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## Reuse of School Plans BRIEFING PAPER

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**For:** Bond Reimbursement & Grant  
Review Committee

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**Subject:** Status/Direction on Reuse of School  
Plans

### Background

The 18th Legislature (1993) envisioned a role for prototypical school designs in the state’s school capital funding process. In session laws of that year, when creating the Bond Reimbursement and Grant Review Committee (BRGR), the legislature included as one of the committee’s duties the requirement to “*Analyze existing prototypical designs for school construction projects.*” (AS 14.11.014 (b)(4).)

The 30<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2018) reinforced this role for prototypical school designs by directing that the department “*encourage each school district to use previously approved school construction design plans and building systems if the use will result in cost savings for the project*” (AS 14.11.013(a)(4)), and include in its prioritized ranking of projects “*the district’s use of previously approved school construction design plans and building systems if the use will result in cost savings for the project.*” (AS 14.11.013(b)(7).)

This paper provides a status of past actions, refreshes BRGR on incomplete intentions, and offers possible direction for statutory compliance and closure on this item.

### Discussion

#### Ancient History

In response to the 1993 statutory duty, BRGR, with department staff, routinely considered and discussed the role of prototypical school design—or ‘stock plans’ as they were commonly called. Initial canvassing of Alaska’s school districts was conducted. Review of practices in other states was affected. Participation at regional and national conferences often resulted in additional exposure to the topic. A December 1997 department staff paper advanced a draft policy for BRGR consideration and noted, “*Staff will complete a review of existing Alaskan prototype designs, as mandated in the committee defining statute, for consideration before advancing a final policy.*”

In 1997, the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District completed the seventh, and final, iteration of a 600-student elementary prototype program that it had initiated in 1983. Between 1983 and 1985, the Anchorage School District constructed five elementary schools based on a single 50,160sf design. This was done again in the late 1990s with another eight schools using a 61,500sf prototype design. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District had a similar

program that reused one design to construct three elementary schools from 1985 to 1992. The district repeated this strategy with a new design that was used for five schools from 2000 to 2007. Both prototypes were around 54,000sf. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, in the mid-1980s, initiated a small prototype school program and used a single design for two 50,000sf schools completed in 1987. School plan reuse is not limited to large urban districts. In 2000, a project to replace the Manokotak K-12 school in the Southwest Region School District was completed and occupied 15 months after funding by reusing a prior school design and a CM/GC project delivery method. In 2002, the Yupiit district received funding for three K-12 schools, two of which had similar square footage eligibility. The department leveraged a requirement for two schools to share a design by reallocating eligible space to the third project.

The committee was actively tracking the later programs in most of these districts, though there is no record of a specific ‘analysis’ of any of these particular prototypical designs.

In late 1998 department staff provided to the BRGR a detailed analysis of types and sizes of schools in Alaska that would most likely experience a need for replication in the next 10 years due to either population growth or a need for replacement of aging schools. Large, medium, and small K-12 schools made the list, as did large elementaries, which was deemed the most likely. No specific recommendations accompanied the analysis but there was follow-up activity that resulted in a draft report to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislature in 2001 (it’s unclear if this was ever provided/published) outlining the committee’s work since 1994 and making four recommendations (synopsized below):

1. Encouragement of district prototype development
2. Possibility of developing a state prototype for K-12 (50-150)
  - a. Scope of effort
  - b. Funding implications
3. Best practice repository
  - a. Market driven success
  - b. EED Oversight
4. Post-occupancy evaluations

No legislative action occurred on item #2, nor was there department action to place other elements into Alaska Administrative Code. In 2004, as a means of completing its statutory task, BRGR adopted a Policy Statement on prototypical schools. This is still referenced today and is posted on the department’s website ([education.alaska.gov/facilities/brgr](http://education.alaska.gov/facilities/brgr)).

### **Recent History**

Since this issue appears to cycle in ‘decades’ (1984 – active programs in several districts; 1994 – BRGR created and tasked with analysis; 2004 – BRGR adopts policy), 2014 saw a new effort from the legislature to influence the use of prototypical school design by directing the department (and providing funding) to commission a report on “the benefits and disadvantages of prototypical school design and construction in Alaska.” The final report was published in October 2015 with conclusions that were distinctly more on the side of ‘disadvantages’ than on ‘benefits’. Although well researched and well written, the report was not held in particular favor by either the then-current department leadership or interested legislators. The report is available on the department's website ([education.alaska.gov/facilities/publications](http://education.alaska.gov/facilities/publications)).

Following the commissioning of the above report, legislative activity and interest remained high; bills touching on prototypes were introduced in 2017 and again in 2018. In 2018, HB 212 was passed with the provisions noted in the **Background** section of this paper, which required the department to both encourage and prioritize the reuse of previously approved school construction design plans and building systems.

**Current Status**

Following are the active elements of the committee and department’s implementation of statutory provisions related to prototypical school design and construction:

1. The BRGR 2004 *Prototype Designs for Educational Facilities – Guidelines Adopted by the Bond Reimbursement and Grant Review Committee*. Key elements include:
  - a. Acknowledgement that prototypical designs submitted by districts with CIP applications will be accepted as eligible for commensurate points and evaluations of project scope.
  - b. Support of appropriate uses including serving as a planning tool, serving as a basis for component designs, serving as construction documents for complete schools as site adapted, and recognizing the need for ongoing design review.
  - c. Department action as a resource and facilitator by issuing a set of ‘advisories’ as needed to improve processes.
2. The 2015 *Report on the Benefits and Disadvantages of Prototypical School Design and Construction in Alaska*. This primarily serves as a reference for pros and cons, success and limitations.
3. Form 05-21-022 *FY2023 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Grant or State Aid for Debt Retirement Application* and supporting *Instructions for Completing the Application for Funding for a Capital Improvement Project Application*. Key elements include:
  - a. A 10pt scoring item for the reuse of previously approved school design if the use will result in a cost savings for the project. (Q.6b)
  - b. A 10pt scoring item for the reuse of a prior building system design.
  - c. In accordance with 1.a. above, the availability of 25pts for submitted designs at 65% complete or more.

**Options**

During the review of the BRGR Annual Workplan in March 2021, the following actions related to the AS 14.11.014 (b)(4) committee task were created:

- |   |           |          |
|---|-----------|----------|
| a. Seek Peer Consensus on Reuse of School Plans and Systems       |           |          |
| i. Develop and Schedule AEC Peer Workshop on Reuse                | Committee | Jul 2021 |
| ii. Update Aug 4, 2004 Committee Position Paper                   | Committee | TBD      |
| b. Codify Regulations As Needed for Reuse of Plans/Systems Policy |           |          |
| i. Make Recommendations to Committee on Prototypes                | Dept      | Sep 2021 |
| ii. Make Recommendations to State Board on Prototypes             | Committee | TBD      |
| iii. Manage Regulation Development and Implementation             | Dept      | TBD      |

In reviewing the history of the committee’s involvement in the area of prototypical school design, there is some question if the original statutory tasking in AS 14.11.014(b)(4) was

accomplished—i.e., analysis by the committee of existing prototypical designs for school construction projects.

In reviewing the 2004 BRGR *Prototype Designs for Educational Facilities – Guidelines*, it appeared that some elements have been more clearly stated in the context of CIP applications, and one element, ‘advisories’, was proposed but never implemented.

Notwithstanding the above, a reasonable position could also be developed that the BRGR has adequately satisfied its responsibilities toward prototypical school design as established in statute. ‘Encouragement’ is satisfied by a supportive Guideline and the incentive of priority points in the grant ranking process. ‘Prioritization’ is satisfied by the inclusion of designated point categories for reuse of school and system plans. ‘Analysis’ is satisfied by a compendium of research and discussion over the past 27 years and by the tiered approach for assigning points that assesses a range of effectiveness and potential cost savings.

### **Option 1**

#### Work the Workplan

This option would validate the need to expand beyond internal BRGR input regarding the current implementation items by convening a workshop from the greater design and construction community. Direction would be established based on input from workshop participants and could include: updating the committee’s 2004 guidelines, setting a framework for “Advisories”, drafting regulations to enforce statutory provisions.

### **Option 2**

#### Low-hanging Actionable Steps

Seek BRGR consensus on updating the committee’s guidelines document to reflect current statutes and CIP application items. Publish the revised document for comment, adjust as needed, and finalize.

### **Option 3**

#### Cease Further Actions

Either using a revised guideline (Option 2) or without. Take committee action to end further analysis and development of additional prototypical school design and reuse of school plans measures. Just say no.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Meaningful work on incorporating prototypical school design can be consuming and filled with circular paths of effort and repeated conversation. However, it’s unlikely to ever disappear as a topic of interest. Choosing a best path forward requires an understanding of the ‘energy’ available to work the range of possibilities.

### **Recommendation 1**

If committee and stakeholder energy is sufficient, go with Option 1.

### **Recommendation 2**

If committee and stakeholder energy is low, go with Option 2 or 3.