

Life **Learn** WINTER 2016

**Making a Difference in Education
at Home and Abroad**

**Commons Spaces Not So
Common Anymore**

Planning a Referendum



USAID Jordan Schools Project

ATS&R
PLANNERS / ARCHITECTS / ENGINEERS



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

Paul Erickson, ATS&R President & Education Facility Planner, travels beyond our country's borders to improve education.

When we get involved in education, we usually do it to directly benefit our children/grandchildren. We make sure they go to a good school; we consider reputation, location, curriculum, scheduling, and extracurricular activities. Once that is settled, we have done our job...or have we?

We could look at our education community and become active in providing opportunities for all children. We might volunteer in our school district in a parent-teacher organization, reading program, mentoring plan, or participate in passing referenda, and other activities. We are volunteering and feeling comfortable that our children are attending the school and school district we support, and living in the community we like. Is that enough?

Our community is typically a 'satellite' of a central population hub in our state. Do we ever look at how healthy (in terms of achievement, testing, graduation rate, etc.) our state's main metropolitan school district is? How important is it to 'step outside' from your local school district and support the metropolitan school district in an effort to keep the county and region healthy? History shows us that if everyone improves in learning and achievement, all of society benefits.

Do we wonder how our state ranks in education in our country? States rank differently from others in achievement, graduation rates, and in participation in free-and-reduced lunch programs. Nationally, we have programs/policies that 'race to the top' in an effort to leave 'no child left behind', but do we know much about their objectives and success? Do we think about how we can help address gaps in equity, achievement, and quality of education? After all, we elect leaders to address these issues, to raise national awareness, and to enact legislation for improving education.

Do we care enough about national student achievement to get involved and make a difference? Our children/grandchildren get a good education; why should we bother with something that is 'beyond our control'. Make a point to research how your federal tax dollars are appropriated and what progress is being made to improve education in our country.

Don't stop there; look beyond our country's borders. Can we individually make a difference to improve education worldwide and enable a child to become a contributing citizen of their own community, region, and country? You

may not realize it, but you are making a difference abroad. Case-in-point, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been supporting education worldwide for many years. The federal taxes you pay are used for teacher training, improving educational curriculum, building new schools and additions, and other activities to improve education internationally. You may welcome this effort or wonder why we do this when we have so many unresolved issues nationally.

Your opinion may be that it's the responsibility of the United Nations, World Bank, and other international organizations to fund projects to improve education worldwide. Interesting, South Korea, Japan, Germany, and many other nations independently fund projects to improve educational infrastructure in areas in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, through your tax dollars USAID funds education projects including teacher training, early childhood reading programs, school construction, expanding access to higher education and workforce development, addressing youth in crisis-and-conflict situations, and improving education equity for girls.

Making A Difference in Education (cont.)

In particular for the Kingdom of Jordan, USAID is the largest donor worldwide in their education sector. The United States and Jordan began this relationship in 1949; USAID has helped Jordan as it becomes a thriving country with commerce and technological advances. In 2006 USAID embarked on a special project to fund and manage the design and construction of 25 new public schools for the Kingdom's Ministry of Education. The schools, each housing approximately 1,000 kindergarten through 12th graders, were built in an effort to reduce school overcrowding and double-shifting, and to replace inadequate rented facilities in poor condition.

The 'Jordan Schools Project' (JSP) directly and indirectly impacted over 150,000 children. As a result of its success and due to the increasing influx of Syrian refugees into the country, USAID is engaging in designing and constructing 25 more new schools through 'Schools for a Knowledge Economy Project' (SKEP), supporting King Abdullah II's vision of a 21st Century Knowledge Economy for Jordan's youth. This effort is made possible through your tax dollars as USAID's logo stipulates, '... FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'. This is only one example of USAID's involvement worldwide, your tax dollars at work, improving education for those in need.

The next time you think about your child's/grandchild's education, think nationally and then expand your vision toward how you make a difference worldwide through your activities and tax dollars. Globally, you are making more of difference than you may have thought; your involvement and the taxes you pay enable you to make a difference in education locally and worldwide!

DID YOU KNOW?

COMMONS SPACES NOT SO COMMON ANYMORE



Student commons are no longer simply congregation spaces for students with time on their hands. Today's commons spaces provide a welcoming environment and effective learning space for students, staff and community members. Many commons spaces are being transformed into areas for socialization, environments for alternative teaching methods, forums for large group meetings and distance learning, and places for consultation or individual and small-group work. Commons are melding with instructional areas to provide attractive studios, labs, and niches.

As an integral part of the student learning experience, commons spaces serve as a hub where students can connect with the information they need to get their work done—individually and collaboratively—through their medium of choice. Spaces often perceived as an inefficient use of valuable square footage have a renewed chance to make a good impression on both students and the communities that support them.





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PLANNING A REFERENDUM

ATS&R provides referendum planning and support to school districts throughout the United States. We will work closely with your School District to determine the appropriate role that ATS&R will play in your pre-referendum efforts. Methods used for a bond referendum will vary with the unique needs of the community. However, all successful campaigns must identify the target audience, clearly explain the issues facing the voters, and acquire commitment from enough “Yes” voters to ensure a positive outcome. Our typical pre-referendum efforts may include:

- Conceptual layouts
- Presentations
- Communications
- Community engagement
- Preparation of referendum materials
- Consensus building
- Surveys
- Group facilitation
- Community meetings
- Building options
- Site and floor plans
- Building layout
- Facilities analysis
- Educational analysis
- Space utilization
- Analysis of programs
- Master schedule review
- Curriculum needs review
- Cost estimates
- Assistance in defining the issues facing the voters

