



Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities

An Anatomy of an Assessment

**A Statewide Physical Assessment of Educational Facilities for
Building Condition and Educational Suitability**

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

Act 1181 of 2003

Facilities Evaluation Process Overview:

In November of 2002, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in the Lake View case that the state's educational facilities are both inadequate and unequal and therefore, in violation of the state constitutional guarantees of free, adequate, efficient, and substantially equal public education for the children of Arkansas. The Arkansas General Assembly was determined by the court to have the ultimate responsibility to establish facility adequacy, as required by the Lake View decision, and respond to the inadequacy and substantial inequality of educational facilities throughout the state. In recognition of the necessity for a statewide school facility study and revised educational facility standards, the "*Joint Committee on Educational Facilities*" was established by the Legislature in April of 2003.

In order to fully understand the adequacy of the existing schools, and what aspects may require renovation, maintenance and/or replacement, the State of Arkansas is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of all public educational facilities.

Part 1: The Educational Suitability Assessment

The first element of the field evaluation is called an "*Educational Suitability Assessment*". In this phase, standards are being established by the Standards Committee for almost every aspect of classroom and/or educational space. Professional survey teams then evaluate the space to determine if it meets those standards. Then, a report is created citing alterations or modifications that need to be made to bring the space into compliance with the standards that define adequacy for a proper environment for teaching and learning.

The primary objective of the Educational Suitability Assessment is to examine each school building and assess what renovations and/or improvements may be required to bring the facility into compliance with statewide educational suitability standards. This will ensure adequacy of the facility to meet the minimum educational suitability standards required for schools within the state. This part of the assessment considers eight categories which include:

- Capacity
- Support for Programs
- Technology
- Security and Supervision
- Instructional Aids
- Physical Characteristics
- Learning Environment
- Relationship of Spaces

Each of these categories are assessed, weighted, and scored to produce an overall suitability score.

Part 2: The Building Condition Assessment

The second part of the evaluation is a "*Building Condition Assessment*". Professional assessment teams will be required to assess physical building systems incorporating civil, structural, architectural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical disciplines in accordance with statewide construction standards for educational facilities. All building construction characteristics will be

entered into a centralized database that will inventory accurate and up-to-date facility data for each school building within the state. All building deficiencies and major repair items will also be entered into the facilities database which will allow the Program Manager to prepare a school-by-school listing of required repairs (and their associated costs) and prioritize those repairs in a statewide context.

Starting June 1st, assessment teams will be visiting each school building, walking through all of the instructional spaces, and collecting information regarding educational suitability. Throughout the summer, teams of registered and licensed architects and engineers will also visit the schools to collect data and compile recommendations for repair, renovation, and/or replacement of educational facilities. At the end of the summer, the team will compile all of the data and generate a findings report.

The combination of these two evaluations will provide the State of Arkansas and the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities with comprehensive technical information needed to make informed and responsible decisions regarding future school building improvements. This information will be essential in identifying the budget and funding sources that will be required to ensure that Arkansas' schools are adequate and substantially equal, to provide the children of Arkansas quality and efficient public education in the 21st century.

When Assessors Come to Your School:

The field assessment portion of the project will be carried out by approximately eighteen professional survey teams represented by a number of local and national firms. Under state law, and by requirements of the Lake View decision, registered professional engineers and architects are required to perform the facilities assessment. Further, the Lake View decision prohibits individual school districts from performing a facilities self-assessment on school buildings. This is to ensure that all data collected will be organized in a consistent, professional, and unbiased manner. Each team will consist of an architect, a mechanical/plumbing, and electrical engineer, as well as an educational suitability specialist. Specialty firms, including ADA, structural, civil, and roofing consultants have been retained to provide additional assessment support to these teams.

The assessment teams will assess approximately 1,200 schools (80 million square feet) over the course of four months. In order to ensure a consistent and cohesive assessment, a number of protocols have been established. The state has been divided into six regions with each supervised by a Project Coordinators (PC). Each region consists of approximately 200 schools (see Appendix A). The regions basically conform to the organization of the existing Educational Cooperatives now serving the schools. The Project Coordinator will supervise the assessment teams throughout the field assessment portion of the project.

Prior to the Assessment:

The Project Coordinators have been very busy over the past several weeks developing a pre-assessment database. This database includes general information currently available about each school. Pre-assessment activities also have included gathering school supplied floor plans (of varying scale, format, and quality), confirmation of existing buildings, identification of educational spaces to be assessed for educational suitability, and sequencing the educational suitability assessments for each school. Prior to the on-site assessment, each team will receive a color coded assessment documentation package with all necessary forms to be used during the assessment. Each assessment team will be required prior to their school visit to:

- Arrange the walk-through schedule for each building
- Notify the school district one week before the visit using phone, fax, or email notification; and
- Obtain prescribed assessment forms in advance.

All assessment team members will be required to display their identification badge at all times while on site.

Beginning the Field Assessment:

Assessment survey teams will be required to register at the main office of each location immediately upon arrival at the campus, and sign out upon completion of the assessment while respecting any unique requirements of the individual; school location as far as additional identification or visitor badges. At the start of each assessment, it is generally advantageous to request a brief interview with the Principal, or Assistant Principal, and perhaps their plant operator / custodian. The district's facility manager may also be present. A preliminary interview may surface any known facility issues and can also be a source of valuable information regarding equipment replacement and construction dates, planned capital projects, and preventive maintenance schedules. When the assessment teams arrive at school, they must:

- Sign in at the school reception area and obtain a visitor's badge if required
- Meet with the Principal or designee prior to the walk through to discuss assessment procedures; and review school or assessment related data; and
- Have a copy of assessment forms, supplied site and floor plans, and measuring tools in hand.

Some Principals may want to provide a tour of the facilities in order to facilitate the assessment. This is allowed, however, the Principal may not directly participate in the assessment. Once the surveyor has checked in, we generally ask that the Principal make an announcement that we are conducting the survey and for teachers to please pardon the disruption. We ask that classroom doors be unlocked and that we be authorized a master key so we may have easy access to the classrooms and equipment rooms when unattended.

During the Walk Through:

During the survey, the educational suitability assessor will enter each instructional space (which includes all classrooms, resource rooms, the media center, the gymnasium, student dining, and other ancillary spaces). Using a form that is specific to that room use, the surveyor will conduct a brief inventory of the space and note observations on the form. After completing the interior spaces, the surveyor will proceed outdoors to collect information regarding the overall site, the playgrounds, and parking areas. During the walk through, the surveyor will:

- Complete a data collection assessment form for each room including estimated dimensions of interior instructional spaces;
- Add pertinent additional notes on the data form; and
- Tour the site noting the number of parking spaces, separation of vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic flow; playgrounds, play surfaces, and playfields, lighting, and signage.

The building condition assessors will progress through the school one building at a time, completing the general information forms, the life cycle forms, and the deficiencies forms. During the walk through, the assessor will:

- Make descriptive notations regarding their observations;
- Take photographs of necessary deficiencies and log the photos on the photo log sheet;
- Note any noncompliance issues relative to building codes.

After the onsite assessment is complete, the assessment team should meet to review findings; resolve any cross discipline deficiency observations; and organize the data forms for submission to the central data analysis team. Each completed data package will be submitted to Assessment Headquarters for processing and data logging.

Assessment Types and Levels:

All permanent buildings are to be assessed using one of two major assessment approaches. The instructional buildings built prior to 1999, including school buildings and school administrative facilities directly related to the school's operation are to be assessed using a comprehensive assessment approach that includes deficiency collection, life cycle data, summary level state of condition, and educational suitability.

All permanent instructional buildings (built prior to 1999) will be assessed for:

- Site and Building General Data Forms
- Comprehensive Deficient Conditions
- Life Cycle assessment
- Summary Level Condition Classifications by Building System
- Educational Adequacy

All permanent buildings that serve district-wide administrative functions (central warehouses, district administration, transportation), as well as instructional buildings built since 1999 are to be assessed using an abbreviated assessment that includes summary level state of condition and life cycle data. All district-wide gymnasiums and stadiums are to be assessed solely for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Portable buildings and temporary facilities are not to be assessed. The only data collected for these facilities is use and size and this documentation is generally made during the pre-assessment phase.

Data Analysis and Quality Assurance:

Once the data forms are submitted to Assessment Headquarters, they will be reviewed for completeness and correctness. Upon final acceptance of the data package, the data will be entered into the database and the data package will be inventoried for record keeping purposes. On occasion, local school district or individual school officials may have requested copies of the preliminary data after the field assessment has been performed. It will not be possible to accommodate these requests due to the fact that the preliminary data has not been fully processed. This data will not be finalized until the completed data base has been reviewed for quality purposes, final educational facilities standards have been adopted, the reporting guidelines and forms have been adopted, and the final report to the legislature has been accepted. All data will be released to the public upon approval by the Legislature and in coordination with the Department of Education Facilities Division. Control of all preliminary data

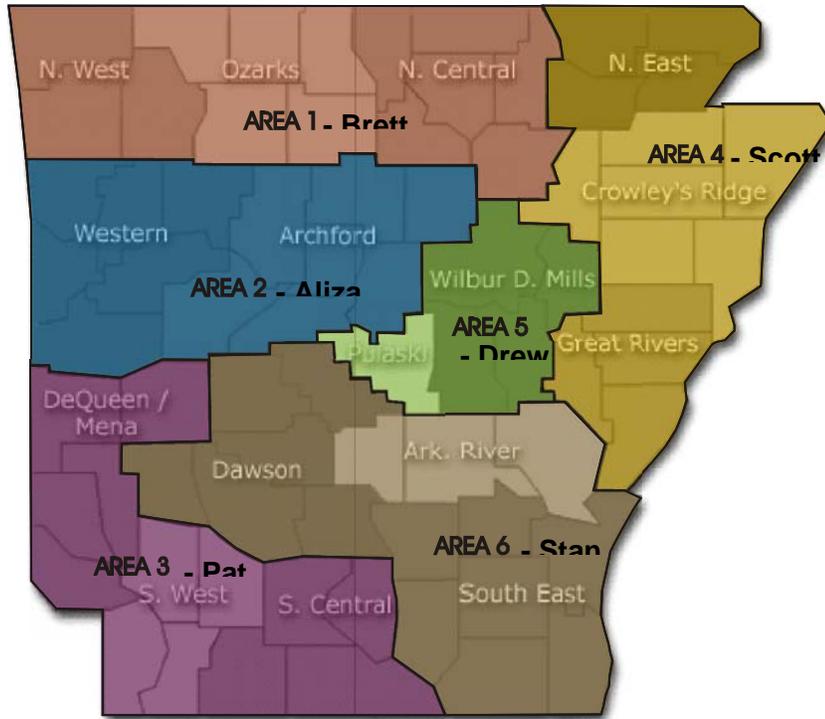
and draft reports will remain under the control of the Program Manager until accepted by the Joint Committee on Educational Facilities.

Since the database has been designed to be a perpetual record with the ability to be maintained and updated, future revisions will be able to be made through the Department of Education Facilities Division, and will be posted on the educational facilities website www.arkansasfacilities.com .

END

APPENDIX A

Project Coordinator Region Assignments



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