Facilities Construction

Summary

The Hernando County School District is using 20 of the 24 facilities construction best practices. The district is using all of the construction funding, design, and renovation best practices. To meet the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction activities, the district should:

- develop a facilities five-year work program;
- regularly conduct post-occupancy evaluations;
- develop written accountability measures to evaluate the performance of the construction program; and
- analyze performance of the construction program based on accountability measures and implement necessary improvements.

Background

The Hernando County School District has a total of 24,409 satisfactory student stations (20,681 permanent student stations and 3,728 student stations located in relocatables) across its 20 schools. With a May 2003 enrollment of 18,334 students, the utilization rate of district facilities is 75%, as shown in Exhibit 7-1. If only permanent student stations are counted, however, the utilization rate increases to 89%. The unusually high utilization rate at the high school level will be alleviated by the opening of the Nature Coast Technical High School, which will have 1,297 student stations when it opens in the fall of 2003.
Facilities Construction

Exhibit 7-1
Overall the Hernando County School District Uses 89% of Its Capacity (2002-03)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total Stu Sta</th>
<th>Permanent Satisfactory Stu Sta</th>
<th>Relocatable Satisfactory Stu Sta</th>
<th>Enrollment May 7, 2003</th>
<th>Permanent Utilization Rate</th>
<th>Total Utilization Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10,353</td>
<td>8,832</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>8,487</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6,650</td>
<td>6,117</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>4,708</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,771</td>
<td>5,119</td>
<td>1,652</td>
<td>5,058</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24,409</td>
<td>20,681</td>
<td>3,728</td>
<td>18,334</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses School Year 2002-03, Hernando County School District.

Age and Condition of Facilities
Hernando County’s steady growth over the past few decades is reflected in an acceleration of facilities construction activity, as shown in Exhibit 7-2. Facilities are therefore relatively new. The addition of new physical plant is expected to continue, reflecting the district’s plans to build a new school approximately every 2 years over the next 10 years.

Exhibit 7-2
Age of Hernando Public School Buildings

![Net Square Footage of Inventory by Year Built](chart)

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses School Year 2002-03, Hernando County School District.

Organization and management
The Hernando County School District has sufficient construction activity to warrant a facilities department, maintaining a professional staff to carry out the program. The director of facilities is a licensed architect, and coordinates all phases of construction activity. The department’s organizational structure is outlined below.
Facilities Construction

Exhibit 7-3
Facilities Department Organizational Chart

Director of Facilities

Chief Engineer
Facilities Project Coordinator
Contract and Production Specialist
Construction Supervisor/Field Inspector (3)

Secretary III
Secretary to the Director

Source: Hernando County School District.
## Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions for Facilities Construction Best Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Area</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
<th>Using the Best Practice?</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The district has effective long-range planning processes.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The board considers the most economical and practical sites for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Funding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the project(s) are cost-efficient and in compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds and the district's five-year facilities work plan.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Construction, Renovation and Remodeling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Area</td>
<td>Best Practice</td>
<td>Using the Best Practice?</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility Occupancy and Evaluation</td>
<td>21. The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. The district conducts comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operation and regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONSTRUCTION PLANNING

Best Practice 1: Using
The district has effective long-range planning processes.

Long-range facilities planning enables a district to identify its critical needs, establish strategies, and plan for the allocation of resources to address these needs. To ensure that all critical needs are identified, the district should obtain broad stakeholder input by establishing a facilities planning committee, which includes school district personnel, parents, real estate and construction professionals, and other community stakeholders. The decisions made during the planning process should be in writing and the resulting plans should address facilities needs from 5 to 20 years into the future. The planning process should assess enrollment projections, plant capacity, sufficiency of funds, and other relevant information. Primary responsibility for facilities planning should be assigned to a district employee, and that person should be responsible for developing and maintaining demographic information that can be used to predict facilities needs. Because the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) is used to report plant capacity and is used to help determine district facilities funding levels, it must accurately reflect the capacities and physical condition of the existing facilities. In addition, to refine projections with more current information, there should be an annual update to the five-year facilities work program, which establishes short-term capital budget plans and construction priorities.

Effective long-range planning in the Hernando County School District is increasing in importance as the district accelerates its construction activity. Given its plans to construct a new school every two years, we the school board should consider establishing a permanent facilities committee, comprised of a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The facilities committee should immediately assist in the development of educational specifications for the proposed new K-8 school scheduled to open in August 2005. Other responsibilities that would be appropriate for a facilities committee include:

- evaluating existing facilities support of current and planned programs;
- assessing current space utilization;
- evaluating, on an annual basis, the district’s progress in meeting facilities goals and objectives;
- assessing how well the district’s facilities accommodate the needs of the educational program on a regular basis;
- identifying future school site needs and reviewing potential school sites; and,
- participating in the selection process for construction professionals (architects, agency representatives, construction managers, construction firms, inspectors, etc.)

Another significant issue is the school district’s relationship with Hernando County and Brooksville. The potential for conflict between school districts and municipalities increases as development intensifies, and cooperation becomes more and more critical. The district’s efforts to reach out to the local governments are laudable, and the interlocal agreements that are being developed between the district and municipalities offer the opportunity to clearly delineate these relationships.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. However, the district could improve its operations by implementing the recommendation below.

We recommend that the district establish a permanent facilities committee and expand its scope to include the responsibilities outlined above.
Best Practice 2: Using

When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan, the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.

Alternatives to new construction such as year-round education, extended day schools, changes in grade-level configuration, changes in attendance boundaries, and use of relocatable classrooms are ways in which a district can avoid the high costs associated with building new space. Alternative methods of using existing facilities can help to mitigate the peaks and valleys in future student enrollments.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.

A five-year facilities work program, mandated by Florida law (s. 1013.35, Florida Statutes), should be prepared annually, and submitted to the Department of Education. It is primarily a current-year budget document with an additional four-year projection of anticipated revenues and new and continuing capital projects. The program details a schedule of major projects intended to properly maintain the educational plant and ancillary facilities of the district, and to provide an adequate number of satisfactory student stations for the projected student enrollments. Information developed and contained in the Five-Year Educational Plant Survey is the basis for the work plan. A five-year work program is not and should not become a district’s strategic plan but it is an important element to be used in the planning process. A five-year view of capital needs is inadequate and reactive in nature for a school district; a much longer-term view, in the form of a strategic plan, is necessary to assure that the district will develop adequate funding and make appropriate land acquisition decisions. Capital project priorities (site acquisition, site improvement, construction, remodeling, renovation, maintenance) should be established in the strategic plan and linked to the district’s anticipated revenues and budget projections through the five-year work program.

The Hernando County School District has been budgeting sufficient resources to building new schools, having used bonds and sales surtaxes to supplement its millage receipts and state funding. The district school board has discussed constructing a new school every two years for the next decade and the possibility of requesting voter approval for a one-half cent sales tax to pay for the next (K-8) school. For smaller projects, the district asks each school to submit a list of priority projects for the upcoming year, and convenes a committee made up of district personnel to choose the projects for funding, given anticipated funding availability.

Although the district’s budget practices are fundamentally sound, it does not use this best practice because it has not submitted a facilities five-year work program to Florida Department of Education (DOE) for the 2002-03 school year. Hernando is one of only three districts in Florida that has not submitted its report to DOE, which was due on October 1, 2002. The Facilities Five-Year Work Program for the previous year was submitted, but it was not filled out properly. This document can be a useful tool for projecting a district’s capital outlay expenditures and funding sources for the current year as well as the subsequent four years. Action Plan 7-1 outlines a process for developing an effective five-year work program.
### Action Plan 7-1

**The district should develop a five-year facilities work program.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Needed</th>
<th>Step 1. Establish a committee to develop long-range facility plans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 2. Utilize new plant survey and district’s needs assessment to develop five-year work program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 3. Present new five-year program to the school board for approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 4. Develop a ten- and twenty-year facilities program using the same evaluation process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Is Responsible</th>
<th>Superintendent, executive director of support operations, executive director of business services, director of planning and accountability, facilities director.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Frame</td>
<td>August 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Best Practice 4: Using

**The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.**

School districts should be accountable for and provide information to parents and other taxpayers on the performance and cost of their major programs, including the facilities construction program. A school district should provide the public with clear and accurate information regarding its capital program, such as information about planned projects, the priorities it has set for future projects and how those priorities were determined. A district should provide a complete explanation of how the planned projects will help the district meet its educational, site acquisition, construction, remodeling, renovation, and maintenance needs. Effective communications with district stakeholders helps earn the support of the public for its capital program. Typically, districts that successfully communicate their capital program priorities hold regular school board meetings at which information regarding the construction program is provided and clear explanations of each construction project are made available in a format that allows for public input.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

### Best Practice 5: Using

**The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.**

The appropriate and timely selection of sites for new facilities is a critical issue for a district’s capital program and ensures that land is available when and where it is needed. A district should use demographic projections in conjunction with existing land use patterns and zoning, as well as land use designations in local Comprehensive Development Master Plans, to project future school site needs. Early identification of appropriate parcels will allow the district to acquire the land well in advance of construction needs, potentially generating substantial savings in land prices, as well as avoiding later conflicts with nearby land uses. When multiple sites are to be considered, the district should designate a committee, including experts and community stakeholders, to review the proposed sites.

Rapid development in the western part of Hernando County has resulted in a dearth of parcels suitable for school sites, with land prices reflecting this scarcity. The Hernando County School District recently contracted for a 38 acre parcel in Spring Hill that will cost $1.05 million—nearly $30,000 per acre.

The district has recently begun to aggressively identify and locate suitable parcels for school sites, and recently contracted to purchase an 80 acre site in the eastern portion of the county that can accommodate a high school, middle school and elementary school, at a price of $8,000 an acre. This portion of the county is projected to grow due to its accessibility to Tampa via I-75. The district is also pursuing more innovative approaches to acquiring suitable school sites. For example, the district will consider waiving impact fees for large developments in lieu of donations of suitable parcels.

An impending interlocal agreement between the school district and the county will hopefully facilitate school siting in western Hernando County. To further facilitate consensus building in the community, the
school district should consider establishing a site selection committee, involving various stakeholders in the site selection process.

**We recommend that the district form a site selection committee, including school officials, local government officials, architects, real estate professionals and community members, to identify and evaluate school sites, and make appropriate recommendations to the school board.**

**Best Practice 6:  Using**

The board considers the most economical and practical sites for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as the need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.

An effectively managed district acquires the right property for its facilities and makes economical land acquisitions. To accomplish this, a district should ensure that the land meets its needs as to location, and that the site complies with the requirements of Florida law as it pertains to land for educational facilities. Moreover, the price should be reasonable. In determining the appropriate price, the district should consider factors beyond the cost of the land itself such as the need for site development and improvement or other work that may be incidental to construction.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

**CONSTRUCTION FUNDING**

**Best Practice 7:  Using**

Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.

Funding for district capital projects is commonly derived from a variety of revenue sources, which include property taxes, bond referendums, sales surtaxes, and certificates of participation. A district should be able to demonstrate that each revenue source is used as authorized in the law. For instance, a district must be able to show that if local bond referendum proceeds were used, the scope of each project was spelled out in the bond referendum; and, that if local sales surtax revenue was used to finance any project, the scope of that project was spelled out in the sales surtax referendum resolution advertisement. The district should have evaluated the advantages and drawbacks of alternative methods for funding and financing construction projects when developing its capital planning budget. The best way to ensure the greatest amount of construction funding is for the district to first maximize the use of local revenue alternatives.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. However, future bond referenda should be written differently to give the district more flexibility in how it spends the proceeds. The district received about $5 million more than anticipated from the ½ cent sales tax approved by the voters in 1998, but because the bond resolution earmarked all of the proceeds to the Nature Coast Vo-tech High School, the district did not have the legal authority to spend the money on other projects. Because the school had been designed to be readily expandable, the district was able to allocate additional funds generated from the sales tax to worthy on-site projects. Future projects may not offer this flexibility.

Future bond referenda could be designed to allocate up to a set amount to a primary project(s), but could be written so as to allocate any additional money to other projects, including the primary project(s), on either a priority or a percentage basis.

**We recommend that the district design future bond referenda to offer flexibility in the allocation of the proceeds to priority projects.**
Best Practice 8: Using
The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the project(s) are cost-efficient and in compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds and the district’s five-year facilities work plan.

A school district must use tax revenues appropriately and for their intended purposes. All capital projects, including new construction, renovation, remodeling, and site acquisition, development and improvement projects may have separate funding sources with differing expenditure requirements. Districts typically rely on a finance officer to ensure that revenues generated for use as construction or site acquisition funds have been collected as authorized by Florida law and are being expended for lawful purposes. Generally, the district finance officer ensures that funds from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund are used for construction of educational plant space with total student station costs, including change orders, which meet the allowable amount specified in Florida law. The finance officer ensures that the school tax defined in Florida law as two-mill money is only used for construction, maintenance, or other authorized capital or facilities purposes. The finance officer is responsible for the timely use of state funds, avoiding reversion of any unspent revenues. During the budget process, the finance officer should ensure that all available capital resources are applied towards the five-year facilities work plan and limited use capital funds are not diverted to other, lower priority allowable uses.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

CONSTRUCTION DESIGN

Best Practice 9: Using
The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project.

Educational specifications are an important part of the planning process, allowing stakeholders, including parents, subject matter specialists, educators, administrators, and design professionals to develop working descriptions of a planned educational facility. Well-written educational specifications will ensure that, once built, the facility meets the needs of a variety of users. Educational specifications should include a rationale for the project, determine the size of the facility, and define the district’s program goals, objectives and activities, teaching strategies and instructional methods, all based on staff input. Educational specifications should identify the needs and design implications of advanced technology and provide for adaptability as changes and innovations occur in education. They should address spatial relationships and circulation patterns, security issues, and comply with the ‘small schools’ requirement.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. However, given the recently enacted class size amendment to the Florida Constitution, the district should implement the recommendation below.

We recommend that the district contact the Department of Education to assess how the class size amendment may affect the current educational specifications and what changes may be required to optimize classroom space to meet growing enrollments.

Best Practice 10: Using
The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.

A district should submit a well-developed educational specification to the design professional for use in preparing written construction documents, which include materials and equipment specifications, and schematic drawings. A review of the documents should be made to ensure that the district planning
leader, the users of the facility, and the architect and engineers have matched the written construction specifications and schematics against the educational specifications. The final plans must represent the district’s needs as expressed in the educational specification.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district has contracted with an agency representative, who has been given numerous responsibilities related to construction of the new high school, including the responsibility of ensuring that the final building plans for the new school fulfill the district’s requirements. The agency representative reviews building specifications as necessary, and has the responsibility of preparing the design criteria package, which ultimately reflects the district’s needs. Changes to educational specifications are transmitted to the architect, who has been accommodating the changes into renderings as necessary. The district does not have a designated planning leader; this function is split between the superintendent and school board. The superintendent acts as liaison to the contracted construction professionals.

**Best Practice 11: Using**

**New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.**

To ensure the safety and security of those using school district facilities, all building specifications should include common safety elements such as controlled access entrances, appropriate, signage, and circulation patterns that allow unobstructed views of the entrance and hallways. Other safety needs and design elements include lighting, intra-communication systems, security and fire systems, security fencing, and a combination of fenestration and doorways, which provide safe and quick evacuation. A district must review safety and address it as part of the construction process when designing and building new structures, as well as during renovation and remodeling projects.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

**Best Practice 12: Using**

**The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.**

A district should design new and remodeled space as efficiently as possible in order to minimize the costs of construction, provide for long term-energy efficiency, and reduce lifetime building operations and maintenance costs. The construction design and major equipment selection are to be analyzed to maximize the efficient use of energy and the environment, the potential for joint usage, how technology is used, and the life cycle and costs of the materials chosen. To control the costs of building new facilities, a district should have a written policy that encourages the design team to comply with Florida’s SMART (Soundly Made, Accountable, Reasonable and Thrifty) school design philosophy and develop practical design solutions that are functional and cost-effective.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. Although the district is constructing schools within Florida Department of Education per-square-foot and per-student-station guidelines and follows the spirit of SMART school design philosophy, it could improve its operations by developing written guidelines to this effect.

| We recommend that the district develop written policies that incorporate SMART school design philosophy into its operations. |
NEW CONSTRUCTION, RENOVATION, AND REMODELING

Best Practice 13: Using
The district has effective management processes for construction projects.

A district may be able to improve the management of construction projects by exploring alternative service methods. A district has several options on how to complete a construction project, which include whether to do the project in-house or contract out to a private company. The potential cost savings of alternative methods should be weighed before a project begins. This practice ensures that the district has evaluated the various types of construction contracting and chosen the most beneficial method given the circumstances of individual projects. Once the method is chosen the project must be monitored for quality, timeliness, and cost.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 14: Using
District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.

A district can obtain maximum use of construction and operating funds by reducing the impact of inflation and ensuring a smooth, non-disruptive transition of students into new facilities at the beginning of a school term. Planning, coordination, and regular communication between the district’s representatives and its contractors are required. Realistic expectations for project completion must be established and should include contingency planning for delays caused by bad weather or unanticipated construction problems.

A district must ensure that the tasks for attainment of all phases of each project have been incorporated and timed to coordinate with the opening of schools to cause the least disruption to students and teachers. When time frames are not met, the district should revise them accordingly and identify why they were not met, periodically updating the board and public. The plan should contain an accountability component that provides assurance to the board and to the public that the projects addressed in the plan will be implemented at the proposed budget levels within the time frame outlined. Regular budget updates, prepared at the completion of each phase of design, should be delivered to the board.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 15: Using
All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.

The State of Florida has completed a major rewrite of the state building code, including those elements that pertain to educational facilities, which became effective on March 1, 2002. Significant changes included allowing districts to establish alternative methods of obtaining permits and required the re-education of existing staff certified to conduct building code inspections. All school construction projects begun after the effective date are required to meet the new code requirements. Districts must adjust for the code changes in contracted projects and consider the impact the new code will have on future projects. To ensure that districts are aware of and follow these new requirements, construction personnel should have received training in the Florida Building Code or the district should be able to justify why training is not needed.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.
Best Practice 16: Using
The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.

Compliance with the Florida Building Code assures that completed building projects provide a safe and secure facility. Therefore, all school construction projects must be inspected by a competent authority, schooled and certified in the requirements of the state building code. Inspectors must be trained and certified in accordance with Florida law and the inspections must be in accordance with the new Florida Building Code as revised March 2002. All information about the affected space should be recorded in the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH), a database that contains extensive information about school sites, capacity, and condition.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 17: Using
The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.

A district should make reasoned and appropriate selections of design and construction professionals to aid in carrying out the mission, goals and obligations of the school board and in accordance with Florida law. The selection process should be in writing and available to the public. It should begin sufficiently in advance of a proposed project’s completion date to ensure that the necessary persons are selected, obligated, and committed to the project. Districts may select from a combination of in-house and out-sourced options to staff a particular project or group of projects. Hiring of permanent employees may not be cost-effective for smaller, low growth districts, but larger districts or districts with significant student population growth may find it appropriate to have permanent, professionally staffed design and construction departments. When outsourcing, the district should use a selection committee to choose appropriate professionals who will act in the district’s best interests during the construction project.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 18: Using
The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.

To control costs and protect itself from litigation, a district should have policies and procedures in place delineating bid solicitation and contracting practices. These policies and procedures should have been reviewed by legal counsel for adequacy and conformity to statutes and generally accepted practices. Generally accepted bidding procedures include bids with set opening dates and times that are inspected to confirm that all required documents are in order. Contracting practices include the use of standardized agreements that have been modified to satisfy local concerns and conditions, and review by legal authority. The district should determine the type of contract appropriate for the work to be performed after considering alternative bid and construction systems for each new project. The contract should be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder whose bid, after review by district legal counsel, meets the specifications or to the construction manager or design build contractor selected pursuant to Florida law. The contracts should be submitted to the school board for final contract award.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. However, in light of increased construction activity, the district could expedite the bidding process by prequalifying bidders on larger projects, whereby the district establishes minimum criteria that must be met in advance for a bid to be accepted. Criteria generally include experience, staffing, insurance coverage and bonding limits. Prequalification expedites the bidding process by minimizing the handling of bids from unqualified bidders without unduly restricting qualified bidders.

We recommend that the district prequalify bidders on projects greater than $200,000 in order to avoid unqualified or irresponsible bidders.
Best Practice 19: Using
The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.

Changes to a facility’s design after construction has begun must be carefully considered as they can be very costly to a district or they can save a substantial number of dollars. Design changes have the potential to create substantial delays in the intended completion date of a project, while adding overlooked elements can enhance the educational environment or the delivery of educational services, or reduce future operational/maintenance costs. Necessary changes to the construction agreement, which may be requested by either the contractor or the district’s representative, should generate a request for a change order. Change orders should be reviewed for viability, necessity, and cost. A district should use planning and contracting methods that minimize change orders and retain information sufficient to document the reasons behind a change order and the responsible individual. Critical to the change order process is a review that, when possible, ensures change orders implemented do not result in the project exceeding budget, do not compromise educational specifications, do not exceed industry standards, and do not extend the completion date beyond the established completion date.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Best Practice 20: Using
The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.

Payments to contractors for larger construction projects are usually separated into a series of partial payments known as progress payments. This practice protects the school district and pays the contractor in a fair and reasonable manner and in proportion to the work completed. Once a payment request is received, the district should respond in a timely and efficient manner. A district should retain a predetermined percentage of the contract pending final completion to be used to cover non-performance issues or liquidated damages, should such a situation arise. The district should have a system of internal controls to ensure that payments are made timely and only after the architect has approved the completed work, and with the concurrence of the district’s project manager.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.

Facility Occupancy and Evaluation

Best Practice 21: Using
The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.

The proper operation of a school is dependent on the users understanding of the facilities systems and why certain design elements were included in the project. Therefore, school district personnel should be familiarized with a new facility prior to occupation. Orienting users to a facility is a critically important activity that allows the new facility to work as it was designed, provides for the safety and comfort of the occupants, and ensures that the building’s components are operated in a non-damaging and efficient manner. An orientation program should include the delivery of clear and understandable users’ manuals designed for the appropriate staff, elements of the program being customized for a particular group of users such as maintenance staff, custodians or administrators and teachers. The district should include clauses in the design and construction contracts to require the architect and the contractor to share the responsibility for and provide the orientation programs and supporting documentation.

The Hernando County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice.
Best Practice 22: Not Using

The district conducts comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operation and regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.

A post-occupancy evaluation helps a district determine how well the design of a facility meets the educational, service, community, and administrative needs of the building’s users. Information from a post-occupancy evaluation can be used to improve the design of subsequent projects. Such an evaluation should be conducted on every new facility no earlier than one year and no longer than three years after occupancy. This window of time allows for a full school year in the new facility and for the evaluation to occur before any functional design changes or remodeling might take place, which would change elements of the original design. As part of the evaluation, users, including students, parents, district and school-based maintenance and food service personnel, teachers, administrators and bus drivers, should be surveyed or interviewed to determine their attitudes about the design. District facilities design and construction staff, the design professional for the new facility, and a representative of the contractor should also provide input to the evaluation. The information gathered should be compiled into a report, enumerating the positive aspects and difficulties, if any, with the design of the facility. Information obtained through post-occupancy evaluations should be communicated to educational specification committees, the design review committee and when contracted for a new facility, the design professional.

The Hernando County School District performs a walk-through after the first year of operation of a new facility. Although post-occupancy evaluations subsequent to the one-year evaluation are not done, the district regularly but informally assesses building operation and performance. The district is now undertaking sufficient construction activity to warrant a more formalized evaluation process. Action Plan 7-2 provides a framework for accomplishing this.

**Action Plan 7-2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We recommend that the district design and conduct post-occupancy evaluations.</th>
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<td><strong>Action Needed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Who Is Responsible</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Time Frame</strong></td>
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</table>
Best Practice 23: Not Using

The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be held accountable for and provide information to parents, other taxpayers, and the school board on the performance and cost of its major programs and support services, including the facilities construction program. To accomplish this, each school district should have an accountability system that includes clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the facilities construction program that identify whether it is operating efficiently and effectively. An effective accountability system includes performance and cost-efficiency measures, and interpretive benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts, to evaluate the program and use these in management decision making. As part of its accountability system, the district also should establish and implement strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data and take advantage of significant opportunities to improve construction operations management.

The district’s strategic plan includes a construction-related strategic goal: “To ensure that all district facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to support the district’s educational programs and to provide for the safety and health of the students and staff.” Identified construction-related strategies include restructuring the plant operations department and incorporating new safety and security standards in new construction. The strategic goal related to financing includes a strategy to “develop a process to identify and analyze alternative methods of long-term financing for new school sites in conjunction with future facilities plan.”

Although these goals are laudable, they do not provide for an adequate assessment of how well the district’s construction program is functioning. The district gauges its construction effectiveness by comparison to peer districts and DOE-published construction costs, which is a good start. Given its accelerated construction activity, the district should develop a more systematic and comprehensive approach to measuring accountability. Action Plan 7-3 provides a framework for accomplishing this.

Action Plan 7-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Needed</th>
<th>Step 1. Develop performance benchmarks for the construction program, including:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>ƒ target cost per square feet,</td>
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<td>ƒ target cost per student station,</td>
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<td>ƒ projected vs. facility completion date,</td>
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<td>ƒ projected vs. actual project budget, and</td>
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<td>ƒ percentage of satisfied users.</td>
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<td>Step 2. Develop peer district comparisons to compare against benchmarks.</td>
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<td>Step 3. Review significant peer district differences to determine what factors influence the differences.</td>
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<td>Step 4. Develop strategies to improve construction program. Note: This action plan should be developed in conjunction with Action Plan 3-1.</td>
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</table>

Who Is Responsible  Director of facilities

Time Frame  June 2004

Best Practice 24: Not Using

The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

Evaluation of completed projects is an important management tool because it assesses how tax dollars were spent and whether a district took full advantage of available, usually scarce, public funds. Districts
should assess their facilities construction operations as a whole at least annually using performance data and their established benchmarks. They should report their progress towards meeting established goals, objectives and benchmarks to the board and the public on at least an annual basis. Strategies should be established and implemented based on the outcomes of these evaluations.

Because the district is not using the previous two best practices, it is not in a position to meet best practice standards relating to evaluation. The information generated from following the previous three best practices can be analyzed to develop benchmarks and identify improvements in the construction program. Action Plan 7-3, found under Best Practice 23 of this chapter, and Action Plan 3-1 include the steps to accomplish this.