
12.0 Partnering and Next Steps

In this chapter we present multiple ways in which schools wishing to implement FirstSchool principles can partner and work with us.







PARTNERING AND NEXT STEPS

There are multiple pathways for schools wishing to implement FirstSchool principles. FirstSchool will provide technical assistance to districts, creating new schools for children three to eight years old. In addition, FirstSchool will partner with existing schools to apply the FirstSchool framework across critical features, including the facility. Please see section 2.1 for more details about the collaborative process.

This document addresses the needs of multiple audiences. While it is designed primarily to guide and inform the construction of a new school for children ages three to eight, it may also be used to support efforts to develop a culture change in schools wherein schools adapt or renovate physical space to better serve the school staff and the young children and families who attend. Additionally, we recognize that some district leaders will decide that any one of a number of different configurations better meets the needs of their entire community – pre-kindergarten through second grade, pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, etc. The size and geographic distribution of the student population at different grade levels, projected changes in the population size and distribution, available resources, existing school buildings, and educational philosophy will all contribute to these decisions. While this document considers the space needs of a pre-kindergarten through third grade community, we believe it can be a useful tool when designing or reconsidering space for any of these configurations. A collaborative, inquiry-driven process will allow stakeholders to identify ways to modify the suggested design to suit the needs of a slightly different age range. For example, if fourth and fifth graders are included, a larger gross motor space may be necessary; if the school serves only pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, a smaller gross motor room might be suitable. Please see chapter 10 for further discussion of this inquiry process. Finally, FirstSchool will partner with schools to apply the FirstSchool framework across critical features of systemic change that include, in addition to the facility, instructional practices and curriculum; families and communities; transitions; school health and wellness; finance; evaluation and research; and professional development. Please see section 2.1 for more details about the collaborative process.

In all cases, FirstSchool provides technical assistance to school districts, individual schools, and state education agencies interested in implementing FirstSchool concepts. Our process is based on the belief that change is not something that is imposed upon schools from the outside, but is rather fostered by people who work in schools, see the need for change and innovation and play significant roles in making change happen. FirstSchool is based on the assumption that there is more than one way to reach intended outcomes, and that each school's context will shape the beginning points and strategies used to meet desired outcomes. Genuine inquiry can only take place within a trusting environment – one where people can pose hard questions, be honest about their beliefs, and be open to different points of view. An inquiry approach pushes members of the school community to examine and refine their practices, beliefs, and expectations as they work to improve facilities design for young children. This approach provides a clear message that there are no simple answers. Each stakeholder must be able to bring ideas and concerns to the table in order to engage in meaningful discussion.



We invite you to use this document to begin your inquiry into optimal physical environments for children from age 3 through third grade. The first step is to see how FirstSchool principles interact with your realities. Our design principles are guidelines. How those principles take shape will vary in each unique context.