Schools in Everyday Life
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For children between the ages of five and eighteen, school is a part of everyday life. Unfortunately, the day-to-day experience of education is often taken for granted by both students and those who have already passed through the halls of primary and secondary schools. For the educator, the hope is that this everyday experience will develop into a thirst for life-long learning. Understanding that learning can be, and in fact should be, a part of everyday life, schools provide a unique and important place in society.

Because of this unique place, schools have the most potential to link and strengthen communities, provide a continued source of inspiration, education, and varied resources, and be a daily experience not only for children, but also for every community member. The daily experiences can range from entering the building and utilizing its resources to merely driving past it and admiring what it is there for. In many communities, gatherings happen at the local church or at the local school. In other communities, schools provide places for adult education after regular school hours. Regardless of how a school is used, it becomes a vital part of the community experience. Schools, and civic bodies join forces and resources to offer the best facilities and opportunities for learning to every community member.

Everyday experiences can be a representation of a community’s beliefs and attitudes or needs and expectations. They can also become a tool to motivate and bond the community, one member to another. Schools can represent and offer different things to different people simply because different people have different hopes, dreams and needs for tomorrow. Understanding this, it is easy to comprehend that the school represents the future of communities and embodies society’s potential to bring about the realization of its dreams.

In order for schools to become a part of everyday life, three things must happen:

- The school must offer to the community.
- The community must offer to the school.
- A physical relationship should exist that allows such interaction.

These chapters focus on the accomplishment of the preceding criteria for making schools a part of everyday life. The guidelines found in this section deal with the issue of incorporating schools and learning into the everyday life of everyone, from the community as a whole down to the individual student. The chapters found within are:

**Embracing Schools (ES)**
**Distribution of Schools (DS)**
**Institutional Symbols (IS)**
**Embracing Schools**
The relationship of the school and community is a very important factor in making schools a part of everyday life. Schools and the community must have a positive attitude towards each other in order to have an embracing school. The school can be a place of beauty, inspiration and civic pride of the community. The use of community facilities and resources by the school also demonstrate a supporting embracing environment in the community. When the school allows the community to have input into the design and maintenance of the schools, a truly embracing relationship will exist. They should strive to become a voice heard by the school in effort to make their hopes and dreams a reality. In many cases, a school that embraces a community might actually heal community wounds and bring members of the community together for the common good. A community that rallies behind a school district will help them to deliver education to children, and perhaps adults, of that community. This relationship can be profound and can grow from a simple and small conception.

**Distribution of Schools**
The distribution of the schools within the community is another important factor. The schools should be distributed throughout the community so that they benefit the community. If the facilities and grounds are to be shared by the schools and community, then they should be located where people utilize them. Schools designed for beauty and visibility in the community will motivate and inspire people to support and embrace the school.

**Institutional Systems**
The final step in making schools a part of everyday life is agreement on the specific location and purpose of certain facilities and joint collaboration in planning the facilities and utilization of resources. The location of the library or auditorium within the school will affect access by the community during and after school hours. The design and joint efforts of all stakeholders is very crucial to the success of maintaining the everyday presence of the school.

As these initiatives come to fruition, the school will become the realization of all that society wants it to be. The school will be a place that fosters learning and inspiration.


**Embracing Schools**

The first step to making schools a part of everyday life lies in the relationship of the school and the community. The two must embrace each other. Embracing Schools describes the attitude of the school and community toward each other. The school offers resources to the community in facilities and teachers. The school building offers a face to the community of beauty, inspiration, and civic pride. The community also offers its support to the school in terms of resources and facilities. The community participates in design and maintenance of schools. Both school and community must work together to strengthen one another.

**ES1 - Beautiful Schools**
**ES2 - Schools as the Community Face**
**ES3 - Community Designed Schools**
Beautiful Schools

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.”
-Winston Churchill

Many of these guidelines tackle very practical issues: school size, safety, materials of construction, the design of rooms for activities. A question might be asked why one would provide a guideline to promote the making of beautiful schools. The requirement of a beautiful school might be seen by some as unnecessary and by others as a given with no reason to be discussed. If time is taken to understand what a beautiful school is, then it will be seen how a beautiful school promotes community pride, school pride, and spurs achievement throughout a community.

What is a beautiful school? A beautiful school is not a formula of a certain window, a roof type, an organization, a color or stylistic persuasion. In fact, one will not know it is a beautiful school until he or she visits or works within the school. A beautiful school can have the beauty of appearance, but it may also have a beauty in how adaptable and useful it is, how it recognizes the scale of both adults and children, how it fits on a site, or all of these qualities. It is believed that all beautiful schools will share three important attributes. They will:
- Care for and Motivate School Users
- Care for and Motivate the Surrounding Community
- Embody an Enduring or Monumental Quality

Motivate School Users
The school can be designed to care for the school community with an element as simple as an interior window in the principal’s office overlooking the main lobby. The window allows the principal to see not only every person who enters and exits but also a display space that holds trophies, plaques, and other awards that remind him or her why he or she is here, and why he or she cares so much for the school. A design that shows care may be classrooms that are filled with light, allowing teachers to bring plants from home or look out to the community. To parents, a beautiful school may be one that they can see from their home. Students may find a school beautiful because they can go outside and eat lunch, or the student can sit in a classroom and feel motivated to learn because of an interesting and varied environment.
In large and small ways, a beautiful school shows through its design that it cares for and motivates the people within the school. In its halls, classrooms, offices, and facilities, a beautiful school has an atmosphere that invites learning. It invites administrators to work proactively with staff and faculty. It invites teachers to care for, plan for, and give to their students. The school invites parents to feel at ease with leaving their sons or daughters within this beautiful school. Most importantly, it invites every student to learn and to love learning. The school’s beauty comes from the way the school enlightens the lives of its inhabitants.

**Motivate the Surrounding Community**

A beautiful school also shows in its design how it cares for and motivates the community around it. A beautiful school needs to be a place where the memory of students, who later become citizens, teachers, and leaders of the community, can take root. To be able to hold these memories and inspire new students and teachers, the design of the school must come from the dreams and values of the community in which it resides. The school might have a courtyard that aspires to bring a diverse student body together, a clock tower seen across town that serves to remind the town of the importance of the school in the community, or forms and decoration that speak to the future or the past of a place. A beautiful school will become part of a dialogue between a community, the community’s past, and the community’s aspirations for the future.

We have talked mostly about schools that give to their users and communities in how they work. If a school is to be truly beautiful, though, it must also be physically attractive in a way that symbolizes the hopes of the community. For example, a community may feel the importance of emphasizing their connection with the history and traditions of their place, so the style of architecture and expression of the school will reflect this desire. Another community might want to express their drive to meet the challenges of the future, thus expressing this desire in the design of the building. There may also be a desire to express both of these visions. In either case, the school must beautifully express the vision of the community back to the community.

When schools are physically attractive, the community becomes more attractive as well. Beautiful buildings typically raise property values of the neighboring area, motivating members of the community to maintain their property and make it more beautiful. The beauty and pride in the school motivates other public bodies to do the same with their buildings, and the newly instilled community pride then feeds back into the school. As the school grows old, the community continues to take care of the school, maintaining its beauty.

Every physical aspect of a school can make it beautiful. Every element has the potential to offer something to the community and the students. An auditorium that has the entire community in mind when it is planned and aspires through its ornamentation to be a municipal auditorium is an offering to the community. A classroom with a door to the outside allows learners to use the outdoors in their education and helps to relieve the sterility of a classroom. By designing efficient parking lots and drives, schools can create better traffic flow through and around the community. Simply by planting trees on the school site, schools can give the community a sense of identity. All of these ele-
ments that inspire a give and take between the building, its users, and the community around it help to make the school beautiful.

Enduring or Monumental Quality
A beautiful school is also a monument. A monument is not something with many large columns made of expensive materials. In fact, some of these buildings make the worst monuments. A monument is simply a physical container for memories and, ultimately, history. A monument does not need to be large or grand; a small mark on a building showing the high water mark from a long ago flood tells an entire story of struggle against the forces of nature. Additionally, the events that a monument holds might be very personal or have national importance. A hill might mark the place where every summer a group of friends get together and picnic and at the same time mark the spot of a battle between nations.

Why should a building be designed to be a beautiful school that inspires memories? One reason is that such a school gives a community identity. Everyone knows where the beautiful school is, when it was built, who went to school there. These memories of the school are actually memories of the community; the memories of the school cannot be separated from those of the community. The identity of the beautiful school and the community are intertwined. An ugly, makeshift school will not inspire the community to intertwine its memories with the school. On the contrary, the ugly school will either be put out of mind or be seen as a burden on a community. The beautiful school, however, will inspire the community with thoughts of current community pride or a longing to recapture past pride or accomplishment in the future.

For a school to hold memories or provide community identity, the school does not necessarily need to be large or grand but must be made to last. A building that will be completely gone in ten years will not be able to retain memories of the community for long. Even a building that can stand in ruin for years has a stronger relationship to the community as a reminder of the goals and aspirations of the community than a temporary, makeshift building.

Conclusion
A beautiful school reminds us of the generations before us who built the school to last with pride and inspiration. A beautiful school expects future generations to use the school and remember the history of the community. A beautiful school makes everyone in the community believe that they are part of a larger purpose and aspire to excellence in whatever they do.
**Related Guidelines**

To motivate school users, provide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS2</th>
<th>Community Athletic Events</th>
<th>1.3.2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IS4</td>
<td>Gathering Places</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC1</td>
<td>Home as a Template</td>
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<td>LC3</td>
<td>Design for Every Student</td>
<td>2.1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>VS1</td>
<td>Variety of Learning Spaces</td>
<td>2.4.1</td>
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To motivate the community, promote:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ES2</th>
<th>Schools as the Community Face</th>
<th>1.1.2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES3</td>
<td>Community Designed Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS1</td>
<td>Neighborhood Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS4</td>
<td>Network of Shared Spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS6</td>
<td>Adult Spaces in Schools</td>
<td>1.3.6</td>
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To create a monumental quality, use:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS1</th>
<th>Park-like Landscape</th>
<th>1.3.1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IS3</td>
<td>Media Center as a Focus</td>
<td>1.3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL1</td>
<td>Long Lasting Materials</td>
<td>3.1.1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
As the most expensive and prominent public building in most small towns or city neighborhoods, the school must communicate its role in the community. The school building will automatically give a face to the community that both residents and outsiders will judge. Homebuyers will see the school and decide whether to buy in a particular neighborhood. Parents will either point to a building with pride or regret. Teachers and students will work in an environment that either uplifts and inspires them to think highly of their community or makes them feel unimportant and neglected. Political leaders can either unite residents behind a symbol of community unity or field complaints about lack of unity. A part of the responsibility in the design of a school building is to be a positive and prominent symbol in the community.

A school building by itself cannot bring about harmonious community relations, responsible citizens, or united goals. No physical object can. The building is, however, a mirror of community values and how the community values itself. A school is not only the container for the activity of learners, but like any other important institution in a community, the building represents the purpose of the institution to the community.

*In order for a school to represent itself to the community, it must simply:*  
*Communicate its Role on Many Levels*

*In order to do this efficiently:*  
Consider *Applications of Communication*

**Communicate its Role on Many Levels**  
A building can represent an institution on a number of different levels. As categorized by William Hubbell, a *civic building can:*’

- a. Simply tell us the name of the institution,
- b. Tell us about what the institution inside is,
- c. Tell us what the institution means to society, and in some cases
- d. Tell us how society should be ideally organized.

An example of these four levels is the original campus of the University of Virginia,
designed by Thomas Jefferson. Through signage and the University’s placement in Charlottesville, Virginia, the buildings tell us the name of the institution. The existence of a library, professors’ residences, student rooms and classrooms tell us the campus is a university. The location of the campus at the top of a hill, the campus’ organization around a beautiful green lawn, the use of lasting materials for the buildings, the use of the classical language of architecture to make reference to Roman buildings all tell us that this is a place highly prized by the society that built and maintains it. The way that Jefferson organized the campus is a glimpse into his ideal society. The library is at the head of the campus, overlooking a large lawn space, which at that time looked symbolically out to the American West. The dorms and houses were planned so the professors and students live side by side at the edges of the lawn. In these ways, the campus was organized by Jefferson to celebrate the importance of knowledge, to increase discourse among students and faculty celebrating freedom of thought, and to acknowledge the importance of the American West in the future of the young country.

Similarly, a school building can communicate at these four levels.

Applications of Communication
The signage, arrangement of buildings, materials, placement in the city, and even planting of the school site communicates the importance or lack of importance of the school to the community.

To communicate better the school’s important role in the community, some suggestions are:

Prominent Signage - Design prominent, permanent signage for the school site. Make sure that there are road signs that lead to the schools from all major entrances to the community.

Institutional Symbols - Communicate what is important to the institution by making the corresponding physical feature or facility a visible and prominent part of the facility as a whole. Design the school so that major public functions of the school - auditoriums, gymnasiums, and the main entrance - are apparent when approaching the school.

Welcome the Community - Design spaces where the community is welcome, such as parent centers, community/school libraries, shared sports and recreational facilities, etc.

Account for the Surroundings - Design buildings that take the surrounding buildings and landscape into account. This can be interpreted in many different ways. For example, the design of a school building might copy the height or the materials or the style of buildings around it to attempt to fit in with its surroundings. A school building can also take into account its surroundings by standing out from them. By standing out, a school building can make itself more important visually than other buildings, giving the school needed prominence within the community. The messages these two approaches send to visitors and the community are different and must be a collective decision by the community.
Civic Materials - Use materials in the construction of the school that are appropriate to a civic building in that community. The materials used for a school building also send a message to visitors and community members. For example, if a school is made of sheet metal while the city hall and courthouse are made of brick, this may send the signal that the school is not seen to be as important as the other institutions.

Outdoor Spaces - Design outdoor spaces that invite community pride and participation. Outdoor spaces are a highly visible way to communicate the school’s relationship to the community. Courtyards, landscaped entrances, sidewalk connections, stadiums, athletic fields and courts should be designed to communicate school pride and allow for community use at appropriate times. Outdoor spaces should also be designed to mark important community events that happen on the school site, such as fairs or graduation. An outdoor podium or a gate can remind the community of the event year round, increasing year round school pride.

Conclusion
If public education is to be thought of as the civic duty of the community and not just a service for hire, the school building cannot afford to be simply shelter. The school building makes concrete for all to see the commitment of the community to education and to the future.

Related Guidelines
To locate schools within the community, consider:

- DS1 Neighborhood Schools
- DS3 Downsizing Schools
- DS4 Network of Shared Spaces
- IS1 Park-Like Landscape
- IS2 Community Athletic Events

To communicate the functions and ideals of the institution, create:

- ES3 Community Designed Schools
- IS3 Media Center as a Focus
- IS4 Gathering Places
- IS6 Adult Spaces in Schools
- LC1 Home as a Template
- LL1 Long Lasting Materials

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Community Designed Schools

“Community is not a place or a thing; it is a calling, a struggle, a journey.”

Schools are about the people that use them and their dreams, hopes, diversities, and challenges. Communities of people give a school its character and identity. Understanding this, it is easy to see that a school designed with no involvement from the community cannot capture the community’s identity. It cannot satisfy the community’s needs and hopes.

The community can participate in the designing of schools in many ways and on many levels. It may be that the architect is selected in a community process or that the community participates in workshops conducted by a planning group. Communities can even participate by beautifying school grounds. There is a vast spectrum of participatory activities for a proactive community that will transform the standard school into the community’s school.

For these activities to be the most effective, they must be conducted according to three basic principles:

- Strive for **Full Community Representation**
- Involve **Participation Facilitators**
- Follow a **Community Design Process**

**Full Community Representation**
In order for a school to be designed by the community, there has to be involvement from every level of the community. Civic and business leaders, parents and grandparents, principals and teachers, school boards, chambers of commerce, and even students must be actively involved in the design and maintenance of the school. Ongoing active involvement by all of the community is the key to a successful school. In fact, providing adequate school facilities is one of the most important efforts that a community should involve itself with.

Schools designed by community members automatically become buildings that represent the community, which in turn allows the community to represent the school. This representation is the truest reflection of the relationship schools and community.
ties ought to have. An intertwined, co-dependent relationship will foster trust, support, and strength for both the school and community. This relationship will go a long way to making and maintaining a beautiful, successful school. This newly developed dialogue between the school and the community will increase the level of parent and community participation within the school on all other levels. The dialogue will educate the community to its duties and provide them with opportunities to fulfill these duties.³

The process of a community helping to design its school can also serve as an educational tool. It will alleviate the lack of awareness adult members of the community have about the issues of school building. It can also serve as a way to teach youth the value of planning. Herbert Smith challenges, “Let’s teach our children that our physical community can be planned, that planning is comprehensive, long-range thinking, and that it will make their cities finer…They can then build better communities, with better schools….“⁴

**Participation Facilitators**

The first of the three basic principles embodies the need for complete community influence. This completeness hinges upon the representation of every demographic group, civic institution, and the commercial sector. The community must also have representation throughout the entire process. However, the second principle may seem out of place, even contradictory to the idea of community designed schools. One might ask, “If the school is to have an element of community design, why is a school representative or a facilities’ planner needed to complete the community’s representation?” Simply put, experience has shown that coordinating the input and participation of the community takes someone who can communicate and open lines of communication between the community, the school administration, and the architects.

**The design process calls for two specialized facilitators:**

**School Representative** - There must be a School Representative who coordinates all activity and oversees the entire design process of any new school. The school representative can be found in various places. The superintendent may serve as a representative or appoint an assistant to take on this duty. Often an assistant superintendent fills this very role. However, the ideal solution would be a full-time representative for the district whose duties are focused on design, maintenance, and the process of school building. The representative serves as a link between the administration, the architects, facility planners, and the community. He/She works to insure that every voice is heard and that every issue of school building and maintenance is dealt with. This person does not need to have experience in school design or maintenance. The most important skills and background needed for this position are communication skills, organizational skills, and an educational background.⁵ This experience will allow the school representative to communicate with all parties, prioritize issues, and, most of all, represent the school.

**Process Facilitator** - Community participation should be facilitated by one of the following: the School Representative, an Architect, or an Educational
Facilities Planner. The facilitator may simply be the architect who adopts the following process, or one similar, as a part of the schematic design phase. School districts should also consider the option of employing an Educational Facilities Planner to head the facilitation process.

**Community Design Process**
The ideal activity for involving the community takes a great investment in time and personnel but produces results that will benefit the school and the community for generations. This process is used today by many educational facilities’ planners and is advocated by the U.S. Department of Education, Council for Educational Facilities Planners International (CEFPI), and many others involved in school building. *The Process consists of four steps:*

1. **Coordination Meeting** - The process begins with a coordination meeting between the school representative and the architect or planner. Here, basic timetables, objectives, and needs of any project are discussed.

2. **Key Interviews** - Second is an interviewing phase where the planner and the school representative work together to interview school administration and teachers. These interviews are used to discover the basic issues for the particular school and district. In the interviews, important community members and groups that need representation in the design process can be identified.

3. **Facilitated Workshops** - The third step is to involve the community, school administration, and teachers in group interviews or a series of workshops facilitated by the planner, architect, or school representative. These group meetings should be used to gather information about the issues, needs, hopes, desires, and goals of the community for their neighborhood and children. The meetings should also be used to discuss the relationship between the community and the school. The planner or the architect should not see these first three steps as conclusive. The architect should continue with any other processes he/she deems necessary to collect information about issues in any manner he/she sees fit.

4. **Continued Involvement** - As the process moves into schematic design and design development, the architect should hold meetings coordinated by the school representative with school administration and with community representatives to update, inform, and gather information and comments about the development of the design. The school representative should continue to meet with the architect through the completion of the project in order to communicate information and concerns from the school board to the architect, from the architect to the school board, and from the community to the school board and architect.

**Conclusion**
Noted at the National Symposium on School Design, “When members of a community become visionaries, creators, and owners, rather than cogs on a bureaucratic wheel, they are more willing to work together to set goals, to solve problems and, ultimately, to...
provide their schools with the kind of intensified support they need to be successful." This involvement, and increased knowledge and willingness, will produce incredible results. Communities will help to pass bond issues. Schools will support community activities. It will produce a school of which the community can be proud, and a community of which the school can be proud.

**Related Guidelines**

When coordinating community participation and input, consider:

- **DS1 Neighborhood Schools** 1.2.1
- **DS2 Community of Learners** 1.2.2
- **DS3 Downsizing Schools** 1.2.3
- **DS4 Network of Shared Spaces** 1.2.4
- **IS1 Park-Like Landscape** 1.3.1
- **SS1 Access Control** 2.3.1
- **SS2 Natural Surveillance** 2.3.2
- **SS3 Territorial Reinforcement** 2.3.3

The school representative should become familiar with:

- **LL1 Long lasting Materials** 3.1.1
- **PM1 Preventative Maintenance** 3.2.1
- **WT1 Well-Tuned Systems** 3.3.1

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4 Smith, 107-114.
6 Ibid.
Distribution of Schools

The second step is quite simple. In order to facilitate an embracing relationship between schools and communities, the Distribution of Schools must be made so that they most benefit the community. If there are shared facilities or grounds, they should be located where people can use them. If schools are to motivate and inspire people, they must be beautiful and visible to the entire community.
Neighborhood Schools

To allow the next generation of schools to teach the next generation of learners, there must be a coalition between the schools and their surroundings. Schools have to be more than just buildings to house teachers and students. They must help influence and secure relationships of all ages and produce knowledgeable leaders of tomorrow. This goal can only be achieved by bringing the schools into the lives of learners and teachers, not by bringing the lives of learners and teachers into the school. “When we locate schools in separate buildings, surrounded by parking lots, with guard-tower like approaches to security we are making the world’s problem worse, not better.”

Schools must be strategically planned and placed in the community in order to shape the surrounding neighborhoods. They must be a distinct and familiar beacon to every parent and child.

In order to establish the proper relationship between the school and neighborhood, there must be a complete evaluation of a possible site. There are four reasons why school site selection and planning are so important. First of all, schools are the heart of the community as well as centers of education. Secondly, site-planning decisions can cost or save money up-front and over the long run. Thirdly, location of the school can reinforce or work against a community’s plans for future growth and development. Finally, a school’s location affects all citizens; it mirrors local values and pride.

In order to produce an effective neighborhood school, three components of site selection must be considered:

- Community Circumstances
- School System Needs
- Site Selection Criteria

In order to weigh all of the criteria and issues, use:

A Prioritizing Matrix

Community Circumstances
In order to make sure both the school and community equally gain from the building or renovation of a school, the designers must know the circumstances of the com-
munity. In particular, the designer should determine what the cultural, geographical, sociological, recreational, transportation, financial, and educational circumstances of the community are. By understanding these circumstances, a school facility can be designed to nurture the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. **Consider the Following:**

**Cultural** – The cultural events in a community can affect public education and be a helpful resource for educational purposes such as film, artists and performers in visual arts, music, galleries, concert halls, and museums. This is an aspect that every student needs in order to have a diverse, complete, and well-rounded education.

**Geographical** – Maps are good sources of information that show city, county, and administrative boundaries. Land can be evaluated by knowing where major roads, utilities, land ownerships, hospitals, industries, cultural centers, and parks are located. As an example, there might be a special river or mountain within the community that a school can be named after or used to give importance and familiarity to the school.

**Sociological** – It is important to know the general characteristics of all inhabitants of the community or territory, such as community history, ethnic origin, educational levels, economic status, employment, cultural opportunities, population, crime patterns, religious bodies, institutions, and educational services. Although the list is long, it shows the multifaceted array of who makes up the community.

**Recreational** – Today more and more school facilities are being shared with the surrounding community to host all kinds of recreational activities. It is important to know the recreational agencies, services, and places used by the citizens in order for the school to best fit the neighborhood and community. As an example, it only makes sense for the upcoming community tennis tournament to be played on the new and well-maintained high school courts, or the school play to be held at the city’s famous, downtown theater.

**Transportation** – Schools have hundreds of buses, cars, and service vehicles that go through its parking lots and drives daily. Studying the transportation systems used by the community will help in determining optimal locations for the site and its transportation needs. Recent and/or current transportation maps, routes, and statistics will all be helpful. Careful planning in this area will reduce the headaches caused around 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

**Financial** – It is important to know about the availability and use of tax funds and other government resources for educational purposes. It is also important for schools to be aware of commercial and industrial enterprises and their development programs in order to gain the most from their services. By tapping into these larger businesses as sponsors and government programs, schools should be able to get much needed financial support.
Educational – School officials should be aware of all local and surrounding educational institutions, because public schooling is typically not the only type of educational institution. Why place a new school in the same neighborhood as an existing school? Be aware that private schools, alternative schools, and colleges and universities can affect enrollment and public attitudes and support.

School System Needs
The second aspect to creating a neighborhood school requires knowing the needs and circumstances of the local school system. This will help the designer and community determine what the personal services, communications, finance, facilities, and educational program aspects of the local school system are, and which are most important. By understanding these aspects, the best site in the community or territory can be located. Consider the following:

Personal Services – Schools should be equipped with enough personal services to teach all types of students. Since schools have such cultural and physical diversity, it is important for the community to help support the school in any way possible through the use of diversified staff from different personal services, such as blind, deaf, and mute centers, cultural institutes, and staff for physically disabled. This is a unique chance for the community to better the lives of students, teachers, and parents.

Communications – Schools are employing more extensive use of media, especially electronic, which may reduce the need for physical facilities at school sites in the future. Audio and video broadcast services are having a positive effect on education within schools. In today’s high paced world, schools must be equipped with efficient communication devices in order to maintain the high degree of importance to the surrounding neighborhood.

Finance – Costs related to sites can be clearly identified by a concise analysis of school finance. It is important to know the revenue and expenditures of the school to assist in better site purchase and development.

Facilities – Ask what is already out there. It’s important to know accurate and complete information about all the existing property and buildings owned by the local board of education. This should include complete floor plans, construction dates, site plans, and a description of construction, including the mechanical, plumbing, and electrical system within each building.

Educational Program – An Educational Program consists of experiences and activities that will take place inside the school building, on the school grounds, and beyond the campus, by both children and adults. To find more information on these types of educational programs, see the guidelines Network of Shared Spaces and Adult Spaces in Schools.
Site Selection Criteria
Once there has been an accurate and thorough evaluation of the different circumstances of a community and school system, it’s important to evaluate the site selection criteria. Site selection criteria should include size/shape, location, topography/drainage, access/traffic, security/safety, noise levels, soil conditions/plant life, and utilities. Establishing this list of characteristics will help determine if a future site is the right one. This is an imperative step, because the life cycle of the school depends on a site that responds to its needs. Consider the following criteria:

Size and Shape that Think Ahead – When determining site size and shape, it’s important to have good judgment in the middle of all the research. Based on experience in educational facilities planning, Gary Bailey has recommended the following site sizes for elementary and secondary schools.

Observe these minimum site sizes for schools:
   a. (K-8) Elementary Sites – Start with 10 acres + 1 acre for every 100 students
   b. (9-12) Secondary Sites – Start with 25 acres + 1 acre for every 100 students

For example, if there were a high school that had 800 students, the site would need to be 33 acres. There is an automatic 25 acres to start because it is a high school. No matter what size the school is expected to be, this number does not change. An additional 8 acres (1 acre per 100 students) would be added to the original 25 because there are 800 students in the school. This brings the total site size to 33 acres.

It’s very important to make allowances for several factors when deciding on the size of the lot. Think about zoning setbacks, vegetation buffers, future road right-of-ways for heavier traffic, wetlands, creeks, and drainage, adequate land for buses and parent pick up, future expansions, and location of temporary classrooms. Future development can and will be greatly hindered if these factors aren’t planned through.

The shape of the site is not as important, although it’s necessary to make sure that there is adequate space for the specific shapes of certain outdoor areas such as sports fields, playgrounds, and other extracurricular activities. For example, a natural flat field would be perfect for a baseball field. It would seem wasteful to remove a large hill or ridge in order to develop a baseball field when a flat field was already available.

A Serving Location – A school’s location is a very important factor in evaluating site selection criteria. In order for a school to interact with the neighborhood, its position inside or outside the neighborhood is crucial. A school should be sited in an area that is best served to all of the community’s citizens. If a school needs to be a monument to the community, a site within a neighborhood would be less desirable than one that faces the community and becomes a...
prominent building. It should be understood that different sites have different advantages/disadvantages. A school located in or near a neighborhood has the opportunity to accommodate all modes of transportation, including walking and bicycling, while a school in the heart of town with other civic buildings acquiring a greater one word community presence will only be accessible to car and bus.

**Natural Topography and Drainage** – It is mandatory that a site be well drained and landscaped. Improper planning and development can cause erosion and swamps to ruin the site and landscape. By keeping as much of the natural site elements intact while building the school, less effort will have to go toward replanting trees and vegetation, or modifying the landscape for drainage. For example, if there is a natural slope to the site, use that as an advantage by planning the site elements around the slope.

**Simplified Access and Traffic** – In order for a school to run at today’s pace, it needs to be well equipped to handle access and traffic even if most of the students ride their bikes or walk to school. If a school is placed in a neighborhood, then it is important that any and all types of traffic found in the surrounding neighborhood can access it.

For instance, if the sidewalks within a neighborhood are 8 feet wide, then the school should not make its sidewalks any narrower. This will not only tie the school into the local neighborhood by allowing a smooth flow of pedestrian traffic, but it will also prevent any confusion that may cause accidents. The idea is to keep the complicated potential of large amounts of traffic to a simple routine that does not become an issue for the public. It is also important to have a site that is accessible to roads that can handle the heavy traffic caused by school use and after hour events.

**Diligent Security and Safety** – Although security and safety are very important, it cannot be truly dealt with until the school is in its design phase. Before choosing a site, be aware of the condition of surrounding locations. Research should be done on crime rates and income. It is also important to make sure that the site is located where it is possible for police authorities to do routine inspections. Additionally, clean air is a must when choosing a site. Make sure that there are no industrial or manufacturing plants located near the site because of the toxins produced by these plants.

**Helpful Soil Conditions and Plant Life** – Although a site may look good to the physical eye, it may well be inappropriate for a school to be there. Studying the soil conditions will help determine if there are any bad conditions, like bedrock, soil that cannot support heavy loads and cannot drain water well. Make sure the site is well suitable for plant life. Vegetation adds beauty to the site, absorbs the intense summer heat, provides shade, and can act as a sound barrier. Placing vegetation around the school makes the school also pleasing for the neighborhood by making recreational activities more enjoyable.
Pleasing Noise Levels – In order for the students to benefit from a neighborhood school, it is important that there are no major noises that distract them. This could include air traffic, high-speed traffic, mechanical and electrical devices, or railroads. Another reason to have pleasing noise levels is to protect the school’s sensitive communication equipment. High noise levels can interfere with some communications.

Utilities that Support – The site should be able to receive all of the basic utilities such as water, sewer, and electrical as well as satellite or cable television and gas wherever available. When dealing with sewage disposal, local health and environmental requirements must be met. Do not use a site that has power transmission lines that run across it.

A Prioritizing Matrix
When evaluating these site characteristics, it is helpful to develop a prioritizing matrix. A matrix evaluates all of the site characteristics relative to each other. It is also important that the school administration rank the site characteristics in order of importance to the school being built. This will help the planning team concentrate more on the characteristics that the school feels are important and less on the ones that the school feels are not as important.

For example, if the school administration ranks site size and shape as a 10 (10 being most important, 1 being least important) and noise levels as a 2, then the planners will know where to put the focus of their ability in evaluating the site. This not only saves time and money for all involved, but it helps create within the school and site a bond that starts to meet the specific needs of the school and local neighborhood.

Conclusion
Schools can be a valuable resource to the surrounding neighborhood when planned appropriately. By maintaining a rigor in understanding the role of a school in a neighborhood, it will make selecting a site more rewarding to the students, parents, teachers, administration, and all the people who use the school. The goal is to make the users of the school feel as though they have not left their neighborhoods to go to school, but have just entered another part of their neighborhood to learn more about life and all of the great possibilities it gives them.
Related Guidelines
To further assess the siting needs and goals of the school, review:

ES1 Beautiful Schools 1.1.1
ES2 Schools as the Community Face 1.1.2
ES3 Community Designed Schools 1.1.3

While researching selection criteria, investigate:

DS2 Community of Learners 1.2.2
DS3 Downsizing Schools 1.2.3
DS4 Network of Shared Spaces 1.2.4
IS1 Park-Like Landscape 1.3.1
LC2 Flexible Schools 2.1.2

To design the site, consider:

IS2 Community Athletic Events 1.3.2
IS4 Gathering Places 1.3.4
SS1 Access Control 2.3.1
SS2 Natural Surveillance 2.3.2
SS3 Territorial Reinforcement 2.3.3
SS5 Secure Traffic & Parking 2.3.5
SS7 Safe Playgrounds 2.3.7
VS5 Outdoor Learning 2.4.5
EL9 Multiple Playgrounds 2.5.9

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4 North Carolina, Dept. The School Site Planner.
5 North Carolina, Dept. The School Site Planner.
6 Gary Bailey, Personal Interview, 26 Sep. 2001
Community of Learners

Schools have grown at a tremendous rate through the last century from one-roomed schoolhouses to giant institutions. This change has affected both teachers and students alike. Once composed of a yard, a building, and perhaps a playground or sports field, today’s school has grown, making it difficult and time consuming to plan and budget any school facility. Therefore, large schools need to be broken down into separate, semi-independent parts. This separation could be as elementary, middle, and high schools, but is this form of separation appropriate for all educational institutions? The essential mission of a school must be understood so that habit does not get in the way of organizing learner groups, forming a school community, much like what happened in those one-room schoolhouses.

In order to establish a community of learners, the following elements must be found within the school:

**Appropriate Grade Composition**
**Smaller School Size**
**Classroom Communities**

**Appropriate Grade Composition**
Appropriate grade composition is a major factor in school planning and design. Where should the division lie between elementary, middle, and high schools? Should there be any division? There is no one way to divide schools, but research has shown the effects of various grade compositions. The best results in elementary students’ academic achievement came from schools with K-8, and 9-12 division.\(^1\) This is because younger students have a greater sense of family and importance when not influenced or pressured by older students as a whole. Take for instance the Sharm El Sheikh K-12 School in Egypt designed by Bruce Jilk, planner of the famous Zoo School in Apple Valley, Minnesota. The major factor in this school’s success is the 100-student family/clusters that the students are divided into. It’s organized into four pre-kindergarten – 8th grade family/clusters and two high school families of 100 – 120 students. Each family/cluster is divided into 10 – 12 student work groups each with their own unique work area.\(^2\)
This of course is not the only way to sub-divide a school into grade levels. An elementary school can be divided anywhere between K – 8, such as K-3/4-8 or K-4/5-8 and so on, because their facilities are similar to each other and simple enough to share. First graders can share the same gym, library, or cafeteria as eighth graders. On the other hand high schools need to be separate from elementary schools, because their facilities are more complex.

**Smaller School Size**

What is the ideal school size? This question seems to lurk in the back of the minds of every planner, architect, principal, teacher, and even parent who is involved in designing and planning a school. The ideal size of a school cannot be determined by research alone, because each site and district has specific needs that affect school size. Even though there are circumstances specific to each school, there are generally effective sizes for most schools. These sizes differ from elementary to middle, and from middle to high schools. They also vary from school to school, because there are some school districts that have more schools than other districts as well as larger population densities. Schools must be evaluated within the context of where they lie. In other words, smaller school districts should have smaller size schools and larger districts should have larger size schools.

These numbers below represent the findings of many research projects dealing with the effective size of schools. Some would say that the numbers for the large school are pushing the upper limits on effective size while others would say they are too small. However, most research supports these numbers below. The circumstances such as district size, the age of students, and the school’s curricular and extracurricular activities must be fully understood when determining school size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Population Size</th>
<th>Smaller School Districts</th>
<th>Larger School Districts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>300 – 400 students</td>
<td>300 – 400 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>300 – 600 students</td>
<td>500 – 600 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>400 – 800 students</td>
<td>800 – 1000 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classroom Communities**

In addition to creating a school of the right size and composition, the classroom is essential in the effort to form a community of learners. A classroom community needs particular conditions in which to grow. First and foremost of these conditions is smaller class size. All of the other conditions, taken from the project STAR, were noted because where the conditions did not exist, the positive effects of smaller class size did not exist either.³ **Consider the following classroom conditions:**

Smaller Class Size- One major problem in schools today is the number of students per classroom. Project STAR, the largest, longest-lasting, and most controlled study to date on class size has proven that in elementary grade levels, students achieve greater academic success from being in a smaller class size. Minority and inner city students progressed 75 percent more than their large class counterparts. This research also proves that once a student reaches the
eighth grade, class size does not affect progress as drastically. 

Effective High School Class Size is more difficult to research because high school classes vary from size to size. For example a laboratory may have only 6 students, whereas a band hall may have 206 students. It is important to maintain a student to teacher ratio that will allow for proper administration and teaching to occur.

For an Elementary School, class size is easier to pin down. **Follow the following guidelines for class size when determining facility needs:**

- Small classes should consist of 13 – 17 students
- Large classes should consist of 22 – 27 students

**Representative Student Mix** - A representative student mix in each class will make sure that there isn’t an overspill of students with learning or behavior problems. It also helps to broaden a student’s mind with a good mix of cultural and ethnic backgrounds in one class.

**Good Teachers** - An adequate supply of good teachers is necessary for any classroom to reap academic benefits. Teachers must be certified and qualified to teach in their assigned grade level.

**Material and Services** - Teachers should have access to adequate materials and services. The smaller classes should have to their availability the same resources as larger classes, such as reading specialists, school psychologists, special education programs, and other school-wide programs.

**Sufficient Classroom Space** - In order for even the smallest class size to have the benefits of that small size, they must have sufficient classroom space. This requirement is discussed in greater detail in Activity Based Space.

**Conclusion**

When designing or planning a school facility, think for whom the school is being built. Students should have the chance to learn in an environment that doesn’t hinder their creative imaginations. No one knows the perfect numbers for school size, but communities should always strive to bring together a community within the school that allows every grade level, classroom, and school to enhance each other. By setting up appropriate grade composition and smaller school and class sizes, a community of learners will begin to grow and flourish within any school.
Related Guidelines
To locate a school within a community, review:

DS1 Neighborhood Schools 1.2.1

For other ways to create a community of learners, consider:

DS3 Downsizing Schools 1.2.3

To bring adults into the school community, provide:

IS6 Adult Spaces in Schools 1.3.6

To continue the process of classroom design, go to:

LC1 Home as a Template 2.1.1
VS1 A Variety of Learning Spaces 2.4.1
VS2 Activity-Based Space 2.4.2
NL4 Support for Teachers 2.7.4

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Decades of experience show that students benefit in numerous ways from attending smaller schools rather than larger ones. “Children in small schools tend to have better attendance and higher test scores than their big-school counterparts, researchers have found. They’re more likely to participate in after-school activities and less likely to be truants, gang members or substance abusers. Instead, they report feeling more connected to and positive about their schools.”

Many would argue the contrary case that bigger schools have more to offer. The bigger the school district, the more funding a school has to offer a wider range of curricula to a wider range of students. Today, many designers, planners, and educators are exploring ways of downsizing schools to make them safe for the community, teachers, students, and parents while at the same time providing a wide range of curricula and extracurricular activities.

Downsizing is a decade old movement to deal with the overcrowding of schools by reducing the number of students per school building. This guideline reveals four strategies developed by planners, educators, parents, community leaders, and designers to downsize large schools. Some of the strategies below are new but are on their way to becoming a more popular means of downsizing. Listed below each strategy are the three major factors and issues to consider when downsizing.

The four strategies for downsizing schools are:

- **Schools Within A School**
- **House Plan**
- **Multiplex**
- **Scatterplex**

**Schools Within A School**

This is a host school that houses or shelters several smaller schools each with their own identity (i.e. mascot). Each small school shares common space with the host school but has its own program, staff, students, and receives a separate budget. Each school reports to a building principal on matters of safety and building operation. Schools-within-schools can be located on one site or on neighboring sites. The
School-within-a-school is a good model for a high school because it has the greatest level of autonomy, separateness, and distinction necessary for adolescent teenagers.

**Minimal Facility Sharing** - Only larger more expensive facilities such as gyms, auditoriums, or playgrounds are shared. The idea of a school-within-a-school is to share as few facilities as possible to keep the separate identities and autonomy between schools. It would be up to the administration of the host school to determine to what degree students from the different schools interact.

**Flexibility Within the Administration** - All teachers and students are given a choice as to which school they want to attend. This makes it easier on the families and neighborhoods within that district. Each school reports to a district official. The staff gets to set their own budget and select their own staff members. Flexibility within the administration is key to having a successful school-within-a-school.

**Separate Curriculum Programs** - The students follow a separate curriculum program that is determined by the staff of each school. Each school’s curriculum is independent of the other school. This could aid teachers or students in deciding which school they wanted to attend.

**House Plan**
A house plan is an arrangement of rooms assigned to a group of students and teachers. Students take their coursework with the other students in their house and from the teacher assigned to the house. They usually operate on a multi-year basis allowing students of different grade levels to be included in one house. The house plan is the most restricted strategy for downsizing schools. House plans are usually located all on one site or neighboring sites. This model works best for elementary schools. High school students need a greater sense of independence than elementary students, and because house plans share most everything and are located close to one another, it makes it hard for high school students to gain that sense of independence.

**Specialized Facility Sharing** - Each house plan usually has its own set of personal spaces such as bathrooms and play areas. Houses can share larger more expensive buildings and grounds, like cafeterias and playgrounds, as well as specialized teaching areas such as music, art, and physical education spaces.

**No Administrative Control** - Staff members have no control over their budget, choice of personnel, or curriculum. The curriculum from house to house is set by the administration. This could cause a conflict for teachers because not all teachers have the same teaching style. A student’s academic ability has no effect on where he or she is placed. Although this is quite restrictive, the house plan organization still allows a child a well-rounded education because of school size, interspersed grade levels, extracurricular activities, and a family-
like atmosphere.

**Integrated Extracurricular Curriculum** - Students take all or a majority of their classes inside their house. Elementary houses may be comprised of grades 1-4, while high school houses may be split into subjects (i.e. English house or Math house). Houses often have separate extracurricular activities and spaces but share the extracurricular program of the overall school.

**Multiplex**
This is a set of (two or more) freestanding schools housed in one building. This doesn’t mean that the building can’t be divided. It mostly depends on the site the school is on. A multiplex would work better as an elementary or middle school since there is less autonomy within the structure of the school.

**Major Facility Sharing** - Each school shares almost everything within the building, so students from each school see each other quite a bit. A student might see a student from the other school three to five times a day. Their paths could cross while on the bus, eating lunch, at recess, going to the bathroom, at the library, or in specialized classes like physical education.

**Shared Administration** - There is one principal who heads both schools, but the schools operate independently of each other. By sharing principals and administration, the cost of running the multiplex decreases. The schools within the multiplex have their own teachers, staff, and students, and possibly curriculum, which gives each school some autonomy.

**Separate Curriculum** - It is structured so that each school could have their own curriculum. However, it’s likely that they would have a similar curriculum, since one administration runs both schools.

**Scatterplex**
This is two or more freestanding schools that are housed in separate buildings. The schools are each placed on different sites giving them even more identity and autonomy. This is a good strategy for high schools because each school could be independent from the others.

**No Facility Sharing** - The different schools don’t share any of their facilities unless otherwise determined by the administration. Since students hardly ever see each other, they develop pride in their own school. The independence means that each school must be well equipped, which makes for a more expensive building.

**Single Administration** - Administration is what sets a scatterplex apart from a normal operating high school. There is only one principal and administration that operates all of the schools. A very skilled professional is required to manage such a difference of culture between schools.
Separate Curriculum - Each school has its own choice of curriculum, but as mentioned before, since there is only one set of administration it is likely that the different schools could share the same curriculum.

Conclusion
By working together with other professionals it may be realized that a totally different solution may be needed than what was expected. Explore all the possible ways to achieve the end goal, because no two situations are the same. When faced with the challenge of reducing the negative effects of larger schools, downsizing can be a very effective strategy.

Related Guidelines
When using any of the above strategies for downsizing review:
- ES2 Schools as the Community Face
- DS1 Neighborhood Schools
- DS2 Community of Learners
- DS4 Network of Shared Spaces
- LC2 Flexible Schools
- SS1 Access Control
- SS2 Natural Surveillance
- SS3 Territorial Reinforcement

When planning for and designing a House Plan consider:
- VS4 Instructional Cluster

When planning for and designing a Scatterplex consider:
- IS5 Visible Administration

In circumstances where facilities are shared consider:
- IS1 Park-Like Landscape
- IS2 Community Athletic Events
- IS3 Media Center as a Focus
- IS4 Gathering Places
- CC2 Deinstitutionalized Eating Environments
- CC6 Isolated Health Station

3 Raywid, “Taking Stock.”
Network of Shared Spaces

"Like a new version of the old town square, it (they) can serve as a community hub, a center for civic infrastructure, a place where students and others can learn about collaboration and the common good."  

What particular set of characteristics and traits define and give identity to a community? Webster defines a community as, “… people with common interests living in a particular area.” According to that definition, any group of individuals living within reasonable distance of each other could be considered a community. But why do some places have a greater sense of community.

The answer is found in a sense of unity, in common ideals or beliefs, which binds great communities together. However, this is not enough alone. Communities need common areas to interact in order to express their common interests. These common areas, just as much as the common interests, begin to define the community and give it a sense of belonging. Such areas, piazzas, town squares, parks, churches, libraries, and schools, have been found throughout history. Civic institutions, conscientious of the good of the community, have always borne the weight of providing these common spaces.

In order to effectively provide and create a network of shared spaces:
- Consider the **Purposes of Sharing**
- Understand the **Advantages of Sharing**
- Work to **Overcome Conflicts**
- Promote **Joint-Use Themes**

**Purposes of Sharing**
These common areas do not have to be located in any one part of the community but should be strategically dispersed among the community according to the needs and wants of the people who will use them. They should be linked to one another as well as to other areas to create a connection between different neighborhoods, institutions, and people. They can be used to heal old community wounds, to cross cultural boundaries, and to breed a spirit of support and caring. A **network of shared spaces can be created to serve many purposes for many reasons.**
Promote Life-Long Learning - It is considered a fact in our society that learning is not contained within the walls and time of any school. Spaces should be designed to bring opportunities for adults to learn into the school. Parents, teachers, and community members can all benefit from this type of shared space.

Promote Real Life Learning Applications - Partnerships can be formed that take learning out of the school. Here shared spaces are found within the community, commercially and industrially. These spaces provide opportunities for students to learn things through practical application of real life skills, trades, and professions.

Combine Community Resources - This is the most commonly attempted area of shared use. Libraries, gymnasiums, athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, parking lots, computer labs, etc. are spaces that can be shared successfully to the benefit of all parties.

Garner Community Support - Bringing families and communities into the school can also bring support. Spaces from the previous three categories can all be built for this purpose. By allowing for community meetings and conferencing, the school becomes part of the community. By serving as a "catalyst for parental and family engagement," the community becomes part of the school.

Advantages of Sharing
The school now finds itself in the position not only of providing and promoting these shared spaces more than any other civic institution, but also in receiving benefit from them. In modern society, the school, more than any other civic institution, has the power and responsibility to bring to a community a sense of identity and unity. This is because the school provides more for the growth, future, and good of the community than any other civic institution. In many cases, these issues may seem selfless. The school provides much, but little is returned. This is simply not true. There are many immediate and obvious advantages to developing a network of shared spaces.

Additional Space for Learning - By utilizing community and commercial facilities for learning, the school can extend past the boundaries of its property without developing new facilities themselves. By providing more space, and more opportunities for learning, the school greatly benefits from joint use.

Reduce Spending - Shared spaces have tremendous potential to reduce spending for both schools and communities. These savings come from preventing the duplication of facilities that both the community and the schools use. Gymnasiums, auditoriums, and performance spaces are examples of obvious duplications. Less obvious examples include conferencing spaces, media centers, labs, and workshops. Money can also be saved from the reduction in maintenance and long-term operations costs that consolidating facilities brings.
Community Enrichment - This sharing of resources provides opportunities for community enrichment programs and services. Communities can utilize facilities for continuing education, vocational training, daycare services, etc. The specifics of what community enrichment takes place are only important if the community decides what its unique needs are. What matters most is that community involvement in the school provides an opportunity for the community to find identity with the school and its purpose in the community.

Community Education - This developing networking between community and school will educate community members as to the financial responsibilities to support the education of their community. This benefit will go a long way toward helping schools pass bond issues to build new facilities. Such newfound community awareness will also increase parental and community support for other school issues.

Overcome Conflicts
This is not to say that this joint use of facilities does not have logistical problems to overcome. Creating a successful network takes effort and time on the part of the school and the community, but it is easy to see that the benefits are certainly worth the effort of development. The first step is to understand the following conflicts that stem from joint use situations.

Non-Aligned Goals - First, it must be recognized that the partners of joint use have conflicting or non-aligned goals. Communities and schools must work to overcome this by formalizing and documenting agreements, developing a pattern for solving conflicts and disagreements, and by identifying the benefits for each party.

Operation and Maintenance Issues - The second conflict arises from operation and maintenance issues. To resolve these issues, communities and schools must have on-going communication in the form of coordination meetings. In these meetings, issues such as security, maintenance, and hours of use coordination should be dealt with.

Regulatory Constraints - The third conflict for joint use is found in the many regulatory constraints of both school and community facilities construction. Codes, laws, and regulations formed to protect students and citizens often create problems in joint use situations. This is perhaps the greatest obstacle to overcome because each situation usually demands a unique solution.

Joint-Use Themes
The school district cannot passively wait for joint-use opportunities to present themselves. The district must be proactive if it wants to save money, provide more educational opportunities for their students, provide identity for their community, and promote community support of education. By developing a network of shared spaces with the community, the school puts itself in the position to lend itself to all of the with it.
community, thus allowing the community to experience it on a daily basis. While each community and school must come together in a way that benefits their situation uniquely, there are common themes that will help to ensure success within every joint-use venture.  

**Community Developer** - First, the school should see itself as a community developer. As a developer, schools must consider that land is a limited and precious resource, that any expansion, addition, renovation, or new construction will affect the community, that schools have the potential to create value within any community, and that schools are places that communities value at the same level as hospitals, libraries, and other community facilities.

**Leveraging Community Goals** - A second theme of joint-use is found by leveraging community goals. Schools should look for common ground with their communities when building new facilities. If they can provide something of value to the community, then the schools becomes valuable to the community. Communities should take initiative to find joint-use solutions that benefit them as well.

**Re-use and Recycling** - A third theme of joint-use is found in building re-use and recycling. Schools and communities can both find creative solutions with each other in already existing structures, parks, and buildings. This form of building recycling offers benefits in reduced cost and minimal construction time.

**Conclusion**
Unfortunately, resources and time are limited, and schools often depend on other institutions for help. Often civic bodies and the community depend on the school for resources. Society is interwoven and interdependent, but this is not entirely a restricting force. Even with these dilemmas, there can be found an incredible opportunity to share, to depend, to rely, and to support.
## Related Guidelines

When creating a network of shared spaces, consider:

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>DS1</td>
<td>Neighborhood Schools</td>
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<td>DS3</td>
<td>Downsizing Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC2</td>
<td>Flexible Schools</td>
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When determining which spaces and resources to share, consider:

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<td>Park-Like Landscape</td>
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<tr>
<td>IS2</td>
<td>Community Athletic Events</td>
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<td>IS3</td>
<td>Media Center as a Focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS6</td>
<td>Safe Hands-on Learning</td>
<td>2.3.6</td>
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<td>VS5</td>
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<td>EL7</td>
<td>Voluminous Musical Spaces</td>
<td>2.5.7</td>
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<td>EL8</td>
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<td>EL9</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC6</td>
<td>Isolated Health Station</td>
<td>2.6.6</td>
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3. “Design Principles For Planning Schools as Centers of Community.”
4. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
There is no doubt that a child’s education is the most important step in finding his or her place in this world. At a young age, children begin to seek a wide range of knowledge to fill their fast developing minds—simple, yes, but vast in such a way that their minds are gathering information faster than they can understand and analyze it. As children grow, they still seek the need to understand things in the next larger context, things that sometimes do not even have answers. It is an instinct instilled in every human being.

A survey was given to Mississippi teachers to find out what learning opportunities they felt were necessary for their school to offer its students. The results offer clear proof that the teachers and administrators feel the number one opportunity for their school is to offer collaborative learning to their students. This opportunity seems to satisfy the faculty’s expectation that the students will leave with a well-rounded education. The survey proves that there is a need for an interrelationship of disciplines within schools today. In order for elementary, middle, and even high schools to meet this need, it is important that there be a wide range of interdisciplinary opportunities for students of all ages.

In order to create an interrelationship of disciplines within a learning environment, schools should:
- Promote Collaborative Learning Opportunities
- Create Gathering Spaces that Promote Learning
- Locate Disciplines to Accommodate each other

Collaborative Learning Opportunities
All schools face the obstacle of deciding when and where it is best to offer an interrelationship of disciplines. It is important that a school decides on the disciplines it feels can relate with one another during and even before the planning phase begins. This can avoid any confusion between faculty, students, and administration after a school is built. It also allows the built environment to be active instead of passive in the collaborative learning experience of the user.
Promoting collaborative learning opportunities opens the minds of the students or local residents involved in the program. Collaborative learning takes the ordinary daily activities and makes them extraordinary. Each school’s unique circumstances dictate what type of collaborative learning opportunities students may be involved in. That is why it is important during the planning phase to decide which opportunities should exist within the learning environment.

The previous collaborative learning opportunity was created not only from an interchange of curriculum, but also from proper planning and design. The location of the shop was in direct correlation with the art department and the performing arts center. By locating the shop in this area, it automatically promotes an interrelationship of disciplines without an interchanging curriculum.

**Gathering Spaces that Promote Learning**
A way to influence a student’s education outside the classroom is to create gathering spaces that promote learning. Most students usually make no extra effort to understand the need for other disciplines within their education, especially while walking from English class to Math class. To them, the act of learning is only supposed to take place inside the classroom, but what they don’t realize is that this is just the opposite. There are spaces outside the classroom that are needed for collaborative learning opportunities. These types of spaces are discussed in greater detail in *Gathering Places, A Variety of Learning Spaces, Outdoor Learning*, and *Creative Spaces*.

**Locate Disciplines to Accommodate**
Once the needs of each discipline have been established, then it is easy to locate the disciplines so they accommodate each other. Everyone knows a piece of music is different from a piece of art, but what do these two things have in common? Some would say that a fine piece of art is music to the ears, while others would say a piece of music is a work of art. Is this a hidden meaning behind the two, and does this create the opportunity to showcase them together in a way that displays their hidden relationship? This same idea can be brought into the school building, but the question still remains: how can the interrelationship of disciplines be created within the school building? The answer is as simple as understanding the needs of each discipline.

There are many ways to locate the different disciplines within a school building to accommodate each other. Each school may have its own unique way to locate different disciplines, but the idea remains the same. Take for instance a theater; it can be used for a music concert or a theatrical play. The theater also goes through stage changes and has the need for a shop. At the same time, art and sculptural class will need the shop for certain projects. Art students may also design props and background murals for concerts and plays. This is just one of many relationships of different disciplines throughout schools. Once the idea has been conceived that certain disciplines have relationships, it only makes sense to locate them accordingly within the school. Placing the shop where it can be easily accessible for both the theater and the arts will help meet their needs. It is very important to investigate each discipline’s needs before coming up with a location because of each facility’s responsibilities to its users. Specific disciplines and their needs and spaces are covered more in depth in the

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1.2.5 Schools in Everyday Life / DS - Distribution of Schools / DS5 - Interrelationship of Disciplines
**Conclusion**

By locating and creating spaces that promote the interrelationships of disciplines, the lives of students, teachers, administration, and maintenance become easier and more productive. These relationships between the different disciplines are definitely places of focus. They are a response to promote the well being of a student and his or her education. It is important to understand these relationships so that when a school facility is designed it responds to the different disciplines uniquely, but at the same time influences the bigger picture of a child’s education.

**Related Guidelines**

In order to provide flexibility and security when planning relating spaces, consider:

| IS5 | Visible Administration | 1.3.5 |
| LC2 | Flexible Schools       | 2.1.2 |
| LC4 | Technology in Every Learning Environment | 2.1.4 |
| SS1 | Access Control         | 2.3.1 |
| SS2 | Natural Surveillance   | 2.3.2 |
| SS3 | Territorial Reinforcement | 2.3.3 |
| NL1 | Visual Openness        | 2.7.1 |

Consider the interrelationship of a variety of learning spaces:

| IS3 | Media Center as a Focus | 1.3.3 |
| IS4 | Gathering Places         | 1.3.4 |
| VS1 | A Variety of Learning Spaces | 2.4.1 |
| VS3 | Interactive Learning    | 2.4.3 |
| EL4 | Creative Places          | 2.5.4 |
| EL8 | Stages for Performance   | 2.5.8 |

To further accommodate interrelated spaces, use:

| CC1 | Shorter, Wider Hallways | 2.6.1 |
| CC3 | Weather Protected Transition | 2.6.3 |
| CC4 | Convenient Restrooms    | 2.6.4 |
| CC5 | Drinking Water Where You Need It | 2.6.5 |

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Institutional Symbols

The third step of making schools a part of everyday life becomes more specific. As communities and schools begin to recognize and collaborate their needs and resources, special attention must be given to certain facilities. Perhaps a library will need to be centrally located in a high school, or an auditorium located near the main public entrance of the school. These Institutional Symbols will be important to maintaining the everyday presence of the school.

IS1 - Park-Like Landscape
IS2 - Community Athletic Events
IS3 - Media Center as a Focus
IS4 - Gathering Places
IS5 - Visible Administration
IS6 - Adult Spaces in Schools
Spaces and places are not limited by the walls that surround and contain them. Buildings are not defined by their interior only. How the exterior is planned, executed, and maintained is a crucial element in school design. The landscape of the school is an extremely important aspect and can be the deciding factor as to whether or not a beautiful school is created. Consideration of the exterior spaces around a school plays a large role in the school’s civic and community presence. How the building interacts and relates to its surrounding community and neighborhood can begin to determine how much or how little the design portrays itself. It can determine whether or not the community will use the school.

The landscape that surrounds the school facility completes the school campus and becomes a symbol of the institution. **School campuses should provide a landscape that will do the following:**

- Create an **Encouraging Learning Environment**
- Promote **Community Interest and Pride**
- Follow the **Principles of Park Design**

**Encouraging Learning Environment**
Creating grounds that encourage learning means providing opportunities for learning and interaction to happen among students outside of the classroom and the building. Outdoor learning activities can range from organized sports to gardening and will be discussed in depth in the pattern *Outdoor Learning*. Schools should also provide opportunities for social interaction to occur.

**Community Interest and Pride**
Beautiful grounds that promote community interest and pride will provide opportunities to bring the community onto the school grounds. This is one way to make the school part of the community’s everyday experience. Playgrounds, tracks, fields, and gardens are all areas that can be provided to instill community pride in any school. If funds are not available, sharing community grounds and parks allows the community to become part of the school.¹
Principles of Park Design

Approach the ground’s design with the principles of park design. Provide shade, green lawns, outdoor spaces, and light to establish a long-lasting beautiful landscape. **Follow these park-like standards to form an ideal campus for any school and community to share.**

Connect Civic Spaces to One Another - If the school is in close proximity to other civic places, such as parks, structures, monuments, buildings, etc., the grounds can connect to them using any combination of the following ideas.

Plan for Year Round Use - School grounds in Mississippi can be enjoyed most of the year. To make summer use more feasible, provide shading devices and orient outdoor spaces to the prevailing winds. For winter use, provide spaces that receive ample sunlight.

Enhance School Ground Entrances - Place large canopy trees to frame the entranceways. Plant trees roadside, along the edge of any adjacent parks and safe drop-off areas. By planting trees along the ground’s boundary, a formal space is formed. The trees will distinguish the school property from adjacent properties.²

Enhance Building Entrances - Many school children gather outside facility entrances before and after school. Use landscaping to create gathering spaces and seating areas for crowds. Place small decorative shade trees, shrubs, floral displays, bike racks, flagpoles, roof coverings, and school signage near the entry. Landscaping is not simply about shrubs hugging a facility. Use every opportunity to make any school’s grounds as comfortable and inhabitable as possible.³

Invest in Shade Trees - 70% of trees being planted on American campuses today have life spans of less than 40 years.⁴ Instead of planting small flowering trees for instant curb appeal, invest in indigenous shade trees. Shade trees will gain stature over the years.

Develop Pathways and Resting Spots - Place pathways to encourage the use of the grounds by the students and the community. Use hard surfaces and gravel when possible. Take advantage of shade opportunities. For example, consider making a path through a corridor of trees. Also, consider placing benches along the path to create an outdoor room.⁵

Shade Athletic Fields - Sports fields should have access to shade trees. The trees should be close to the field so that both spectators and players can use them. Place trees far enough away from an athletic field that the mature canopy will not enter over the field. Consider planting a grove of trees adjacent to or between athletic fields. Ideally, the grove should be located on the west or north side of the field. Planting in these directions leaves the athletic field in sun, yet provides a refuge for students to move in. Also, consider a shaded dug
out area, columns of trees, water, and seating to enhance views.\(^6\)

**Shade and Light Playgrounds** - There is the possibility that a fully shaded playground may get slippery. Consider planting trees on the west or north side of a playground so that the trees can provide a filtered shade refuge for the students.\(^7\)

**Provide Nature Trails** - Place signage in appropriate areas. Make the paths botany trails. Use the paths to get classes involved. Science classes can take part in identifying the natural ecosystem. Instead of manicuring a huge lawn, consider specifying meadow lawns, which are mowed once a year in late fall.\(^8\)

These design principles can be used in different combinations to provide a variety of learning environments, places for social interaction, and grounds that can be shared with the community. Consider the following examples.\(^9\) At Creekside and Lakeside Elementary in Utah, outdoor classrooms are instrumental tools that encourage multi-curriculum strategies. North Elementary School in Colorado provides a design that integrates the preservation of mature trees in a nearby park while a centralized courtyard creates an outdoor learning environment for the school. A sidewalk system throughout the site ties into the existing system for pedestrian traffic and unites the entire landscape. At Monroe Middle School in Omaha, Nebraska, there is an outdoor courtyard that provides a gathering area for students before and after school and during lunch hours. The courtyard is complete with tables and even offers the teachers the opportunity to hold outdoor classes.

**Conclusion**
Designing a park-like landscape that can be used year round by both the school and the community is no small task. However, it will make the school a beautiful and valuable part of any community. It will also create a memorable environment for the students and faculty and help to make the school a place they enjoy.
Related Guidelines

A park-like landscape can help create:

- **ES1** Beautiful Schools
- **DS4** Network of Shared Spaces
- **SS1** Access Control
- **SS2** Natural Surveillance
- **SS3** Territorial Reinforcement
- **CC3** Weather Protected Transition

A variety of activities and functions can occur in the landscape:

- **IS2** Community Athletic Events
- **IS4** Gathering Places
- **VS5** Outdoor Learning
- **EL9** Multiple Playgrounds

In order to maintain a park-like landscape, consider:

- **PM6** Grounds that Keep Themselves Up

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4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
Everyone can agree that high school athletics is not only good for a young person’s physical education and psychological development, but for bringing together parents, friends, and entire communities as well. Athletic events are a great way for students to engage in a physically active lifestyle as well as show their school pride in a socially accepted manner. It is in these places that friends, heroes, and rivals are made in a matter of seconds and childhood dreams are fulfilled by the putting on of a jersey. In these places, people come to enjoy not only the event but also each other’s company.

In order for the school and community to take full advantage of the uniqueness that high school athletics have to offer, it is important for the athletic facility to be properly placed, whether it is on the school campus or at a nearby park. Consider the following strategies for utilizing athletic facilities:

**Community Stadiums and Gyms**

Since school grounds become more community oriented, it should be understood that they must be planned with this in mind. Today, schools are places of focus that offer communities more than just an educational array of opportunities, but also a convenient place to gather and participate in recreational activities. Communities also use the gyms or stadiums to host city or county meetings and elections. This is why stadiums and gyms must be located in a convenient and accessible manner. Locating the facilities on the edge of campus closer to main roads can accomplish this. It is also beneficial to have plenty of parking and open field space in case of event overflow. There should be clear paths or sidewalks that connect neighborhood streets to the outskirts of campus that are safe and free of hazardous obstacles.

**Multi-use Stadiums and Gyms**

When programming the spaces for stadiums and gyms, remember that they are quite
often used for other events besides sports. Gyms are excellent places for schools to host science fair competitions and other indoor activities that require a large amount of open space. Stadiums often host outdoor events other than football or soccer games such as fall festivals, horse shows, or pep rallies, which require large outdoor spaces with adequate seating.

**Visibly Symbolic Stadiums and Gyms**

It is also important to understand the psychological effects that stadiums and gyms have on students, teachers, parents, and communities. These sporting facilities can be the connection that people have to the school ground as an institution. By understanding this phenomenon, it can be easier to plan the location of the stadium or gym. Even the design of the facility and its placement on the school grounds can have an effect on the viewers and users. More flashy and exposed facilities will enhance its importance and significance as an institutional symbol, while a more conservative and moderate facility will reduce its importance and significance.

**Conclusion**

Although high school athletics offer great things to students, parents, teachers, and communities, an emphasis on athletic spaces is controversial in some respects. Many schools feel that stadiums and gyms have become the focal point of campuses today, instead of the library or classroom. While this may be the case for some schools it is not necessarily wrong considering all of the positive aspects athletics confer. They offer advantages such as bringing together communities and helping a student gain valuable social skills outside the classroom in a safe respected environment. Some schools also feel that the fields and courts are taking valuable learning time away from students, causing a decline in academic success. Although this may be true in some instances studies show that high school athletes average between .75 and 1.00 point higher in their GPA.¹ These activities and events, in their proper place, will enhance the lives of students and communities.

It is important to address these principles during planning, or the school’s visual message to the community could be opposite to what the school wants to send. Stadiums, gyms, and all other athletic facilities are a significant part of a student’s everyday life, and for this reason they will always play an important role as an institutional symbol for years to come.
Related Guidelines
When planning for these facilities, review:

- DS1 Neighborhood Schools 1.2.1
- DS4 Network of Shared Spaces 1.2.4

To accommodate for the welfare and safety of users and spectators, consider:

- IS1 Park-like Landscapes 1.3.1
- SS7 Safe Playgrounds 2.3.7
- CC4 Convenient Restrooms 2.6.4

When designing spectator seating, use:

- IS4 Gathering Places 1.3.4

When designing fields and courts, use:

- EL9 Multiple Playgrounds 2.5.9

Consider other opportunities:

- DS5 Interrelationship of Disciplines 1.2.5
- VS5 Outdoor Learning 2.4.5

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Media Center as a Focus

There has been much talk about the new role of the library over the past few decades and the changing ideas and patterns that have developed out of this new role. The library is no longer referred to as just a library because of the many other roles it has now taken on. One popular name given to fit the role of the new library is the media center. The role of the media center is no more prominent than the day the library was conceived, but it is more complex than ever before because of ever changing technology. A library no longer is just a place for books, but it is a resource center, a liberal arts focal facility, and a social gathering place for the school as well as the community. By understanding the complexity of the new media center, it is possible to fulfill its role through a proper location and configuration.

*It is important that the media center be a place of focus on two levels. The media center should:*  
- Engage the Surrounding Elements and Community  
- Provide for Inter-needs and Components

Surrounding Elements and Community
The media center’s location is important due to the multitude of relationships it has to other areas of the school and community. For instance, communities today sometimes share the media center with the local high school, which forces the location of a new media center to be well suited for community use. In other instances, schools solely concentrate on the library as a hub to meet the direct needs of every department within the school. Depending on the idea and program for each specific media center and school, it is up to the designer, planner, and school administration to decide which strategy or strategies would best meet their needs. *Consider the following strategies:*

**Centrally Located** – This provides easy access to each wing of classrooms and serves as the main focal point for the school. There are several ways to centrally locate a media center. It can either be located inside or outside the school. The intentions of the media center should be evident in its location.
One example of a centrally located media center is in the Davidson Elementary School in Davidson, North Carolina. The media center is surrounded by a courtyard on three sides, and linked to the classroom wings by covered walkways. The courtyard is at the center of the school, which makes the media center an important focal point.

**Strategically Placed Entry** - Entrances and exits allow for the maximum use of resources available to the school and community. Entrances and exits should be familiar, inviting, and easily accessible to students, teachers, parents, and the community. One way to do this would be to locate the media center in a separate building so that there could be direct and easy access for everyone, even after school hours. Entrances and exits are also used to transport equipment and materials in and out of the media center by a variety of different people. Placing at least one larger entry with direct access to a parking lot will provide the necessary room and convenience for everyone.

**Allow for Future Expansion** - Locating the media center to allow for future expansion is a necessary step in planning its location. The media center is an ever-changing plethora of activities and is soon to encounter an activity or technology that will require a change of floor space. It is not a question of whether it will expand and change, but is a question of when and where. Centrally locating the media center allows for future expansion because of its location.

**Single Level Media Center** - Locating the media center on a single level has great advantages for three reasons. First, it reduces the number of staff needed to maintain the media center. Secondly, it makes for easier accessibility for people and audiovisual equipment. Thirdly, it makes it easier for staff to keep an eye on the current circulating books, which helps prevent theft.

**Inter-needs and Components**
The media center is arranged with a wide variety of important spaces that are a part of a student’s everyday life. The important thing to remember is that these spaces are not just for students anymore because of the community’s involvement with the media center. These spaces have a very important relationship to the surrounding school and community. *To plan and design a media center, it is important to understand its components and inter-needs.*

**Movable Shelving for Books** – There should be enough space within the library to house the current circulating books. This space should be very flexible and creatively designed to meet the changing needs of the media center. For more information on movable shelving, see the guideline **Configurable Furniture and Equipment.**

**Expandable Computer Room** – This is a place where all users can use e-mail, word processors, search the Internet, or any other type of multimedia used directly by the school. It is very important that the computer room be
adaptable to changing technology, which includes upgrades, networking, fiber optics, and space for additional computers and equipment. For more information on expandable computer rooms, see the guideline *Technology in Every Learning Environment*.

**Flexible Reference Area** – The reference area provides the users with larger, more specific information that cannot be checked out of the library. This would include encyclopedias, maps, catalogues, or collections of photographs. For more information on flexible reference areas, see the guideline *Flexible Schools*.

**Multiple Study Areas** – More and more teachers are implementing curriculum that is group oriented, which increases the need for places where students can interact within a larger, quieter environment. Study areas can be out in the open or contained within individual smaller rooms. For more information on multiple study areas, see the guideline *Instructional Cluster*.

**Informal Reading Areas** – This should be the most leisurely area within the media center. It should be located close to the periodicals, newspapers, and other current literature. The space should be furnished with relaxing furniture in order to create a casual and comfortable atmosphere. For more information on informal reading areas, see the guideline *Generous Reading Spaces*.

**Smaller Group or Conferencing Rooms** – These rooms are similar to the study areas with one difference. Group or conferencing rooms should have a degree of isolation and privacy, which can be achieved through the use of movable partitions, half walls or by complete isolation. For more information on small group or conferencing rooms, see the guideline *Organized Discussion*.

**Larger Library Classrooms** – It is important to have areas within the media center where a teacher can take his or her class to discuss certain topics, watch films, or do specific types of research. These larger classrooms within the library can serve various functions such as teacher conferencing spaces, class research projects, or community meetings. For more information on library classrooms, see the guideline *Lecturing Places*.

**Controlled Viewing and Listening Room** – Every media center should have a separate and controlled room where users can go to listen to tapes, compact discs, and view microfilm or slides. This room should be contained or enclosed to prevent disturbance to the rest of the media center.

**Separate Librarian’s Facilities** – The librarian and his or her staff need separate offices to maintain the media center. There should be room for administrative tasks, storage of administrative records, and meetings. It is important that the librarian’s offices have a view into the main circulation area for theft determent or in case someone is in need of assistance. For more information
on a separate librarian’s facilities, see the guideline Support for Teachers.

**Secure Periodical Storage** – Over time any library will accumulate back issues of magazines, articles, and newsletters. There should be a room that is secure from fire and theft to house these older periodicals. This room could also be a storage place for old books that are either out of circulation or are too damaged to put on shelves, but are still needed in circulation. For more information on secure periodical storage, see the guideline A Variety of Designated Storage.

**Accessible Equipment and Repair Room** – The equipment and repair room should be available and accessible to staff and faculty on a regular basis. This room is for storage of all the hardware media devices such as televisions, projectors, cameras, and even laptops along with software for these devices. It should have more than one entrance or exit to allow for easy transportation to classrooms. For more information on accessible equipment and repair rooms, see the guideline Design for Easy Maintenance.

**Conclusion**

When planning a media center, it is important to remember that it should be the heart of the school. That is why it is important to step back and look at the bigger picture of the school’s mission before being too meticulous about a media center’s location. When the school’s mission is understood, whether it calls for a formal and direct relationship or an informal and casual relationship between the different departments within the school, it will make all of the smaller design decisions much easier and adaptive.
Related Guidelines

To create a flexible, expandable, and current media center, provide:

- **LC4** Technology in Every Learning Environment 2.1.4
- **LC2** Flexible Schools 2.1.2
- **NL4** Support for Teachers 2.7.4
- **NL5** A Variety of Designated Storage 2.7.5
- **NL8** Configurable Furniture and Equipment 2.7.8

To accommodate for a variety of activities, use:

- **IS4** Gathering Places 1.3.4
- **VS1** A Variety of Learning Spaces 2.4.1
- **EL3** Generous Reading Spaces 2.5.3
- **EL4** Creative Spaces 2.5.4

To accommodate community use, consider:

- **DS4** Network of Shared Spaces 1.2.4
- **IS6** Adult Spaces in Schools 1.3.6

To accommodate for the welfare and safety of users, consider:

- **CC4** Convenient Restrooms 2.6.4
- **CC5** Drinking Water Where You Need It 2.6.5
- **NL1** Visual Openness 2.7.1

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Today the need for social places on campus is being understood more than ever. Research has found that the importance of reason and feeling are of equal value, especially when considering the complex daily human connections created and shaped in school.\(^1\) The conclusion can then be made that it is necessary to encourage emotional dialogue in the student’s, teacher’s, parent’s, and the community’s every-day lives and activities within the school. “By some measures, less than 25% of all learning occurs within the classroom.”\(^2\) This statistic shows the extreme importance of the un-programmed spaces in schools.

Gathering places are not needed just for students; they are needed for parents, teachers, and community as well. Such places might include parent/teacher conference rooms or a student commons area open to the general public for an art exhibition. Each type of space serves a unique purpose for a school to enhance the lives of its users.

To provide for the social needs of students, faculty, and community, a school should provide the following components:
- **Student Gathering Everywhere**
- **Gathering Spaces for Support**
- **Community Gathering**

**Student Gathering Everywhere**
Formal and informal gathering places for students occupy most of the programmed gathering space within a school. They cover everything from the classroom to the auditorium. However, it is also seen that students can use most un-programmed spaces for socialization as well. It is important to understand the need for informal, formal, programmed, and un-programmed learning spaces inside and outside the classroom for students. Consider the following environments for formal and informal student gathering:
Well-Balanced Classrooms - A well-balanced classroom is needed to offer a student a well-rounded education. The classroom is typically thought of as a formal place due to the teacher’s formatted instruction, rows of desks, and a strict code of conduct. At the same time, the classroom can be informal in nature depending on the curriculum being taught. For example, an English class is more formal than an art class although both could be delivered with the same integrity and discipline. To learn more about the well-balanced classroom, refer to the guideline A Variety of Learning Spaces.

Shorter or Wider Hallways - Shorter, wider hallways are needed in schools today because of the time spent by most students going to class, getting books from their lockers, or chatting with a friend before class. Hallways in the past have been dangerous places to socialize because of heavy traffic. Many would argue that it is better to have hallways that discourage socialization, but it is important to understand that students are going to stop and talk between classes nevertheless. That is why it is important to make sure it is safe and convenient. For more information on hallways, refer to the guideline Shorter or Wider Hallways.

Flexible Commons - Flexible student commons are becoming more popular today in high schools. The commons area is a response to the need for informal gathering places for students. This common area can also serve double functions; in fact, many schools have doubled the commons area as a cafeteria. This may seem like a bad decision, but it has proven to be an effective cost saving idea. In many cases, students make an extra effort to pick up after themselves to keep the area clean because they feel a sense of personal ownership for that space. To learn more about flexible student commons, refer to the guidelines Activity Based Space and De-Institutionalized Eating Environments.

Versatile Outdoor Courtyards - Outdoor courtyards are used to give students a place to socialize and learn in a relaxed atmosphere. To place an extra emphasis on informal learning, some schools incorporate outdoor learning environments or outdoor classrooms. These outdoor spaces can be used by teachers to instruct students in the middle of a unique informal setting. The reason they work so well is because they offer a student a wide range of experiential situations that can’t come from being inside. They can be made from simple materials like rocks and logs and can be flexible enough to handle a multitude of tasks. For more information on versatile outdoor courtyards, refer to the guidelines Park-like Landscape and Outdoor Learning.

Sociable Playgrounds - Sociable fields, courts and playgrounds are more than places for athletic events. They are places where students can let all of their bound up energy and excitement out, and even learn something. Football fields and basketball courts have both been places for social interaction for students for years. Playgrounds are a gathering place for not only students, but for local residents and their families to come out, have fun, and enjoy the
outdoors. For more information on social fields, courts, and playgrounds, refer to the guidelines Community Athletic Events, Safe Playgrounds, and Multiple Playgrounds.

Gathering Spaces for Support
Formal and informal gathering places for teachers and parents are needed for their administrative duties and social lives. The most obvious gathering place for teachers is for staff conferencing. Teachers also need spaces to relax and to consult with parents on certain issues about their children. While the need for informal spaces for parents in school exists, it is understood that a majority of their time at school would be spent with their children. This is why gathering places for students must be ready to handle all types of users. Consider the following environments for formal and informal teacher/parent gathering:

Comfortable Conferencing - Comfortable teacher and parent conferencing rooms are needed to allow parents the opportunity to discuss their child's welfare or other issues without feeling apprehensive or uneasy. A conferencing room could either be formal or informal depending on the attitude that one wants to portray while in a discussion. For instance, if an administration decides that parent/teacher conferences should be prescribed and straight to the point, then it makes sense to create a formal environment. On the other hand, if the administration decides that parent/teacher conferences ought to be relaxed and unofficial, then it makes sense to create an informal environment. Teachers also need a place for conferencing among themselves in a comfortable atmosphere. For more information on comfortable teacher and parent conferencing spaces, refer to the guideline Adult Spaces in Schools and Support for Teachers.

Support Spaces for Teachers - Support spaces for teachers are needed for the everyday tasks that teachers are responsible for, such as developing projects, communicating, and meeting with other teachers. There should also be a lounge for teachers to eat lunch and take a well-deserved break. These spaces should all be as informal or formal as the tasks performed in them. For more information on support spaces for teachers, refer to the guideline Support for Teachers.

Community Gathering
Formal and informal gathering places for the community are needed to help a school fulfill its goal as a resource to the community. A few places on the school grounds are available for the community to use during or after hours, such as the media center, gymnasiums, or theaters. To understand more about gathering places for the community, refer to the guidelines Unlocking the Doors to the Community, Network of Shared Spaces, and Adult Spaces in Schools.

Conclusion
It is important to remember that gathering places are not meant to bring a lazy or lethargic atmosphere to the school, but are meant to give a student a social outlet to
develop his or her emotional intelligence. By understanding the need for schools to impact a student’s everyday life, it becomes a must for gathering spaces to inhabit the school in a profound way.

**Related Guidelines**

To enhance the function and flexibility of gathering places, use:

- **HS1** Control Light Quality
- **HS4** Acoustics for Learning
- **HS5** Maximize Indoor Air Quality
- **HS6** Maximize Comfort and Control
- **VS6** Proportionally Scaled Volumes
- **NL8** Configurable Furniture and Equipment

Provide a variety of gathering place types:

- **IS2** Community Athletic Events
- **VS5** Outdoor Learning
- **EL1** Lecturing Places
- **EL2** Organized Discussion
- **EL7** Voluminous Musical Spaces
- **EL8** Stages for Performance

Certain spaces can double as gathering spaces:

- **IS3** Media Center as a Focus
- **SS4** Natural Disaster Safe Zones
- **CC1** Shorter Wider Hallways
- **CC2** Deinstitutionalized Eating Environments

To accommodate for the welfare and safety of users, consider:

- **CC4** Convenient Restrooms
- **CC5** Drinking Water Where You Need It
- **NL1** Visual Openness

Consider other opportunities:

- **ES2** Schools as the Community Face
- **DS2** Community of Learners
- **DS4** Network of Shared Spaces
- **DS5** Interrelationship of Disciplines

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1.3.4 Schools in Everyday Life / IS - Institutional Symbols / IS4 - Gathering Places
Leaders drive others to achieve great things by serving, setting an example and carrying responsibilities on their shoulders. Leaders are needed in every aspect of life, whether it is inside or outside the classroom. The administration serves, sets the example, and carries the responsibilities of our nation’s schools today, and schools could not operate without them. Above any other aspect of the school, the administration is by far the most important because of the role it plays. It is no longer comprised of only a principal and secretary. It is a fast-paced business with ever-changing issues and circumstances.

Today’s educational administrations serve, set the example, and carry the responsibilities in two major areas:

Center of Daily Function
Psychological Presence

Center of Daily Function
To outline the functional aspects of a school administration, it is important to look at the programmatic parts of the administration. The following is a breakdown of the different components of the administration, their relationships, and needs:

Welcoming Counselor – The counselor’s office is a place where students and their parents should feel welcome and important. Locating the office close to an entry provides a welcoming atmosphere, as opposed to feeling like being stuck in the middle of the school somewhere. It is also important for the counselor’s office to have a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere so students and parents feel at ease. Use furniture that is informal, like soft couches and recliners, and refrain from using bold colors. Instead, use neutral colors to enhance the comfortable atmosphere. For more information on how to achieve a casual environment, refer to the guidelines Meaningful Use of Color and Proportionally Scaled Volumes.
**Visible and Open Principal's Suite** – A principal is the most important figure in the entire school and is needed in more places at one time than anyone else. It is important that his or her office be located where it is highly noticeable and accessible to anyone in need. The atmosphere should also not be intimidating to students so they can feel free to approach the office at any time. There should be separate direct access that connects the principal’s suite to the outside for the principal and vice-principal. Every office or room located within the suite should be open to each other so there is an easy flow of traffic in and out at all times. For more information on how to achieve a visual and open space refer to the guideline *Visual Openness*.

Today, the principal’s suite is comprised of many different occupations to handle the massive amount of business and responsibility that an administration deals with. One is a secretary to handle all of the principal and/or vice-principal’s scheduling and paperwork. An administration may also have a vice-principal or multiple principals depending on the student population. One vice-principal is needed in a high school for every 400 students after a base population of 500 students.

**Operations Office Close to Entry** – In order for a school to function on a daily basis, it is a necessity that there is a well-run operations office that takes care of daily needs. There should be space for a waiting area, toilets, storage, and a vault for student records. It should be located close to the entry for ease of shipping and processing along with ease of communication with the general public. It also sets the stage for a familiar and welcoming entrance where parents, students, and the general public are greeted with a smile.

**Isolated Health Station** – for more information on this topic, refer to the guideline *Isolated Health Station*.

**Psychological Presence**

It is important to look at the environmental and psychological role of the administration and strategies on how to fill that role. This role requires openness and availability to students, teachers, and parents at all times with an atmosphere that is not intimidating. This is especially true to allow for comfortable parent/teacher conferencing and counseling with students.

An administration’s role is very diverse, including everything from arranging reduced lunch plans to disciplining a student. Many of the duties are subtle derivatives from mere administrative presence. For example, an imminent fight would be diverted because of the principal walking nearby.

There are two strategies on how to locate an administration within a school that can both fulfill its environmental and psychological role. Although there is a continuing debate on whether a decentralized administration is better than a centralized administration, it is evident that both have worked successfully. The debate should not be a matter of which strategy is best, but should be a matter of determining which strategy best
meets the administration’s individual needs. It should be up to each administration to choose which strategy is appropriate. **Consider both strategies in relationship to specific needs and circumstances:**

**Centralized Administration** – Locating the administrative offices in a centralized area allows for connection and convenience to anyone in the school no matter where they are located. This accomplishes availability and visibility in a less personal way, but in a more familiar and resourceful way. In a situation where there are fewer faculty and staff members, a centralized administration would work better because of the small space the entire administration would occupy.

**De-centralized Administration** – Locating the administrative offices throughout the school reduces the grandeur and intimidation felt by the students and brings the principal’s office into the realm of the student/teacher relationship. This accomplishes availability and visibility on a less familiar and organized way, but in a more personal way. The idea is that each principal or vice-principal will become more familiar with a designated group of students, thus remembering names and faces of students. If the school is on the larger site, it would be more appropriate for the administration to be de-centralized based on student population.

**Conclusion**
Before any administration can develop the skills needed to become what the school needs, it is imperative that students, teachers, and parents feel a sense of importance in attitudes of the administration. Being visible and available sends a message to a student that although he or she may never come in direct contact with the principal or any of the administration, he or she is welcome anytime for anything. This is done through a welcoming counselor’s office, open and visible principal’s suite, and an operation’s office that’s well run and suitable to meet the needs of the community and school.
Related Guidelines
A visible administration is important for the creation of:

ES2 Schools as the Community Face 1.1.2
DS3 Downsizing Schools 1.2.3
NL4 Support for Teachers 2.7.4

To accommodate the function of any administrative part, consider:

LC4 Technology in Every Learning Environment 2.1.4
HS1 Control Light Quality 2.2.1
HS4 Acoustics for Learning 2.2.4
HS5 Maximize Indoor Air Quality 2.2.5
HS6 Maximize Comfort and Control 2.2.6
VS2 Activity Based Space 2.4.2
VS6 Proportionally Scaled Volumes 2.4.6
VS7 Meaningful Use of Color 2.4.7
NL1 Visual Openness 2.7.1
NL5 A Variety of Designated Storage 2.7.5
NL7 Surfaces for Learning 2.7.7
NL8 Configurable Furniture and Equipment 2.7.8

To accommodate for the welfare and safety of users, consider:

SS1 Access Control 2.3.1
SS2 Natural Surveillance 2.3.2
SS3 Territorial Reinforcement 2.3.3
SS5 Secure Traffic and Parking 2.3.5
CC4 Convenient Restrooms 2.6.4
CC6 Isolated Health Station 2.6.6

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Adult Spaces in Schools

“With learning we can’t afford to think of graduation as the finish line, and that means that one of the most important end products of schools needs to be citizens who have learned how to continue to learn.” 1

For the most part, the education offered in schools today is the best it has ever been. Technology has advanced. Learning environments, teaching standards, and learning techniques have been refined over years. As a result, almost all careers today demand at least a high school degree, if not a college degree. Today there are many adults who would love the chance to finally earn their high school diploma and perhaps better themselves and their career. Is there something the school can do to help these adults?

It has been said that learning never ends. Depending on one’s career or profession, continuing education may be required to keep up on ever-changing technology and ideas. Often, learning seminars, training, professional tests, and lectures are conducted for the benefit of the workforce. Even the teachers who work within the school everyday need the same opportunities to advance in their profession. Can the school offer learning environments, tools and technology to these people?

Often parents do not get deeply involved in their children’s education. This is not because they do not care. Often this is because parents do not feel welcome in schools. It has become common for students to cringe in fear when their parents have a teacher or principal’s conference because it is always assumed to be about something bad. Should a parent not feel welcome to meet with a teacher just to see and better understand what and how his or her child is performing in the learning environment?

When providing adult spaces, a school should:

- Provide A Variety of Adult Spaces
- Consider Opportunities and Obstacles

A Variety of Adult Spaces
Schools are in the business of educating children and molding them into life long learners. However, schools cannot afford to stop there; they must assume the responsibility of promoting life long learning to those further along in life. This can be
aided by providing the following Adult Spaces:

**Adult and Continuing Education Programs** - The Sweetwater School District in California is highly distinguished as one of the best in the country, not only for its K-12 curriculum, but also for its continuing education. The district operates the best adult education program in the state and offers adult education classes at over 70 locations in the county. The programs include vocational, professional-skills development, literacy, English as a second language, and other general courses that help prepare adults for a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) equivalency certificate.

**Learning Environments for the Community and Local Companies** - This creates an easy way for the school to interact more with the community without the use of huge resources. These spaces can help provide for job training in any community. Not only can they be onsite but also can be built as satellites. These facilities can also be utilized by the students for vocational training. Training spaces should be formed in partnership with local business and industry. Creating training facilities would be effective in providing an incentive for the community to become more involved with the school district.

**Places to Comfortably Meet with the Parents** - Parents also need their space to feel more comfortable within the school system. One proposal is to program a space that provides comfortable spaces to meet and discuss the matters at hand. This space should provide a nice, comfortable atmosphere and provide material for the parents to obtain information on the school system and its curriculum. There should be a variety in the size of these spaces, some allowing for small one on one discussion and others for group conferencing.

**Space for Community Assembly and Display** - Schools need community spaces for a variety of purposes. Schools can establish a community forum space where dances, auctions, community meetings, and exhibits of student and community works can be held. Conference spaces should be established for community and neighborhood meetings. Kitchens, storage, and display space can also be provided.

**Space to Promote Proactive Parental Involvement** - A parent information center can serve many purposes. It can serve as an interface between the school, parents and the community. PTA’s can use this facility, along with parents who are participating in school functions. It can be a place parents come to find information about the school and its programs, as well as information on other topics. It can even serve the purpose as a public relations office.

**Opportunities and Obstacles**
Providing spaces for adults can provide invaluable community identity and support for the school, while at the same time bringing with them certain logistical, security, and usage problems. These are of great concern but involve nothing that cannot be overcome with careful thought and consideration. For more information on these
obstacles, look at the guideline **Network of Shared Spaces**.

**Conclusion**
The schools of tomorrow need to take responsibility for the education of adults as well as their children. This is not to say that it is the primary concern, or that those adults and the community in which they live do not also bear responsibility. It is simply to say that schools can provide resources and opportunities to make the above opportunities easier and more convenient. By doing this, the school places itself in the midst of the community, providing for the common good. This in return will provide a wiser, more knowledgeable community who will be more willing to support the school in all of its endeavors.

**Related Guidelines**
These spaces can become part of:

- **DS4** Network of Shared Spaces 1.2.4

Consider a variety of spaces for:

- **IS3** Media Center as a Focus 1.3.3
- **IS4** Gathering Places 1.3.4
- **VS1** A Variety of Learning Spaces 2.4.1
- **EL2** Organized Discussion 2.5.2

To accommodate for the welfare and safety of users, consider:

- **IS5** Visible Administration 1.3.5
- **LC3** Design for Every Student 2.1.3

To balance the relationship between child and adult scale, consider:

- **LC1** Home as a Template 2.1.1

To enhance the function of all adult spaces, use:

- **LC4** Technology in Every Learning Environment 2.1.4
- **NL5** A Variety of Designated Storage 2.7.5
- **NL6** A Place for Display 2.7.6

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4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.