The assessment section in the Final Report specifically responds to Mandates IV and VI and included:

- **Inventorying** all educational facilities, building by building, existing in the state
 - 5,744 School Buildings
 - 803 Temporary Buildings
 - 1,092 Other Buildings

- **Locating** by GIS Coordinates all educational facilities, building by building, existing in the state.
 - 1,571 Total Site Locations

- **Determining the “State of Condition”** of all educational facilities existing in the state by evaluating:
 - **Structural Condition**, including cursory seismic review
 - **Mechanical and Electrical Systems**, including HVAC, plumbing, fire protection, audio/video, voice/data, clock/paging, fire alarm, and electrical.
 - **Site Conditions**, including driveways, parking lots, drainage, site utilities, playgrounds, and landscaping.
 - **Building Envelope**, including roofs, exterior walls, exterior doors and windows, and insulation.
 - **Interior Condition**, including walls, floors, ceilings, doors, frames, windows, hardware, chalkboards, bathroom specialties, and miscellaneous building specialties and hardware.

- **Determining the “Educational Suitability”** of all educational facilities existing in the state by considering:
 - Enrollment projections for ten (10) years
 - Support for Educational Programs
 - Technology Infrastructure
 - Security and supervision
 - Instructional Aids
 - Physical Characteristics
 - Learning Environment
 - Sample Educational Facility Space Standards as further addressed in Mandates II and III.

This Final Report provided the State of Arkansas and the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities with comprehensive technical information needed to make informed and responsible decisions regarding the development and maintenance of state policy supporting the court mandate of ensuring that adequate facilities and substantially equal facilities are, and will continue to be provided for Arkansas' school children.

But to understand what is stated in the report and be able to employ the information presented, one must understand the facts as presented by the report in the context by which they were observed. So, in order to establish such an understanding, we will provide an assessment of the statewide educational facilities assessment (the Final Report) to establish the context of the environment in which the facilities assessment was reported.

Background:

For the past 168 years, the responsibility for providing school facilities was the responsibility of the local independent school district. The local district planned, designed, financed, built, and maintained the facilities they needed to provide the educational product in their community. It was up to the local community to set the facilities standards to meet their unique requirements. No enforceable state educational facilities standards or policies have ever existed in Arkansas except for a recommended room size definition provided by the State Board of Education, as well as the Arkansas State and Municipal Building Codes. Because of the lack of a statewide unified consensus standard for school buildings, the hundreds of independent school districts developed their own criteria, design, construction methods, and quality standards for their school buildings. This practice allowed for a diverse and aging educational infrastructure that varied widely from community to community.

The Arkansas Supreme Court decision in the Lake View case established that the educational facilities in Arkansas were inadequate, inefficient, and substantially unequal from district to district as well as within districts. Furthermore, the Supreme Court held that it shall be the responsibility of the State (the Arkansas General Assembly) to define and maintain educational adequacy, ensure and manage adequate funding mechanisms for the provision of school buildings, and ensure substantial equality in facilities on a statewide basis. Historically, this has never been the responsibility of the Legislature.

Since the Legislature has now found itself responsible to set policy for and manage educational facilities statewide, members needed to get their arms around the stock of school buildings that currently exist across the state. It was quickly determined that the legislature could not accurately determine the quantity and location of school buildings in the state. Neither could they determine the state of condition of the schools as there was no statewide standard by which buildings could be evaluated and analyzed. Therefore, the 84th General Assembly established the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities (Appendix A) to perform an assessment of the condition of all educational facilities across the state in order to determine their educational adequacy, the state of condition of the state's schools, and answer the eight (8) mandates stipulated in Act 1181 of 2003 (Appendix B).

The Problems:

In its broadest sense, a facilities assessment is a simple process. However, when the constraints of a limited assessment budget, an extremely compressed time allocation to support the legislative schedule, the lack of existing educational facilities standards, the lack of existing database systems, the lack of an existing statewide governing body, the lack of existing credible

facilities records, and the lack of skilled assessors are considered, the facilities assessment project became a problem of substantial complexity.

There have been other previously issued white papers describing the assessment process that have gone into detail explaining the history and the process by which the facilities assessment has been conducted. In this document, we will discuss only the interpretation of the results of the Final Report. In other words, what is this report telling us?

The Final Report:

First, we must consider to whom the Final Report is communicating, and what they needed to know. In this case, the Final Report is addressed to the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities for the purpose of advising the 85th General Assembly on structuring a legislative agenda to support rectifying the specific deficiencies cited in the Lake View decision, and the eight (8) mandates of Act 1181 of 2003 (Appendix B). The Joint Committee needed to be able to take the details of each school building to scale and determine, at the state level the total impact of the elements of the:

- Total inventory of buildings
- State of condition of existing buildings
- Educational adequacy of the existing buildings
- Forecast of life-cycle maintenance issues
- Student population growth trends
- Custodial/maintenance issues
- A definition of educational adequacy related to facilities
- Inefficiencies resulting from the over/under utilization of facilities.

The Legislature needs to be able to deal with the summary data covering 6,547 individual school buildings as a whole in a macro analysis in order to develop legislation that will comprehensively manage the facilities of the entire state ensuring educational adequacy, efficiency, and substantial equality. For their purposes, the summary whole is the critical data, not the individual parts. Therefore, the Joint Committee authorized a statewide facility assessment that cited the state of condition of buildings in gross terms based on a uniform analysis of easily observable metrics that did not require intrusive investigation and/or materials testing. They also allowed a forecasting method of construction remediation and life-cycle analysis based on RS Means published statistical building costs as reported in the A.P.P.L.E. database.

The point is that the data reported by this method was sufficient for establishing a statewide legislative agenda and for future planning. This form of evaluation saved approximately 70% of the cost of a full top-level facilities assessment and took approximately 20% of the required time to perform. This method also has a high level of consistency, repeatability, and a provision for technical data substitution which may be required to re-scale the results if the facilities evaluation standards applied to this study were ever to be revised. As such, this was a great value for the State of Arkansas.

Other Benefits:

Now that the Legislature has what it needs to fulfill its responsibilities under Lake View, what else can be made from this report?

First, the statistics regarding 6,547 buildings in 254 school districts are very dynamic with changes and/or revisions occurring every day somewhere in the state. The Legislature cannot contend with data that changes so fluidly. Therefore, the assessment data was frozen as of the

time of site evaluation. This provided a stable platform for the legislature to do their work. Also, as time progresses, the data supporting legislation will remain constant for the purpose of history. Everyone will be working from the same numbers.

Second, in order to define the variables of an assessment, educational facilities standards had to be developed. The Joint Committee is required to define educational adequacy and facilities standards are required to make such a definition. Comprehensive facilities standards have now been placed on the table for review by school districts, educators, and the legislature. The great benefit is that now that the assessment standards have been costed (Appendix C) and is now part of the database, any future changes and/or revisions in educational facilities standards may be immediately evaluated for both efficacy and projected cost implications.

Third, assessment data for every building, school campus, and district now exist in the A.P.P.L.E. database. This will provide a very good starting place for each school district to develop their individual facilities master plan. Master planning is not only critical for district financial planning, but will soon be required as an annual report to the Arkansas School Facilities Division. Each district will have a list of building deficiencies, educational adequacy assessment, and student population growth projection to aid the district in establishing its master plan.

Please note, - - - the Final Report is not a detailed comprehensive facility assessment. It is not a master plan. It is not a detailed bill of requirements. It is not a complete definition of every facility need of the district. As educational facility standards are further developed by statewide authorities, the summaries of the final report may further change

The Final Report is, however, a resource that a district may use to initiate a master planning process with its own design professionals. While it is not the complete answer at the local building level, it can be a useful starting place for school districts to begin their master planning process. Please remember that the Final Report is intended only to directly support the Legislature in their deliberative process for the 85th General Assembly. But because the Final Report is very beneficial to the school districts in their master planning process, we welcome the district representatives to use this important and useful tool to aid them in their planning process.

END

Task Force to the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities
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APPENDIX A

Background:

On November 21, 2002, the Arkansas Supreme Court affirmed in the Lake View School case (*Lake View School District No.25 of Phillips County, Arkansas et al, vs. Governor Mike Huckabee, et al.*) that educational facilities serving the public school system in Arkansas were inadequate, unequal, and in violation of the state constitutional guarantee of a free, adequate, efficient, and substantially equal public education for the children of Arkansas. The court has charged the Governor and the Arkansas General Assembly with the responsibility of correcting these defects in public policy. To meet these ends, the Arkansas General Assembly, in Regular Session of the 84th General Assembly of 2003, has established a joint legislative committee under Act 1181 of 2003, AN ACT TO CREATE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATUIONAL FACILITIES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, to serve the General Assembly in exercising its responsibilities relative to the provision of adequate and substantially equal educational facilities for the State of Arkansas.

The 84th General Assembly determined the need to have an updated statewide educational facilities study. The General Assembly further recognized that, such a study performed an important responsibility toward satisfying the requirements imposed by the Supreme Court's decision in Lake View, as the General Assembly is ultimately responsible for making a final determination of what constitutes an adequate facility and how to provide substantially equal educational facilities throughout the state. To this end, the General Assembly established the "Joint Committee on Educational Facilities" in April, 2003.

By law, the joint committee has the responsibility to deliver eight mandates relative to state-wide educational facilities in Act 1181 of 2003. Mandate-Two (2) requires that the General Assembly:

Recommend what constitutes an adequate school facility, including all necessary components for:

- a. Elementary education***
- b. Middle school education, and***
- c. High school education***

This mandate further requires the State to establish and maintain the substantial equality of educational facilities, equipment, and technology infrastructure as may be required to ensure equal opportunity for an adequate education for the children of Arkansas.

APPENDIX B

Eight (8) Required Mandates of Act 1181 of 2003

Mandate I: Review the opinion of the Arkansas Supreme Court in the matter of Lake View School District No. 25 of Phillips county, Arkansas et al. vs. Governor Mike Huckabee, et al. issued on November 21, 2002, and use the opinion and other legal precedent cited by the court in the committee's deliberations.

Mandate II: Recommend what constitutes an adequate school facility, including all necessary components, for:

- A. Elementary Education
- B. Middle School Education
- C. High School Education

Mandate III: Recommend a method of providing substantially equal facilities and equipment for all schools in Arkansas as necessary to ensure equal opportunity for an adequate education .

Mandate IV: Establish a process to conduct a review and assessment of all school facilities in the state to determine which are in compliance with the recommendations of subdivision (f)(2) of this subsection.

Mandate V: Recommend policies and criteria for use in determining renovation, replacement, or discontinuation of inadequate buildings and facilities based upon statewide adequacy standards and other requirements necessary to ensure adequate and substantially equal school buildings and facilities.

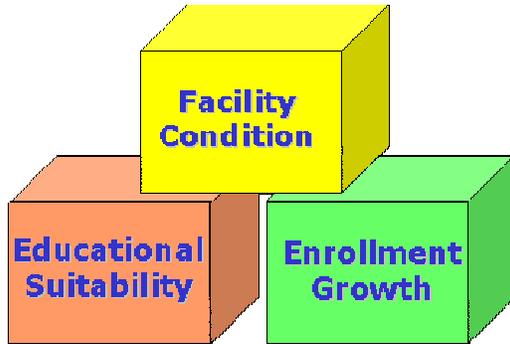
Mandate VI: Recommend the cost of an adequate school facility in Arkansas

Mandate VII: Recommend a method of funding the cost of adequate and substantially equal school facilities.

Mandate VIII: Recommend a system or method to assess, evaluate, and monitor the school facilities across the state to ensure that adequate facilities and substantially equal facilities are, and will continue to be provided for Arkansas' school children.

APPENDIX C

Determination of Facility Adequacy & Condition Cost



The public educational facility needs in Arkansas are composed of three major variables:

Facility Condition is the state of repair of the building infrastructure. Facility condition takes into consideration all of the building systems from roofs and windows to electrical and mechanical systems.

Educational Suitability is based on having adequate space to support the educational program.

Enrollment Growth addresses the projected school enrollment for the next five and ten years.

The facility condition cost includes the cost of bringing all schools to current codes and standards. This is a process that will likely require ten or more years to accomplish.

Nearly all schools in Arkansas were constructed prior to current building codes and standards. Over half of the schools are 40 years or older. Since that time, there have been new codes and standards published for virtually every building system ranging from air quality and air conditioning to technology and fire and safety.

Although there is a cost associated with rectifying every building according to current codes and standards, this does not mean that all schools need massive and immediate repairs and renovations. Rather, this provides an understanding of the effort it would take to bring all facilities up to the same standard.

At the same time, the facility condition information does provide:

- comparative analysis of building conditions
- approximate cost to address the facility conditions of all buildings in the State of Arkansas
- understanding of which buildings are in the worse conditions that might be slated for more immediate focus

