

# MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Mississippi School Design Guidelines is a collaborative effort of the Educational Design Institute at Mississippi State University and the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools of the Mississippi Department of Education. This manual contains information for the design, construction, and maintenance of safe and effective K-12 school facilities.





# Mississippi School Design Guidelines, Second Edition

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## Project Managers

Dr. John Garner  
John Poros  
Ryan Hansen  
Brandon Gowen

## Writers

William Baker  
Leigh Ann Black  
Brian Conner  
Brandon Gowen  
Ryan Hansen  
Michel Lebel  
Philip Luse  
Donald McKenzie  
John Poros  
Jennifer Rowe  
Elizabeth Trent  
Emily Whetstone

## Support Operations

Rhoshunda Cork  
Shannon Martin

## Layout Design

Michael Graham  
Ryan Hansen  
Vrushali Palamwar



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# Preface

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The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and Educational Design Institute (EDI) at Mississippi State University have collaborated to write these new school facility guidelines for the state of Mississippi. These guidelines were developed through a collaborative process with 154 participants concerned with the design, construction, and maintenance of school facilities. The guidelines cover school facility issues from the planning of new facilities to the maintenance of existing facilities. While not mandatory, we believe that these guidelines provide a good, practical guide whether a district is renovating an older building or starting the process of planning a new building.

The Educational Design Institute is a collaborative effort of Mississippi State University's School of Architecture and College of Education. The mission of EDI in collaboration with students, parents, educators, school administrators, school boards, and communities is to promote and encourage the creation of safe, accessible, flexible and developmentally appropriate learner-centered environments in the State of Mississippi.

## **Purpose**

The Mississippi School Design Guidelines were developed with several goals in mind:

- a.** To link educational goals and facilities design
- b.** To facilitate flexible, performance-based application
- c.** To encourage collaborative development
- d.** To become a tool to train superintendents
- e.** To guide for future capital improvements

## **To Link Educational Goals and Facilities Design**

For educational facilities to aid in improving the quality of education, the design must support the educational goals of a school. While the educational environment is only one factor in providing a quality education, an unsupportive educational environment can create obstacles and distractions to learning, eroding the quality of instruction. When an environment supports educational goals, that environment goes beyond eliminating obstacles and actually suggests new opportunities for learning.

## **To Facilitate Flexible, Performance-Based Application**

The guidelines are voluntary, written as a guide and learning tool for school boards, school administrators, and their design professionals. This approach will help generate the appropriate questions, but not dictate solutions. The definition of, the advantages, the disadvantages, questions to ask, and further references are identified in each of the guidelines. The guidelines in many cases set up standards for performance in building design, construction, and maintenance, but do not dictate an approach. While there are many common goals for facility design, school districts and their design professionals need the flexibility to find an approach based on the individual needs of a school or district.

## **To Encourage Collaborative Development**

In planning the development of the guidelines, MDE and EDI recognized the need to address diverse issues not only issues of maintenance, durability, and basic functionality but also of community use, compatibility to the educational program, and future flexibility. The diversity of issues involved argued for a process considering many different viewpoints.

The process began with EDI collecting design guidelines from the 43 states that have these written guidelines. EDI and MDE then sent invitations to architects, engineers, construction companies, and school districts to participate in a series of workshops to determine the key issues that the guidelines should address.

On June 14, August 30, and October 11, 2000, MDE and EDI held workshops in Jackson, MS to get input from organizations and individuals involved in the design and construction of school buildings. Three focus groups were established corresponding to three broad categories of facilities issues: health and safety issues, ambient environmental issues (acoustics, temperature, lighting, etc.), and curriculum-based design factors (size of schools, different learning activities impact on the facility, etc.). The focus groups consisted of ten to fifteen people and included community leaders, engineers, architects, general contractors, building product representatives, school administrators, and representatives from the Department of Education. These groups developed an initial set of guidelines.

A second stage of workshops occurred between October 19 and November 16, 2000. MDE and EDI visited nine school districts geographically distributed throughout the state to get the opinion of teachers, administrators, and superintendents on the guidelines as developed thus far and to learn of additional issues educators want addressed in the design of schools. There were 90 participants at these workshops.

Writing and research of the guidelines started in January, 2001. In addition to the staff of EDI, architectural students enrolled in an independent study class conducted research for the guidelines. A small advisory group met with the EDI staff to review the progress of the guidelines. When the guidelines were completed, the advisory group reviewed the guidelines again.

By developing the guidelines collaboratively with the users of the guidelines, school administrators, teachers, architects, and engineers, the guidelines have benefited from real-world experience in the problems and solutions of school design and maintenance.

## **To Become a Tool to Train Superintendents**

Because superintendents are trained to educate children, not to design a building or supervise a construction project, these guidelines will help school administrators by suggesting the right questions to ask their design and construction professionals, by providing concise background information on issues, and by offering references for further research. By reading the guidelines, a school

administrator can get a solid start on handling facilities issues and a general overview of school design and planning.

### **To Guide for Future Capital Improvements**

For school administrators, planning large capital improvements can be one of the most important projects of their tenure. The guidelines have information on school planning to help school administrators through these large projects. The guidelines cover building size and site selection issues. Non-building issues such as community involvement, the sharing of facilities with other governmental entities, and public use of school facilities are covered as well. By laying out all of the issues involved in school planning, the guidelines are a checklist and reminder of all the possibilities for strategic planning efforts.





# Acknowledgements

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Robert Campbell	Director of Office of Safe and Orderly Schools
Dr. Bill Welch	Director of School Building
Donna Hales	Operations Management Analyst
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William Baker  
Leigh Ann Black  
Brian Conner  
Michel Lebel  
Phillip Luse  
Brandon Gowen  
Donald McKenzie  
Vrushali Palamwar  
Jennifer Rowe  
Elizabeth Trent  
Emily Whetstone

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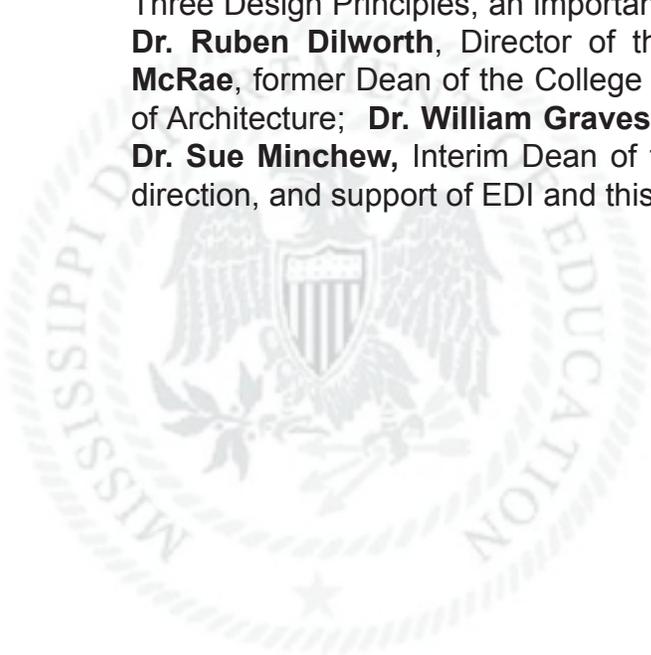
Rankin County School District  
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Greenville Public School District  
Petal School District  
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# How to Use this Book

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*Mississippi School Design Guidelines* identifies principles and strategies to be used when designing schools. The use of the guidelines is voluntary. They serve as a guide and a learning tool for teachers, school boards, school administrators, and design professionals. The definition of design approaches, the advantages, the disadvantages, questions to ask, and further references for different approaches are identified

## **The guidelines can be navigated in three basic ways:**

- Using the Table of Contents.
- Using the List of Related Guidelines.
- Using the Index.

## **Using the Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists the guidelines from larger-scale to smaller-scale issues. The guidelines are organized into three major categories:

- Schools in Everyday Life
- A Student's Place
- Enduring Construction

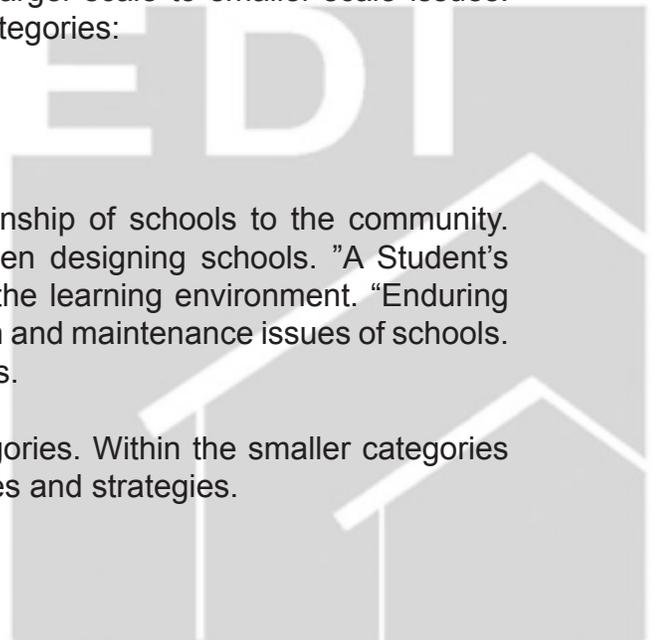
"Schools in Everyday Life" concerns the relationship of schools to the community. This is the larger-scale issues to approach when designing schools. "A Student's Place" concerns the relationship of learners to the learning environment. "Enduring Construction" concerns the technical construction and maintenance issues of schools. This category addresses the smaller-scale issues.

Within these larger categories are smaller categories. Within the smaller categories are the written guidelines, which identify principles and strategies.

### **Example:**

- Schools in Everyday Life contains:
- Embracing Schools
  - Distribution of Schools
  - Institutional Symbols

The first written guideline in "Embracing Schools" is Beautiful Schools. This guideline addresses the larger-scale issue at hand when designing a school and is followed by a guideline addressing the next smaller-scale issue. The last written guideline in Institutional Symbols is Adult Spaces in Schools, which addresses a smaller scale issue than Beautiful Schools. Adult Spaces in Schools, like all the guidelines, introduces the issue then lists the principles of the issue in bold face type. The principles are followed by strategies. Each strategy is individually discussed. The use of indentations within the text denotes sub-strategies.



**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 can not afford to stop there, they must assume the responsibility of promoting life-long learning to those further along in life. ***This action 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 ...

After reading this guideline, go on to the patterns that follow working through the Table of Contents that will lead to the design of an entire school.

### **Using Related Guidelines**

The guidelines are hierarchically related having issues that relate to guidelines in other categories and point to some larger-scale issue rather than a smaller scale issue. A guideline that concerns a place for large assembly is also related to questions of community use as well as acoustics. Some sections mention other guidelines throughout the text that should be read as well. All guidelines list related guidelines at the end of the text. This listing points, to both the larger and smaller scale issues related to that particular guideline.

#### **Example:**

You may choose a guideline of particular interest such as Adult Schools.

#### **Opportunities and Obstacles**

Providing spaces for adults can provide invaluable community identity and support for the school, creating 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 ...

#### **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

After one reads the guideline, other issues are brought to mind that begin leading to other guidelines of various scale. This is an ongoing process so starting with one particular concern in mind can also lead to the entire design of a school.

### **Using the Index**

The guidelines are thoroughly indexed with the first two sections presented as lists of questions. The first section is comprised of questions such as, “What learning activities should be considered when designing a school?”, that an architect might be faced with when designing a school. The second section is comprised of questions such as, “What type of learning activities should a school provide?”, that an educator might face. Each question leads to guidelines at any scale that explain how to approach that particular question. The alphabetical index lists keywords and the guidelines that are concerned with that keyword.

#### **Example:**

Read through the list of questions and find one of particular interest, such as: “How can behavior be controlled?”

This question will lead to

- Access Control
- Natural Surveillance
- Visual Openness

#### **Example:**

Choose a particular subject such as safety.

Look up the word “safety” in the alphabetical index.

This word leads to

- Neighborhood Schools
- Downsizing Schools
- Access Control
- Safe Playgrounds
- Abundance of Windows
- Preventative Maintenance

The index can be used when dealing with a specific issue or when browsing the guidelines.

