



About Our Schools

~~For Immediate Publication~~

PRESS RELEASE

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School building costs in Washington have decreased sharply in the 39-month period ending June 30, 1950, reports the State Board of Education in its statement "Schoolhouse Construction in Washington" released this week to members of the Legislature and the people of the State.

During the period, July 1, 1947, to June 30, 1950, the square foot cost of complete elementary school buildings was reduced from a state-wide average of \$12.49 to \$10.55.

Based upon analysis of 43 complete elementary school plants, the report shows 16 elementary schools were built July 1, 1947, to June 30, 1948, at an average cost per square foot of \$12.49. In 1948-49, eight new schools were built at \$10.79 per square foot. From July 1, 1949, to June 30, 1950, 19 elementary schools were completed at the further reduced average per square foot cost of \$10.55.

The sharp reduction in square foot cost from \$12.49 to \$10.55 the State Board of Education reports "may be due partly to the following factors: better architectural design, elimination of waste space, utilization of more functional building materials, continually increasing productivity of labor, more favorable market for bids and sound cooperative educational planning between local communities and the State.

TODAY'S SCHOOLS
BUILD
TOMORROW'S CITIZENS

The State Board of Education summary explains, "Through cooperative school plant planning, with local school authorities taking the initiative, school plants have been provided which are economical, flexible, expansible and adapted to the educational program.

"This type of school building design has been achieved as a result of hard work and careful research on the part of architects, contractors, lay citizens, school directors, educators, and the State Office working closely together. Such planning has been instrumental in the reduction of waste space and the elimination of unnecessary interior and exterior ornamental work.

"As a result of this continuous study and research, new school buildings have, in general, the following characteristic features:

1. One-story construction.
2. No basement.
3. Building on a concrete slab.
4. No attic space--use of flat roof with ceiling tile applied directly to the underside of the roof joist and roof to the upper side of the joist.
5. No parapet walls--no brick work over the windows.
6. Square-shaped classrooms--reduces perimeter of outside wall and length of corridors.
7. Standardized classroom design--permits some prefabrication."

The report considers the various factors producing variation in square-foot costs of construction, such as climate, local material and labor shortages, prices and supply of materials, number of contractors submitting a bid, type of building, incomplete buildings, building code requirements, two-story buildings and differences in size and scale of building units.

For example, on the number of contractors submitting a bid, the report says, "In general, the more contractors bidding on a job, the greater the likelihood of getting a satisfactory low bid; the season, amount of construction underway in the region and relative distance from construction centers affect the number of bids that are received."

According to the United States Department of Commerce a building costing \$100,000 in 1940 would cost nearly \$250,000 to construct today. Statistics show that over-all construction costs are continuing to go up because of the tremendous increases in (a) the cost of building materials, and (b) the cost of labor.

Square-foot costs for complete school buildings averaged \$10.55, while a residential building in Olympia cost \$12.00, Johnson Hall at the University of Washington \$13.00, Seattle's Public Safety Building, \$16.20, the New Bank Building in Yakima \$31.00, and the Veteran's Hospital at Spokane \$18.00 per square foot. These figures are based on the period of July 1, 1949, to June 30, 1950.

The need for school buildings has been magnified by the little construction done during the depression, the tremendous population influx during World War II --a 37 per cent increase for the State in the years 1940-50, curtailment of school construction during the war and a rising birthrate. In 1939 there were 26,471 births in the State; in 1948, 55,887.

As a result of these factors many school districts were faced with unprecedented construction which would meet the needs of their children.

Many citizens realized that educational opportunities could never be equalized so long as State aid was limited to current operating funds. Some districts could not provide any more than 25 per cent of the capital funds necessary, while others with equal effort were able to raise as much as 75 per cent.

In order to meet this situation, State aid to school districts for building construction was extended and broadened in scope by act of the 1947 Legislature.

The report to the Legislature also includes a summary of items used in school house construction in the State.

Pearl A. Wanamaker, President, State Board of Education, pointed out that in the face of an unknown future we cannot expect the downward trend in square foot costs to continue.

"The present world crisis, necessitating military priorities and accompanied by allocations of critical materials, short labor supply and insecurity of contractors, indicates possible increases in construction costs despite local, district and State efforts to maintain or reduce present costs," Mrs. Wanamaker said.

Price and wage controls, priorities and similar war-time economy measures are bound to be reflected on building costs, she said. A conference of architects and contractors was held early this month to plan solutions for these problems.

Mrs. Wanamaker called for continued research and study of all problems, national, state and local, in order to provide the best facilities and services possible in the education of our children.