



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



**Prepared by**  
Sapphos Environmental, Inc.  
for the  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
Office of Environmental Health and Safety

**March 2014**



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*Cover illustrations, clockwise: Reseda Elementary School (1936), Music Room, Orville Wright Middle School (1948-1952), and Chatsworth Senior High School (1963). Source: LAUSD and Sapphos Environmental, Inc.*

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Figure 1. Point Fermin Elementary School, Administration Building, Sumner P. Hunt & Silas Burns, San Pedro (1917–1925; remodeled in 1936 following Long Beach Earthquake). Source: LAUSD Point Fermin Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2010.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Behind every building type and feature comprising our built environment—whether commercial or residential buildings, urban plans, or parks—is a long history of practitioners who tried to harness the best ideas and technologies of their day to create quality environments for living and working. In California and throughout the United States, few other areas have generated as much debate and study, however, as environments for learning.

Whether in 1900 or 1960, reform-minded architects and designers, school boards, and educators used similar language to present their ideas for the most “modern” classroom and campus. Through this time, ideas evolved, of course. But the debate has always been shaped by the latest ideas about teaching methods and curricula, childhood development, and optimal environmental conditions for comfort, safety, and efficiency. Fueled by a national network of education-related organizations and publications, this has been a shared, ongoing project throughout the United States since the Progressive Era.

Spanning the early 1870s to 1969, this Historic Context Statement explores over a century of development of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), examined in the context of school design in the United States. Since the Progressive Education Movement gained momentum in the early twentieth century, national standardization has been at the heart of school reform, in terms of both classroom curriculum and design. Therefore, the local story is best understood against the backdrop of the national context. This study explores the ways in which LAUSD’s schools and campuses reflect a century of national practice, reform, and regional variation.



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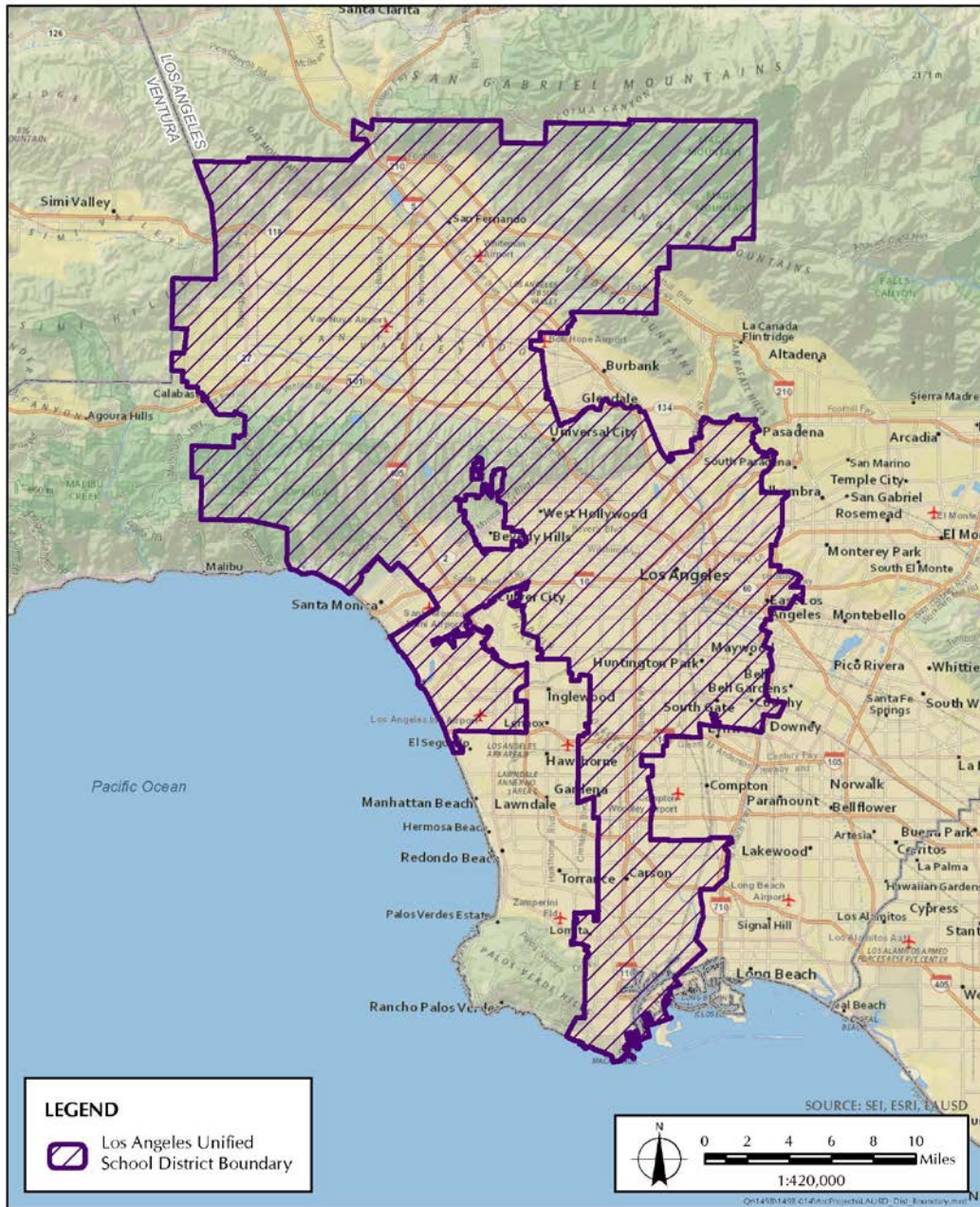


Figure 2. Los Angeles Unified School District Boundary. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.



Figure 3. Children at Vernon Avenue Junior High School, Los Angeles, circa 1925. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

## Project Summary and Scope

With nearly 800 campuses and a geographic span of over 700 square miles, LAUSD is the second largest public school system in the United States. The district's northern portion spans the San Fernando Valley, including Granada Hills, Chatsworth, Reseda, Woodland Hills, Van Nuys, Sylmar, San Fernando, Pacoima, and Sunland. Along the west, the district includes western Los Angeles, Pacific Palisades, Venice, and Westchester. Along the east, LAUSD borders Glendale, Monterey Park, Montebello, Commerce, Downey, and Long Beach. Within the district, extending south from Los Angeles, are the communities of Vernon, Huntington Park, Maywood, Bell, South Gate, Gardena, and Carson. LAUSD's southernmost portion includes San Pedro, Lomita, and Rancho Palos Verdes.

Since its founding in 1872, the district has commissioned, designed, and acquired a remarkable collection of buildings, campuses, and facilities. These properties reflect over a century of social, architectural, and technological advances, as well as ongoing educational and curricular reform. Extant properties range from the wood-framed schoolhouse of the late nineteenth century to superblock campuses displaying Mid-Century Modern architectural styles.

In July 2013, in anticipation of district-wide modernization efforts, LAUSD contracted Sapphos Environmental, Inc. to provide historic resource consulting services to inform master planning efforts and environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The scope of work includes updating the LAUSD Historic Context Statement, conducting historic resource surveys of 55 unevaluated campuses, and preparing design and procedural guidelines to help guide facilities management and planning efforts.

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Figures 4 and 5. San Fernando Valley schools: on left, Grover Cleveland Senior High School (1959), Charles Matcham & Stewart Granger and Associates, Reseda-West Van Nuys. On right, Chatsworth Senior High School (1963), Adrian Wilson & Associates, Chatsworth. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.

## **Purpose of Historic Context Statements**

The *LAUSD Historic Context Statement* follows the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) format, which provides a consistent framework for evaluating properties sharing similar periods, geographic distribution, and historic themes.<sup>1</sup> The MPD approach defines themes of significance, eligibility standards, and related property types. Properties sharing a theme of significance are then assessed consistently, in comparison with resources that share similar physical characteristics and historical associations.

According to federal, state, and local law, landmark eligibility is not just tied to architectural style but also to significant people, events and patterns of development. Historic context statements facilitate the consistent consideration of these criteria. Three principal components go into context statements: historic themes, geographic areas, and chronological periods. Contexts offer more than a chronological history; they identify the patterns and events that drove development of an area—or, in this case, a building type, educational facilities—and caused the building type to acquire the form and appearance for which it became known.

Because of the high degree of national standardization of school curricula and facilities design, in particular during the postwar period, the *LAUSD Historic Context Statement* provides a framework for evaluating school plants not only in Los Angeles but also in other school districts throughout California and beyond.

## **Historic Resources and CEQA**

The *LAUSD Historic Context Statement* is also designed to facilitate compliance with CEQA, which requires lead agencies to consider the impacts of proposed projects on historic resources. CEQA identifies a historic resource as a property that is listed on—or eligible for listing on—the NRHP, California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), or local registers.

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NRHP-listed properties are automatically included on the CRHR. The criteria for both are similar and described below, with the NRHP letter (A, B, C, and D) followed by the corresponding CRHR number (1, 2, 3, and 4). In keeping with the 2001–2004 Phase 1 and 2 LAUSD historic resources survey, this survey does not include local criteria.<sup>2</sup>

Resources that may be eligible for listing include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and historic districts. To qualify as a historic resource under CEQA, a resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following criteria:

- A/1: For an association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States (NRHP Criterion A; CRHR Criterion 1);
- B/2: For an association with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history (NRHP Criterion B; CRHR Criterion 2);
- C/3: As an embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, representative of the work of a master or high artistic values (NRHP Criterion C; CRHR Criterion 3); or
- D/4: Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation (NRHP Criterion D; CRHR Criterion 4).

Resources eligible for listing in the California Register must retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be “recognizable as historic resources and to convey the reasons for their significance.”<sup>3</sup> Some resources that do not retain sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register may still be eligible for the California Register. There is no specific age threshold for California Register eligibility; rather, the regulations specify that enough time must have passed for a property to be evaluated within its historic context.

## **Focus and Parameters of the LAUSD Historic Context Statement**

This Historic Context Statement creates a framework for evaluating Los Angeles’s public schools at a critical juncture, as LAUSD begins planning for campus-wide modernization and redevelopment. Emphasized in this study, therefore, was the question of potential eligibility of schools under Criteria A/1, as outstanding examples of LAUSD design ideals and principles. The history and context of Los Angeles public school design and educational architecture are the particular focus of this study. Because the postwar era largely fell outside the scope of the 2002 LAUSD historic context statement, the postwar era is examined in detail.

This study represents not a comprehensive history but rather a first step in better understanding the evolution of school design in the district. Project limitations precluded extensive research on additional aspects of LAUSD’s history that might result in eligibility

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under Criteria A/1 and Criteria B/2. Campus-specific research was conducted on all pertinent topics for each of the schools surveyed. Subsequent research that establishes additional themes for the district overall would be an excellent area for future study. For example, this study offers a short section on LAUSD and the Civil Rights Movement; in addition, this topic was addressed in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation form for African-Americans in Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup> Given how broad and rich the topic is, however, ample opportunities remain for further research.

In terms of evaluations under Criteria C/3, this study also includes a section on the typical architectural styles of LAUSD schools. This material draws on and expands the 2002 LAUSD Historic Context Statement as well as the guidelines prepared by the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources for historic resource survey work.

Inclusion in this context does not indicate eligibility for listing. Rather, the range of LAUSD campuses, past and present, illustrated or described here serves to define the context, themes of significance, and features of properties that might be found significant upon further study.





Figure 6. Orville Wright Middle School (originally Westchester High School), Spaulding & Rex, architects (1948-1952). Source: LAUSD Orville Wright Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2012.

### **Project Team**

Debi Howell-Ardila, senior architectural historian with Sapphos Environmental, Inc., served as project manager, principal investigator, and author of the LAUSD Historic Context Statement. Carole Zellie, historic resources manager, provided guidance and input. Marilyn Novell, historic resources coordinator, provided valuable research assistance, and Matthew Adams, senior technical editor, provided editorial expertise. Gwenn Godek of the LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety served as project administrator and manager. The study also benefited from the feedback of LAUSD Facilities Services Divisions staff Mitra Nehorai; Janet Hansen, deputy manager of the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources; and Linda Dishman, executive director, and Adrian Scott Fine, director of advocacy, of the Los Angeles Conservancy.

### **Report Preparation and Methodology**

A wide range of repositories and archives were consulted in the course of this study. Among them were the combined collections of the University of Southern California (USC) libraries; the Los Angeles Public Library, including the Photo Collection, California Index, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; the Getty Research Institute; and the historic *Los Angeles Times* and other digital newspaper collections. The photographic collections of the Getty Research Institute and the USC Digital Archive were also used. A variety of primary source materials were provided by LAUSD.

Research also explored an array of online and print sources. These included historic photographs and aerial images, reports, studies, and treatises on school architecture (ca. 1900 to 1950). Other sources included books, trade publication and newspaper articles, and architectural plans. Scholarly articles as well as specialized studies and chronologies of LAUSD were also consulted.

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Also informing this study was a review of past LAUSD historic resource contexts and surveys, including the multiphase survey conducted by Leslie Heumann and Associates and Science Applications International Corporation between 2001 and 2004. In addition, Sapphos Environmental, Inc. reviewed the findings of historic resource surveys conducted through SurveyLA, a citywide, multiyear initiative of the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources. To complement the work of SurveyLA, this Historic Context Statement reflects and draws upon the basic structure of context, themes, and property types used in SurveyLA for institutional architecture in Los Angeles. With a focus on the patterns and trends that shaped LAUSD's history and schools, as well as on-site access to district campuses, this context provides a supplemental framework to help inform and guide evaluations.

In accordance with LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, once complete, the LAUSD Historic Context Statement and Historic Resources Inventory database will be provided to the Office of Historic Resources. The Historic Resources Inventory being developed by Sapphos Environmental, Inc. is Arc-GIS compatible and can easily be utilized as an Arc-GIS layer in future historic resource surveys carried out for the City of Los Angeles.

## ***Study Contents***

This report consists of six sections: Section I, Introduction; Section II, Summary of Themes of Significance; Section III, Historic Context and Background; Section IV, Architectural Character; Section V, Themes of Significance; Section VI, Conclusion and Recommendations; and Section VII, Selected Bibliography. Four distinct eras for LAUSD were identified: Founding Years, 1870s to 1909; Progressive Education Movement: Standardization and Expansion, 1910 to 1933; Era of Reform: Great Depression, Earthquake, and Early Experiments in the Modern, Functional School Plant, 1933 to 1945; and Educating the Baby Boom: Postwar Expansion and the Functional, Modern School Plant, 1946 to 1969.



Figure 7. Garvanza School, 1910.  
Source: USC Digital Library.



Figure 8. Circa 1900, Schoolhouse, West Los Angeles.  
Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



## II. SUMMARY OF THEMES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Themes of significance were prepared for extant school property types. No known examples exist of some important types, notably the monumental, early-twentieth-century big-block school that was once a LAUSD standard. This school type was usually constructed of unreinforced, fire-resistant masonry. However, the material's earthquake vulnerability meant that most of these schools were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, or were subsequently replaced to comply with new building codes.

In order to facilitate cross-agency coordination, this section draws on relevant material developed by the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources for historic resource evaluations. Information used in SurveyLA to evaluate institutional properties was consulted and adapted where appropriate.

### **CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

#### **THEME: LAUSD | FOUNDING YEARS, 1875–1894**

This theme is embodied in Los Angeles's remaining one- and two-story wood-frame schoolhouses that generally display Late Victorian or vernacular styles. Only three nineteenth-century schoolhouses are known to remain from LAUSD's founding years. Schools constructed during this period display traditional modes of school design, before the Progressive Education Movement and widespread reform changed national construction standards and before increased urbanization necessitated larger-capacity school plants.

#### **THEME: LAUSD | PRE–1933 LONG BEACH EARTHQUAKE SCHOOL PLANTS, 1910–1933**

This theme reflects an important period for Los Angeles schools. First, it occurred after the Progressive Education Movement had triggered widespread reform of school design throughout the United States. This resulted in a more differentiated, expansive school plant, with specialized facilities and program-specific buildings and classrooms; this ended the era of the monumental, big-block school. Second, this period occurred before a statewide overhaul of school building codes and practices after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake.

This period also began as the 1920s ushered in a school building boom and period-revival golden age in Southern Californian architecture. The importance placed on public education was expressed through beautifully designed school buildings, often created by the region's leading architects. Campus design became more unified, with elaborate approaches and entrances. The advent of more grand entrances, as well as the incorporation of separate auditoriums, sited for ease of public access, reflected a growing sense that public education was a community affair.

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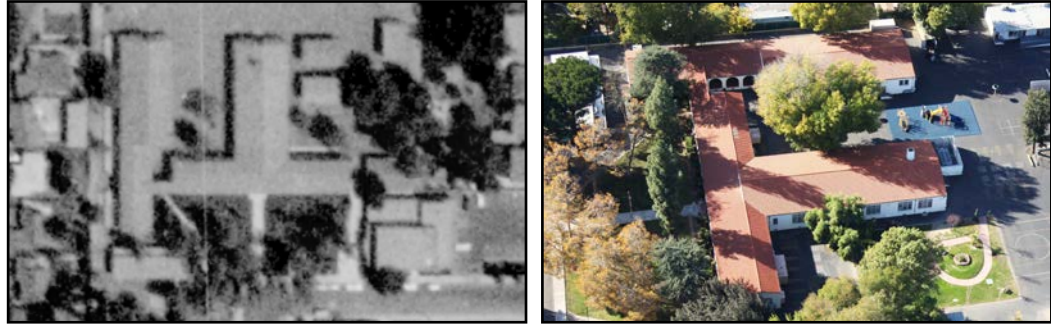
HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 9. 10th Street Elementary School, Los Angeles (1922). Source: LAUSD.

Replacing the big-block school, with internal corridors, was a generally lower-massed, spread-out campus. In some examples, designers replaced hallways with covered outdoor walkways. Building plans also evolved, as the traditional rectangular plan took on adjacent wings, in H-shaped, T-shaped, or U-shaped buildings that facilitated the creation of sheltered outdoor spaces and patios. Lower massing was particularly common for elementary schools.

Because most pre-1933 schools were substantially remodeled following the Long Beach earthquake, intact examples from this era are relatively rare. It is common to find 1920s-era schools that were remodeled following the earthquake; such schools might exhibit the building plans and configurations typical of the 1920s but with 1930s PWA Moderne and Streamline Moderne detailing.



Figures 10 and 11. Post–Long Beach Earthquake school: H-shaped plan and Mission Revival style of Reseda Elementary School (1936). Aerial photographs from 1959 (left) and circa 2010 (right). Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *historicaerials.com* (left) and LAUSD Reseda Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey (right).

**THEME: LAUSD | POST–1933 LONG BEACH EARTHQUAKE SCHOOLS, 1933–1945**

Following the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, state and city legislation regarding school building codes and practices shifted the character of LAUSD schools and campuses. Requirements of the Field Act (1934), such as maintaining one-story massing for elementary schools and no more than two stories for junior and high schools, mirrored reforms already under way. Classroom wings continued to be designed for connections to the outdoors, with L-, H-, U-, and T-shaped buildings accommodating sheltered courtyard and patio spaces. Continuing another trend under way in the 1920s, campuses displayed an increasingly unified site design, with sheltered corridors linking campus buildings.

The advances of the Progressive Education Movement also continued to shift school plant design. Campuses were increasingly differentiated, with administration buildings, auditoriums and gymnasiums, separate classroom, shop, and specialty wings, and cafeterias. Adequate indirect lighting and ventilation were provided through the use of generous bands of windows, including multilight sashes, casements, and clerestories. Stylistically, these buildings were less ornamental than their 1920s period-revival counterparts. An emphasis was placed on traditional Southern Californian styles, such as the Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival. Other styles included Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, and Late Moderne. Much post-earthquake reconstruction was funded through the Public Works Administration (PWA), and many schools exhibit a range of PWA Moderne styles.



Figure 12. Reseda Elementary School, 1936. The spare Mission Revival style was in keeping with the post-Field Act requirement for one-story massing and the post–Long Beach Earthquake trend to design in the “traditional Southern Californian” mode. Source: LAUSD.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 13. Susan Miller Dorsey High School, Cogerty and Noerenberg, Los Angeles (1937). Source: LAUSD.

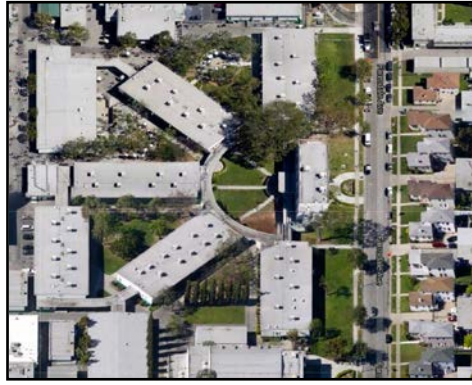


Figure 14. The inventive site plan of Dorsey High School. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

## THEME: LAUSD | EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN THE MODERN, FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL, 1933–1945

Although this category shares general characteristics with the preceding theme (Post–1933 Long Beach Earthquake Schools), it is distinguished by an experimental approach to school design that emerged during the Great Depression. Such schools reflect the most avant-garde ideas of the era and the beginning of modern, functionalist school design. Stylistically, the proto-modernist school need not be purely “modern” in the sense of lacking any ornamental detailing. The significant changes reflected a philosophy that went a step further than did the schools of the 1920s in designing for function and integrating school buildings with exterior spaces. During the postwar construction boom, many of the same ideas that characterized these experimental schools became the norm throughout Los Angeles and the United States.

The notable differences between the two themes (or periods) relate to scale, site plan, and functional, child-centered design. The proto-modernist school has an explicitly domestic scale, with low ceilings and a lack of monumental design or massing. These schools generally exhibit a decentralized, nonhierarchical campus, with a strong geometric patterning applied to the site plan. Classroom wings generally consist of one-room-deep rectilinear buildings, lined with adjacent patios and landscaping. Building plans clearly express their function, with (usually) one-story massing, generous expanses of glazing, window sizes and configurations tailored to sun patterns and doors opening directly onto patio areas and courtyards. The preferred typology was the early version of the “finger-plan” school, with rectilinear classroom wings extending from a central axis.

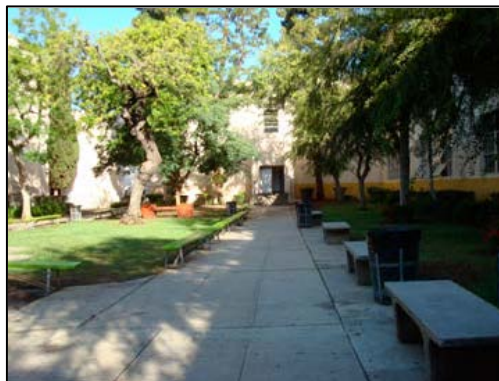


Figure 15. Emerson Middle School, Richard Neutra (1937–1940), example of open green spaces lining classroom wings. Source: LAUSD Emerson Middle School, Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.





Figure 16. Baldwin Hills Elementary School, Robert Alexander, architect, Los Angeles (1949–1951). Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.



Figure 17. Early finger-plan school, Baldwin Hills Elementary School. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

**THEME: LAUSD | EDUCATING THE BABY BOOM: THE POSTWAR MODERN  
FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL PLANT, 1945–1969**

By the 1950s, many of the design ideas considered experimental in the 1930s had matured and become the national standard for schools. Stylistically, schools might include some historicist detailing reflecting popular styles (such as Colonial Revival). But, overall, a unified campus design, building types and plans that accommodated a high degree of indoor-outdoor integration, ample outdoor spaces, and sheltered corridors marked the typology as the mature version of the functionalist school plant. The priority remained the creation of a domestic scale for schools. Campuses displayed a one-story massing for elementary schools, and up to two stories for middle and high schools. Site plans, which often featured a decentralized, pavilion-like layout, lacked the formality and monumentality that characterized earlier eras of school design.

School types expressive of these ideals include the finger-plan (1940s–1950s) and cluster-plan (1950s), and variations on their basic themes. Combinations of these basic forms, which flexed according to available lot size and school enrollment, are also evident.

For LAUSD, the postwar years brought another round of reform as well as unprecedented expansion. Given the postwar classroom shortage, many campuses were constructed quickly, from standardized plans used district-wide, in designs that convey some of these ideas. The most intact and well-designed campuses among these, though, uniquely represent this era of reform and the midcentury modern school.



Figure 18. Orville Wright Middle School, Spaulding & Rex (1948–1952); balanced, indirect classroom lighting. Source: LAUSD Orville Wright Middle School, Pre-Planning Survey, 2012.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 19. The “East LA Blow Out,” Lincoln High School, 16 September 1968. Students protested for “better schools for Mexican Americans. Sal Castro was a teacher there and spearheaded the movement.” Source: LAPL, Herald-Examiner Collection, 00041327.

## THEME: LAUSD AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, 1954–1980

This theme of significance begins with the filing of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. The Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* addressed state laws that did not exist in California—namely, laws allowing for racially segregated public schools—this case and the Civil Rights Movement helped generate and focus attention on related issues in Los Angeles. Issues touched on racial division and cultural identity, equal access, and how to create more balance and diversity in public schools. Signaling the end of this period of significance is the U.S. Supreme Court decision effectively ending mandatory school busing as a solution to racial imbalance in California’s public schools. Although this issue continued to form part of the social context for LAUSD, this period captures an era of intense debate and activism on the part of community members, parents, politicians and jurists, as well as teachers and administrators.

A school eligible under this theme might be the site of significant integration initiatives, challenges, or community activities related to the Civil Rights Movement and school integration. This might include initiatives for equal access to schools and/or to employment opportunities in LAUSD schools.

In addition, a school might qualify under this theme for a long-term association with a figure who was significant in the Civil Rights Movement and school integration.



Figure 20. “School integrationists,” in a 1963 hunger strike for better racial integration of Los Angeles public schools. Source: LAPL, Shades of Los Angeles, #00041605.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 21. Postwar school: Chatsworth High School (1963), curved outdoor corridor and mature landscaping of student quad and courtyard. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.



Figure 22. Chatsworth High School, classroom. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.

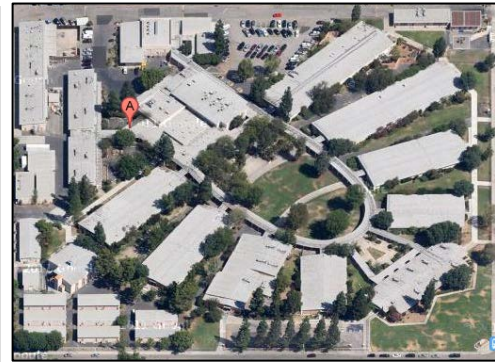


Figure 23. Chatsworth High School, aerial view of site plan and design. Source: Google Maps, 2013.



Figure 24. Chatsworth High School, courtyard. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.



Figure 25. Chatsworth High School, courtyard. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 26. Old Farmdale School circa 1950. Source: LAPL Photographic Collection.

### III. HISTORIC CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

This section provides a broad overview of the trends and patterns of development that shaped the facilities of the Los Angeles Unified School District since its founding in the 1870s. The following eras are covered:

- A. Founding Years, 1870s through 1909
- B. Progressive Education Movement: Standardization and Expansion, 1910 to 1933
- C. Era of Reform: Great Depression, Earthquake, and Early Experiments in the Modern, Functionalist School Plant, 1933 to 1945
- D. Educating the Baby Boom: Postwar Expansion and the Modern, Functionalist School Plant, 1945 through 1969

Each era is broken down into three sections: (1) National Context and Developments, exploring the trends in educational methods and curricula, as well as background information on school plant design; (2) Effects on School Buildings and Campuses, exploring how these trends resulted in changes to school plant facilities; and (3) Los Angeles City School Districts: Developments and Context, presenting Los Angeles–specific events that resulted in changes to educational policy and school plant design in Los Angeles and the region as a whole.

Sections also include a variety of historic and current photographs, with national and local examples illustrating the trends, patterns of development, and significant themes in the evolution of school plant design. Until 1961, what became the LAUSD comprised two separate entities: the Los Angeles City School District, covering primary education; and the Los Angeles City High School District. Throughout the Historic Context Statement, references to the district therefore reflect the administrative structure at the time (as the Los Angeles City school districts).



Figure 27. Los Angeles High School, 1891.  
Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 28. Palos Verdes High School, 1961.  
Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## A. FOUNDING YEARS: 1870s THROUGH 1909<sup>5</sup>

Only three schools are known to remain from this early era in the history of the Los Angeles Unified School District: the Old Vernon Avenue School (1876; 450 N. Grand Avenue); the Old Farmdale School (1889; 2839 N. Eastern Avenue, in El Sereno); and, in present-day Santa Monica, the Old Canyon School (1894), now serving as the library for an elementary school. The Old Farmdale School, a Queen Anne Revival–style building attributed to architects Bradbeer and Ferris, was restored and rededicated as a museum in 1976.

Few resources remain, but the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century context helps set the stage for the eras that followed. During the period considered in this context, school architects and educators shared a sense of urgency in describing the importance of the safe, well-designed school. Whether in 1906 or 1966, they used remarkably similar language to describe their era’s contributions to designing the ideal “modern American school.”

Describing the district’s founding years helps illustrate the evolution of school plant design and the challenges faced by successive generations of architects and educators. Well into the postwar period, late-nineteenth-century educational philosophies and facilities remained a point of comparison, an example of what to avoid. In 1965, writing about modern Californian school design, State Department of Education official Charles D. Gibson declared that “big block schools with internal corridors and windowless classrooms are becoming a rarity, with most schools returning to the campus plan concept, using landscaped courts and natural materials to create informal environments.”<sup>6</sup>

In fact, by 1965, the battle against the big-block school had long since been won. But the specter of the imposing, factory-like school plant remained the example against which new ideas were measured.



Figure 29. Old Vernon Avenue School, built in 1876. Source: LAUSD Vernon City Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.

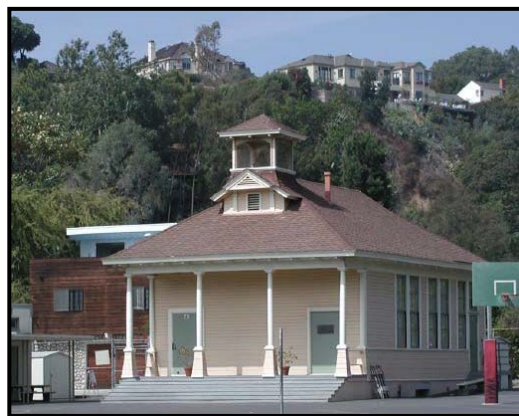


Figure 30. Old Canyon School, built in 1894. Source: LAUSD.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT | DEVELOPMENTS

In the early years of American school design, the most typical building type for educational facilities had been the wood-framed, one-room schoolhouse—a basic typology that attempted “to be all things for all children,” as well as all things for all teachers and educational methods.<sup>7</sup> Rapid urbanization throughout the United States called for a new approach. Large-scale schools, with classrooms accommodating several dozen pupils, were needed. With the increased demand, public schools started separating children into grades, with separate classrooms for each rather than a single large room housing all grades.

The new building typology tended to be rectangular in plan, with multistory massing, sanitation systems and facilities placed in a basement, and classrooms designed for large groups of students seated in rows. High ceilings accommodated tall windows, which provided the main source of interior illumination. In his study of the history of the American school, R. Thomas Hille observed that “a typical urban school from this era was organized in a single block of one or two floors, with standardized classrooms on each floor organized symmetrically around a central hallway. ... School furniture was already standardized and typically included individual desks organized in rows and bolted to the floor.”<sup>8</sup>

This typology fit the curricula and methods of the time. Before the Progressive Education Movement gained momentum throughout the United States, beginning in the 1880s, primary and secondary schools continued to follow traditional methods emphasizing rote memorization and discipline, in an atmosphere that was regimented and authoritarian (rather than flexible and participatory).

In this respect, Los Angeles’s early schools were similar to schools around the country. Los Angeles educators and administrators followed the philosophy of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), an influential Swiss pedagogue and reformer, and his “emphasis on the disciplinary values of the subjects taught.”<sup>9</sup>



Figure 31. Old Farmdale School, opened in 1899. Source: LAUSD.



Figure 32. 79th Street School, South Central Los Angeles (now McKinley Avenue Elementary School), shown in 1925 aerial photo. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

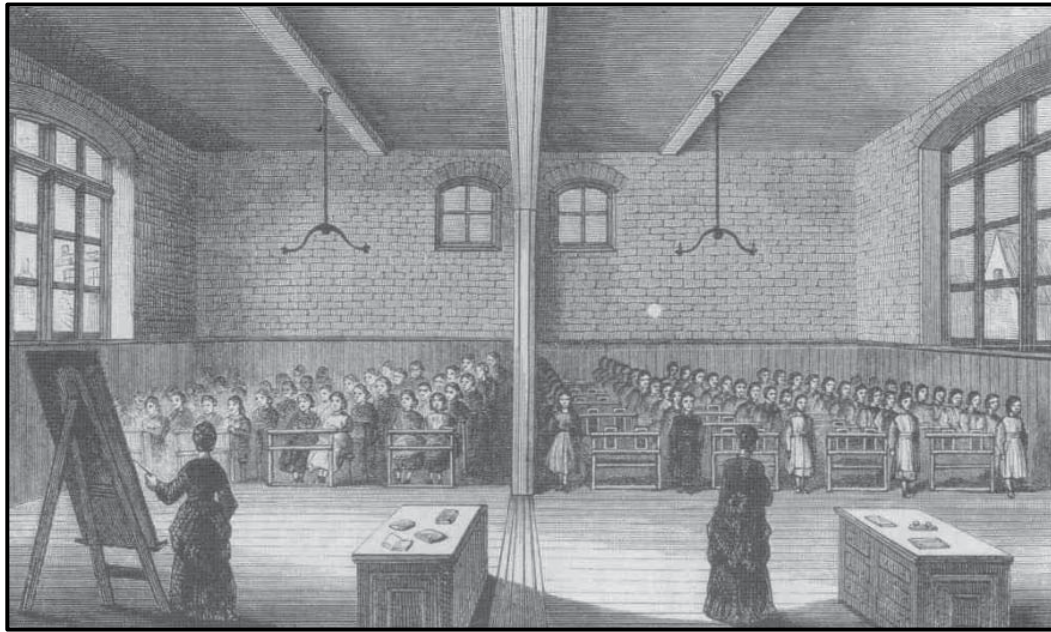


Figure 33. Typical British classroom design, as of 1900. Source: Baker, 2012.

Pestalozzi's thinking mirrored the trends of American education at the time, with an emphasis on memorization and recitation. In Los Angeles schools, "All pupils did the same lessons in the same way. There was no recognition of individual differences."<sup>10</sup> Early school officials emphasized the "disciplinary values of their subjects" and uniform teaching methods for all students and classes.<sup>11</sup>

At this time, the effects of the Progressive Era—the period of social activism and political reform associated with the 1890s through the 1920s—were becoming evident in the public schools. In Los Angeles, when promoting the activities and accomplishments of the schools, district officials began describing a general liberalization of teaching methods and curriculum. The new programs were based less on discipline—including, as one official proudly pointed out, a diminishing reliance on corporal punishment—and were more participatory and tailored to children's nature and needs.

In this way, as the nineteenth century came to a close, "the foundations were laid against regimented instruction," in Los Angeles as elsewhere; "the concept of the pupil as the passive recipient, the sponge soaking up information in preparation of adult life, was abandoned. The broader concept of education as an integral part of the life process, of learning by doing through creative participation, slowly replaced the old accepted theory."<sup>12</sup> In subsequent decades, these evolving philosophies would also shift ideas about school plant design.

## EFFECTS ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CAMPUSES

It took time for school plant design to catch up with evolving educational methods. As noted Connecticut school architect Warren Richards Briggs (1850–1933) argued in 1906, “no one will deny [that] the public system of education has been carried in our country during the last half century to a degree of perfection heretofore unknown to any country of the world.” Yet, he wrote, “can it be said, however, with equal assurance that our school buildings have kept pace with our educational systems? Are they as complete in their design and construction as the educational system in its plan and equipment?”<sup>13</sup>

Among architects and educators it was widely recognized that reform and standardization were needed. During the late nineteenth century, especially in urban schools, systems for sanitation and safety “were less than ideal and varied considerably from location to location, with little in the way of regulatory oversight.”<sup>14</sup> This area was the first to be widely studied and significantly changed during this time, as many resources were devoted to developing and improving health and safety standards and systems.<sup>15</sup>

In Briggs’s 1906 book, *Modern American School Buildings*, the architect contributed one of many guides available for standardized schools. The scale of Briggs’s schools remained imposing and monumental, with the entire school contained within a single, multistory building. But the new standardized schools offered the best building infrastructure available at the time, with improved heating, ventilation, and sanitation systems, as well as recommendations for the ideal size and configuration for windows, doors, emergency exits, and other features.

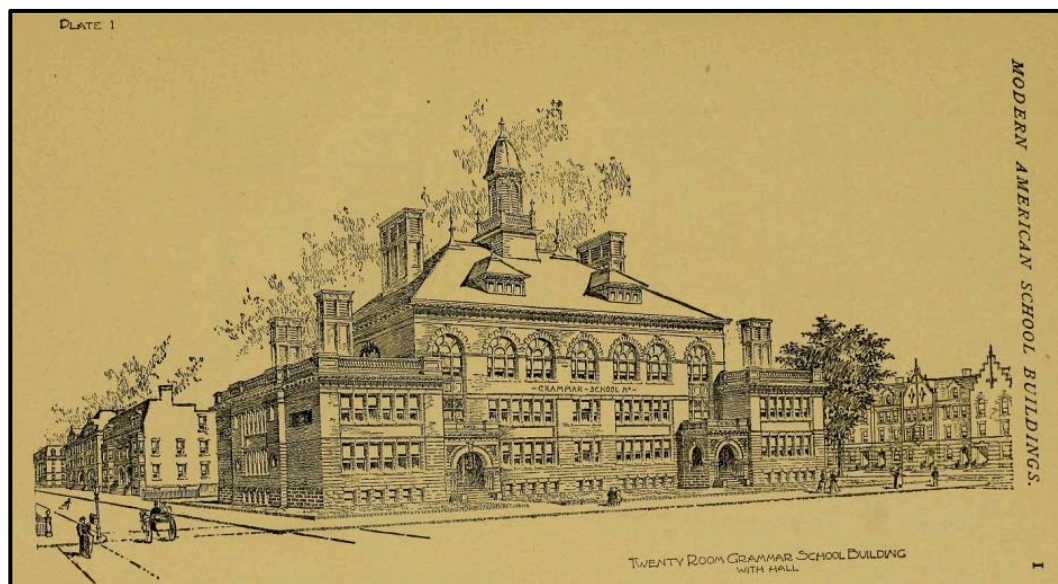


Figure 34. The “Modern American School,” as of 1906, a 20-room elementary school. Source: Briggs, 1906.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

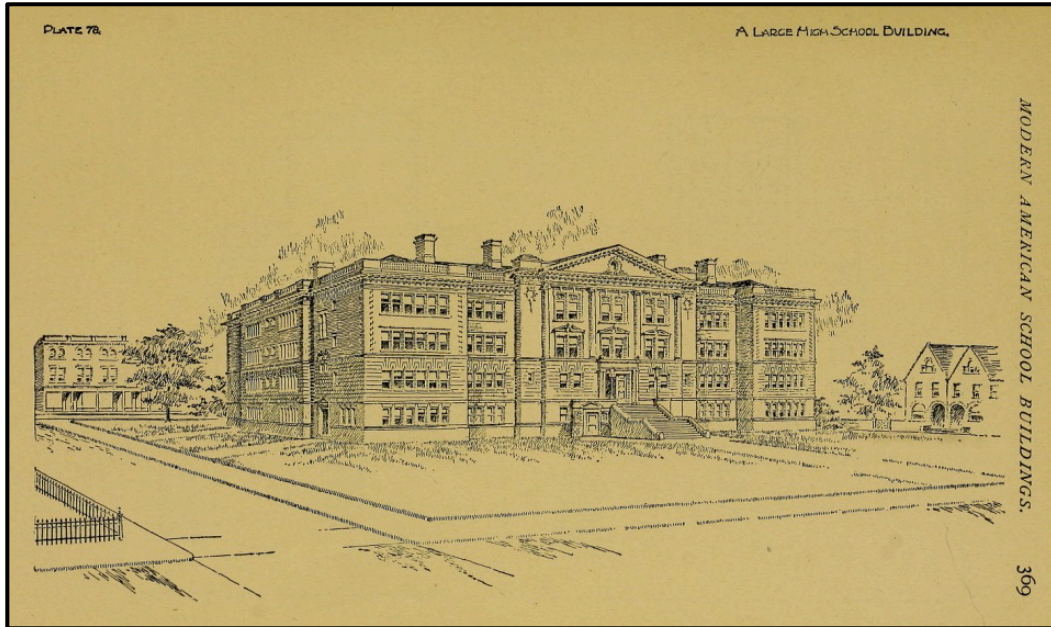


Figure 35. From *The Modern American School*, 1906. One of many available reference guides for standardized school construction. Illustration shows sketch for a four-story, neo-classical “Large High-School Building.” Source: Briggs, 1906.

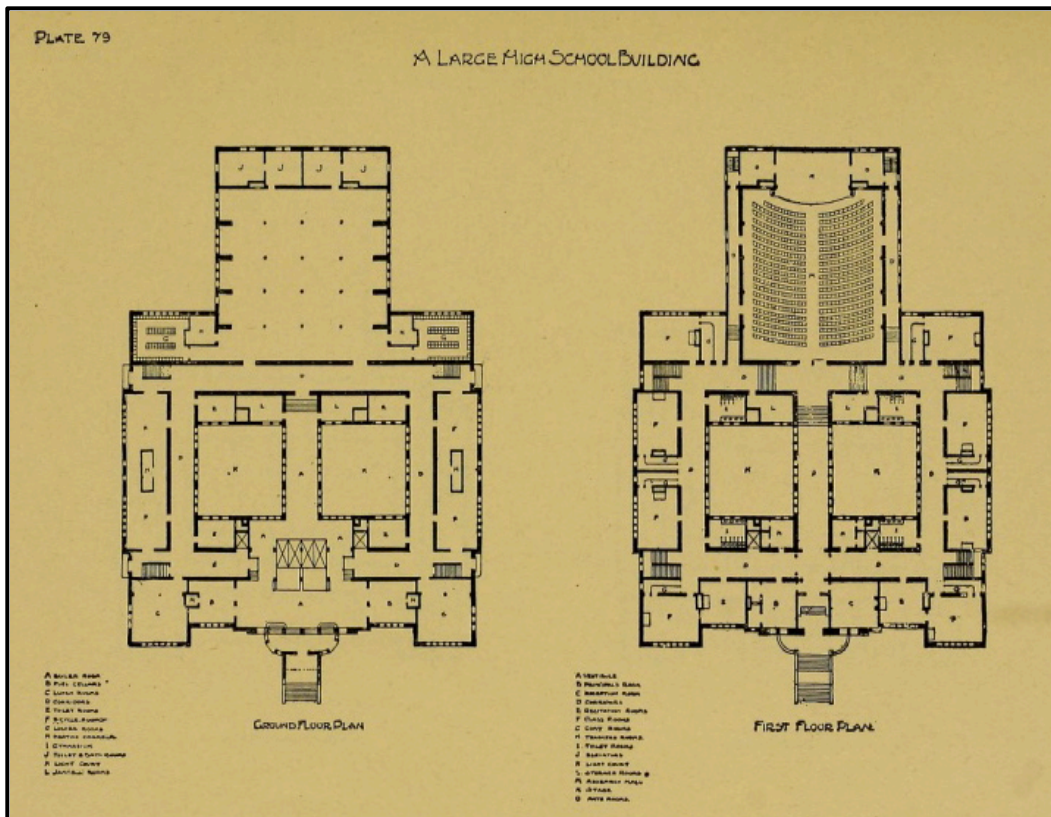


Figure 36. From *The Modern American School*, 1906. Plan for first two stories of neo-classical “Large High-School Building.” Source: Briggs, 1906.





Figure 37. Original Manual Arts High School (1910), shown in circa 1925 aerial photograph; demolished and rebuilt following the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

In the early twentieth century, the movement to standardize and improve schools gained momentum and took off in earnest. American school architecture “advanced from the low point of complete neglect to a high point of monumentalism. School buildings changed from small, shabby units to large, beautiful edifices, glorifying the people’s devotion to education.”<sup>16</sup> Education-related organizations and trade publications around the country helped forward the cause. Overall, urban school plants still tended to be imposing “big-block” institutions “designed to house as many students as possible.”<sup>17</sup>

But the seed had been planted among a national network of educators and administrators that the classroom should be a comfortable, safe place. Advances in health and hygiene research translated into changes in school plant design. By the end of the nineteenth century, for example, a better understanding of ventilation and disease prevention, in particular for tuberculosis, affected approaches to fenestration and building siting and led to an increasing emphasis on cross-ventilation. Overall, the issue of how to design the most healthy and efficient school remained the topic of intense study and debate, as these ideas continued to evolve through the first quarter of the twentieth century.

## LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS | DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTEXT

As elsewhere, the earliest schools in Los Angeles were utilitarian and vernacular in style, constructed to serve newly established communities emerging throughout the region during this time. Early schools were generally wood framed and sheathed, with a simple communal room or two serving all of the school’s needs. The late nineteenth century was the era that “introduced the bell tower as a signature element of a school building, perhaps modeling school buildings on early churches.”<sup>18</sup> Three late-nineteenth-century school buildings survive in Los Angeles.

As school buildings turned from vernacular, domestic-scaled forms to more monumental statements of civic pride, the model became Beaux-Arts Academic Classicism: “The Classical Revival was especially favored, and impressive porticos of colossal columns

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

proclaimed the importance attached to education.”<sup>19</sup> School buildings came to resemble grand civic buildings, with monumental scale, classical styling, symmetrical design composition, and a rational program. Spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this era brought improved technologies and industrial-strength materials, allowing buildings to rise to two or three stories in height. Most of these buildings were unreinforced masonry construction—more fireproof, but also more vulnerable to earthquakes—and many of these schools were destroyed or damaged beyond repair by the 1933 Long Beach earthquake.

## ***Formation of the Los Angeles City School Districts***

In 1872, little more than two decades after California’s entry to the United States, the Los Angeles City School District was founded. The timing of the district’s establishment was tied to state legislation requiring, among other things, that each city in California create a board of education. In 1879, amendments to the state constitution gave cities the authority to establish school curricula and methods, and Los Angeles educators set to the task of developing a program of study for their new district. Curricular improvements and reform in Los Angeles, as elsewhere, remained the topics of ongoing debate and refinement throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth.



Figure 38. Central School (1873) at Temple and Broadway Streets in downtown Los Angeles, 1931 photo (demolished). Source: USC Digital Archive.

As the new district was launched, two schools were constructed in the early 1870s. One of these was the wood-framed Central School, located at Temple and Broadway Streets (then Fort Street) in downtown Los Angeles. Constructed in 1873 for \$25,000, Central School became home to the county’s first high school, which occupied four rooms of the two-story building.

In a 1936 series of articles exploring “landmarks almost forgotten in the march of progress,” the *Los Angeles Times* recalled that when the school was constructed, it was “so big and grand that they came from miles around to see it, quite the finest school south of San Francisco. Its lines were classic, and it had a cupola with a clock in it. ... The teachers like the wide corridors and generous windows and the transoms over the doors. The earthquake, which did so much damage to newer school buildings, didn’t harm the [Central] school in the least.”<sup>20</sup> In 1882, Los Angeles’s first teaching college, the State Normal School, was constructed downtown near the present-day site of the Los Angeles Public Library.

## ***Early Currents of Change***

One shift during this period was a growing sense that public education and schools should be a community affair, with a mission to serve the needs of the population. One example of this is seen in a citywide poll launched in 1900 by the Los Angeles Board of Education. With an extended list of questions, the poll was distributed to all city residents in order to solicit input on district curricula and teaching methods. The stated goal of the board in creating the survey was to initiate “the freest and most open discussion of public school work by all interested.”<sup>21</sup> All citizens of Los Angeles were asked to offer opinions on the subjects taught at all grade levels, with a particular amount of attention going toward the newly established kindergarten program, as well as the amount of homework assigned and classroom conditions. After surveys were distributed throughout the city, results were tallied and discussed at a public meeting, in what would ultimately become an ongoing effort to solicit community input.

Similarly, in this era, a range of special-needs schools were established, including facilities for the deaf, blind, physically disabled, or cognitively impaired; special facilities were also provided for children suffering from tuberculosis. In addition, vocational schools with more hands-on, skills-related curricula were established in these early years. The 1904 Polytechnic High School was one example of this initiative.

## ***The Boom of the 1880s and Los Angeles City Schools***

In the 1880s, as has been well documented, Los Angeles experienced a significant population boom. One factor fueling this expansion was a speculative land rush, fueled by the completion of the transcontinental railroad and price wars between competing railway lines. The “boom of the 1880s” brought prosperity and development throughout Southern



*Figure 39. Los Angeles’s first teaching college, State Normal School (1882), downtown Los Angeles, in a circa 1900 photo. In the 1920s, this site became the location for the Los Angeles Public Library. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.*

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

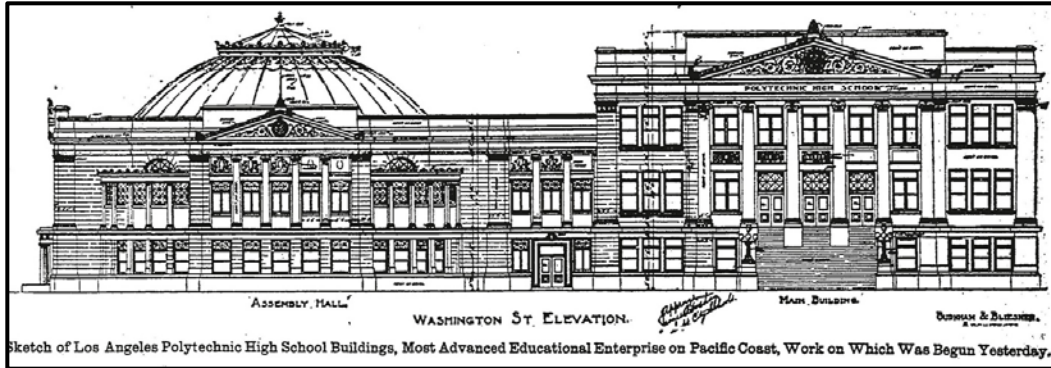


Figure 40. Elevation sketch of Los Angeles Polytechnic High School (1904), by Los Angeles architects Burnham & Bliesser. Source: Los Angeles Times, July 9, 1904.

California (though the boom had collapsed by 1890). Between 1880 and 1900, the population of Los Angeles expanded tenfold, growing from 10,000 to more than 100,000. In another decade, these numbers would triple, expanding to nearly 320,000 by 1910, greatly testing the capacity of the fledgling school district and board.

Although the district carried out an extensive building campaign during its first decade, keeping pace with population growth was a constant struggle. The city's schools quickly became overcrowded. As of 1874, the Los Angeles Board of Education recorded a total of six schools with nearly 900 students in the district. Within one decade, by 1884, the number of students within the district had nearly quadrupled, expanding to almost 3,500. By 1890, the Los Angeles Board of Education operated a total of 178 classrooms, which, in the spirit of the times, were classified not in terms of grade level but according to classroom capacity to house students.<sup>22</sup>

Rapid population growth produced multiple problems for the fledgling Los Angeles Board of Education and school districts. Among them, according to the board's 1884 annual report, were a lack of scholastic uniformity among schools; significant gaps in the educational levels of pupils; crowded classrooms, which necessitated turning students away; and poor financial support. In addition, board president Frank A. Gibson "bemoaned" a governing structure by which state boards of education lacked the authority to issue bonds for school-building campaigns.<sup>23</sup> Within five years of the publication of this annual report, state policy changed. Cities were given the authority to issue bonds for municipal projects and improvements, including school construction. In

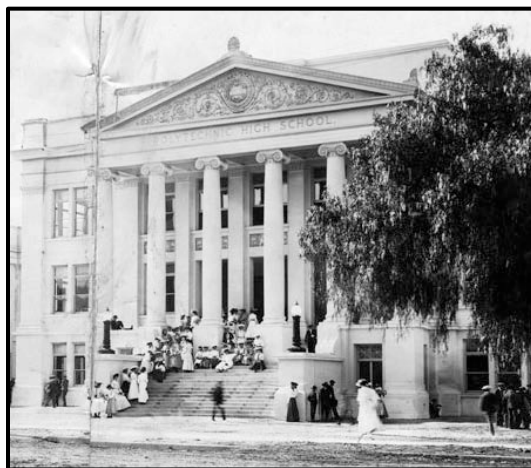


Figure 41. Neo-Classical Los Angeles Polytechnic High School (1904), Burnham & Bliesser (demolished). Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 42. Grand, neo-classical high school beyond the city core: San Fernando Union High School (circa 1900), shown in a circa 1900 image (original location unknown). Source: USC Digital Archive.

1899, the City of Los Angeles sold bonds amounting to \$200,000, generating proceeds for a turn-of-the-century building campaign for new schools.<sup>24</sup>

The funding provided through the bond measure temporarily helped ease overcrowding. However, the respite was short-lived. The board and district struggled to accommodate ever-expanding enrollment figures. Reflecting on the school year 1892–1893, the superintendent of the Los Angeles Board of

Education wrote, “There seems to be no way to get entirely rid of these half-day schools in our rapidly and continuously growing city.”<sup>25</sup> In the 1900s, this problem remained an issue, with rapidly increasing enrollment each year. Indeed, overcrowding continued to represent one of the most pressing challenges facing Los Angeles school districts throughout this era (and throughout the twentieth century).

### ***Civic Pride and the Turn-of-the-Century School***

On the city periphery, as undeveloped lands slowly gave way to residential and farming communities, utilitarian wood-framed schoolhouses continued to serve the needs of new communities. But in the city core, grand new schools reflected the city’s economic and institutional success. In its first few decades, the district added many monumental large-scale schools. Designed by the city’s nascent field of architects, the buildings were generally self-contained, multistory buildings exhibiting the palette of styles popular in the era, including late Victorian, Romanesque, Classical Revival, and Beaux-Arts styles. The district’s educational facilities and slowly modernizing methods mirrored Los Angeles’s transformation from an outpost of 10,000 in 1880 to a metropolis of nearly 320,000 by 1910.<sup>26</sup> Of the district’s rapid growth, the *Los Angeles Times* noted in 1898 that

while it is altogether unnecessary to draw comparisons, it may be said that there is no other city in the United States that can show a proportionately great increase in school population. To say that Los Angeles is proud of her school record and of the large and well-appointed buildings erected for the education of her children is but to repeat that which the parents of the children well know and appreciate. No expense has been spared in providing every modern acquirement.<sup>27</sup>

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figures 43. and 44. A rare remnant of the neo-classical era in school design: San Fernando Middle School, Auditorium, John C. Austin, architect (1916). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

On January 1, 1898, the *Los Angeles Times* took stock of a decade of expansion of the city's public schools, which by then included 57 facilities with nearly 400 classrooms, estimated in value at \$1.25 million. The new, progressive tone was evident in the article. "Play is the business of childhood," the reporter wrote, so the new kindergarten facility is "the playschool for the little ones," with a day filled with varied arts and crafts activities. "By those simple methods, which afford an amusement rather than a task, the mind of the child is set in motion."<sup>28</sup>

The monumentality and beauty of the city's public schools were also celebrated as forwarding the cause of education. The fine buildings, along with updated classroom activities and subjects, would inspire the older pupil to attend school rather than "lie awake all night scheming how he might play hookey all next day." "How different it all is from days gone by," the reporter concluded wistfully.<sup>29</sup>

In this way, for Los Angeles, providing the most modern, up-to-date curricula and facilities became important symbols of the city's growth, economic success, and stature as an urban center worthy of comparison to San Francisco, its well-established rival to the north. With the 1908 groundbreaking for the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and the subsequent wave of land annexations to the city, the area covered by the Los Angeles City School Districts would expand even more in the 1910s and into the 1920s, bringing new challenges for the city's school districts.

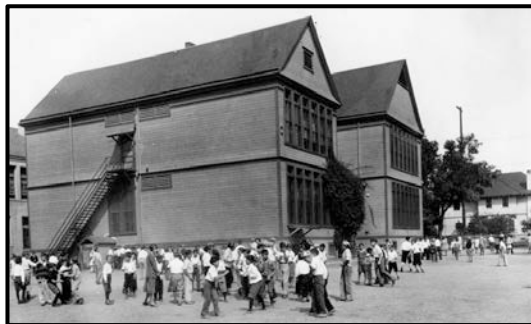


Figure 45. 10th Street Elementary School, 10th St. and Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, in 1926 photo. The oldest extant building on campus is the Administration Building, constructed in 1922. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



## B. PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION MOVEMENT: STANDARDIZATION AND EXPANSION, 1910 TO 1933

“One of the important functions of school architecture is to sell education to the public. This is accomplished by making attractive that side of education the public sees most.”

—John J. Donovan, *School Architecture: Principles and Practices*, 1921

### NATIONAL CONTEXT | DEVELOPMENTS

Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, Progressive Era reform inspired a broad restructuring of educational methods and curricula in the United States. Reform was guided by the theories of educators and philosophers such as John Dewey (1859–1952) of the Columbia University Teachers College. Dissatisfied with authoritarian teaching methods emphasizing passivity and rote learning—and factory-like schools—Dewey and others argued that a student’s natural curiosity and real-life needs should shape the classroom environment and curriculum. Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement stressed “learning both abstract concepts and real skills through projects ... children should move freely through classrooms, use materials other than textbooks ... explore the physical world through hands-on projects.”<sup>30</sup>

By the 1910s, the Progressive Education Movement had gained momentum. Educators and administrators interested in reform advocated for more hands-on, child-centered methods and curricula. Key to this movement was the notion that the classroom should flex to the needs of each student. Anthropologist William Henry Holmes (1846–1933) thus noted the change in 1912: “Within the past few years we have been coming to measure education by a new standard, the standard of individual achievement. This means that we have begun to differentiate the abilities of children ... not in terms of a general standard, but in terms of what each individual is able to do within the range of his own ability.”<sup>31</sup> This new standard brought changes to classroom dynamics, school structures, and to schools themselves.

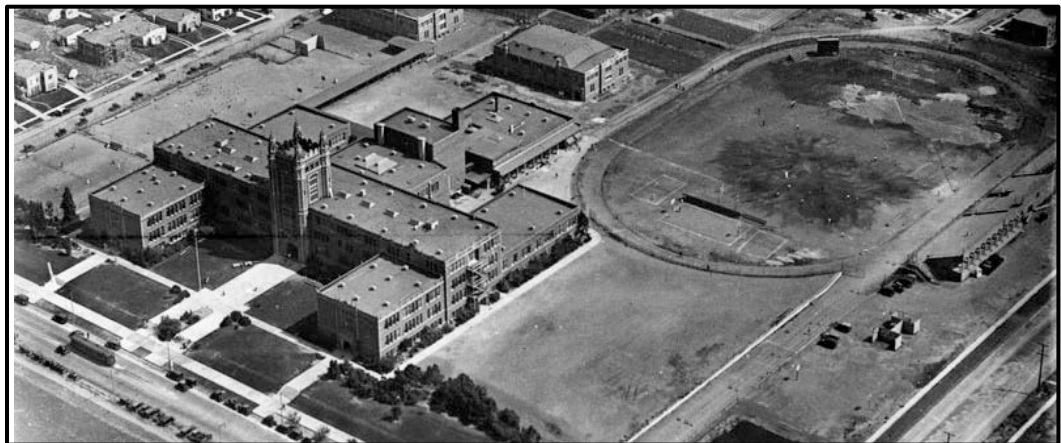


Figure 46. Los Angeles High School (1917), in 1925 photo. Although the school still occupies this site, at 4600 W. Olympic Boulevard in Central Los Angeles, this building is no longer extant; most of the existing campus core was constructed between 1964 and 1978. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



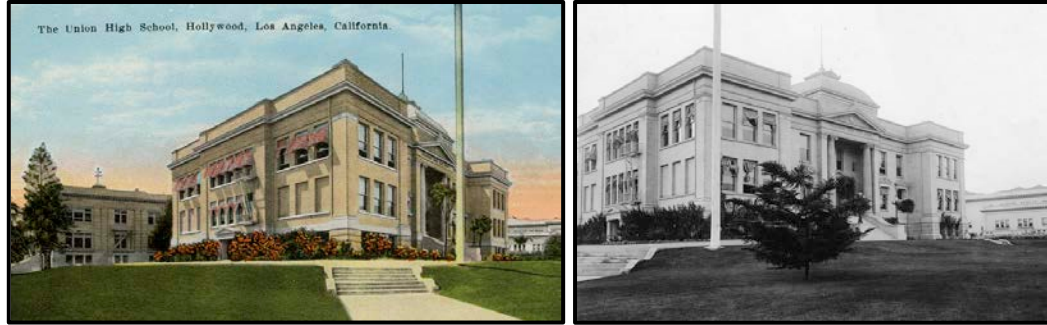
Figure 47. Lincoln High School (1918), northeast Los Angeles, shown here in circa 1925 photo. After sustaining significant damage during the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake, the school was reconstructed beginning in 1936/1937. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

The 1910s in Los Angeles also brought a number of developments that ultimately affected public schools. In addition to the 1913 opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the film industry settled in the Los Angeles area during this time, and its economic strength drew new residents. Also in the early 1910s, the region's first collegiate school of architecture was taking shape at USC. By 1925, USC began conferring the region's only professional degree in architecture.<sup>32</sup> This helped establish the city's architectural profession and culture by training architects and attracting faculty throughout the country.

During this period, the role of the public school also changed, with a greater focus on serving community needs. An expansion of specialized programs and facilities served new groups, including working teenagers and adults. The school plant itself also took on a greater role as a community-gathering place, with auditoriums, outdoor spaces, and public rooms sited and designed to double as gathering areas. Artfully designed and landscaped approaches and entrances to schools represented an acknowledgment of this change and the need for positive relations with the community. Summing up the changes to educational philosophy in the early twentieth century, W. H. Crocker (1861–1937), editor of *The American Architect*, wrote,

During the past quarter century, each succeeding year has witnessed the broadening development of public education. The relation of the school to the community has radically changed. Systems of education have been evolved as the result of the careful observation of those engaged in pedagogy, and these systems have become broadened and extended. ... With this evolution and extension of educational methods it was logical to assume that the modern schoolhouse would keep pace in its designing and planning.<sup>33</sup>





Figures 48. and 49. Civic pride and the monumental public school. On the left: Historic postcard of Union High School (1910), later Hollywood High, Hollywood. Source: LAPL Photo Collection. On the right: Union High School in a circa 1915 photo. Located at 1521 N. Highland Avenue, the building is extant but significantly altered; it is currently in use as the Hollywood High School Museum. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

In fact, modern schoolhouse design was initially slower to keep up with the times. But by the early 1920s, the Progressive Education Movement had brought significant changes to two main realms: first, teaching methods and curricula became more hands-on and individualized, less rigid and authoritarian; and second, environments for learning were transformed to facilitate these new ideas. As architectural historian Amy Ogata wrote, “Historians of education are still divided on the real impact of progressivism on American education, but its effect on the *architectural* discourse was profound and enduring.”<sup>34</sup>

#### EFFECT ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CAMPUSES

Educational philosophies and methods—and eventually schools themselves—changed substantially during this period. For their communities, school plants remained important symbols of civic identity and pride. The buildings were increasingly functional, but the wish to create beautiful temples to learning, reflecting the community’s aspirations for itself and its youth, remained strong: “There is nothing more impressive or hopeful in American democracy than the devotion of the people to education. ... Unconsciously the spirit has been to represent truly this national devotion to education in the architecture of public schools.”<sup>35</sup>

As architects and designers began experimenting with the new ideas of this period, school plants became “more flexible and adaptable, and more accommodating of the new methods of teaching.”<sup>36</sup> The keys became functionality, adaptability, and programmatic differentiation of buildings and spaces, for interiors and for the site overall. The increasing emphasis on natural light and fresh air brought the incorporation of bays of windows, which would march across the building elevations and span each floor of classroom wings.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 50. Southern Californian flavor of Allison & Allison's Grammar School No. 2, Glendora, California. Source: Donovan, 1921.

With a growing network of education-related organizations and publications, the push for modernization was a shared project for architects and educators around the United States. One of the era's most defining documents in this respect—one that became a standard office reference for architects—was John J. Donovan's 1921 *School Architecture: Principles and Practices*. Encyclopedic in scope, Donovan's volume offered a richly illustrated guide with the latest ideas in everything from construction to costs, campus planning and landscape development, to each feature of a modern school plant, whether vocational, elementary, junior, or high school. A wealth of drawings and floor plans illustrated the ideas described by Donovan and other school architects in the volume. In 1954, renowned school architect William Wayne Caudill referred to Donovan's book as "the 'bible'": "Any account of the architectural development of school buildings in the United States certainly would not be complete without a statement concerning the writings of Donovan."<sup>37</sup>

## **John J. Donovan's School Architecture: Principles and Practices**

A native of Massachusetts and alumni of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, John J. Donovan (1876–1949) moved to Oakland, California, in 1911 to supervise the construction of Oakland City Hall. Donovan resided and practiced in Oakland for the rest of his career, completing many high-profile commissions including libraries, schools, and infrastructure projects. Although he lived and practiced in Northern California, Donovan's book became a standard reference throughout the United States.

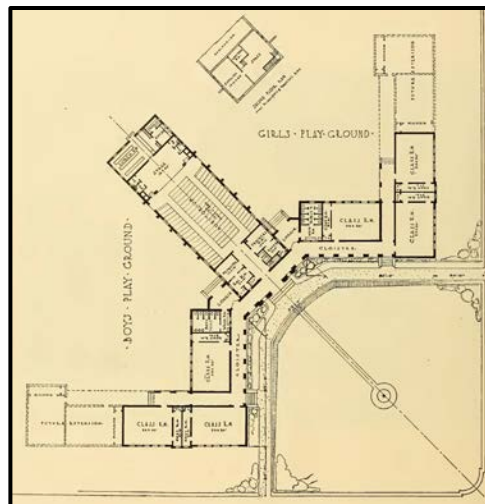


Figure 51. Open-air plan, Allison & Allison's Grammar School No. 2. Source: Donovan, 1921.



Figure 52. Open-air classrooms in northern and southern California. On left, Leland Stanford Jr. University Elementary School, Palo Alto, California. On right, Francis W. Parker Elementary School, San Diego, California. Source: Donovan, 1921.

***Shift away from Monumental Scale and Beaux-Arts Classicism***

Donovan documented and proposed examples of how to plan for the new school. In terms of scale, the schools were less monumental, less imposing. For primary grades especially, Donovan wrote, “Vainglorious attempts to build monumentally are fatal to both child and adult, for instead of attracting the child’s interest they are most likely to repel and make fearful.” Rather, he continued, “the architecture of the elementary school should be symbolic of quiet simplicity, expressing in permanent materials much the same charm that the little child has for those who appreciate and love children.”<sup>38</sup>

Stylistically as well, from the 1910s through the 1920s, there was a move away from Beaux-Arts Classicism and Classical Revival styles toward the period-eclectic styles commonly used in domestic architecture. The significant innovations and departures from earlier eras were in building plan, layout, and interior program. Using a range of national examples, Donovan’s illustrations and narrative showed a new approach to school design that was focused on artful, functional site planning, and coordination of campus buildings.

During this time in Southern California, as in many other parts of the region, architecture was entering a golden age. Responding to the boom in construction, architects and designers were both meeting and fueling demand for the menu of period-eclectic styles popular at the time. In Southern California, architects drew on the heritage of the region, including the Arts and Crafts movement and Spanish Colonial past, to forge a unique architectural identity.

***Importance of Indoor-Outdoor Integration***

One of the most significant shifts during this era was the emphasis on outdoor spaces in schools. In 1910, in another guide for designing “modern” schoolhouses, architect Alfred D. Hamlin observed that “however perfect the heating and ventilating plant, and however faultless its operation, let it be clearly understood and always remembered that no artificial

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 53. A lack of monumentality, low scale, and U-shaped plan characterize John J. Donovan's Stanford University Elementary School, Palo Alto, California. Source: Donovan, 1921.

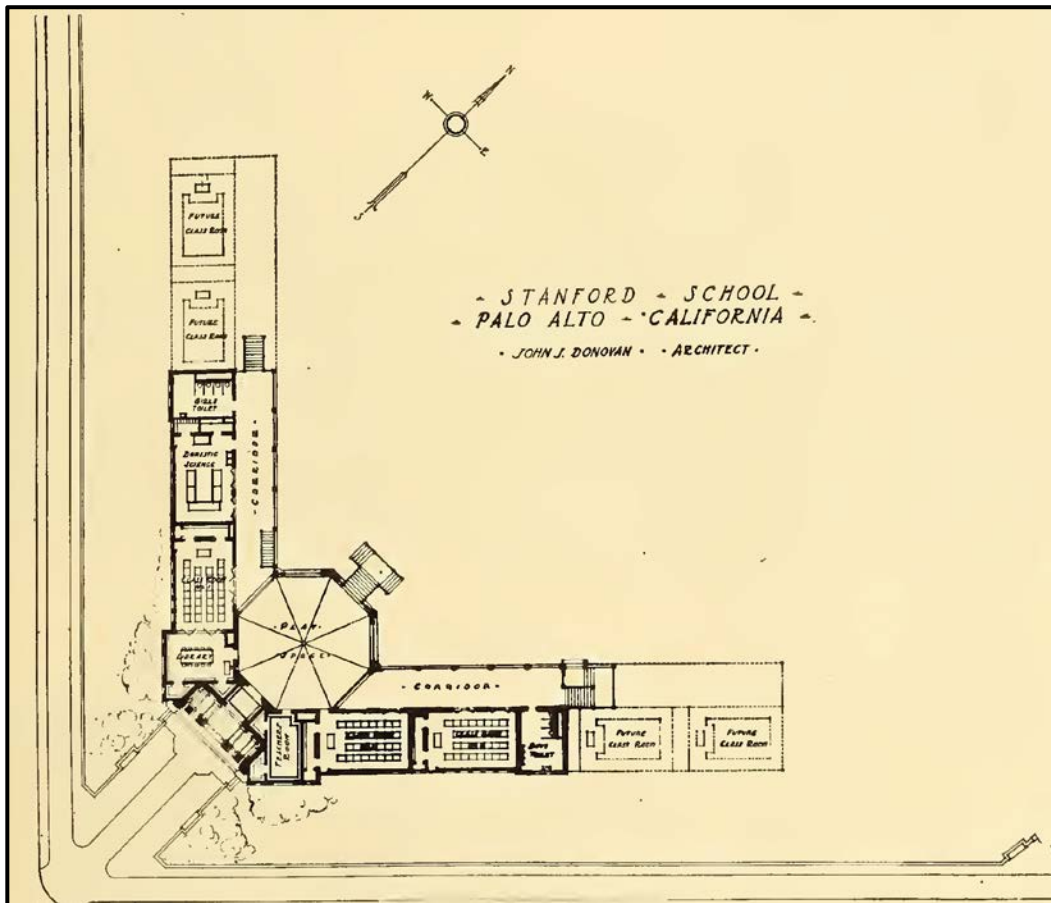


Figure 54. U-shaped campus plan, Stanford University Elementary School, Palo Alto, California. The plan allows for easy indoor-outdoor spaces as well as expansion as the school grows. The locations for four "future class rooms" are sketched in at each end of the plan. Source: Donovan, 1921.



heating and ventilation can ever take the place of fresh outdoor air and sunshine.”<sup>39</sup> Rapid urbanization throughout the United States brought increased acknowledgment of the need for and benefits of outdoor activities. During this era, Hille wrote, “Connections to the out-of-doors were important for reasons of health and hygiene, providing access to natural light, fresh air, and exercise, and places for new kinds of learning activities.”<sup>40</sup>

These ideas translated into clear changes in school design. Plans became “more open and interconnected, with more transparency and spatial complexity—both inside and out.”<sup>41</sup> Schools capturing these ideas in particular abounded in Donovan’s book. Simple changes to the traditional big-block school, such as adding adjacent or parallel wings, created numerous possibilities for outdoor spaces. The school branched out and turned in on itself, with building plans including elongated L shapes, T shapes, H shapes, or U shapes, all of which spread out the interior program and opened up possibilities for courtyard spaces and interconnections.

Many of the examples Donovan used to illustrate the latest ideas were drawn from Northern and Southern California. As Donovan said of these Californian schools, “Elevating the building and spreading its area over more ground brought forth many interesting developments in plan of single units and groups of units which of course led to delightful exterior compositions of the modified Romanesque, Spanish, Italian, English, and modern Renaissance. Thus it is that the school architecture of California has found a permanent spot in the sun.”<sup>42</sup>

In this respect, California led the way. With its relatively mild climate—not to mention rapidly growing population, need for new schools, and room to grow—Southern California in particular was an early proving ground for the open-air campus and school. (For the region’s residential architecture as well, outdoor living came to exemplify the good life and contemporary design in the “Californian” mode, a label that itself was becoming a marker for the latest ideas.)

This was an idea promoted by the Los Angeles school district officials as well. In 1911, M. C. Bettinger, assistant superintendent of the Los Angeles City School District, told the *Los Angeles Times* that in the city’s schools “the custom of studying and even reciting out of doors is growing. The children take their books and go out under the trees, sit on the benches or the ground.”<sup>43</sup> Bettinger said, “In my district I heartily encourage this custom.” He evoked the language of reform when he declared that outdoor study provided a means of “getting away from the factory system of education. ... This is especially desirable in the lower grades, when the children grow restless, and look longingly out toward the fields and the hills.”<sup>44</sup>



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 55. One-story scale and E-shaped plan of Fishburn Avenue Elementary School (1923), extant in Maywood, south of Los Angeles, shown here in 1927 aerial photo. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



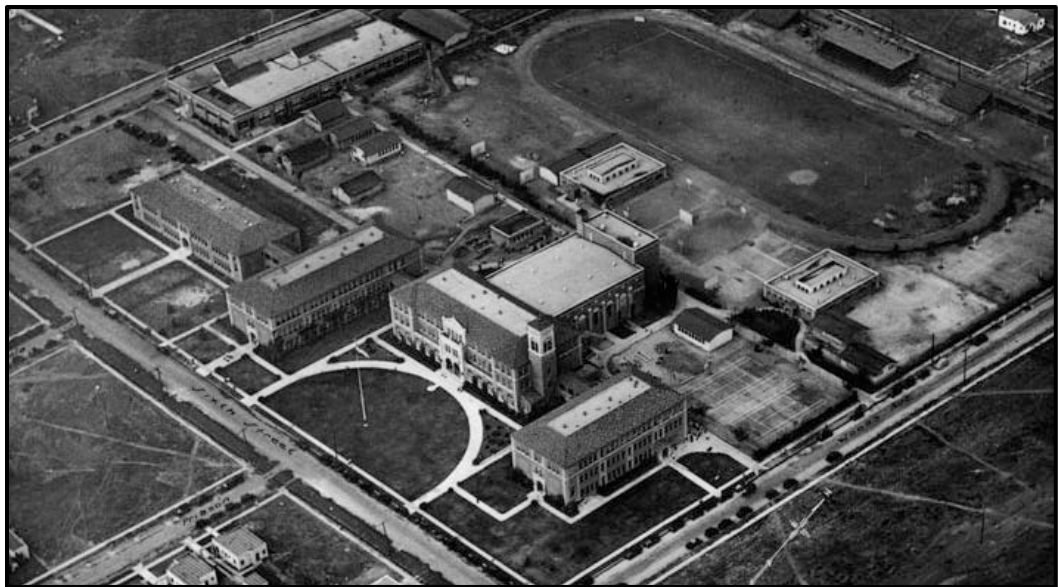
Figure 56. The grand approach, unified campus plan, and H-shaped building of John C. Fremont High School (1924), shown in 1932 aerial photo. Located in south Los Angeles, limited portions of the original campus are extant. Note series of window bays on each floor, letting in natural light and fresh air. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

## ***Site Planning and Layout***

Unified site planning, the incorporation of landscape architecture, and a spread-out campus became increasingly important in this era. These qualities enhanced patterns of circulation, created more outdoor gathering spaces, and built connections between campus buildings based on use. Spreading out the plan, Donovan wrote, created “many opportunities for pleasing courts, and approaches, at the same time furnishing to the plan spaces for lawns, shrubs, trees.”<sup>45</sup>

Because of the acreage requirements for an extended campus plan, though, such schools were often added on the city periphery. Donovan wrote, “The trend of the times is to locate secondary schools in sparsely settled sections of the cities where the buildings may be spread out and their height reduced. This is desirable, as it means better lighting, better natural ventilation, fewer fire hazards.”<sup>46</sup> This was the case in Southern California as well, with many examples of open-air campuses located in what were, at the time, the expanding suburbs beyond the city core. This trend in campus planning also made school plant design, planning, and construction an interdisciplinary project, involving teams of architects, landscape designers, and school facilities personnel.

Buildings were designed with generous setbacks, taking into account adjacent traffic to ensure that classrooms were adequately buffered from street noise. More comprehensive site planning also allowed architects and school planners to think ahead to future expansion needs, in terms of both individual buildings that could be expanded and buildings and structures that might be added.



*Figure 57. Garfield High School (1925), in 1929 photo. While the campus still occupies this site, very little of the original campus appears intact. Note semicircular driveway and approach to school, generous setback, use of landscaping, and unified campus plan. Expanses of window bays span each elevation. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.*

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 58. Expansive site plan of Hyde Park Elementary School (1923), south Los Angeles, shown in 1927 aerial photo. The site is still occupied by a school (LAUSD's Young Empowered Scholars Academy), though little of the original campus appears extant. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

The notion of campus planning was becoming more important as well, especially for upper grades. High schools were expected to be “about double the size” of junior highs, with the “character of the college campus”: “The day has arrived when high schools are being planned as groups of buildings, not more than two or three stories high, with the different departments in separate buildings connected by open or inclosed arcades or wings.”<sup>47</sup> This trend was best suited to expansive lots, though, rather than dense urban environments. For urban schools without much acreage to work with, multiple stories were often necessary, with classrooms organized in blocks with adjacent wings and double-loaded corridors. Although Donovan conceded that in the “larger cities, due to the cost of land, it may be necessary to have the high school under one roof,” his book illustrated how variations in plans and programs still created opportunities for visual interest and outdoor spaces.

In addition to limited acreage, limited funding played a role in determining how far a campus could spread out across a site. Resources were not always available to design and construct an entire campus. In the Los Angeles city school districts in this period, buildings would be added as enrollment increased, usually starting with the administration building—usually the flagship building of the campus—and classroom wings, then eventually including additional classrooms, a cafeteria, and a gymnasium, depending on the grade level of the school. Purposeful site planning also allowed architects to factor into their designs the patterns of the sun and interior illumination, in order to make the best of natural light in the classroom.

According to Donovan, as of 1921, the finer points of building siting, orientation, and interior lighting had been “carefully documented and thoroughly understood by architects at the time.”<sup>48</sup> Conventional wisdom held that window areas should equal approximately 40 to 50 percent of the total wall area of the room’s longest side. Windows would extend up to 6 inches from the ceiling, to maximize light. In this way, the repetitive bays of windows, on

each floor with classroom space, became one of the trademark features of 1920s schools in particular. Views out the windows were also considered important, because students should have the chance to look out the window and “rest their eyes at times.”<sup>49</sup> Ceilings also tended to be high, ranging typically from 12 to 15 feet, “a minimum standard that in many places was regulated by building codes.”<sup>50</sup> High ceilings helped with ventilation and accommodated tall windows, which provided the main light source until the advent of fluorescent lighting in the 1930s.

### LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS | DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTEXT

#### ***Building Program***

During this time in Southern California, the boom in construction and resources brought a golden age for period-revival architecture. Buildings reflected a wide palette of styles and stylistic hybrids; schools exhibited the ornamental programs of Romanesque, Italian Renaissance, Spanish Colonial, and Collegiate Gothic Revival styles. In terms of materials, schools during this period were generally, though not always, of masonry construction. Brick was a popular structural and decorative cladding material, as were hollow clay tile and concrete, the latter often manipulated to resemble stone or other materials.

While the 1920s boom provided opportunities to test new ideas, the era remained transitional, with some new construction showing the new lower massing and open site plans recommended by Donovan, and some schools still adopting a more monumental decorative program and higher massing. As elsewhere, the most common building plan types during this period were increasingly rectilinear with perpendicular wings in T, H, and U shapes, providing areas for courtyards and outdoor spaces. Ordinarily the interior would consist of classrooms lining a double-loaded corridor.



*Figure 59. Craftsman-style Morningside Elementary School (1915), George Lindsey, architect. Morningside Elementary remains LAUSD’s oldest school building still serving its original purpose. Source: LAUSD.*



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 60. John Burroughs Middle School (1922), central Los Angeles, shown in 1926 aerial photo. This school is extant and shown in the illustration below. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 61. John Burroughs Middle School, central Los Angeles, in recent aerial photo. Source: LAUSD John Burroughs Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.





Figure 62. John Burroughs Middle School (1922). This Renaissance Revival–style school is one of the most intact 1920s schools in the district. Source: LAUSD John Burroughs Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.

Construction generally unfolded in phases as school enrollment grew. Between the mid-1910s and 1930, elementary schools, for example, were typically constructed in three stages. The first stage usually brought an administrative office, the flagship building of the school, as well as a kindergarten and a nine-classroom wing. The second stage took place once enrollment reached 400, with the addition of more classrooms, facilities for home economics and manual education, and a cafeteria. When enrollment reached 900, the third stage took place, which usually brought a new auditorium, classrooms, or other service rooms as needed. Kindergartens tended to be self-contained and separate from other classes. Gymnasiums, shops, and specialized facilities for home economics, wood shop, and other coursework were also added for junior high and high schools.

During this era, newspapers of the day reflected much civic pride in—and promotion of—the city’s new public schools. In 1914, when Los Angeles’s public schools were singled out as “models for the rest of the state” (in comparison with San Francisco’s schools, which were declared substandard), the bragging rights this conferred made news in the *Los Angeles Times*:

A city is known by the schools it keeps and nobody can ignore the fact that Los Angeles owes no small measure of her astonishing growth, her rapidly increasing wealth and commercial stranding, her desirable American population, to the acknowledged high efficiency of her public school system.<sup>51</sup>

Keeping up with ever-expanding enrollment figures remained a struggle, however. By the end of the 1910s, high enrollment and little funding for new facilities had again led to overcrowded classrooms and the need for half-day sessions. In April 1919, the Los Angeles Board of Education took temporary measures, building 30 bungalows to relieve the overcrowding, in advance of bond funding for a wider building campaign.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figures 63 and 64. Spread-out plan and Renaissance Revival style of University High School (1924), west Los Angeles. Source: LAUSD University High School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.

The 1920s brought dramatic expansion in school construction. By 1927, \$60 million in bond issues had been sold for the construction of new schools, as well as additions to existing facilities. More than 200 permanent facilities were constructed in 6 years. As a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in 1927,

Los Angeles is in many respects such a super city that it is difficult to write about her without using superlatives. In speaking of her public schools, however, one may be pardoned—especially an outsider—for according them high praise, since they are the product of teachers and officers who are laboring unselfishly for the public good.<sup>52</sup>

## ***Alfred S. Nibecker Jr. and the District Architecture and Building Department***

Guiding the Los Angeles school districts through rapid expansion in 1920s, disaster and depression during the 1930s, and the great postwar boom through the mid-1950s was district architect and business manager Alfred S. Nibecker, Jr. In the 1920s, Nibecker began private practice in Los Angeles; he joined the Los Angeles City Board of Education as an architect in 1926, where he remained until his retirement in 1955. In his three-decade career with the school district, Nibecker oversaw the construction of, and contributed designs to, hundreds of school plant projects. Many commissions were completed by the district's in-house staff, but many others were handled by a range of the region's best architects and builders, with an increasing number of firms specializing in school design. In addition to his work with the Los Angeles City school districts, Nibecker was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and served on the National Committee on School House Construction, the National Advisory Council on School Building Problems, run under the auspices of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education. In 1955, Nibecker was made an honorary member of the Structural Engineers Association of Southern California, the association's highest award.

## ***Building Code Reform***

New building codes attempted to keep pace with the construction boom and ensure safety. In 1914, with the focus still on fire hazards, Los Angeles voters approved a law requiring the replacement of wood-framed schools with masonry structures. Of course, the vulnerability

of masonry construction to earthquakes was not yet fully known. Therefore, most schools constructed in Los Angeles post-1914 utilized masonry construction, with brick construction used for a majority of the new schools.

In 1925, in response to the devastating Santa Barbara earthquake, the state adopted new building codes aimed at strengthening seismic safety. In 1927, the City of Los Angeles followed suit and revised its local building ordinance and added supplemental steps and requirements to ensure the structural stability of schools. Improvements included fire-resistant corridors, stairs, and exterior walls and reinforced concrete beams within floors and roofs. When the March 1933 Long Beach earthquake hit, schools built after 1927, under the new requirements, proved more resilient than those constructed before the laws took effect.

As before, the new schools of the district generated much civic pride, with newspapers of the day praising new campuses for their beauty and modern facilities. As *Los Angeles Times* reporter Neeta Marquis wrote in 1928, "Let us of Los Angeles who often grow depressed at times over the inadequacies of our city administration in other departments take heart of grace from the efficiency and stability of the factory which is turned out our citizens of tomorrow, our public schools."<sup>53</sup>

### ***The Roaring '20s and Enrollment Expansion***

The basic shift in philosophy coincided with the continuing, remarkable expansion of Los Angeles, not only in terms of population growth but also geographical range. In anticipation of the ample water supply promised by the Los Angeles Aqueduct, constructed between 1908 and 1913, Los Angeles experienced rapid population and land growth through annexation of neighboring cities. As of 1910, the population of the City of Los Angeles stood at 319,000, and the area served by the Los Angeles City School District spanned more than 85 square miles, with more than 46,500 students enrolled. Within just 6 years, by 1916, enrollment in the Los Angeles City School District had nearly doubled to more than 78,000 students, and the expanse of the district quadrupled, growing from 85 square miles



Figures 65 and 66. *Vernon City Elementary School (1929), with Spanish Colonial Revival arcades moving school corridors outside.* Source: LAUSD *Vernon City Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.*

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 67. One of Los Angeles's earliest middle schools, Lafayette Junior High School (1911), in 1925 photo. Located in southern downtown Los Angeles, the school closed in 1955 due to decreasing enrollment figures. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 68. Winter 1933 class at Lafayette Junior High School. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

to approximately 400.<sup>54</sup> Some areas annexed by the Los Angeles City School District already had schools to serve their own needs; more often, though, new schools were required. Between 1911 and 1915, a total of 22 schools had been annexed to the district, with an additional 31 elementary and high school buildings under construction.<sup>55</sup>

During the boom of the 1920s, Los Angeles film and aeronautics industries remained strong draws for new settlers. In one decade, between 1920 and 1930, Los Angeles's population doubled, climbing to 1.2 million, making the city the fifth largest in the United States. At a high point during the 1920s, new residential subdivisions were being established at the rate of 40 per week in the City of Los Angeles. By 1930, Los Angeles spanned 441 square miles.<sup>56</sup> This represented a twelvefold expansion in 30 years.

Concurrently, Los Angeles's public school enrollment grew nineteenfold during the 1920s. The construction boom in schools helped accommodate the enrollment increase, but the need for new schools and classrooms remained a constant issue. By 1933, the Los Angeles City School District included a student population of 300,000, attending 384 schools—293 of them elementary schools; 22 junior high schools; 32 senior high schools; and continuation, trade, and junior college facilities rounding out the remainder.<sup>57</sup>

## **Curriculum Shifts**

The Los Angeles City school districts followed the curriculum modernization and reform trends seen in the rest of the United States. By the early 1910s, the city's public schools had made a decisive move "away from the uniformity that was so much prized at the turn of the century. Diversification now marked the schools and the officials made that fact known."<sup>58</sup>

The heart of reform was designing curricula that flexed according to the students—their abilities, needs, psychological well-being, and their inherent curiosity and love of learning. For example, the new course of study in elementary schools was based on the idea that





Figure 69. Central Junior High School, as of circa 1925. Located in downtown Los Angeles on Hill Street, this school closed in 1946. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

“individuals should progress in accordance with their individual capacities” and was organized in “large units with the activity approach emphasized throughout.”<sup>59</sup>

In 1911, Los Angeles established a new intermediate level for schools, launching the third junior high school system in the United States, behind Columbus, Ohio, and Berkeley, California. Vocational schools and junior colleges (as an extension of the high school curriculum) were also greatly expanded in this period.

***Social Responsiveness and a Broadened Mission for Public Schools***

In Los Angeles and elsewhere, this era saw a broadened role for public schools as community centers. Public education became more inclusive and socially responsive to underserved populations. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, a range of special-needs schools were established, including special facilities for the deaf, blind, physically disabled, or cognitively impaired; special facilities were also provided for children suffering from tuberculosis. National trends and legislation prompted the establishment of evening high schools, for adults seeking to broaden or finish their education; part-time high schools, to help meet the new requirement for working children between the ages of 14 and 18 to attend school part time; and vocational schools. Cafeterias and nurseries became part of schools—the first for nourishment, and the second to ensure that older children tasked with caring for younger siblings could attend school while their parents worked. Schools also offered assimilation and language programs for the city’s significant immigrant population.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

The first evening high school opened in 1907 in Los Angeles at the Polytechnic High School. Offered initially as a means for working adults to obtain a high school education or diploma, night schools blossomed in popularity; and by the post–World War I period, they served as informal community centers, with offerings expanding to include a variety of course offerings.

## ***Legislative Reform and Public Education***

The two other major changes to Los Angeles’s public schools were prompted by legislation at the state and federal level. Beginning in the early 1910s, legislation began emerging throughout the United States making part-time school compulsory for teenagers. The first such law was introduced in Wisconsin in 1911, with California following in 1919.

In 1913, a presidential commission was formed to assess the need for vocational training throughout the United States. One of the results of this commission was the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act, which, among other things, initiated new compulsory education requirements for school-aged children and provided federal funding for vocational schools and coursework, in particular in agriculture. In Los Angeles, specialized vocational training had been available as early as 1905, with Polytechnic High School. Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, technical schools offered specialized coursework, such as commercial courses at Polytechnic, industrial and household arts at the Manual Arts High Schools, and agriculture at Gardena High School.<sup>60</sup>

The state law that emerged from the Smith-Hughes Act required that all working children between the ages of 14 and 18 attend a minimum of 144 hours of class instruction per year.<sup>61</sup> In 1920, in response, Los Angeles public schools launched a program in part-time education, making use of “a large number of rented locations.”<sup>62</sup> In 1926, Los Angeles’s largest part-time high school—aptly named the Part-Time High School—became Metropolitan High School (located at 234 W. Venice Boulevard in Los Angeles, the campus became the Los Angeles Metropolitan Junior College in 1950).



*Figure 70. Frank Wiggins Trade School, circa 1925. Located in downtown Los Angeles on Olive Street, this school closed in 1951. Source: USC Digital Archive.*

The Frank Wiggins Trade School, the first of its kind in the district, was established in 1925 on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles (though it was relocated in 1927 to South Olive Street). Named for the longtime secretary of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the Frank Wiggins Trade School provided a course of adult education in specific vocations and placement of students in the

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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occupations for which they had been trained. Among its other curricula, the school offered the first professional culinary training program in the nation, an offshoot of the home economics program. The trade school evolved into the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, still operational today as part of the nine campus, 882-square-mile Los Angeles Community College District.

The establishment of the District's first junior college in 1929 was represented as the crowning accomplishment of the administration then in office. The school district purchased the Vermont Avenue campus of the former State Normal School when it relocated to Westwood and established the Los Angeles Junior College, which was an immediate success. The curriculum constituted the freshman and sophomore years of college and included semiprofessional courses for students interested in a 2-year education, as well as certificate work for those planning to qualify for subsequent admission to a university.

Together with trade schools, junior colleges filled an important social need by supplying focused adult education and career training during the Depression years, and enrollment steadily increased as the war approached.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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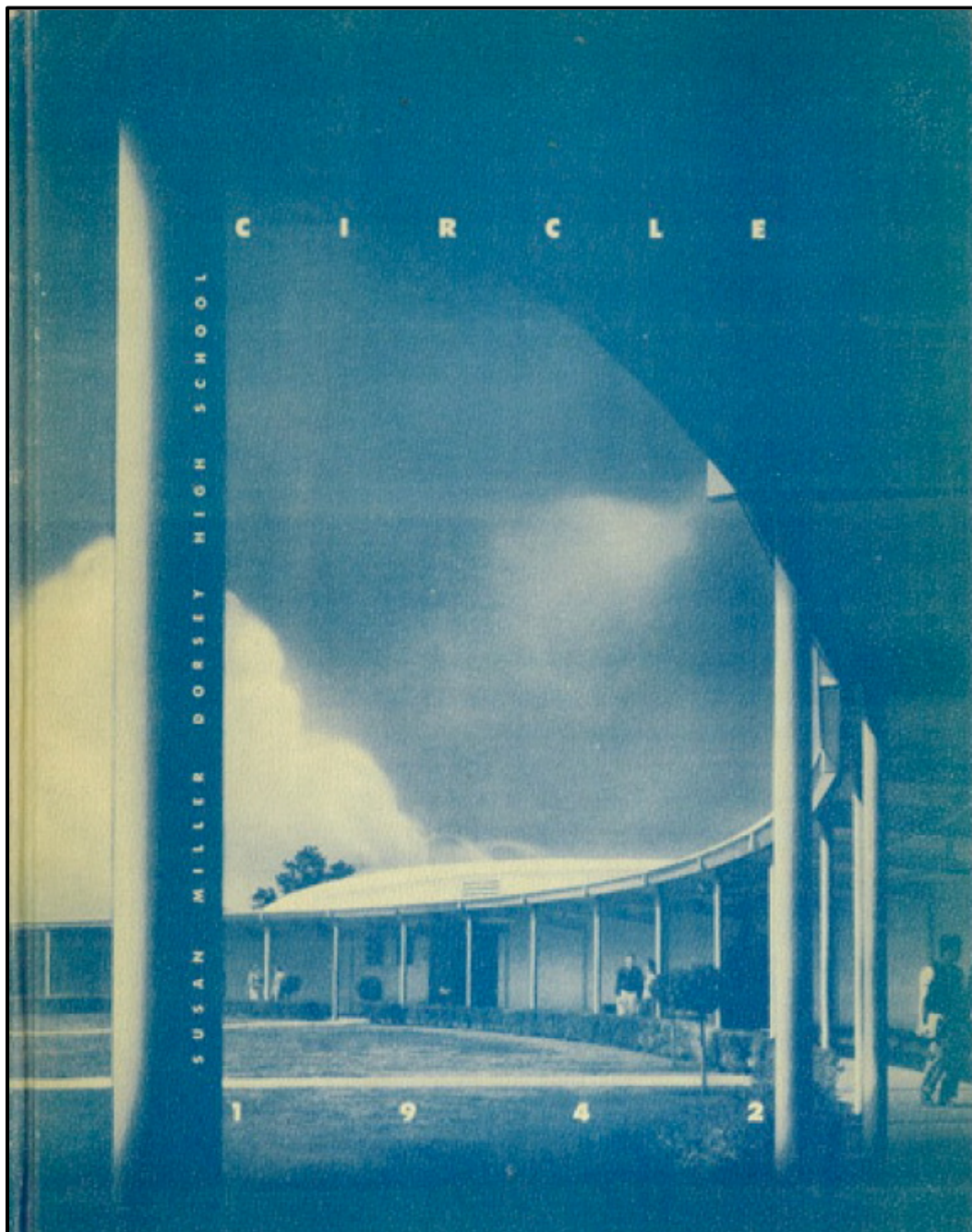


Figure 71. Susan Miller Dorsey High School (1937), extant in mid-city Los Angeles near Baldwin Hills. The school's yearbook, "Circle," took its name from the innovative site plan and arc of outdoor corridors. Source: Circle, Dorsey High School Yearbook, 1942.

**C. ERA OF REFORM: GREAT DEPRESSION, EARTHQUAKE, AND EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN THE FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL, 1933 TO 1945**

“The old school was primarily designed to impress the adult and the new school primarily designed to impress and provide comfort to the pupil.”  
 —William Wayne Caudill, *Better Design for Schools*, 1954

**NATIONAL CONTEXT | DEVELOPMENTS**

In the simple epigraph above, architect William Wayne Caudill (1914–1983) captured the evolving ideas about twentieth-century school design. Traditional schools had often been built as self-contained, monumental blocks, in Classical Revival and Beaux Arts–inspired styles designed to impart prestige. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, reformers started moving away from the multistory, block-style school in favor of a more flexible, program-differentiated school plant.

The reform movement was not concerned with bringing modernist style, per se, to school plant design. The real push was for a more “functional” school. If the function of a school was educating children—and if educational methods and curricula had improved and evolved—then school plant design had to evolve as well. Building plans, campuses, and interiors were increasingly designed to be more child-centered and flexible: “The broadening curriculum, the more active methods of learning, and emphasis upon doing and working with things rather than merely studying books—all have focused attention upon the importance of the physical environment.”<sup>63</sup>



Figure 72. Indoor-outdoor classroom, Corona Avenue Elementary School, Richard Neutra, 1935. Extant in Bell, California, south of Los Angeles. Source: USC Digital Archive.

Continuing the trend begun in the 1920s, integration of classrooms with the outdoors became one key factor for school plant improvement. The early-twentieth-century recognition of the importance of children’s playgrounds and an increasing emphasis on the benefits of outdoor living fueled this movement. Wrote Elizabeth Mock in 1943, “If we grant the importance of encouraging the child’s awareness of nature along with his sense of freedom, we can then understand the present tendency towards ground-level classrooms, each with its own door to the outside and its adjacent outdoor class area.”<sup>64</sup>

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Numerous proposals were forwarded for including more indoor-outdoor connections for classrooms and campuses, whether through the use of patios, courtyards, or playing fields. So central was the concern for outdoor classrooms and recreation that, by the 1930s, the

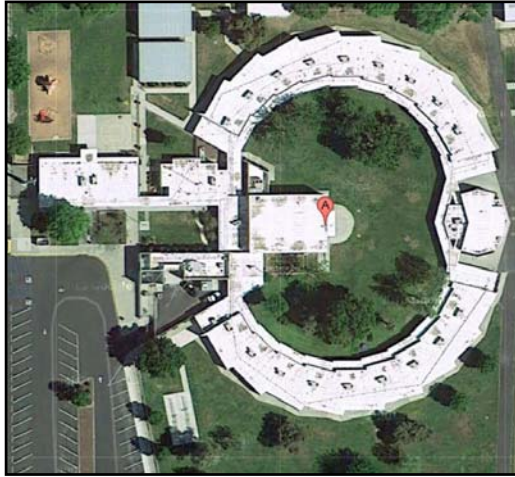


Figure 73. Richard J. Neutra School, Lemoore, California (Central Valley), 1960, based on Neutra's 1928 design. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

trend became known as the "open-air school" movement, with its emphasis on "air, light, outdoor learning, and easy circulation through the school buildings."<sup>65</sup> Site planning was also carried out with an eye toward environmental factors, such as sun patterns, interior cross-lighting, and ventilation. With its mild climate and room to grow, Southern California pioneered some of the nation's best and earliest examples of open-air schools in the 1930s.<sup>66</sup>

As in the 1920s, schools continued to play an increasingly important role as gathering places for the community. This was reflected in campus site planning, with auditoriums sited for public accessibility and separate entrances allowing for school-time access by the public that would not interrupt studies. Architects, designers, and school staff actively sought ways to adapt schools to this expanded function within the community, and innovations in this regard were amply noted in the education- and architecture-related trade magazines.

In the 1930s, an expanding field of research in the building sciences aided those tasked with designing comfortable classrooms for children. Controlling, designing for, and regulating the environmental conditions of classrooms became the topic of numerous studies, including in the science of proper lighting, ventilation, and safety systems (the field of acoustics came into play in the postwar period).

A new focus on defining and better understanding building typologies and their specific needs also grew out of this era, with the idea of creating better environments and lowering costs through standardization.<sup>67</sup>

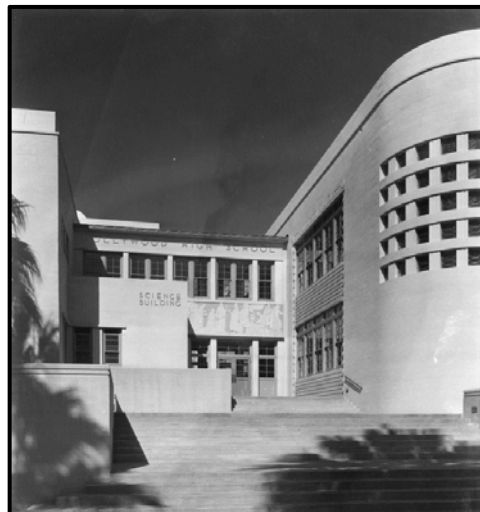


Figure 74. Hollywood High School, Marsh, Smith & Powell (1935), in 1939 photo. The school is still located in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenues. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



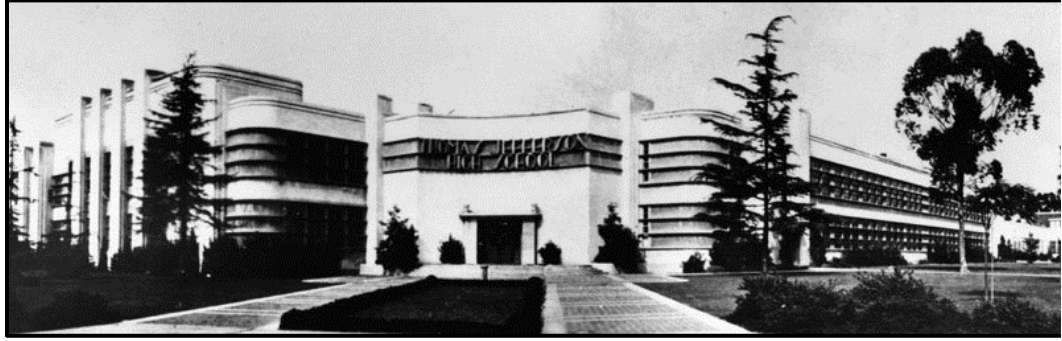


Figure 75. Thomas Jefferson High School, Stiles O. Clements, 1936 image. Extant in south Los Angeles, on East 41<sup>st</sup> Street. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

By the mid-1930s, the advent of the New Deal and the PWA (later the Works Progress Administration) sponsored a generation of new building. Throughout the United States, PWA funding helped buoy school construction during the Great Depression, with approximately 70 percent of all new school construction in the 1930s funded through the agency.<sup>68</sup> In Southern California, following the 1933 Long Beach earthquake and the urgent need for new facilities (described in detail below), PWA funding for school construction and reconstruction totaled over \$13 million, a sum accounting for 62 percent of the spending overall.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout the United States, PWA buildings, including dozens of schools, became known for their distinctive Streamline Moderne styling. In Southern California, Streamline Moderne ideas were also applied to historic-eclectic styles that had been popular in the 1920s, creating new stylistic hybrids.

## EFFECTS ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CAMPUSES

### *The Functionalist, Modern Movement in School Design*

By the 1930s, progressive educational reform had brought major changes: teaching methods and materials were becoming more hands-on, practical, and engaged; and the environments for learning were themselves transformed to facilitate the new ideas. As architectural historian Amy Ogata wrote, “Historians of education are still divided on the real impact of progressivism on American education, but its effect on the architectural discourse was profound and enduring.”<sup>70</sup>

Compared with school buildings and campuses just a decade before, schools were increasingly nonmonumental in their scale, site plan, and design. One-story buildings were increasingly used for all grade levels, in particular for elementary schools. In a companion piece to the Museum of Modern Art exhibit *Modern Architecture for the Modern School*, Elizabeth Mock wrote in 1943 that “if the architect is guided primarily by his desire to create a building for children, the result will almost certainly be a one-story school, built as close to the ground as possible. This is the easiest way to open each room to the outside, and the easiest way to attain suitable scale.”<sup>71</sup>

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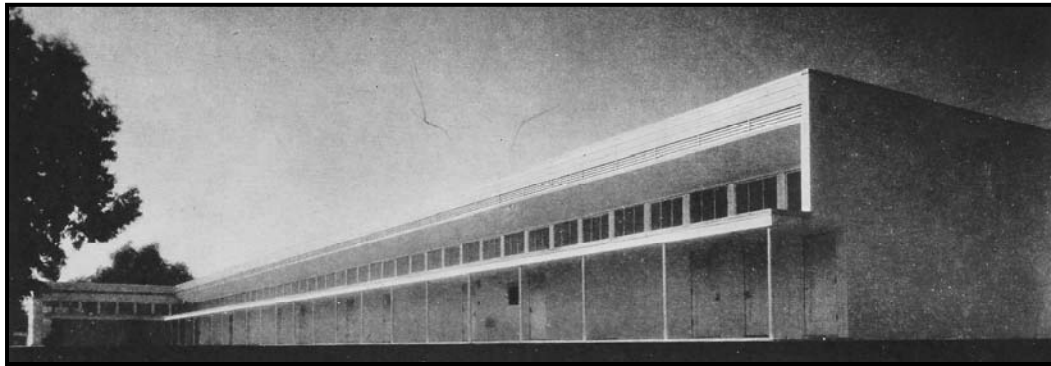


Figure 76. Richard Neutra's Corona Avenue Elementary School addition, 1934/1935. Extant in Bell, California, southeast of downtown Los Angeles. Source: *Built in USA*, 1944.

The emergence of modern architectural design provided a quantum leap forward for this new wave of reform. Modernism embraced honesty in structure and materials and a functional design driven not by a given style or ornamental program but by the building's purpose. By the postwar period, this debate had been settled, and modernism did become the preferred (though not exclusive) idiom for American school plants. But in the 1930s, this movement, which brought together ideas about educational reform, modern architecture, and research in building sciences, was just taking root.

## ***William Edmond Lescaze***

One architect who actively advocated for a more modern, functional approach to school design in the 1930s was William Edmond Lescaze (1896–1969). Between 1929 and 1932, Lescaze, along with partner George Howe (1886–1955), designed one of the era's most significant modern buildings in the United States, the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society building, considered to be the country's first example of a skyscraper in the International Style.<sup>72</sup> In the mid-1930s, Lescaze published articles in architectural magazines as well as specialized education-related trade journals to argue for more functionalist, modern schools:

If buildings have an influence on us, should we not insist that our school buildings work well, and be good looking? Of course we should. But do they work well, and are they good looking? Alas, no! Most of the schools are massive, uninspiring, uninviting buildings. Pediments of limestone, a few columns and, when we can afford them, a tower or a cupola! Just as you may order lettuce salad with French dressing or mayonnaise, you may have a school building Gothic or Colonial!

There can be no school planning worthy of the name unless the functions of the building are clearly understood, clearly expressed: and that understanding, expressing clearly the functions of a building, has been achieved by all good architecture in the past, and is what modern architecture is today attempting to achieve.<sup>73</sup>



Figure 77. Corona Avenue Elementary School, 1935. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 78. Same outdoor classrooms, circa 1950. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

The key to this, Lescaze argued, was moving beyond historic eclecticism:

Modern functions cannot be fitted into old forms, nor can twentieth-century “uses” be combined with twelfth-century “beauties”! The buildings of the past are beautiful not because they are a “style.” They are beautiful because the men responsible for them devoted all their skill, their taste, their understanding, to fulfilling the purposes, the functions, of these buildings. In other words, these buildings grew out of the life of their time, to meet the requirements of their time. And that is exactly what our buildings must do.<sup>74</sup>

### **Richard Neutra**

As of 1936, Lescaze wrote, there was only one truly modern school building in the United States: Richard Neutra’s 1934/1935 Corona Bell Elementary School in Los Angeles. Like Lescaze, Neutra (1892–1970) was European-born and educated and had come to the United States in the 1920s. Neutra had long been working on the problem of the modern school plant, with a philosophy steeped in Progressive-era notions of deinstitutionalizing the classroom. As Esther McCoy wrote, Neutra’s ideas about school design

grew out of the conviction that tensions begin to accumulate in a child when he is taken from the home and living room into a school and classroom, to be moored to the floor, and forced to look up at a teacher sitting above him on a platform. ... Neutra saw great advantages in classrooms, especially for elementary grades, which resembled living rooms filled with group action—but a living room such as only a handful of architects had conceived at that time, one connected to a patio by a movable glass front.<sup>75</sup>

In 1928, Neutra had proposed a ring-plan school consisting of an outdoor, sheltered corridor providing circulation and access to finger-like classroom wings separated by landscaped patios and gardens. The elliptical plan was inventive and practical, as it made use of a compact lot and shortened distances between classrooms. (The plan was radical for 1928 but perfectly in the spirit of the times by 1960, when it was constructed as the Richard J. Neutra School by Neutra and his partner Robert Alexander in Lemoore, California.)

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Figure 79. Emerson Junior High (now Middle) School, Richard Neutra, 1937, Los Angeles. This school is extant and located on Selby Avenue near Santa Monica Boulevard in west Los Angeles. Source: Julius Shulman Archives, J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute.



Figure 80. Seamless connections between classrooms and outside patios. Emerson Middle School, 1937. Source: Julius Shulman Archives, J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute.



Figure 81. Richard Neutra's Emerson Middle School (1937), extant, west Los Angeles. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

In 1934, Neutra was given the opportunity to translate theory into practice. In the wake of the Long Beach earthquake, the architect was chosen to design an addition for the Corona Avenue Elementary School. His simple, L-shaped plan quickly became a prototype for Californian (and American) schools and "a classic in its field."<sup>76</sup>

The addition consists of a linear, one-story wing of single classrooms. On one side, covered passageways provide circulation corridors and, as Esther McCoy noted, evoke the arcades of Spanish Colonial architecture. On the west elevation, sliding glass walls provide direct access to outdoor play areas and classrooms. Landscaping creates divisions between classes, and 6-foot roof eaves provide shelter and transitional space. With this, Neutra perfectly melded outside and in and presaged the ways in which postwar architects would create seamless indoor-outdoor spaces.

The construction system of earthquake-friendly wood framing with generous expanses of single-pane windows adds to the sense of weightlessness and integration with the site. With a band of high clerestories on one side and full-length windows on the other, Neutra controlled classroom illumination and provided cross-ventilation. As McCoy wrote, the Corona School "banished the 'listening classroom,' which had its effect upon education methods, for the teacher became a part of the group as soon as students were no longer restricted to fixed seats."<sup>77</sup>

As the decade progressed, the ideas of architects like Lescaze and Neutra started to take hold. In 1937, Neutra designed a second pioneering example of a functionalist school plant, with the steel-framed Ralph Waldo Emerson Junior High School in Los Angeles. In this school, the architect continued the same themes of indoor-outdoor integration on a more constricted urban site. Emerson Junior High's "basic plan organization and massing are clearly expressive of function, with classrooms efficiently organized along double-loaded hallways in freely arranged wings. ... The restrictions of the site are compensated by Neutra's inventive plan, making use of outdoor spaces, like a rooftop, for outdoor access."<sup>78</sup> As with the Corona Avenue project, Neutra created seamless connections between classrooms and patios with movable walls and landscaping.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## ***Franklin & Kump and Finger-Plan Schools***

Beyond Los Angeles in this era, other prototypes that became influential in the postwar period were under construction. One of the most important of these was Franklin & Kump and Associates' Acalanes Union High School in Lafayette, California, east of San Francisco. Franklin & Kump's rational "finger-plan" school perfectly captured the ideas of the day and became the most common school plan typology in the United States in the 1940s.

Constructed in 1939/1940, Acalanes Union High School was designed for a large rural site, with one-story wings extending outward in finger-like wings. Classrooms consist of open lofts with adjustable plywood partitions dividing the interiors. The pavilion-like site plan, low scale, and finger-like classrooms provide ample opportunities for outdoor access.

As with Neutra's early experiments, Acalanes Union High School moved interior hallways outside, with sheltered outdoor corridors throughout the campus. A recessed terrace off the dining room provided outdoor seating areas for lunch, and lockers were installed on exterior walls. The finger-like plan also allowed for cross-lighting and ventilation for each classroom. To the north, students enjoyed outdoor views through full-length windows. To the south, bands of high clerestory lights provided balanced illumination without glare.

Modular design and construction allowed for easy expansion of the school as enrollment increased. The campus included a variety of facilities, including gymnasium and playing fields, workshops, dining room, a network of classroom wings, and a parking area, all

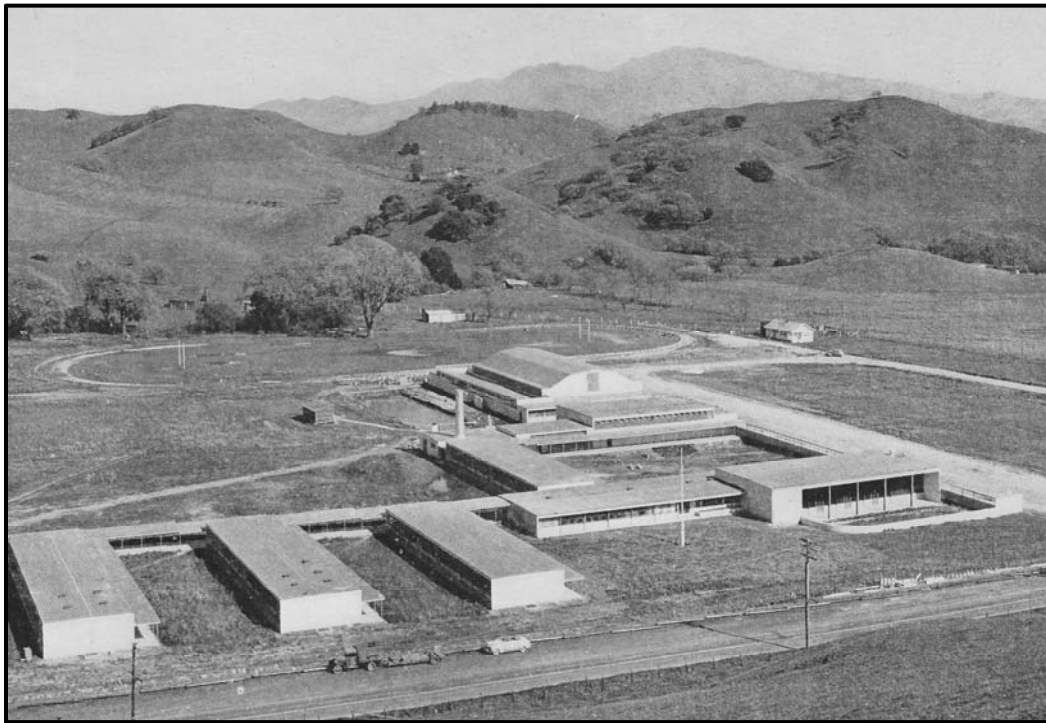


Figure 82. Acalanes Union High School, Franklin & Kump and Associates. Source: *Built in USA*, 1944.

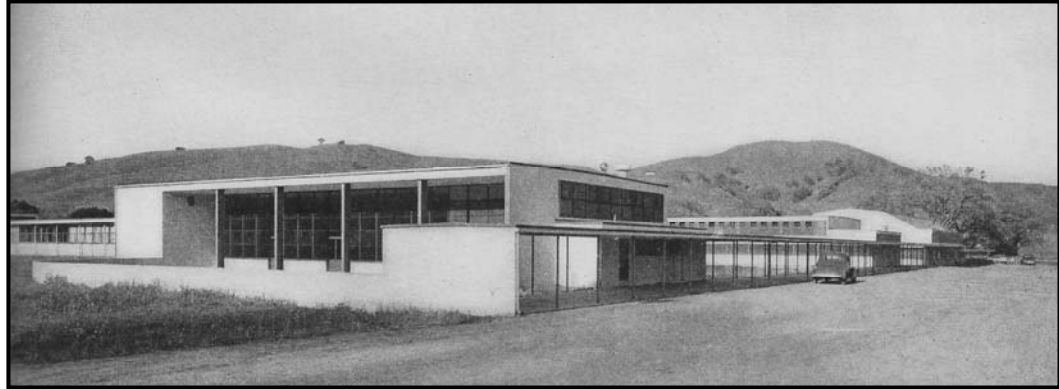


Figure 83. Franklin & Kump and Associates, Acalanes Union High School, Lafayette, California, 1939/1940. Source: *Built in USA*, 1944.

configured in a unified site plan. In keeping with 1930s planning trends, pedestrians and automobiles were separated through the use of a 500-foot-long canopied passageway, which connects the street and drop-off areas with the school entrance.

Although Franklin & Kump's school was published nationally on multiple occasions prior to 1945, it was in the postwar era that the school typology and plan took off. Pre-1945, Elizabeth Mock included the school in *Built in USA*, the Museum of Modern Art's 1944 exhibit and publication showcasing American regional modernism. Acalanes Union High School was one of only three other schools constructed between 1932 and 1944 included in the volume (Neutra's Corona Avenue project was among them).

Also included in the Museum of Modern Art's *Built in USA* was Eliel and Eero Saarinen's 1939/1940 Crow Island Elementary School in Winnetka, Illinois. Crow Island was another early experiment in how to interpret new ideas about education into function-driven, modern schools. The Saarinens, along with Perkins, Wheeler, and Will, proposed a domestic-scaled modular school, with an innovative pin-wheel plan, finger-like classrooms, plentiful opportunities for outdoor play, cross-lighting, and ventilation. This plan also was widely published and imitated in the postwar period.

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Figure 84. Another highly influential pre-1945 modern, functional school design: Eiel and Eero Saarinen's Crow Island Elementary School in Winnetka, Illinois, 1939/1940. Source: *Built in USA*, 1944.

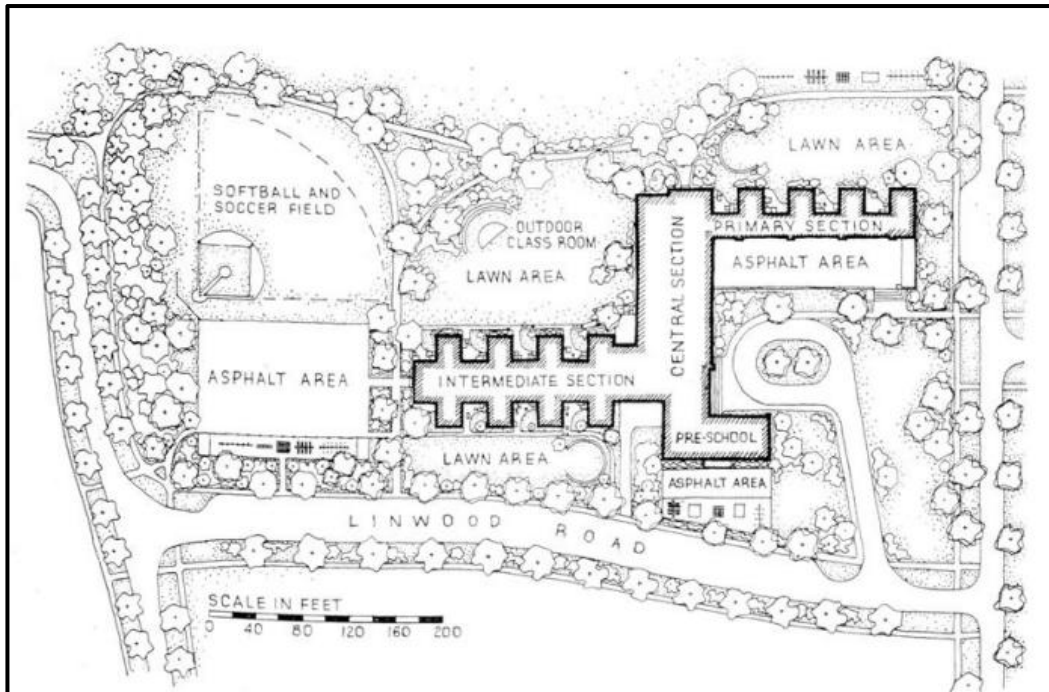


Figure 85. Plan, Eiel and Eero Saarinen's Crow Island Elementary School. Source: *Built in USA*, 1944.



Figures 86 and 87. Hollywood High School, Science Building, Marsh, Smith & Powell (1935), in 1939 (left) and 2002 (right). Extant in Hollywood, on Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenue. Source: LAPL Photo Collection and LAUSD.

### ***Post–Long Beach Earthquake: The Era of the PWA Moderne | Streamline Moderne***

Not all examples of the functional school plant were modernist in the sense of being antihistoricist. Most 1930s schools continued to display stylistic programs and ornamentation, though tastes had shifted to PWA Moderne, Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, and streamlined versions of historic-eclectic styles, such as the Spanish Colonial Revival. School plants embracing the new ideas might express their function clearly, with a differentiated, unified campus plan, but they might also display a specific style. These examples were widely praised and published as representative of the 1930's movement toward more functional school plants.

Several of the most significant Southern Californian firms to point the way forward in this regard on a national scale were James Edward and David Clark Allison; Sumner Spaulding and John Rex; Donald and John Parkinson; and Norman Marsh, David Smith and Herbert James Powell (later Marsh, Smith and Morgridge). During this era, these firms, among others, participated actively in school construction, designing more functional, child-centered, open-air schools that were also historicist to varying degrees.

In the postwar period, Spaulding & Rex, Marsh, Smith & Powell, and the successor firm to the Parkinsons' partnership continued to play an active role in school plant design, by then in stylistic idioms that forwarded the cause of modernism.

### ***Marsh, Smith and Powell***

During the 1930s and early 1940s, Marsh, Smith and Powell designed numerous school commissions that garnered national attention. Their work brought together the latest ideas in functional site plans and child-centered buildings and classrooms, with the all-important indoor-outdoor spaces and connections. The same issue of *Architectural Record* featuring Lescaze's 1936 call to American architects used a Marsh, Smith and Powell school, Roosevelt Elementary School in Santa Monica, to illustrate the new trends.



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Figure 88. Post-Long Beach earthquake reconstruction at Manual Arts High School, Parkinson & Parkinson, circa 1935. Extant in mid-city Los Angeles, on South Vermont Avenue and West Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.



Figure 89. Manual Arts High School, Parkinson & Parkinson, circa 1935. Source: LAUSD.



The firm, consisting of Norman Foote Marsh, David D. Smith, and Herbert James Powell, was also featured in a 1938 issue of *Architect and Engineer* in order to illustrate the “progress” made in American school design during the decade: “The architects of California can well take pride in that which has been accomplished during the last twenty-five years. Their school buildings are beautiful—they are practical, they are utilitarian, and they are economical. To the credit of the architectural profession, the architecture of educational buildings has kept abreast with the progress of education.”<sup>79</sup>

### ***Los Angeles City School District’s The Progressive Elementary School: A Handbook***

Southern California’s version of the open-air, functional school was also brought to a national audience in 1938’s *The Progressive Elementary School: A Handbook for Principals, Teachers and Parents*. The guidebook was written by Robert Hill Lane, the assistant superintendent of schools in Los Angeles and vice president of the Progressive Education Association. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company and prepared in conjunction with the Los Angeles City School District and State Department of Education, Lane’s handbook explored the region’s array of modern, functional, open-air school plants.

The handbook drew on the wealth of post-Long Beach earthquake examples with numerous illustrations and plates. It also described the philosophical underpinnings of the movement: the desire to create more child-friendly, inviting schools and classrooms. The handbook was one of many primers and guides on modern schools, but *The Progressive Elementary School* brought Los Angeles school plant design to a national audience.

The trend continued away from the institutional, monumental school block and toward more approachable, flexible facilities and plants. A few years before the end of World War II, the movement had footholds throughout the United States, just in time to decisively shape the character of schools designed during the postwar building boom. As one commentator noted in 1942,

Here and there throughout the country there appear signs of another basic change in school architecture. It is primarily a movement away from the monumentalism of the past four decades. People are not using their school buildings to sell their communities. The school building is being developed as a more intimate and better integrated element of the community, a place closely associated with child and adult living.<sup>80</sup>

The era of reform in progressive educational methods and school plants had thus come of age by the end of the Great Depression and just prior to 1945. Many prototypes and proposals emerged throughout the 1930s, with many examples from Southern California. By the time the war ended and construction began in earnest, these pre-1945 examples suggested the direction and the future shape of the modern, functional American school plant.

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Figure 90. Franklin Junior High School, Long Beach, March 1933. Source: National Information Service for Earthquake Engineering, University of California, Berkeley.

## LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS | CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENTS

### ***Long Beach Earthquake and the Field Act***

The March 1933 Long Beach earthquake was one of the decade’s most significant events for the region’s built environment. The 6.5-magnitude earthquake caused significant damage and losses; in Long Beach, more than two-thirds of the city’s schools were in need of demolition and reconstruction.<sup>81</sup> In Los Angeles, 40 unreinforced masonry school buildings were destroyed.<sup>82</sup> In addition, after a survey of Los Angeles schools within 10 days of the earthquake, all damaged or “precariously placed” chimneys, parapets, fire walls, and ornamentation were removed. Fortunately, the earthquake took place when school was not in session.

The Long Beach earthquake posed a disaster for the district but also an opportunity for the region’s architects. While change and reform in school plant design were already underway, the Long Beach earthquake and the mini-school construction boom it triggered provided ample opportunities to test new ideas about school architecture and campus planning in Southern California.

These changes also affected the state overall. One month following the earthquake, through the efforts of California Assembly member Charles Field, the State of California adopted the Field Act. Similar legislation had already been passed following the 1925 earthquake in the City of Santa Barbara. With this, the state had adopted building codes tailored to upgrading seismic stability. In 1927, the City of Los Angeles revised its own City Building Ordinance and adopted additional requirements for schoolhouse construction. All new construction after 1927 adopted the updated building codes, which included requirements for fire-resistant corridors, stairs, and exterior walls and for reinforced concrete beams within floors and roofs. By the time the 1933 earthquake struck, these post-1927 schools indeed proved more resilient.

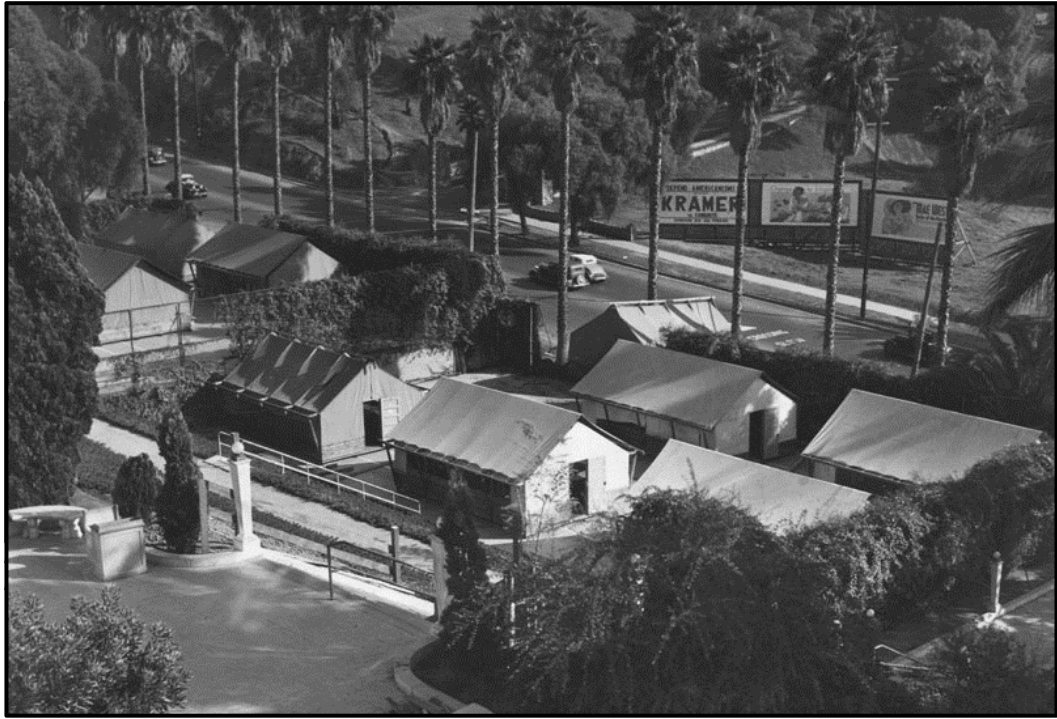


Figure 91. October 1934, Lincoln High Tent Village, awaiting reconstruction of classrooms. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

Through the Field Act, the lessons learned in the Long Beach earthquake were used to further strengthen school building codes. The law directed the State Division of Architecture to design and enforce regulations to ensure earthquake-resistant buildings. State oversight and implementation of building codes/construction inspections were also established. Additionally, the City of Los Angeles Board of Education again revisited its own building codes. Post-1933 elementary school buildings were not to exceed one story in height, and high school buildings were limited to two stories (this would change over time, given the tremendous demand for classroom space in the postwar period and relative scarcity and expense of large lots). New buildings incorporated the latest construction techniques and prominently showcased the use of modern materials such as steel and reinforced concrete. On sites where soil load-bearing properties were found to be too low for steel and concrete, demolished schools were replaced with relatively earthquake-resistant wood-frame buildings. In cases where damaged buildings were rehabilitated, methods included installing reinforcing steel columns, beams, and diagonal bracing, exterior refacing with reinforced gunite and installation of reinforced concrete walls.

Some of the requirements of the Field Act were well aligned with the goals of progressive architects for more child-scaled, one-story schools. In a 1942 article on modern trends in school architecture, one commentator observed the overlapping influences: “Much emphasis has been given to the open plan in California. It is possible that this development has not grown so much from changing educational practice as it has from structural needs.”<sup>83</sup> The author’s insight had come from an *Architectural Record* article on a new

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“open plan” school in El Monte, California. As *Architectural Record* pointed out, however, “Two factors determined the choice of open plan, with departments housed in separate structures: the local soil-bearing value was very low; the buildings had to be designed to resist earthquake stresses.”<sup>84</sup> In this way, the new requirements were compatible with the trend of the times toward one-story, open-plan buildings and campuses.

## ***PWA Funding and the Post–Long Beach Earthquake Building Boom for Schools***

Following the earthquake, the district planned for phased reconstruction. Available at the time were a total of \$5.3 million in unsold bonds. The PWA purchased the bonds and granted additional matching funds for school reconstruction efforts. A total of \$12.1 million was ultimately raised for the 1933 to 1935 reconstruction program. Approximately \$250,000 funded the construction of temporary classroom housing, in order to minimize the interruption of the school year. An estimated 879 tents and 139 bungalows were initially erected to house the district's enrollment of 300,000 students.

As the school reconstruction program progressed, final steps included reinforcing or replacing 132 unreinforced masonry buildings, strengthening 275 buildings constructed



Figure 92. Children attending school in tents, one year following the Long Beach earthquake, March 1934. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

since 1927, replacing 51 wood-frame buildings, and eliminating all temporary classroom housing. By 1937, over \$34 million had been spent on post-earthquake school construction, repairs, retrofitting, and rehabilitation. The advent of World War II put substantial investments in schools on hold (after war's end, a \$75 million bond issue kick-started these efforts).

As reconstruction began, Los Angeles City school districts intended to build new seismically sound buildings but also facilities with regionally inflected styles. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1934, new and repaired buildings would be designed for “absolute safety with simplicity and beauty of architecture in harmony with

the atmosphere and traditions of Southern California.”<sup>85</sup> Many designs were executed by the district's architectural department, under the direction of Alfred Nibecker, but bids were also issued to outside architects, with the intention of awarding the work to a wide field of architects. In addition, new buildings were to be explicitly Southern Californian in design but “free of needless ornamentation.”<sup>86</sup> This represented a move away from 1920s period-



Figure 93. Reseda Elementary School, 1936. The spare Mission Revival style was in keeping with the post-Long Beach earthquake trend to design in the “traditional Southern Californian” mode. This school is extant and located on Wyandotte Street, Reseda, San Fernando Valley. Source: LAUSD.



Figure 94. South Gate Middle School, 1941. A streamlined mix of Moderne, classical and modern elements. This school is extant and located on Firestone Boulevard, South Gate. Source: LAUSD.

revival styles but also a nod to earthquake safety, since applied ornament often failed and fell to the ground during earthquakes.

### ***Early Experiments with the Finger-Plan School***

Other school plants began exploring the new currents in modern, function-driven design. Henry L. Gogerty and C. E. Noerenberg’s Susan Miller Dorsey High School is one such example. While the 1937 design drew inspiration from the PWA Moderne, the classrooms, patio spaces, and radial site plan, with classrooms extending outward like spokes of a wheel, were innovative for the time. With this site plan, the architects created an early form of condensed finger-plan school, which made use of a smaller site but provided the ample air, cross-lighting, and outdoor access possible with one-story finger-like classrooms. A circular outdoor corridor, sheltered beneath wide overhanging eaves with thin post supports, acted as the outdoor hallway for the campus, providing circulation to all classrooms and the main entrance. Adopting the language of functionalist reform, *Southwest Builder and Contractor* praised how the designs “architecturally and structurally express in functional form the outer envelope of a process of public education.”<sup>87</sup>



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 95. Susan Miller Dorsey High School, 1937, Gogerty and Noerenberg, mid-city Los Angeles. Adopting the language of formalist reform, Southwest Builder and Contractor praised how the design expressed "in functional form the outer envelope of a process of public education." Source: LAUSD.

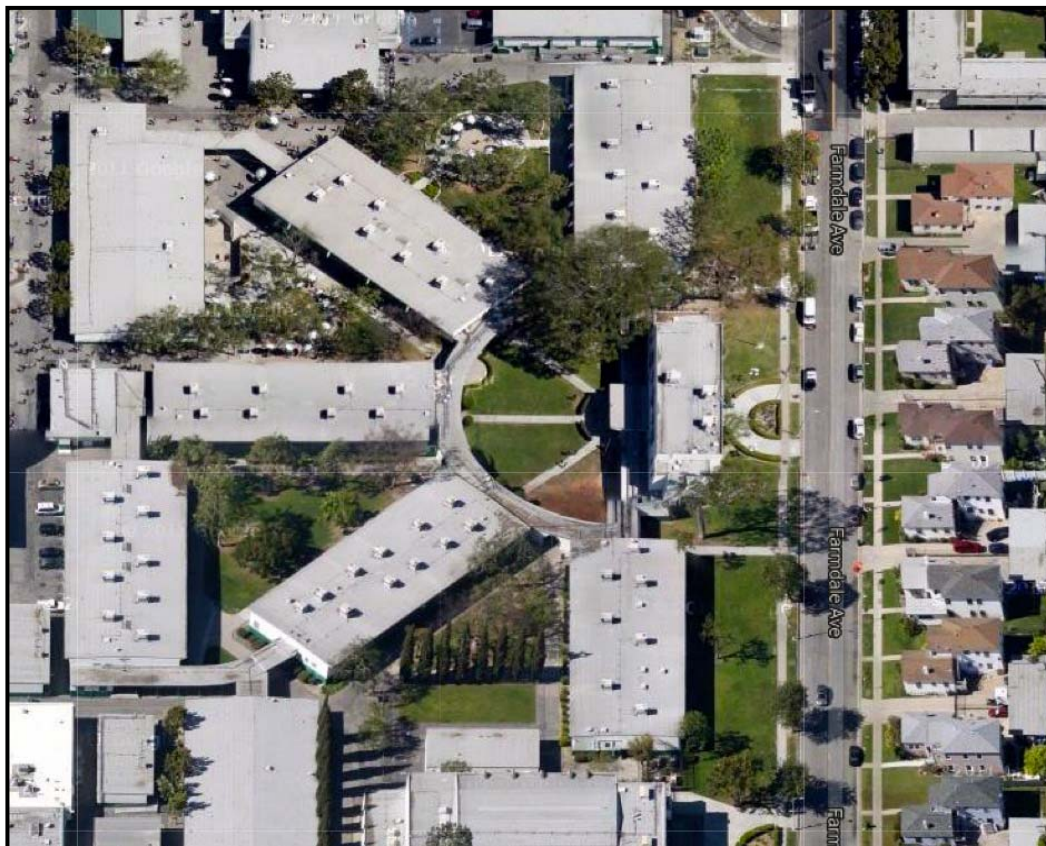


Figure 96. The inventive site plan and semicircle corridors of Dorsey High School. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

## ***Great Depression and World War II: Curriculum Shifts***

Just as the Long Beach earthquake struck in 1933, the Great Depression hit its nadir, and within the decade, the advent of World War II brought another round of readjustment. This period brought many changes to the operations and curricula of Los Angeles's public schools. Overall the decade was characterized by experimentation and liberalization of the curricula, in particular for secondary students. The general trend moved away from college preparatory studies and toward a more generalized program. Courses and new areas of emphasis came to reflect the realities of the era and the individual needs of students. A few examples include the expansion of social studies courses to consider contemporary issues and problems and a shift in the sciences toward more applied topics, aimed at the consumer rather than the future researcher.<sup>88</sup>

Through this era, the notion of the public school as an important gathering place for the community took a new turn. Schools became the focal point for a number of initiatives aimed at mitigating the social costs of the Great Depression, and later at supporting the troops during World War II.

By 1935, two federal programs had been launched that ultimately had a significant presence in Los Angeles public schools: the Emergency Education Program and the National Young Administration. Established in 1933, the Emergency Education Program provided federal



Figure 97. Lincoln High School War Bond Drive, 1945. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

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Figure 98. The women of Frank Wiggins Trade School, 1943. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

funding to hire unemployed teachers to provide instruction to adults. With this, teachers were again gainfully employed and adults were able to further their training and education. By 1934, Los Angeles public schools provided approximately 200 such classes at 52 different campuses.<sup>89</sup>

In 1935, Congress authorized the National Youth Administration (NYA) program, aimed at providing jobs to teenagers and young adults in order to help them remain in school. The program was open to those aged 16 to 25, who earned no more than \$6 a month. Through the NYA, Los Angeles public schools provided employment to thousands of students. After World War II began, this program continued but shifted its focus to defense-related classes.

## ***Los Angeles Public Schools and World War II***

World War II brought another round of adjustments to an educational system already reeling from the Great Depression. The focus on every front of American life for defense-related support brought major shifts. New classes for secondary students included defense-related training and specialized programs in aircraft recognition and aviation mechanics. At the city's vocational schools, applied skills were emphasized. The Frank Wiggins Trade School began teaching auto mechanics to female students, since the "war has taken away many a guy with the monkey wrench, and so today industrial schools are opening new courses for



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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women auto mechanics to fill the gap.”<sup>90</sup> Coursework during the war and immediately after reflected the sociopolitical background of the time, with school districts offering programs in democratic systems of government, the functions of the United Nations, and, for a short time, “moral and spiritual values.”<sup>91</sup> Geography courses took on a more international view, exposing students to a wider array of countries around the world.

The war also impacted activities in the city’s elementary schools, where students were given opportunities to participate in a variety of war-related drives and programs. By 1942, Los Angeles City school districts had created nearly 30 different ways for students to support the war effort. The goal was organizing “every school so that each pupil and teacher had a part in supporting the war program” and inspiring “each child to be so patriotic that he would, of his own volition, carry on a program which would help the war effort.”<sup>92</sup>



Figure 99. World War II in the Los Angeles public schools: materials drive, Crescent Heights Boulevard Elementary School, circa 1943. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*Figure 100. Victory Garden at Manual Arts High School, 1942: "Students in a gardening class at Manual Arts High School learning about vegetables. The students and teachers during the spring term of 1942 had over 500 Victory Gardens to help in the war effort." Source: LAPL Photo Collection.*

Two federal programs brought significant changes to the operations and curricula of Los Angeles public schools. The first program was the National Defense Training (NDT) program, which provided \$15 million to American schools, \$400,000 of which went to Los Angeles, for vocational and war-related training programs. Congress authorized the program in 1940 (before the U.S. entry into the war); by September 1940, the Los Angeles Board of Education had launched programs in 13 high schools and 10 evening high schools. Training programs included welding and shipbuilding, mechanics, and aircraft production and maintenance. The program continued to grow, and by 1942, Los Angeles City public schools housed the largest NDT program in the United States.<sup>93</sup> In August 1942, the NDT program became the War Production Training program.

In 1942, following the U.S. entry into the war, Congress established the Rural War Production Training program. A branch was established in Los Angeles, with classes targeted to working teenagers and adults attending evening high schools. Referred to as the Out-of-School Youth and Adults program, this initiative was more geared toward food production than industrial production (as with the NDT program). Canneries were established in schools throughout the district as a result of the program, which was renamed "Food Production War Training" in 1943. After the war, though federal funding of the project ended, the Los Angeles Board of Education continued the program, and community canning projects remained in place at a number of area high schools.



**D. EDUCATING THE BABY BOOM: POSTWAR EXPANSION &  
THE FUNCTIONAL, MODERN SCHOOL, 1945 TO 1969**

“Above all the school must be childlike.... It must be a place for living, a place for use, good hard use, for it is to be successively the home for a procession of thousands of children through the years. It must be warm, personal and intimate [so] that it shall be to each of these thousands ‘My school.’”

—An American educator, writing to his architect, *Architectural Forum*, 1952<sup>94</sup>

**NATIONAL CONTEXT | DEVELOPMENTS**

With the end of World War II, the United States turned its attention to the long-awaited postwar—and post–Great Depression—expansion. The magnitude of the construction and population boom that followed, and its effect on the built environment, have been well documented. A wealth of literature has been devoted to the era’s severe housing crisis, for example, and the array of initiatives launched to address it.

Less widely explored in the literature, but equally pressing at the time, was a dire classroom shortage. In 1949–1950, enrollment at U.S. elementary and secondary schools stood at 25.1 million. In one decade, this number expanded by nearly 50 percent to approximately 36 million; by 1971, it reached 46 million.<sup>95</sup> In 1955, in the midst of this boom, “editors at the *Architectural Forum* worried, ‘every 15 minutes enough babies are born to fill another classroom and we are already 250,000 classrooms behind.’ The rising population of young American children made school building, together with housing, the most widely discussed architectural challenge after World War II.”<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps in no other state of the union was this growth felt more acutely than in California. The booming birth rate was accompanied by a wave of in-migration, as new settlers were drawn by established employment centers in, among other things, the aerospace industry, which had shifted operations to peacetime production. In Southern California, one region with a particularly strong pull in this regard was the San Fernando Valley. The postwar construction boom transformed miles of the San Fernando Valley’s agricultural lands into new residential communities, and the population—and demands on schools—expanded accordingly.

School districts around the country struggled to keep up with unprecedented demand and overcrowded classrooms. Adding to the challenges facing school districts was the need not only for new schools, in particular in emerging suburban communities, but also the need to repair and maintain aging school plants, facilities, and equipment.

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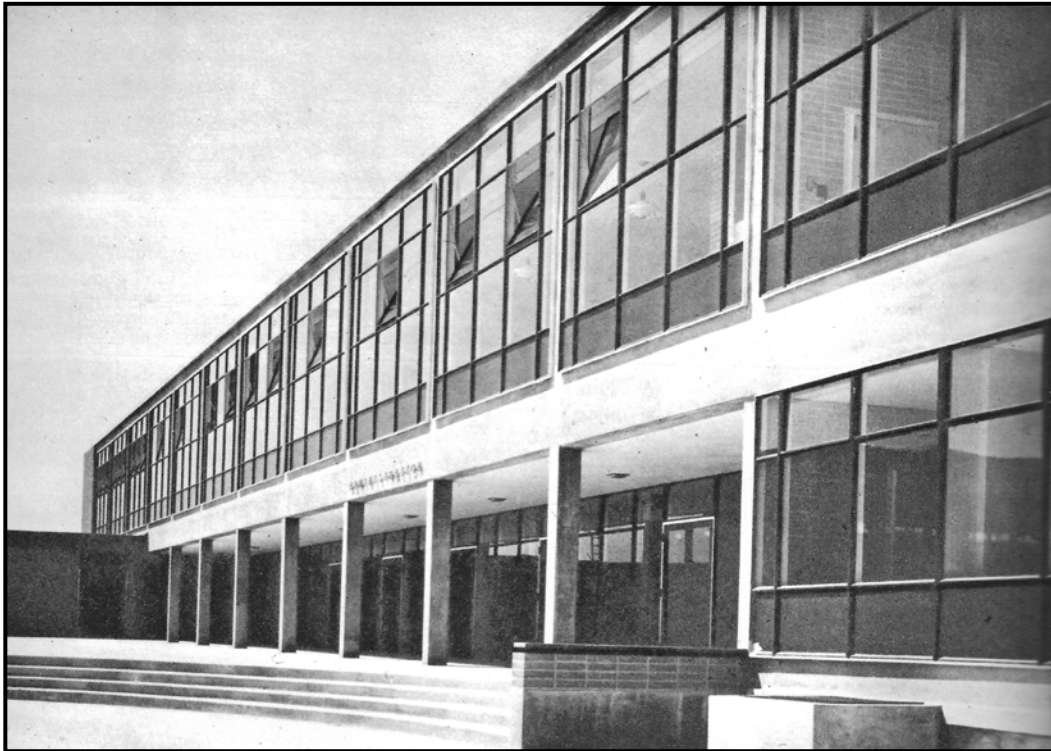


Figure 101. Modernism became the preferred (though not exclusive) style for postwar American schools. Ernst J. Kump, San Jose High School, 1952. Source: *Built in USA*, 1952.



Figure 102. Fern Drive School, 1956, Smith, Powell, & Morgridge, Fullerton. A functionalist postwar school need not also adopt a modern, machine-age aesthetic. The notion of providing a child-friendly environment often translated into incorporating forms and details commonly used in residential architecture. Source: J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.



Figure 103. Oso Avenue Elementary School, 1959, Woodland Hills. Most students “come from new tracts still opening in West Valley.” Source: LAPL Photos.



Figure 104. Image for a 1959 article on the “back to back construction” of schools taking place in the San Fernando Valley. Source: LAPL Photos.

### 1930s Reform Comes of Age: The Modern, Child-Centered School

In this era, the functional, child-centered school plant that emerged in experimental form in the late 1930s became the norm. Newspapers, magazines, and trade journals in a variety of fields—including architecture, engineering, building trades, education, and school design—began forwarding proposals for the ideal modern school. Organizations devoted to the topic also helped standardize and disseminate these ideas; these included the American Institute of Architects Committee on School Buildings, the National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Council of Educational Facilities Planners. Journals and guidebooks proliferated with the latest ideas in school plant design, infrastructure and systems, and, above all, how to meet the demand in the most economical fashion possible. Within the architectural profession, a new subgroup of architects who specialized in school design also started to emerge.

Modernism—whether regionally inflected, wood post-and-beam or the machine-age International Style—became the idiom of choice for expressing the new ideas, for its relative economy, informality, accessibility, and, increasingly, “democratic” spirit:

All the architecture shall be a setting for childlife. Everywhere children and what they can do shall be the adornment of the structure. The building itself shall be the place of joy in living. But I must warn you. It must be a place which permits the joy in the small things of life, and in democratic living. These two things we must safeguard in children’s lives.<sup>97</sup>

While some school plants adopted the period styles popular at the time—including a postwar return to American Colonial Revival—the trend by not only modern architects but also educators was to move beyond historicist styles: “The building must not be too beautiful,” wrote one commentator, “lest it be a place for children to keep and not one for them to use. Its materials must be those not easily marred, and permitting some abuse. The

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 105. Smith, Powell & Morgridge, Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, 1954. Source: J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.

finish and settings must form harmonious background with honest child effort and creation.”<sup>98</sup>

While regional variations existed, this was a national project. The extent to which school districts throughout the United States adopted similar approaches and strategies to the modern school plant was noteworthy. Since the early twentieth century and the days of the Progressive Education Movement, national standardization was a key element of reform. But the avenues available to architects, builders, and schools in this regard proliferated in the postwar era.

The National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, for example, addressed the topic in its annual guidebook, *Guide for Planning School Plants*. Written for school facilities managers, planners, and architects, the 1946 version illustrates the extent to which ideas considered experimental just a few years before had become best practices for the nation. The emphasis remained designing schools around their function—serving and educating children. With the psychological well-being of the student the prime consideration, numerous studies were devoted to optimal interior conditions and controls, such as studies in proper lighting, color schemes, and surface reflectivity to “increase morale and to decrease fatigue.”<sup>99</sup>





Figure 106. John Lyon Reid, Manor Elementary School, Fairfax, California, 1958. Source: J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.



Figure 107. Henry Gogerty, Inglewood High, 1954. Source: J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

**Educational Facilities Laboratories (EFL)**

The need for schools remained dire through the 1950s. In 1953, the American Institute of Architects established its Committee on School Buildings to address the issue. In 1956, the committee became the Educational Facilities Laboratories (EFL), a nonprofit funded by the Ford Foundation’s Fund for the Advancement of Learning. The EFL “brought together educators, architects, manufacturers, and government officials” to “encourage new ideas about both curriculum and architecture.”<sup>100</sup> The EFL conducted research, sponsored conferences, and held grant competitions.

With the rate of school construction continuing apace, EFL officials visited Southern California often. In 1962, the EFL sponsored a tour of one of the nation’s early open-plan schools in West Covina, California. Attending the tour were Dr. James D. MacConnell, director of the school planning laboratory at Stanford University; Dr. Paul Salmon, superintendent, Covina Valley District; and Dr. Harold B. Gores, president of EFL in New York. In 1965, the EFL conferred an award on Covina High School as one of three outstanding Californian examples of “schools without walls” (the open-plan school, described in more detail below).<sup>101</sup>

In 1964, the EFL sponsored an airplane tour of the United States for 60 educators, including two from Orange County. The EFL flyover tour reflects two noteworthy points about this era in school design: (1) many innovations were best revealed from the air, by looking at the campus design and plan, building siting and configuration; and (2) ideas about how to create the best possible modern school were developed in tandem and shared among architects, builders, researchers, and school officials throughout the United States.<sup>102</sup> Between 1958 and 1976, the EFL invested over \$25 million in the rethinking and designing modern American educational facilities.<sup>103</sup>



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

By the early 1960s, a shortage of teachers, as well as ever-evolving ideas about childhood development and education, prompted a renewed wave of reform. At its heart was an updated version of the Progressive Education Movement: the idea was that schools—both in terms of facility design and teaching methods—were not adequately harnessing a child’s natural curiosity and creativity. There was a renewed sense that classrooms should nurture and capitalize on these qualities and adapt to the individual needs and pace of each student.

The national embrace of team teaching (an idea further promoted because of a shortage of qualified teachers) was one result of this movement. As the name implies, team teaching established a system whereby teachers shared pupils and class spaces, and classroom sizes varied throughout the day, depending on the wishes of the teachers. A few dozen students might gather to watch a movie, then break into smaller groups to work on projects. The classroom would be a dynamic rather than static place, with mixed grade levels, multimedia educational methods, and hands-on learning.

This push for more creative, flexible curricula and teaching methods flourished in Southern Californian schools. By 1968, reformed programs had been launched in 18 Southern Californian elementary schools, in conjunction with the League of Cooperating Schools. As in early eras, methods that appeared “traditional” were de-emphasized and a more experimental classroom environment was proposed. The coordinator of the program, Robert E. Keuscher, invoked many of the same ideas shaping curricular reform throughout the twentieth century, with a distinctively 1960’s spin:

Labels are disappearing, there are fewer graded classes. Schedules are more flexible. More and more, curriculum is not worked out in advance; the kids work it out as they go along, and it’s more advanced and more scholarly. The teacher is more of a guide than an oracle. The emphasis is shifting from the group to the individual; there is more emphasis on query and discovery.<sup>104</sup>

Of the Southern Californian schools making this transition, Keuscher said, “We’re helping these 18 become creative schools, but it’s a slow, painful process. Our biggest problem is to make teachers and principals comfortable with change. ... But it has been great to emancipate the creative teacher.”

Throughout this era, the debate on how to shape a curriculum that best served children, and how to keep up with ever-expanding enrollment figures, continued to evolve. Yet the basic ideas seen in the early twentieth century remained at the heart of educational reform at midcentury. The evolving experiments in curricula and school plant types grew out of the same wish to eliminate institutionalism and to fashion a child-centered curriculum and school plant. The variety of building plans and campuses that grew out of midcentury reform reflected the postwar boom of construction and population, the robust network of publications and organizations disseminating the ideas nationally, and evolving philosophies about childhood development and education.



Figure 108. Grover Cleveland High School, Charles O. Matcham & Stewart S. Granger and Associates, architects (1959), Reseda. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.

### EFFECTS ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CAMPUSES

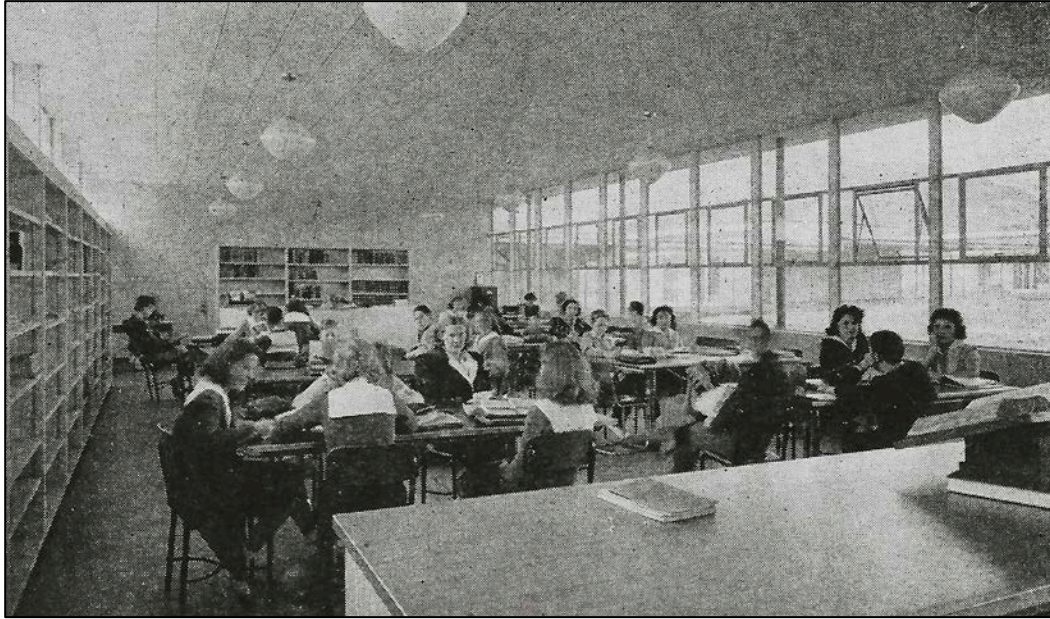
The stylistic vocabulary of choice for American schools became modern—antihistoricist, decentralized, with function instead of style the driving concern. Of course, modernism did not take hold in earnest for residential design (to the dismay of many architects at the time). But for schools, by 1950, “the battle between ‘contemporary’ and ‘traditional’ was won. The public not only began to accept ‘modern,’ but also demanded it. ... This new movement ... brought together educators as well as architects, and together they are forwarding the cause of architecture for children.”<sup>105</sup>

Although this era brought a major stylistic shift, from the architects’ perspective, designing in a modern “style” was not the main concern. Progressive architects at midcentury often sounded a tone of idealism about the social value of their work. As architect William Wayne Caudill explained about school design, “There is no ‘modern’ style as such. Each new building ideally is the product of specific solutions to individual problems peculiar to that building’s particular environs, site, function, budget, and designer. If two new schools are similar in appearance, they are ... only because they were designed to perform similar specific functions in similar environments.”<sup>106</sup>

This was especially true for architects trained and already practicing in the pre-1945 era. William Wayne Caudill was among them; the Texas architect graduated from MIT in 1939 and, by 1941, had already authored a pioneering study on modern school design, *Space for Teaching*. Throughout the 1940s and into the 1960s, Caudill and his firm specialized in functional, modern classrooms and campuses.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



*Figure 109. Balanced cross-lighting is achieved through full-length windows on the north elevation and clerestories on the south. Franklin & Kump, Acalanes Union High School. Source: Built in USA, 1944.*

By 1969, Caudill had become an international authority on school design, and his firm, Caudill, Rowlett & Scott, had designed educational facilities in 28 states. Caudill's classic finger-plan schools in Blackwell, Oklahoma, designed in the late 1940s and early 1950s, epitomized the school planning ideals of the time. In 2009, all four schools—Huston, Northside, Parkside, and Washington Elementary—were listed on the National Register for their exemplification of postwar ideals of modern American school design.

Whether a postwar school exhibited a modern or mildly historicist design, they likely shared the same basic design principles. Postwar schools were designed to feel decentralized, nonhierarchical, approachable, informal, and child-centered (indeed, domestic-scaled for elementary schools, with lower ceilings making the class feel more like a living room). The preferred massing was one story, with an axial wing of classrooms usually one room deep, to provide cross-lighting, ventilation, and easy access to the outdoors.



*Figure 110. Orville Wright Middle School, library roof slopes upward on north elevation to allow for maximum indirect lighting. Source: LAUSD Orville Wright Middle School, Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.*



Postwar schools continued to emphasize and experiment with the limits of indoor-outdoor integration. By the postwar period, one feature that was still experimental in the 1930s was now essential: canopied outdoor corridors. Supports remained simple posts or pilotis, either in steel or wood post-and-beam. It was a feature used in schools throughout the United States. Outdoor corridors lined classroom wings, providing sheltered circulation throughout the campus as well as outdoor gathering spaces.

During this period, size and orientation of windows took cues from the environment: a building with north-south exposure, for example, might feature large-panel, floor-to-ceiling glazing on the north elevation, with bands of clerestory casement windows on south elevations modulating or softening illumination. Experiments in roof configuration and design also tackled the issue not only of lighting but acoustics.

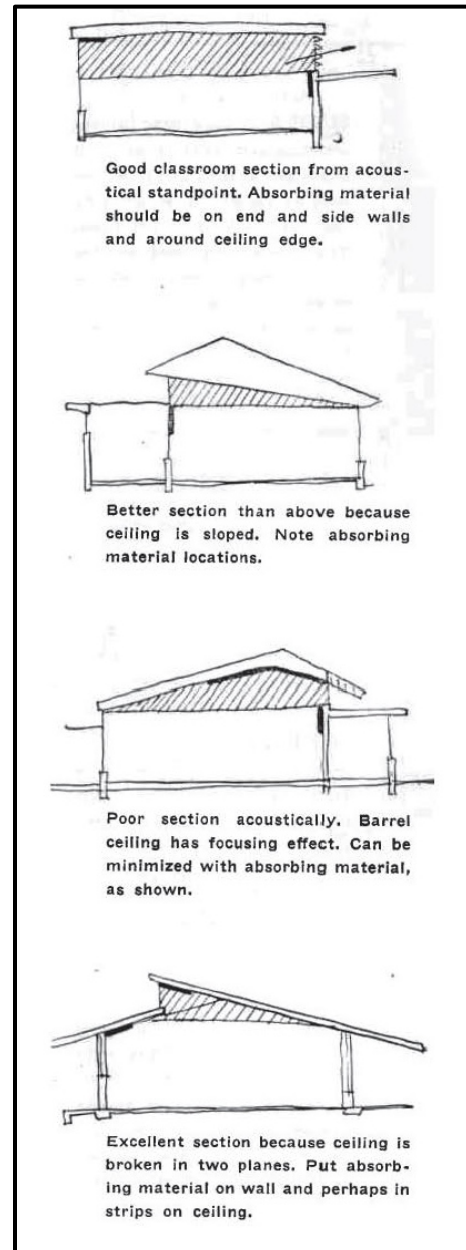


Figure 111. Architectural Forum, 1949, showing studies of roof configuration and acoustic properties. Source: Baker, 2008.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 112. Fern Drive School reflected the latest ideas about roof-line configuration and classroom acoustics. Smith, Powell, & Morgridge, 1956, Fullerton. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.



Figure 113. Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, with covered corridors, outdoor courtyard spaces, ample awning casements and clerestories. A sloped shed-roof caps the building for good classroom acoustics. Smith, Powell, & Morgridge, 1954, Anaheim. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.





Figure 114. Hallways move outdoors in postwar schools. El Monte School (1956) Los Angeles County. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.



Figure 115. Classroom and patio are one in Neutra's Kester Avenue Elementary School (1951), extant, Sherman Oaks, San Fernando Valley. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

When necessary, massing might climb to two (or rarely, three) stories, if real estate was scarce and demand was high. But this allowance was more commonly made for junior and high schools. Roofs were flat, sloped, or occasionally gabled, with simple, exposed construction systems of steel or concrete framing with large-pane in-fill windows. Wide overhanging eaves with simple porch or piloti supports were common for connecting corridors. In terms of materials, the treatment and finishing were simple and unpretentious.

In the postwar period, architects economized through the use of new prefabricated materials, such as plywood, glass, and steel, as well as modular design and coordination, a 1930's movement that took off in the postwar era following the 1945 adoption of the 4-foot module as the American Standard Measurement.<sup>107</sup> Modular design and construction allowed for easy expansion as school enrollment grew and was a common construction technique in Southern Californian schools. (Two early all-steel-frame schools in Los Angeles were the 1937 Emerson Junior High, by Richard Neutra, and the 1959 Justice Street Elementary School in Canoga Park; stylistically unpretentious, the school was promoted as durable, safe, and easily expandable, a concern that remained pressing at the end of the 1950s.)

Modular site planning and design also lent itself particularly well to creating the indoor-outdoor connections now considered essential. As with the residential architecture of the era, school design relied on generous expanses of windows and outdoor access to patios or courtyards to provide students with recreational areas and outdoor classrooms. Throughout the United States, the importance of indoor-outdoor living for both residential and educational architecture remained a central concern. In this respect, California schools continued to garner national attention. In its 1949 series on postwar American schools, for example, *Architectural Forum* commented that "possibly because California's balmy climate ventilates educators' minds as well as their houses, California schools have been less tradition-bound than most. As one of the fastest growing states in the union, California has had plenty of chance to experiment in school design."<sup>108</sup>

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

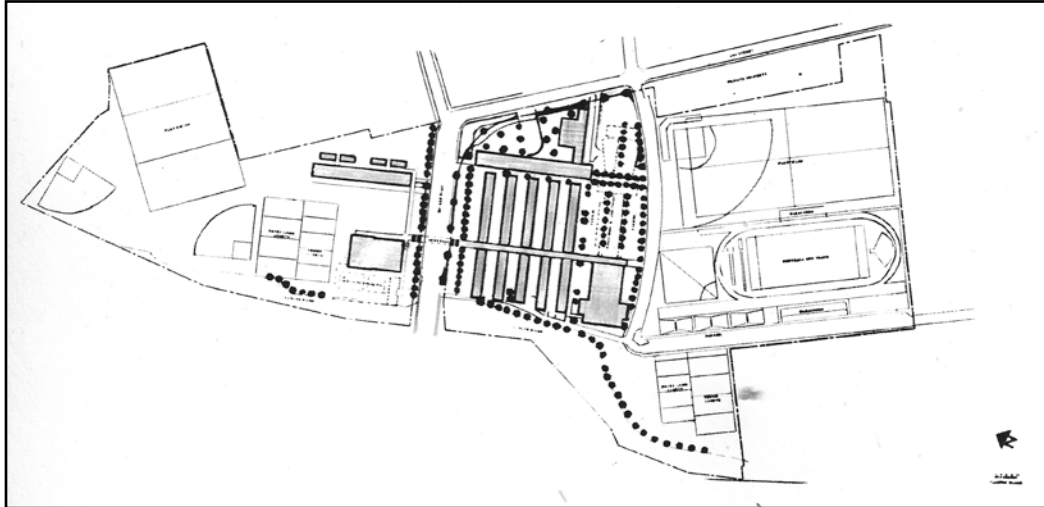


Figure 116. Ernst J. Kump, San Jose High School, San Jose, California, 1952. Source: *Built in USA*, 1952.

By the 1950s, school design had entered “a new age of innovation,” as the decade brought “a proliferation of standardized plans and facades.”<sup>109</sup> In California and elsewhere, three main plan types emerged during this period: the finger-plan school, the cluster-plan school, and the open-plan school. As the trends came and went, these plan typologies morphed, hybridized, and changed. But they shared basic design principles, and most reflected the tenets of midcentury modern design.

### ***The 1940s and the Decade of the Finger-Plan School***

The plan type that best captured the design principals of the immediate postwar years was the finger-plan school, which was launched in the late 1930s in Franklin & Kump’s Acalanes Union High School and the Saarinen’s Crow Island Elementary School. According to *Architectural Forum*, this plan type, dubbed the “western finger plan,” became the most influential building typology for schools in the 1940s. The finger-plan school resembled

a tree plan, based on a trunk corridor with side branches. It rests on radical standardization of classrooms; on absolute insistence that all classrooms share the best (north) orientation to sun and air; daylight for all of them from the open-corridor side as well as the main window side. This plan is not only flexible ... but extensible indefinitely outward like a tree, by growing at branch-ends and by sprouting new branches.<sup>110</sup>

To illustrate the advantages of the plan in 1949, *Architectural Forum* chose the 1939/1940 Acalanes Union High School, which it described as

the first large scale school which could serve as a complete demonstration of principles which amounted to a schoolhouse revolution—the revolution of the thirties. Since then, the Acalanes type of school, with its wide ranging, one-story classrooms arranged according to the “finger” plan, has swept the West Coast, is sweeping rapidly across the Midwest on its way to the East Coast.<sup>111</sup>



Figure 117. An expanded Acalanes Union High School, Franklin & Kump. Source: Schoolhouse: A Primer, 1958.



Figure 118. Finger-plan school in Eugene, Oregon, 1947. Kelly Junior High. Source: Pinyerd Historic Postcards.



Figure 119. Exterior of a finger-plan school: G. Russell Wilkerson Elementary School, 1950, El Monte. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

Acalanes had been published nationally, on multiple occasions, prior to 1945, but it was in the postwar period that the “schoolhouse revolution” it started took off in earnest. In the immediate postwar period, numerous examples could be found on the West Coast. Even though the plan type spread through the United States, the Californian roots and flavor of Acalanes Union High School were often highlighted.

In 1958, a self-described “primer” on how to build a good modern public school described Acalanes High School’s divided “rows of classrooms with open-ended corridors of greenery, to achieve good ventilation, sound isolation, and a remarkable California-like architectural comfort.”<sup>112</sup>

*Built in USA* included another California finger-plan school in its 1952 edition, San Jose High School, also by Ernest J. Kump. In San Jose High School, Kump proposed a slightly more condensed finger-plan, with concrete-frame construction, generous expanses of windows set flush to the wall plane, and a sheltered corridor with unadorned post supports providing circulation and outdoor spaces.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 120. Huston Elementary School, Caudill, Rowlett & Scott, 1949, Blackwell, OK. Source: Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.



Figure 121. Huston Elementary School, Blackwell, OK. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

With many of the early experimental schools located in California, the issue arose of whether these prototypes would work in the rest of the country. In a 1943 article on modern American schools, Elizabeth Mock commented on this question: “Many people have the illusion that such schools are impractical. ‘Fine for California,’ they will say, ‘but not for this climate. Too costly to build and heat.”<sup>113</sup> However, Mock argued, modern materials and construction techniques were sound and economical enough to mitigate these problems. William Caudill appears to have agreed, as evidenced in his four classic finger-plan schools in Blackwell, Oklahoma (all now listed, as noted earlier, on the National Register of Historic Places).

As the popularity of the finger-plan school increased, its basic form changed to accommodate climate variations. Modifications on the plan included double-loaded hallways to provide the same level of indoor-outdoor connections, light, and ventilation, but with one less elevation exposed to the exterior. In the Midwest, the spread-out finger-plan became a compact trunk, with double-loaded corridors providing better insulation. Other plan innovations included a zigzag building plan, with an interior connecting walkway, in order to double-load corridors but also maximize window space for each classroom.

Two examples of more condensed finger-plan schools are seen in Richard Neutra’s Kester Avenue Elementary School in Sherman Oaks and Robert Evans Alexander’s Baldwin Hills Elementary School in Los Angeles, both from 1949 to 1951. Neutra designed the finger-plan of the Kester Avenue Elementary School around a compact central axis, with classroom wings alternating with landscaped patios. With its seamless connections between classrooms and outdoor play areas, the Kester Avenue facility displayed, in Esther



Figure 122. Kester Avenue Elementary School, Richard Neutra (1951), Sherman Oaks. Source: LAUSD Kester Avenue Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

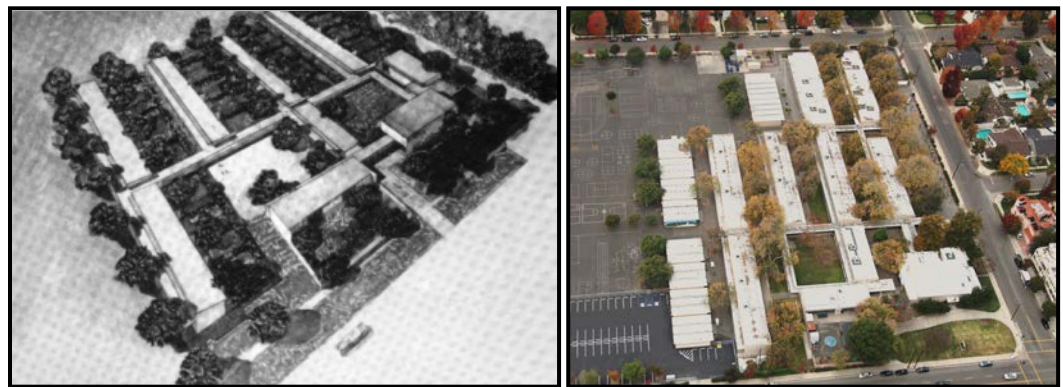
HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

McCoy's word, the "essentials of the open-air classroom ... restated in a more refined form."<sup>114</sup> Canopied passageways supported with light steel columns provided circulation and outdoor gathering areas.

Baldwin Hills Elementary School was constructed as part of the groundbreaking garden city of Baldwin Hills Village. Architect Robert Alexander arranged the school along a central corridor/axis, with parallel classroom wings extending from each side in lengths tailored to fit the site. Swaths of greenery divide the classroom wings, which are sheltered beneath wide overhanging eaves. The focal point of the entrance is a dramatic, cantilevered canopy, resting on a simple steel I-beam. The design otherwise is spare, unpretentious, and modern.



Figure 123. Kester Avenue Elementary School, Richard Neutra (1951), Sherman Oaks. Source: LAUSD Kester Avenue Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.



Figures 124 and 125. Neutra's conceptual sketch of Kester Avenue Elementary School and the current aerial view. Source: McCoy, Neutra (left) and LAUSD Kester Avenue Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011 (right).



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 126. Robert Evans Alexander, Baldwin Hills Elementary School, 1949-1951. Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

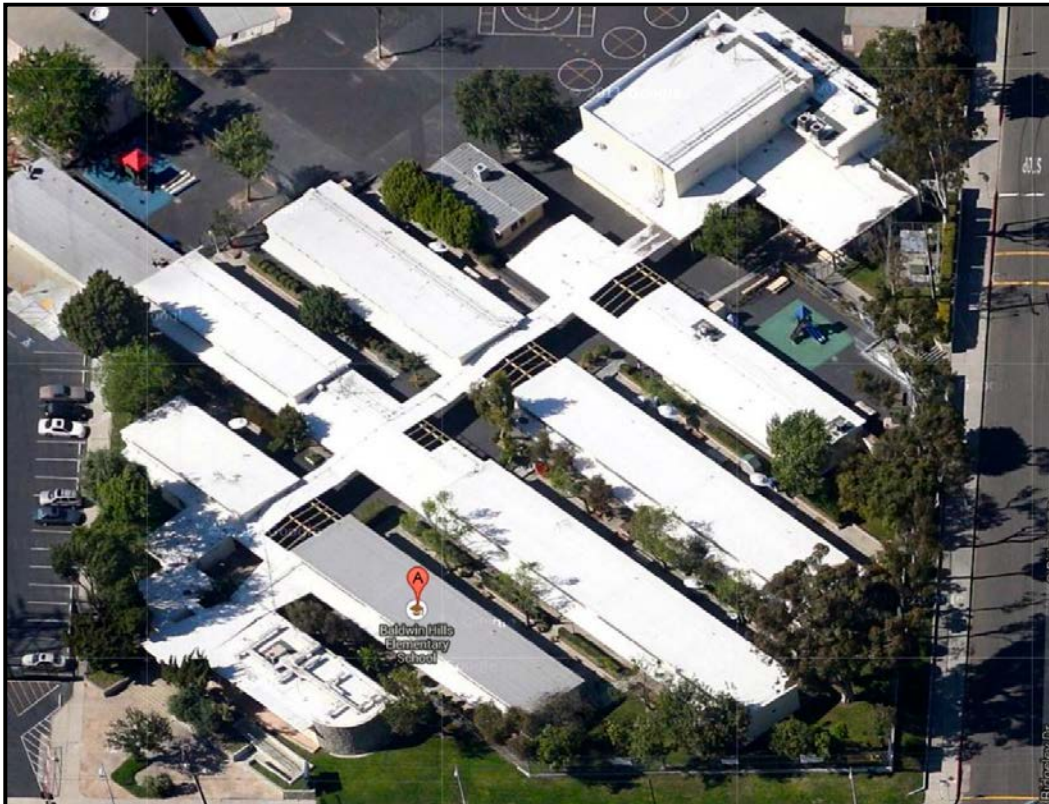
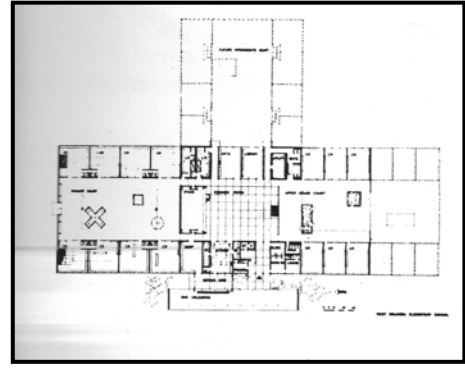
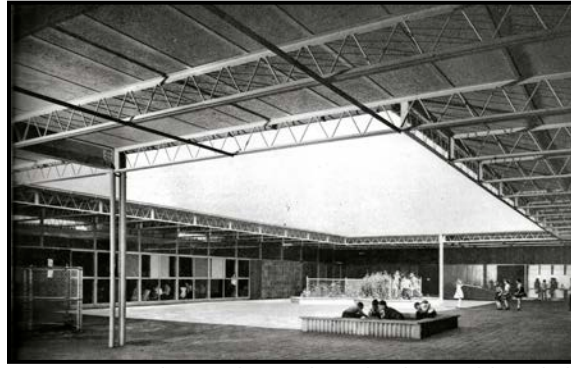


Figure 127. Neutra & Alexander, Baldwin Hills Elementary School. Aerial shows the condensed finger-plan design used to create the preferred one-story massing, set off by swaths of landscaping and patios, but with a more compact site plan. Source: Google Maps, 2013.



Figures 128 and 129. Cluster-plan school, Donald Barthelme & Associates, West Columbia Elementary School, West Columbia Texas, 1950. Source: *Built in USA*, 1952.

***The 1950s and the Advent of the Cluster-Plan School***

By the early 1950s, the popularity of the finger-plan school had begun to decline.<sup>115</sup> First, the design required large swaths of land to accommodate the extended site plan. Second, the plan increased cross-campus walk times and communication. In some scenarios, it also made more sense to build upward instead of outward. On hillside locations, where an expanded footprint meant doubling or tripling already expensive grading costs, the finger-plan school was not a viable option. In mass circulation and trade magazines of the day, though, the one-story scale was still preferred, in particular for elementary schools (the exception remained densely developed urban sites, where one could only expand upward).

The need for cost-effective school design and construction was an additional factor in the move away from the finger-plan. By the early 1950s, there were signs that the immediate postwar focus on carefully harnessing and controlling light—including orienting the building on a north-south axis to create the perfect blend of cross-lighting—was becoming too time-consuming. Not all sites would be large enough, and not all building programs well-funded enough, to justify having such an expenditure of design time devoted to fenestration alone. In 1952, *Architectural Record* observed that, in national school design,

in more and more localities we can expect substantially less emphasis on daylighting. Natural light is so variable that it can seldom be relied on during the entire school day without considerable recourse to electric light. Control of daylight to prevent glare has been found costly and involved.<sup>116</sup>

With high demand and restricted funding for new schools a constant issue, the possibility of a more compact campus plan became the subject of study, a few early prototypes, then a new trend, the cluster-plan school, by the early



Figure 130. Cluster-plan school, Perkins & Will, Heathcote Elementary School, Scarsdale, New York, 1953. Source: *Ogata*, 2008.

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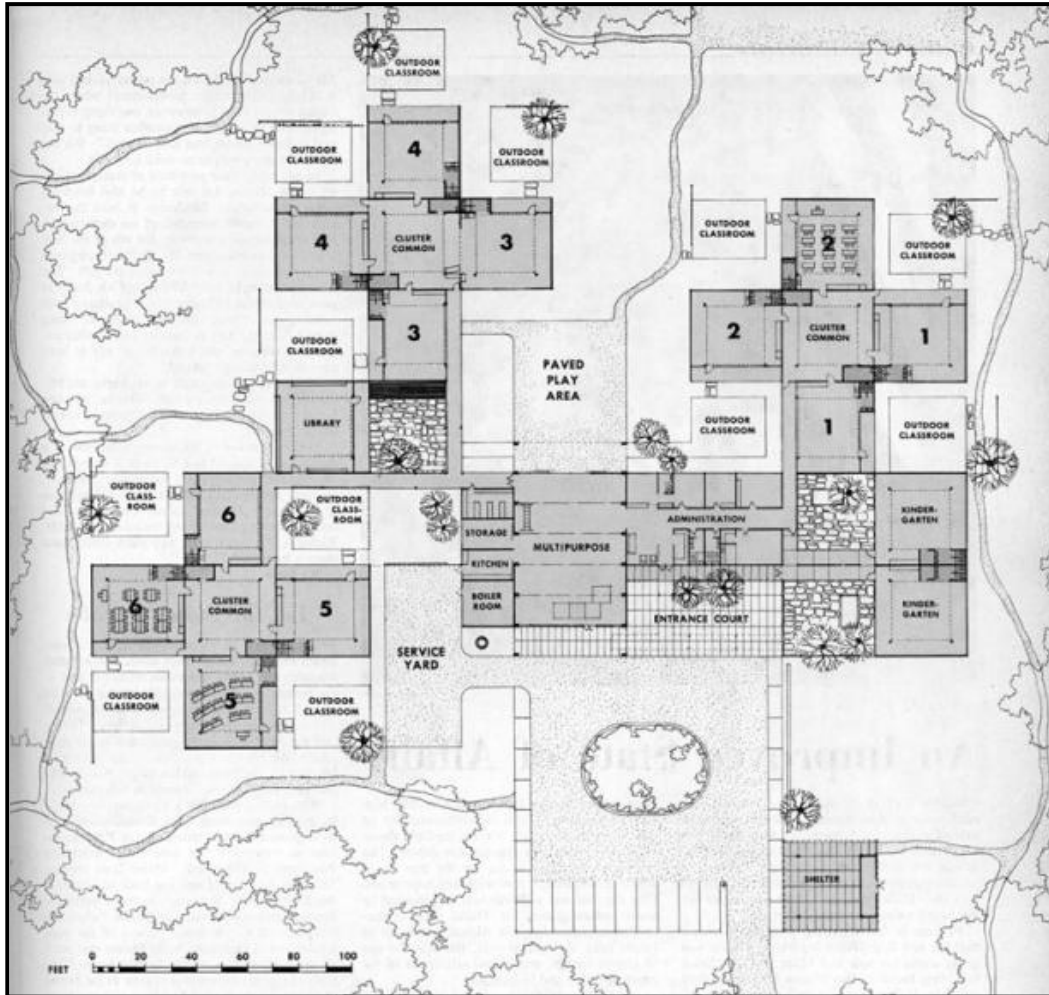


Figure 131. Prototype for a cluster-plan school and unified campus, *The Architect's Collaborative*, Walter Gropius, 1954. Source: Ogata, 2008.

1950s. The cluster-plan school offered a logical solution to these issues. It retained the low massing and indoor-outdoor access and views for all classrooms. But rather than extending wings along an axis, the plan called for grouping them as modular, standalone units around a shared central courtyard. Classrooms still had generous expanses of windows, but now views took in the courtyard and other classrooms, which provided a more communal, neighborhood-like setting. As architectural historian Amy Ogata observed, the plan type provided “both economy and a meaningful spatial experience. In organization and details, the prominent cluster schools of the early and mid-1950s reflected a new sensitivity to the child’s perception.”<sup>117</sup>

As with the finger-plan, the new typology was interpreted and designed in many different variations, but the basic ideas remained the same.

Even in California, with space to grow, the cluster-plan became the preferred typology in the 1950s. Finger-plan schools were still built—usually the condensed or modified typologies





Figures 132 and 133. On left: Courtyard of a cluster-plan school: John Muir Elementary School (1951), John Lyon Reid, Martinez, California (northern California). Source: Ogata, 2008. On right, aerial of John Lyon Reid, John Muir Elementary School. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

already emerging by the late 1940s. But by the early 1960s, the cluster-plan school had “almost universally replaced the finger plan concept.”<sup>118</sup> In a five-year study of the state’s school plants, the California Department of Education praised the cluster-plan for more efficient land utilization and for encouraging “cooperation between teachers by allowing them to share multiuse classrooms, resources center, and teacher preparation areas, all adjacent to their classrooms. ... Better acoustical control and lighting is evident, and technology is enabling these comfort factors to be coordinated with flexible interiors.”<sup>119</sup>

The advantages of this plan were many: more child-friendly in its scale and setting, especially for younger children; more communal, with more shared spaces; and easier to supervise. With this plan, what had been the corner of the room on the interior became the front row on the courtyard.

One early example in California was John Lyon Reid’s 1951 John Muir Elementary School in Martinez, California, northeast of San Francisco. In his design, Reid employed a typical pavilion-like plan, with long one-story classrooms separated by patios and landscaping, accessed via sheltered walkways with wide eaves. The classroom wings are clustered around cross-wings, creating a courtyard setting. As with the Saarinen’s Crow Island school, Reid’s L-shaped classrooms created enclosed outdoor areas for outdoor play and recreation. In a demonstration of the nonhierarchical, informal campus, Reid also eliminated the formal auditorium and designed instead an all-purpose room, “for meetings, lunches, and play, that looked onto a central courtyard through large sharply angled windows.”<sup>120</sup>

Within the Los Angeles City School District, Sumner Spaulding and John Rex’s Orville Wright Middle School (originally Westchester High School) was another early example of a finger-plan and cluster-plan hybrid, this time for a high school campus. The school incorporated the best of midcentury modern design, by one of the region’s renowned firms, with the newest design principles for school plants. Completed in stages between 1948 and 1952, Orville Wright Middle School was constructed for a growing residential community near one of Los Angeles’s centers for the aerospace industry.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Figure 134. Orville Wright Middle School (originally Westchester High School), Spaulding & Rex, 1948-1952. Source: Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archive.



Figure 135. Orville Wright Middle School. Bands of clerestory windows provide balanced lighting for classrooms. Source: Flight, Westchester High School Yearbook, 1956, [www.e-yearbook.com](http://www.e-yearbook.com).



Figure 136. Westchester High School (now Orville Wright Middle School), Spaulding & Rex (1948-1952), west Los Angeles. Source: J. Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Shulman Archives.

In a spare, modernist design, Spaulding & Rex incorporated the same modular design, low massing, and easy indoor-outdoor connections typical of the era (and midcentury modernism in Southern California). Cross-lighting was provided through bands of clerestories and single-pane fixed and casement windows. A network of canopied corridors linked buildings and facilities throughout the campus. In a nod to the aerospace industry employing much of the adjacent community, the campus cafeteria featured a circular, space-age design.

The campus overall displays a decentralized but unified plan, zoned for automobile and pedestrian-only areas, with pavilion-like classrooms wings “clustered” around courtyards. In the “Curating the City” program for modern architecture, the Los Angeles Conservancy noted that Spaulding and Rex’s Westchester High School took the basic tenets of the International Style and Southern Californian educational architecture and “turned them into a spectacular example of a Mid-Century Modern school. ... This campus is a wonderfully intact and very vibrant testament to the power of good ‘design for learning.’”<sup>121</sup>

Another LAUSD example of a hybrid finger- and cluster-plan school is the George K. Porter Middle High in Granada Hills. Built in 1959 and designed by Rowland H. Crawford, the campus displays a pavilion-like plan, with axial classroom wings connected by a central corridor. Swaths of landscaped patios divide the classrooms. Interrupting the axis, the focal point of the campus is a landscaped quad, with an expansive lawn ringed by trees creating a neighborhood, park-like setting.

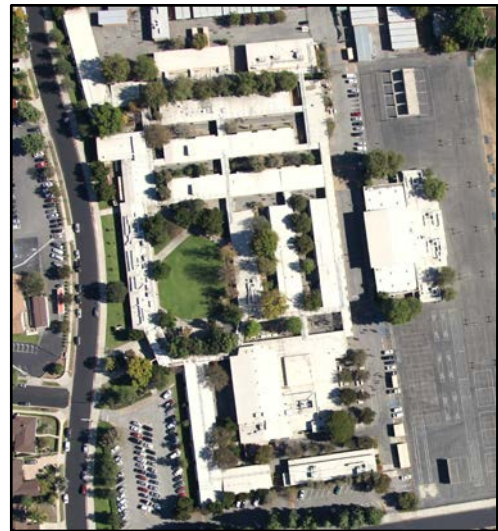


Figure 137. Combination cluster- and finger-plan, George K. Porter Middle School, Granada Hills, California, 1958. Source: LAUSD Porter Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Figure 138. 1953 aerial, Orville Wright Middle School. Source: USDA, [www.historicaerials.com](http://www.historicaerials.com).

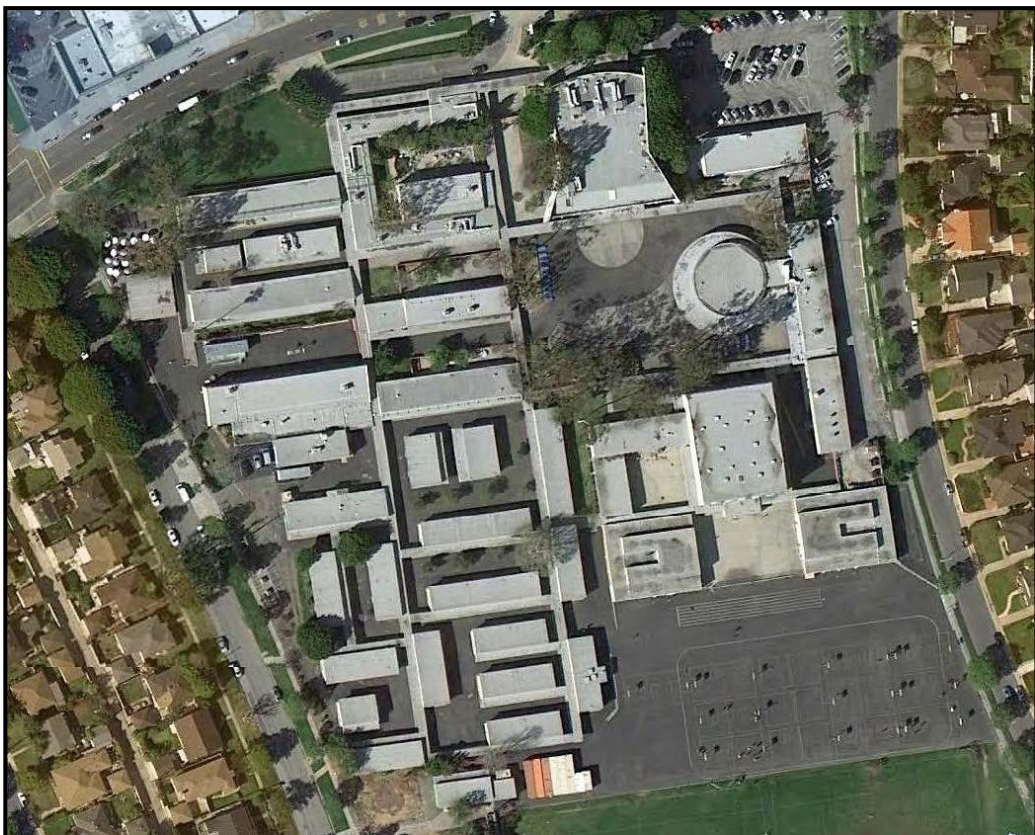


Figure 139. As of 2012, the campus plan of Spaulding & Rex's Orville Wright Middle School remains largely intact. Source: LAUSD Orville Wright Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2012.



Figure 140. George K. Porter Middle School (1958), Granada Hills, San Fernando Valley (extant). Source: Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.

Typical of modern campus planning, and similar to Orville Wright Middle School, the site plan turns inward on itself. Automobile traffic and drop-off areas are located on the exterior, with extended canopied corridors providing access to the campus.

The George K. Porter Junior High also reflects how Los Angeles’s still-expanding suburbs provided a testing ground for modern design and programming ideas school plants. The school is located in Granada Hills, also home of Joseph Eicher’s celebrated midcentury modern tract of Balboa Highlands, now a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone in the City of Los Angeles. These buildings and so many others like them reflect how the suburbs continued to expand, especially throughout the San Fernando Valley, and how by the late 1950s midcentury modernism enjoyed wide acceptance among the public.

### ***The 1960s and the Open-Plan School***

Another wave of school plant reform in the early 1960s brought calls for more flexibility. To accommodate the new method of “team teaching,” the focus became designing completely adaptable interiors, with movable walls and few built-ins, in a new typology known as the open-plan school.

In light of this new trend, the finger-plan of the 1940s—those “once-daring school plants with long corridors and classrooms located on one or both sides were now dismissed as hopelessly dull ‘egg-crates.’”<sup>122</sup> Basic features like load-bearing interior walls came to be seen as too limiting. As the EFL wrote in a study, “‘Old walls should not stifle new ideas. Identical boxes must not enforce the same program on all students and teachers; each is a unique individual. Fixed furnishings must not quash spontaneous inquiry.’”<sup>123</sup> The school capable of serving the needs of students, the EFL concluded, offered space to “accommodate groups of various sizes from 100 students down to one or two students studying by themselves” and “space allowing for the rapid shifting of group size or change in group’s activity.”<sup>124</sup>



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Figure 141. Caudill, Rowlett, & Scott, Paul Klapper School, New York, 1966-1967. Source: Ogata, 2008.

EFL findings were well publicized and widely published, first finding audience in the nation's many education-related trade publications and into mass-market newspapers. Reporting on the findings of an EFL study, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that "if you were to take the roof off most schools and look in, you would see a series of identical rooms, approximately 30x40 ft., strung along both sides of a corridor. This is the floor plan of an obsolete school."<sup>125</sup> This description, of course, fit the classic finger-plan school, and many cluster-plan schools, considered cutting-edge just one decade before.

What this meant in terms of school design was a less low-slung, spread-out campus; the buildings were more compact, with higher ceilings. The idea of cross-lighting and ventilation provided by the long rectangular classroom wing fell out of favor. They were no longer as essential, since, in the early 1960s, improved air-conditioning systems diminished the importance of cross-ventilation and less glazing was generally



Figure 142. Thurston School, Open Plan Model (1967), Flewelling & Mood. Source: Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Photography Archive.

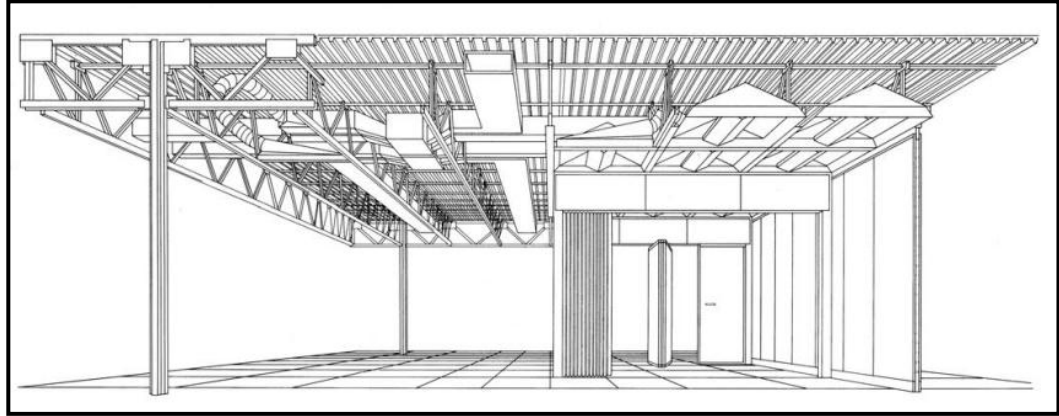


Figure 143. Standardized, demountable components for an open-school, *School Construction Systems Development*. Source: Ogata, 2008.

used. Since the open-plan school had to accommodate interior spaces separated by non-load-bearing walls, roof spans had to be long and high, with a steel structural system providing, essentially, a large high space into which the school's program could be designed. Massing increased, and corridors moved back inside.

Although the most obvious changes brought by the open-school plan were to school interiors, the shift was also discernible on the exterior. Some—but not all—open-plan schools adopted the circular form, with architect William Caudill arguing that the circular form best served team teaching, since the circular plan offered “continuous movement of children.”<sup>126</sup>

Architects also experimented with hexagonal building shapes, either with self-enclosed campuses or smaller circular classrooms clustered around a common area or courtyards (in yet another variation bringing together two plan types). One of the “most adventurous examples” of the plan type, according to architectural historian Amy Ogata, was Caudill, Rowlett & Scott's Paul Klapper School in New York, constructed in 1966/1967.

### ***School Construction Systems Development (SCSD)***

In efforts to promote the open-plan school, the EFL awarded a substantial grant to develop “an economical, standardized building system” through its School Construction Systems Development (SCSD) program.<sup>127</sup> The program developed, standardized and manufactured modular components and structural systems for open-plan schools. The SCSD school components and infrastructure were standardized but aesthetically flexible, allowing for design and plan variations so that “architects were not limited in plan layout.”<sup>128</sup> High roof spans of 60 to 70 feet provided the structural template into which the school's interior program could be designed.

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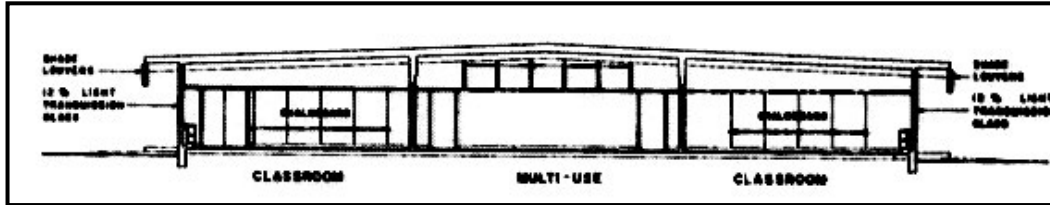


Figure 144. Section, Van Duzen Elementary School, open-plan school with cluster-plan configuration. Source: Gibson, 1965.

The SCSD system was promoted nationally. In 1962, the program “had the commitment of twelve California school districts to develop and build schools worth 25 million dollars.”<sup>129</sup> Ultimately, 13 SCSD schools were constructed in California. The formation of the SCSD also grew out of the astronomical costs facing school districts and boards to keep up with demand; the goal was creating prototypes that offered economical, good design, reflecting the latest ideas in educational methods and school plant design. Modern school architects around the nation experimented with the new ideas.

Ultimately, in spite of high expectations, open-plan schools “faced problems of practicality and perception.”<sup>130</sup> Problems related to acoustics plagued open schools, for example. The gap between theory and practice also became an issue, as the open-plan school did not in and of itself guarantee that teachers would adopt the creative, flexible team-teaching strategies that had prompted design reform in the first place. Much national debate and discussion about the open-plan school took place in the educational and architectural trade press. By the mid-1970s, the open-plan school had joined the finger-plan and cluster-core plan as experiments in school design that declining quickly in popularity.

As with the finger- and cluster-plans, there were many combinations of the main plan types. The Van Duzen Elementary School in Northern California, for example, represented one of first “cluster plan schools built in California with open planning.”<sup>131</sup> Constructed in the early 1960s for a cooperative/team teaching program, the school consisted of three parallel classroom wings, open and flexible on the interior, but configured around an exterior courtyard, for the benefits of the clustered site plan.

Constructed in 1964, the Round Meadow Elementary School, in Hidden Hills, was another example of an open-plan school, this time in Southern California. Again, the cluster-plan idea played a role in the design: “This school is designed so that each building can work as a cluster-type ‘little school.’”<sup>132</sup> At the center of each open-plan building was a multipurpose area, with a resource center and library. The buildings tended to be higher, with more wall space and fewer windows. The interior was made flexible through the use of folding walls, and a relative lack of windows was compensated for through a modern air-conditioning unit. As with the earlier postwar typologies, the open-plan type accommodated a variety of stylistic variations.



Figure 145. New community, new school: Hoover High School, Lakewood (1963). Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.

## LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS | CONTEXT & DEVELOPMENTS

### *The Building Program*

In the postwar period, the order of the day for Los Angeles City school districts was keeping up with demand. Overseeing the first decade of postwar expansion was Alfred Nibecker, who had served as chief architect for the architectural department of the district since the 1920s. As before, Nibecker oversaw design and construction of schools, with a variety of commissions still shared between area architects, in particular those who had begun to specialize in school design, and the in-house team of the district. In 1955, Nibecker was made an honorary member of the Structural Engineers Association of Southern California, the association's highest award. That same year, he retired. Following his retirement, the board appointed Ernst Raymond C. Billerbeck as district architect.<sup>133</sup>

As school construction expanded in the suburbs, however, enrollment figures at several downtown schools were in sharp decline, resulting in the closing of a number of campuses in the postwar period (among them Central Junior High, founded in 1911 and closed in 1946; and Lafayette Junior High, founded in 1911 and closed in 1955). Between 1946 and 1953, the enrollment of Lafayette Junior High dropped by one-half, falling from nearly 1,400 in 1946 to 700 in 1953/1954, reflecting the population shift from the city to the suburbs.<sup>134</sup>

During this period, standardized construction techniques and components, with variations reflecting differences in site conditions and demand, allowed the district to expedite construction. Standardization meant that many campuses throughout the district, in particular schools constructed during the 1950s, display identical or similar elements and features. Common modular components (for elementary, middle, and senior high schools) included classroom wings that are one-room deep, one story in height, with a finger-link rectangular plan. These buildings are often capped with a slightly sloped shed roof. Along one side (intended for southern exposure), clerestories span the building below the roof line. Shade is provided through either wide (usually cantilevered) roof eaves, in steel or wood, or a wide, sheltered arcade. These arcades generally rise to the level of roof clerestories and are supported on simple pipe supports.



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Figure 146. San Fernando Valley expansion: Panorama City, Burton Elementary School, 1951. Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.



Figure 147. Pacific Palisades Charter Senior High School (1961), Adrian Wilson & Associates, Pacific Palisades, west Los Angeles. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.



Figures 148 and 149. Fernangeles Elementary School (1954), Sun Valley, San Fernando Valley. Image on the left shows the Administration Building and Auditorium; image on right shows the student lawn and landscaping, from the vantage point of sheltered outdoor dining area. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.

Along the opposite side (meant for northern exposure), window glazing is generous, usually occupying 60 to 80 percent of the wall height in grouped, multi-light, operable windows. The grouping of windows marks the location of the classroom inside, and treatments vary, from wood-framed, multi-light double-hung sashes to steel-framed casements.

By the 1960s, it became more common to see double-loaded classroom wings (for senior high schools especially, but also for some elementary schools where demand was high and available acreage was scarce). By double-loading corridors but retaining the preferred one-story massing, schools accommodated more students while also providing a more domestic scaled, indoor-outdoor campus. Also in the early 1960s, for sites with less acreage, campuses incorporated more two-story buildings, with designs still drawing upon the postwar ideals for an informal, indoor-outdoor campus.

Many slight variations of another classic feature of postwar schools, sheltered corridors, appear on campuses throughout the district as well. Intended to move hallways outside, sheltered corridors might display wood plank and beam roof structures, resting on simple piers or steel pipe supports, capped with a flat or slightly sloped roof. Many examples form an elaborate network connecting all buildings and facilities of the campus.

Many LAUSD schools constructed during this period, from the late 1940s through the 1950s, also display standard campus components and site designs. Some basic elements include an auditorium, usually cited close to the public entrance to the campus, with a low, one-story entrance wing giving way to a two-story high interior. Stylistically, the auditorium generally reflects the character-defining features or influence of Mid-Century Modern design. Detailing is spare, and materials vary. For the auditorium, and usually for the equally public administration building, brick cladding and piers flank entrances and/or accenting building bases. Other typical materials include stucco, steel, and scored concrete.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Figure 150. Narbonne High School (1956), Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall (DMJM), Lomita, southern Los Angeles. Image shows one example of the swaths of greenery and landscaping between classroom wings. Source: MSP Architects (McDonald, Soutar & Paz, Inc.).

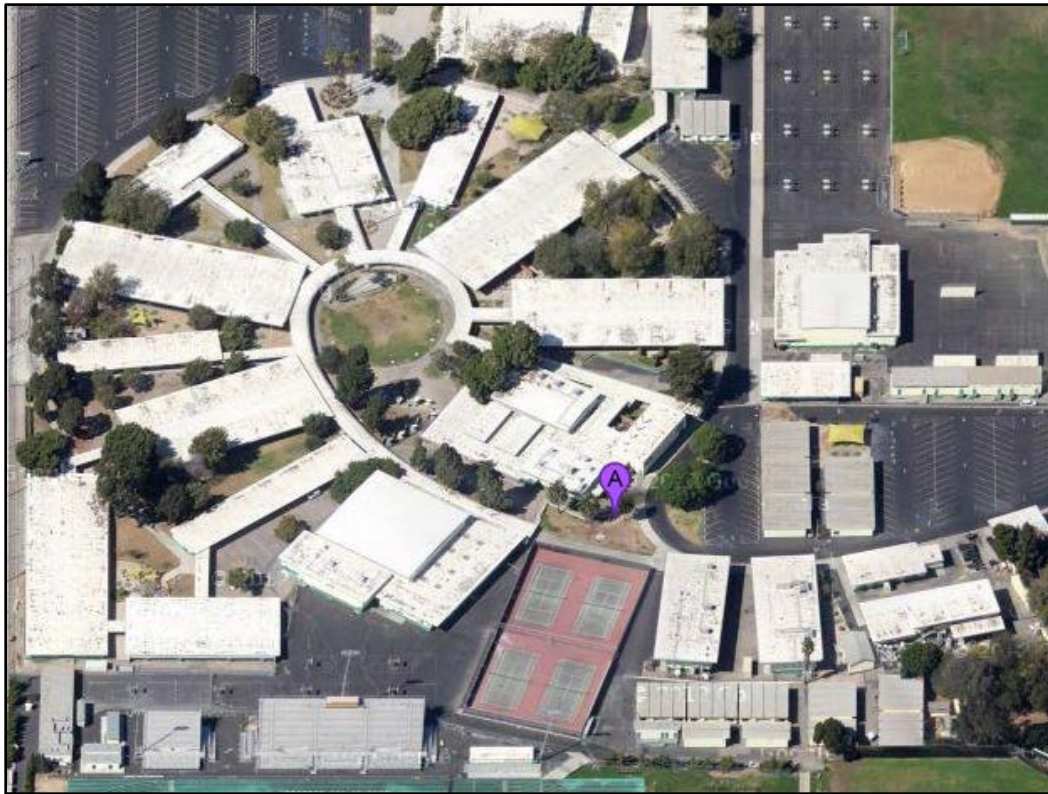


Figure 151. Narbonne High School (1956), aerial view. The finger-plan school forms a spiral, allowing for the benefits of the landscaped, expansive site plan and low, one- and two-story deep classroom wings providing easy outdoor access and views. The use of the spiral plan creates these features on a relatively restricted lot. Source: Google Maps, 2013.



Figure 152. Leapwood Avenue Elementary School (1962), Carson; image on left shows two-story, double-loaded classroom; image on right shows landscaping and patios between classrooms, connecting corridors, and wide arcade eaves. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.

Other common features for elementary, middle, and senior high schools included the incorporation of a centrally located, sheltered outdoor dining area and adjacent Cafeteria/Multipurpose Building, outdoor assembly area and landscaped lawn/quad and recreation fields along the periphery of campus (the latter two features are more common for middle and senior high schools). Elementary schools often incorporated a separate area for kindergarten classes. Usually located near the Administration building, the kindergarten areas have their own patios and recreation areas, adjacent to the classroom wing.

***Postwar Expansion and Educating the Baby Boom***

After the tumult of Great Depression and World War II, the Board of Education of Los Angeles, in spite of a turn toward architectural modernism, shifted away from the experiments of the 1930s and back toward a more traditional, college-focused curriculum. In September 1945, the Board of Education added its voice to a movement to carry out district-wide achievement testing for students and reevaluate the curriculum, partly in order to stop the “drift toward laissez-faire, experimental, and lax methods.”<sup>135</sup> The curriculum was revamped, with a renewed emphasis on the “3 Rs” and additional coursework in American history and geography.

The biggest challenge facing the district at the time was keeping up with demand. In Southern California, one of the areas with the most rapid growth was the San Fernando Valley. Between 1930 and 1950, population expansion in the valley was remarkable even for Southern California. With new settlers drawn by the area’s emerging aerospace and entertainment industries, residential expansion had already been under way by the 1920s and 1930s. By the onset of the Great Depression, for example, the valley had become one of the United States’ most important hubs for the aviation industry. Given this concentration of jobs, population doubled from approximately 51,000 in 1930 to 112,000 by 1940. With the advent of World War II and an infusion of federal funds for wartime spending, these figures skyrocketed by another 50 percent in 5 years, from 112,000 in 1940 to 176,000 by 1945. Between 1945 and 1950, a nearly fourfold increase was recorded, with figures climbing to 402,000. Given the magnitude of this expansion, a majority of post-1945 school construction for the district overall took place throughout the San Fernando Valley.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Figures 153 and 154. Chatsworth High School (1963), San Fernando Valley. Double-loaded axial classroom wings fan out from a spoke-like plan, centered on a landscaped quad area. Photo on the right shows detail of courtyard spaces and landscaping lining all classrooms. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.

This created another challenge for the Los Angeles City school district. Overcrowding led to the need to offer “half-day” sessions for children, where attendance happened in shifts of half-days. Bond issues in 1946, 1952, and 1955 addressed the pressing need for new school construction, and the resulting funds paid for the construction and expansion of numerous schools.<sup>136</sup> The 1946 bond issue provided \$75 million, which helped generate 66 new schools, with a total of over 2,300 classrooms, over 480 cafeterias, gyms, auditoriums, and other ancillary buildings.<sup>137</sup> In addition, over \$7.8 million went toward land for new schools, \$3.2 million for maintenance and improvements to an aging stock of facilities, \$4.5 million for grounds improvements, and \$10.6 million for equipment. In spite of these investments, another \$148 million was proposed for a 1952 bond issue.

In 1948, district-wide enrollment stood at 301,000 students; by 1949, this figure had increased by 15,000, with enrollment reaching over 316,000.<sup>138</sup> By the end of the 1950s baby boom, however, the student population of the Los Angeles City school district more than doubled, climbing from 316,000 to over 645,000. A further increase of 28,000 pupils was predicted for the school year 1960–1961.<sup>139</sup>

Although the district temporarily succeeded in decreasing the need for half-day sessions in 1948–1949, by 1952 the sheer numbers threaten to overwhelm its ability to keep up. Without a new building campaign, the number of students needing to attend half-day sessions was predicted to increase from 11,355 in 1952 to 100,000 by 1957.<sup>140</sup> By 1965, in the San Fernando Valley, demand was so great that school district officials began predicting that school plants would soon occupy high-rises, a trend that was not desired but seen as a possibility.

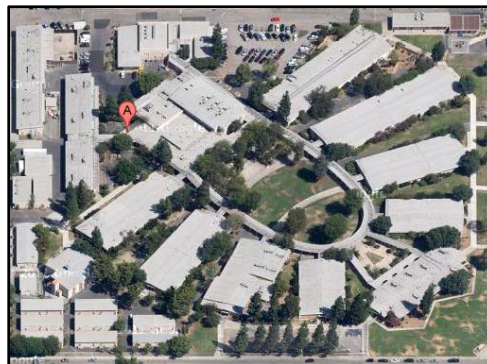


Figure 155. Chatsworth High School, aerial view of site plan and design. Source: Google Maps, 2013.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figures 156 and 157. Colfax Avenue Elementary School (1950-1955), North Hollywood-Valley Village. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.

Funding was not the only challenge facing the district. There was a pressing need for new construction, but also a shortage of trained architects in the immediate postwar years (this tide started to turn in the 1950s). In 1949, the State of California issued a “renewed plea for draftsman and designers,” as the state’s ambitious postwar building program for institutional construction was falling behind schedule due to a personnel shortage.<sup>141</sup>

These years profoundly impacted the growth and organization of the school district. The geographic area served by the school district fluctuated over time, expanding during the 1920s and 1930s as it annexed adjacent school districts and served new areas. As of 1935, the school district enrolled 300,000 students housed in 384 schools, including 293 elementary schools, 22 junior high schools, 35 high schools, a trade school, and a junior college; and it served an area of over 1,095 square miles.

During the late 1930s and 1940s, the general trend in school district organization was toward decentralization; as communities grew and developed their own identities, they might split off and form stand-alone districts. For example, between 1936 and 1945, the Beverly Hills, Torrance, Culver City, and William S. Hart Union High School districts formed after leaving the Los Angeles City School District.

Even so, throughout the district, enrollment steadily increased. Rapid postwar residential development perpetuated the need for funds for additional classroom space, facilities, equipment, and other resources. To examine apportionment of state aid to school districts, in 1954 the state legislature created the State Commission on School Districts and directed it to examine unification and other means of reorganization of school districts in the state. The state's policy thereafter was the encouragement of unification for reasons of streamlining administrative functions and costs, enlarging tax bases and reducing dependence on state aid. Developing suburbs were, accordingly, encouraged to align themselves with the existing Los Angeles City School District, further contributing to its growth.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Figure 158. Palisades Charter Senior High School (1961), Adrian Wilson & Associates, extant, Pacific Palisades. Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.



Figure 159. Palisades Charter Senior High School (1961), Adrian Wilson & Associates, extant, Pacific Palisades. Source: Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.





Figures 160 and 161. On left, Palisades Charter Senior High School (1961), Adrian Wilson & Associates. On right, Daniel Webster Middle School (1954-1958), Palms-Mar Vista. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.

### ***Formation of the Los Angeles Unified School District***

Through the 1950s, the Los Angeles City School District remained organized as three separate entities: an Elementary School District, High School District, and Junior College District. In the late 1950s, calls for unifying Los Angeles’s elementary and high school districts into one unified entity began gathering momentum. The movement for district consolidation was seen throughout the region and state in this era. As of 1959, the State of California spent upwards of \$1.5 billion for public education, spread across 1,721 separate districts, “a maze related to the state’s unending growth.”<sup>142</sup>

Supported by the State Board of Education, the Los Angeles City School District and Board of Education, as well as California’s governor at the time, Edmund Brown, district unification would “bring advantages in curriculum, staff and financing.”<sup>143</sup> Proponents of the measure argued that unification would help bring costs under control by streamlining administrative procedures and eliminating duplication. In addition, a unified district would also provide a “continuity of education along a solid plane from the kindergarten to the senior year,” as Los Angeles City School District superintendent Ellis Jarvis argued.<sup>144</sup>

These efforts culminated in three ballot measures, Propositions C, D, and E, included in the 1960 national primary elections. The propositions easily passed. As of July 1961, the LAUSD came into being as the second largest school system in the United States, and the Los Angeles Junior College District became an independent entity.

### ***Changing Times: LAUSD in the 1950s and 1960s***

In 1960, the *Los Angeles Times* education editor, Dick Turpin, observed that “growth, the word most nearly synonymous with California, has brought many problems to the state and education has had a major share of them.”<sup>145</sup> At this juncture for LAUSD, enrollment in 1959–1960 stood at 645,000; by 1960–1961, enrollment figures were expected to climb by 28,000 pupils.<sup>146</sup> The school year 1960–1961 also brought the opening and staffing of 15 new schools.



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Figure 162. The 1960s arrive at LAUSD. Caption, left image: Teachers on strike, circa 1969. Source: LAPL, Shades of LA, #00003951. Caption, right image: "Thousands of teachers and supporters staged a mass demonstration in front of city hall." 19 September 1969. Source: LAPL, Shades of LA, #00058154.

The extended postwar boom of school construction and expansion had brought dozens of new schools to the district. Between 1946 and 1962, a total of \$649.5 million in bond issues had funded the expansion. But population growth continued through the 1960s, exerting a constant pressure for new classrooms.

In 1962, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that California had become the most populous state in the nation and that this population boom was having a negative impact on the state's schools. As a result, LAUSD had increased half-day sessions for the first time since the 1950s, during the height of the baby boom. Half-day sessions had hit a high mark in 1957, with over 48,000 classes adopting the partial schedule; this number had steadily dropped in the intervening years. But by 1962, the numbers were again on the rise, with an estimated 20,000 half-day sessions needed in the fall of 1962. Other solutions, such as the temporary fix of busing students from overcrowded to less crowded schools, was one proposed but problematic solution in the early 1960s.

Even as the need to expand and upgrade continued, signs of voter fatigue for school bond measures were becoming evident. In 1962, a defeated bond measure of \$128 million would have funded new schools and expansion in areas most impacted by enrollment increases and/or overcrowding, among them, the San Fernando Valley and central Los Angeles. By 1963, for example, enrollment in the San Fernando Valley accounted for one-third of the total for the district.<sup>147</sup> Even with the additional funds, keeping up with demand still would have proved onerous: "Had the measures passed," reported *Los Angeles Times* education editor Dick Turpin, "the city school system could barely have kept pace with the city's surging enrollment wave. Now additional half-day sessions are certain."<sup>148</sup>

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Through the 1960s, however, the tide continued to turn against school bond measures. In 1969, for the fourth time in a row, Los Angeles voters rejected a tax increase to provide funding for “the already troubled Los Angeles city schools. A bond issue for the construction of new schools was also a victim of nonsupport.”<sup>149</sup> This trend was statewide: joining Los Angeles voters in this rejection of school bond measures were Culver City, Ventura, and San Diego, among many others. Between 1966 and 1968, “52 percent of all propositions designed to provide more funds for California schools ... have been defeated.”<sup>150</sup>

In an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, Warren L. Steinberg, a consultant with LAUSD’s Center for Planned Change, commented on the trend:

California businessmen and politicians—in addition to exploiting the beauties of the California scenery and climate—have long attributed much of the success in luring business to the state to an educational system that provides a large source of skilled manpower. Again, why do Californians reject support for one of the state’s most precious assets—schools? Some will answer that it is a taxpayers’ revolt, that school taxes are the only taxes on which the average citizen gets to vote and that there is no other way that the individual can show his wrath at the steadily climbing tax bite.

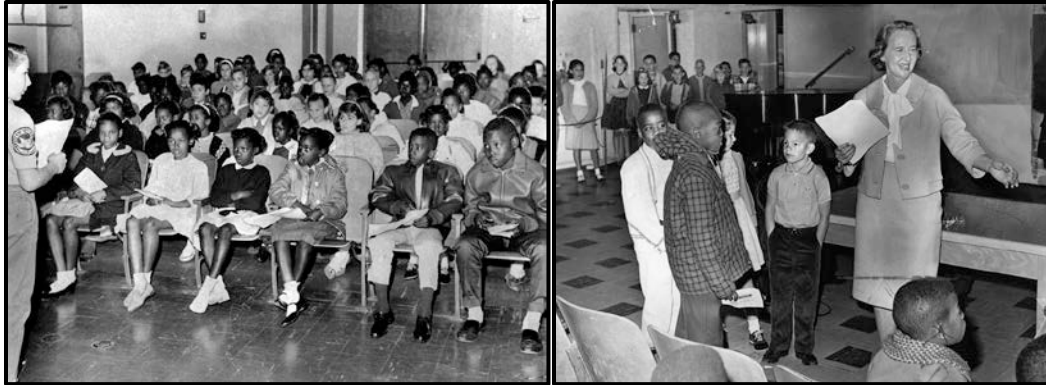
Steinberg captured the mood of the era, not just with respect to funding, in his concluding comments in the piece:

Our children need to ponder basic educational problems: When will equal educational opportunity be a reality, what is the place of religion in the school, what should be taught in the schools, how much is good education worth, what is the role of home and school, how free should academic freedom be, what part should students have in determining the education they will receive? Unless schools turn out a better educational product and begin to teach students the history and place of education in our society, we can expect more propositions to fail their ABCs.<sup>151</sup>

As the decade ended, though, the “voter revolt” against school bond measures continued, and Los Angeles city schools were tasked with serving a substantial student population with ever-diminishing resources. In 1969, for the first time in its history, LAUSD’s student enrollment dropped. The news made headlines in the *Los Angeles Times*: “This is a new development for us,” said a surprised Asst. Supt. Frederick Fox. “The trend (of growth) has been broken.”<sup>152</sup>

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Figures 163 and 164. School busing, 1964. On left: Loyola Village School, Playa del Rey, welcomes 82 pupils from Manchester Avenue School. Source: LAPL Herald-Examiner Collection, #00042149. On right: "Miss Ina Metcalfe, principal of Osage Avenue School, greets some of 69 pupils who were transferred to Osage from the 66th Street School. The transfer of 151 pupils from two predominantly African American schools to two all-white schools was accomplished without incident." Source: LAPL Herald-Examiner Collection, #00055171.

## **Civil Rights and School Integration**

As the 1960s ended with this novel news—of an enrollment decrease—school officials cited the dual causes of decreasing birth rates as well as the widespread move of many families to new suburban areas outside the district. An additional factor in this shift was increasing racial tension and growing pressure on the district to correct the racial imbalance that had become evident in many schools.

In the postwar period, addressing and correcting decades of de facto racial segregation represented a significant challenge for LAUSD.<sup>153</sup> By the 1960s, as the Civil Rights movement gained momentum, this long-brewing issue finally came to a head and formed an important part of the social context shaping the district during this time.

Throughout the early twentieth century, racial discrimination and segregation in housing had been reflected in the demographics of Southern Californian schools. A new wave of openly discriminatory housing practices in the 1930s helped maintain and worsen these divisions. In the mid- to late 1930s, surveyors for the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) studied the demographic breakdown of communities throughout the United States, including in Southern California. The HOLC provided long-term mortgage loans to, mostly, Anglo-American clients. In addition to discriminating against potential clients, the HOLC's "security maps" helped lenders discriminate against entire neighborhoods. In this climate, ethnic diversity was considered to be a security risk.

In order to document the presence of what they termed "subversive races," HOLC surveyors went block by block throughout Los Angeles, interviewing residents and creating neighborhood profiles describing, among other things, racial composition. Hundreds of data sheets, with detailed demographic information, were created for Los Angeles alone. Neighborhoods would be assigned a color denoting the level of risk, with an inordinate amount of weight being assigned on the basis of who lived there: green usually meant that a

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neighborhood was entirely Anglo-American; yellow meant that a few ethnic minority members lived in the neighborhood; and red was reserved for neighborhoods with predominantly minority populations, usually African-American.

This practice, which became known as “redlining,” fueled discrimination and racially restrictive lending practices and intensified segregation in Los Angeles.<sup>154</sup>

As restrictive housing and lending practices continued in the postwar period, racial segregation became particularly pronounced in newly constructed suburbs, in particular in the San Fernando Valley. The student populations of schools reflected this: “The Valley, regardless of the region—North, East, or West—was by far the most racially segregated region of the Los Angeles School District,” according to a 1967 report released by the school district.<sup>155</sup> Among thousands of students at Birmingham, Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Cleveland, Granada Hills, Grant, Reseda, Taft, and Van Nuys high schools, there was a combined total of 19 African-American students.<sup>156</sup>

However, additional factors contributed to the marked racial imbalance in so many Los Angeles public schools. As architectural historian Teresa Grimes, et al., noted:

According to Josh Sides, school segregation in Southern California was the product of racial geography, willful neglect, and racial gerrymandering. In this respect, the civil rights battle over education was very much tied to housing. If black families were restricted to living in certain areas with substandard schools, there was de facto school segregation.

While the LAUSD officially mandated that students attend the school closest to them, white students in racially mixed neighborhoods were able to seek a waiver and attend a predominately white school. This practice, combined with segregated residential patterns, resulted in de facto segregation well into the 1950s. When the NAACP started investigating the schools system in 1953 and U.S. Supreme Court handed down the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, schools became a central focus of the Los Angeles civil rights movement. Resistance from both the LAUSD and white parents in affected neighborhoods throughout the city led to a protracted battle over school desegregation well into the 1970s.<sup>157</sup>



Figure 165. 1963 hunger strike by school integrationists: “A year-long study on the subject of de facto segregation was scheduled to be presented to the Board of Education.” Source: LAPL, *Shades of Los Angeles*. #00041605.



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Figure 166. The “East LA Blow Out,” Lincoln High School, 16 September 1968. Students protested for “better schools for Mexican Americans. Sal Castro was a teacher there and spearheaded the movement.” Source: LAPL, Herald-Examiner Collection, 00041327.

In the early 1960s, the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), along with a coalition of other organizations, launched a campaign of sit-ins, marches, and other nonviolent action, calling upon the Los Angeles Board of Education to adopt policies aimed at correcting racial segregation and broadening the curriculum. This coalition asserted the need for (1) the Los Angeles Board of Education to redraw its school boundaries, (2) black students in overcrowded schools to elect to attend predominantly white schools, and (3) black teachers to be hired throughout the district.<sup>158</sup> By the mid-1960s, a variety of groups joined forces, arguing for classes and subjects more reflective of the diverse histories and cultures of LAUSD students.

The issue also touched on school boundaries. In 1963, African-American leaders in Los Angeles staged protests, asking that “elementary and secondary school boundaries be redrawn around these ‘Negro districts,’ that that minority students be transferred from crowded schools to less crowded ones in a 15-mile radius, and that “barriers” to promotion of certified Negro personnel be eliminated.”<sup>159</sup> With the Watts uprising in 1965, attitudes were intensified on all sides of the integration issue. Some citizens became more adamant that de facto segregation should remain in place, while other community members, activists, and students began arguing for and asserting the legal rights of all students to equal educational facilities and opportunities.

In 1968, Latin-American students in East Los Angeles staged a series of school strikes popularly known as the “East L.A. Blowout.”<sup>160</sup> During the first week of March 1968, approximately 15,000 students walked out of classes at Woodrow Wilson, Garfield, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Belmont, Venice, and Jefferson high schools with demands for an “equal, qualitative, and culturally relevant education.”<sup>161</sup>

***Early Litigation***

In 1954, in the landmark case *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate public schools for black and white children were “inherently unequal” and therefore violated the constitutional rights for equal protection for minority children.<sup>162</sup> Impacts of this decision were felt in Southern California. The Los Angeles Board of Education had cited “color-blindness” as its official policy, stating that racial segregation in housing patterns was beyond their control.<sup>163</sup> However, when the policies of the nearby Pasadena School Board (which mirrored those of Los Angeles) were challenged in a 1963 lawsuit brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the California Supreme Court ruled that school boards must attempt to eliminate racial segregation, regardless of its causes.<sup>164</sup>

In 1963 in Los Angeles, the ACLU filed *Crawford v. Los Angeles City Board of Education*, a class-action school desegregation lawsuit filed behalf of two African-American high school students, Mary Ellen Crawford and Inita Watkins.<sup>165</sup> The lawsuit highlighted two schools—both located in the southern portion of the district, only one mile apart—with pronounced racial imbalance: Jordan Senior High School in Watts, whose student population was 99 percent African-American, and South Gate Senior High School, which had 97 percent Anglo-American students.<sup>166</sup>

The case of *Crawford v. Los Angeles City Board of Education* became a watershed for Los Angeles schools. Filed in 1963, and effectively ending in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982, the case “encapsulated and propelled the legal and political framework of an era.”<sup>167</sup> As a result of the lawsuit, the California Supreme Court ordered LAUSD to formulate a plan to correct de facto racial imbalance in the schools. The most controversial solution proposed and implemented was busing students; programs were first established on a voluntary basis, then in a mandatory program that was hotly debated from the 1960s through the early 1980s, when a constitutional amendment passed by California’s voters and affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court ended the practice.

*Crawford v. Los Angeles City Board of Education* initially sought to halt the expenditure of public funds to renovate Jordan Senior High School until it was desegregated.<sup>168</sup> The suit was filed in 1963 but amended twice: in 1966, it was broadened to include Mexican-American students, and in 1968, the ACLU further amended the case to call for district-wide desegregation.<sup>169</sup> In 1970, as a result of lawsuit, a Los Angeles City Superior Court affirmed the presence of segregated schools in Los Angeles and ordered the district to take steps to correct racial imbalance. This prompted “a protracted fight over how to desegregate the increasingly diverse and increasingly racially segregated Los Angeles Unified School District.”<sup>170</sup>

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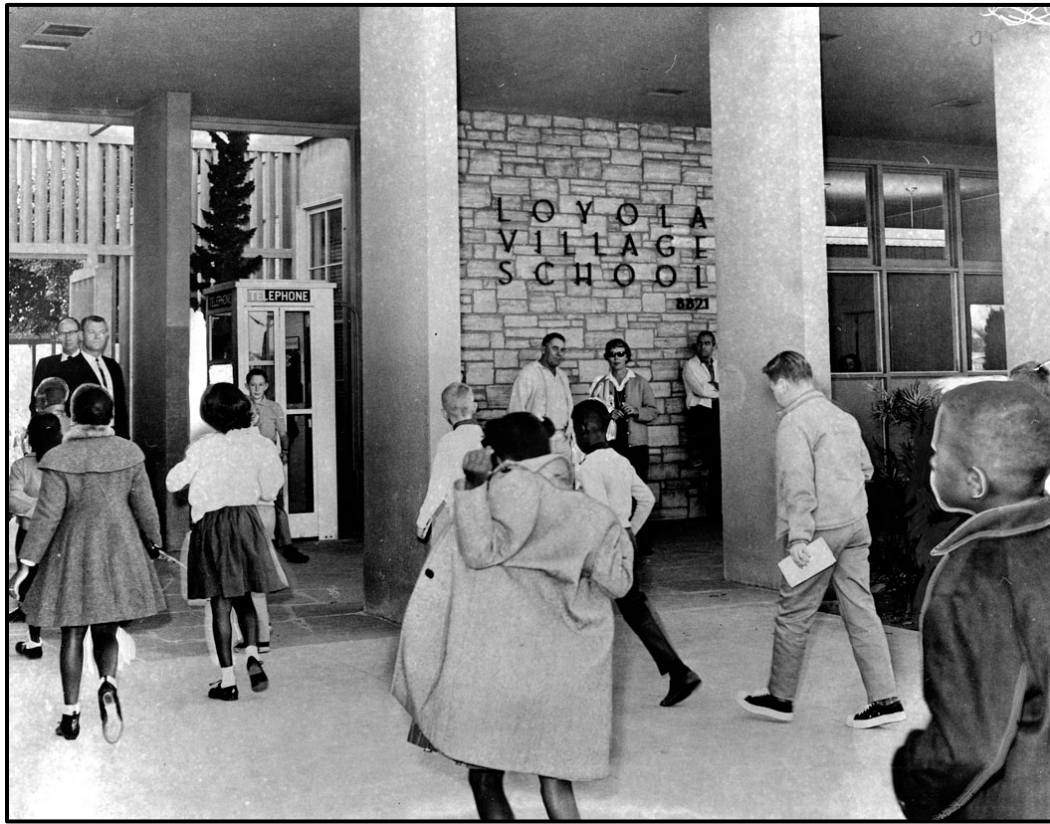


Figure 167. Voluntary busing as a solution to racial imbalance and overcrowding: This February 1964 photo shows children from Manchester Avenue School entering Loyola Village School. The caption read, "The transfer program is designed to cut half-day sessions at schools which are overcrowded by transporting pupils to schools with undersized classes." Source: LAPL, Herald-Examiner Collection, #LAPL00041639.

As mentioned, the most controversial solution involved busing students to correct racial imbalance as well as overcrowding. As early as the 1950s, and increasing in the 1960s, many communities and schools within LAUSD began exploring busing programs. In 1964, much attention was paid to a busing exchange program between relatively new schools in western Los Angeles (Loyola Village Elementary School and Osage Avenue School) and schools in older, more urbanized sections of Los Angeles (Manchester Avenue Elementary School and 66th Street School). In September 1967, a parents' group in Pacoima, in the San Fernando Valley, succeeded in establishing a busing program for 60 Pacoima students; the students would be taken by bus to the predominantly Anglo-American Encino Elementary School.<sup>171</sup>

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During this period, in the late 1970s, two schools launched a voluntary, experimental program. Hobart Boulevard Elementary School, a multiracial school within the City of Los Angeles, partnered with Dixie Canyon Elementary School in the San Fernando Valley. In a program funded for a limited time by the Los Angeles School Board, approximately 70 second- and third-grade students from each school made the half-hour trip by bus to attend their partner school for a semester. The next semester, a new group of children would participate in the program. When the program was approved, the *Los Angeles Times* described it as “two schools, and one big step to integration”: “The Anglo parents sat for more than two hours making a decision. Carefully, thoughtfully, they weighed the arguments. ... But when the meeting was over, more than 100 parents of children in Dixie Canyon Elementary School in the San Fernando Valley agreed to participate in a voluntary two-way integration plan with Hobart Boulevard Elementary School, a multiracial inner-city school.”<sup>172</sup> Writing in support of the program in the *Los Angeles Times*, Judith R. Birnberg, a Dixie Canyon Elementary School parent, stated that

Socially, Hobart couldn't be more ideal: children attending the school have come from 42 different countries, and such a mix is already affecting my son. ... Too many parents base their resistance to integration on the unknown. They assume minority schools are inferior, they assume the time traveling by bus will be a burden to their children; they assume children are haunted by the same fears clouding their own lives. But the time has come for parents to learn from their children.<sup>173</sup>

In 1977, in response to a California Supreme Court ruling calling for a “reasonable and feasible” integration plan, the Los Angeles Board of Education designed a program for mandatory busing. Under the plan, approximately 55,000 fourth- through eighth-grade students would be bused to school in 1978, with an estimated 112,000 students to follow in 1979.<sup>174</sup> The program was controversial and contested on a number of fronts. Just two years after the Los Angeles Board of Education proposed its plan, California’s Proposition 1 sought to reverse it through a constitutional ban on mandatory busing. On the ballot in November 1979, Proposition 1 passed handily, with 70 percent of voters supporting the end of the practice.<sup>175</sup> On appeal in 1982, the US Supreme Court found Proposition 1 constitutional and upheld the ban on mandatory busing.

While this ruling solved one question, the issue of racial imbalance, cultural sensitivity in hiring practices and curricula, and encouraging diversity continued to shape the local- and state-level conversations about public schools through the 1960s, into the 1980s, and beyond. This issue continued to unfold in the courts on many fronts, as well as local and state governmental offices, school boards and classrooms, communities and families throughout Southern California. In this way, civil rights, ethnic identity, culture, and equal access shaped the sociopolitical context for school districts such as LAUSD in this period.



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## Summary: The Postwar Modern, Functional School Plant

In the postwar period, the functional modern school plant quickly became the norm throughout the United States and in Los Angeles. As school districts struggled to keep up with demand, architects had ample opportunities to test new ideas. The emphasis on the child-friendly school meant a continuing focus on improving and standardizing environmental controls, such as lighting, ventilation, heating and cooling systems, and interior design. While three main plan types emerged during this era—the finger-plan, cluster-plan, and open-plan school—there were many combinations and variations on the basic themes. Stylistically, as well, postwar schools might exhibit textbook features of the International Style, more regionally inflected modernism, or variations on the styles popular in the postwar period.

First and foremost, the postwar school was designed to be more informal, accessible, and child-friendly. A more accessible school generally signaled lower massing, though junior and high schools might still climb two or three stories, especially given the pressing need for more schools. In general, the preferred, more domestic scale was reflected in one-story massing and low ceilings, which made classrooms more intimate. Generous panels of glazing provided light and outdoor access, with larger windows on north elevations and



Figure 168. Palos Verdes High School, Richard Neutra and Robert Alexander (1961). Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Julius Shulman Archives.

often clerestory windows on southern sides, to balance cross-lighting. With the advent of air-conditioning, schools in the early 1960s tended to diminish generous expanses of glazing. The need for economical construction and finely tuned environmental features and controls accompanied a continued national call for standardization of school design.

Campus planning and site-specific design also became increasingly important, as new residential areas emerged from former agricultural lands, and school builders and planners had the acreage to plan an entire campus created for new residential communities. In this era, ideas about planning at the scale of the neighborhood included the generous use of outdoor spaces and landscaping and a zoned design that turned the campus inward and separated pedestrians and automobile traffic, for safety and accessibility. Although many variations were proposed, the modern campus plan called for “small separate units connected by arcades or passageways and attractively grouped. This type of arrangement is quite flexible and eliminates much of the institutional atmosphere of the large compact structures.”<sup>176</sup>

## SECTION IV ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

As described in Section III, early-twentieth-century reform brought a more functional approach to school design throughout the United States. Priorities shifted, and designing according to function rather than style became the starting point for architects and builders. In this way, Los Angeles's public schools generally display a scale and function that are unique to their purpose as educational facilities. Even so, as the focal point for the community's identity and commitment to education, public schools also showcased outstanding architectural design by the region's leading practitioners. Throughout the twentieth century, the public schools of Los Angeles have reflected both the increased emphasis on functionality as well as the significant stylistic trends of the day.

The following summary of the typical architectural styles reflected in LAUSD schools serves to introduce the topic and sketch the main character-defining features and eras for each style. This section draws upon and expands the architectural character section of the 2002 LAUSD Historic Context Statement and presentation prepared by Leslie Heumann & Associates and Science Applications International Corporation of Pasadena, California.<sup>177</sup> This updated version draws upon additional field observations, as well as recognized guides and studies.<sup>178</sup>

In order to ensure cross-agency compatibility, the authors of this section also considered and adapted, where appropriate, the standards used by the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources and Department of Planning for historic resource surveys.

This section is not intended to be an exhaustive list of styles but rather an introduction and general framework for understanding the principal styles, as well as stylistic evolution, of LAUSD school plants. Descriptions of each style include the general period during which the style was used and its typical character-defining features.

The broad stylistic categories presented here were compiled with an understanding that architectural design is more dynamic than a fixed label might suggest. Styles and trends come together through a combination of architectural precedent, historical interpretation, creative license of designers, and the agency of clients. Therefore, architectural styles are best understood as cultural hybrids incorporating elements from a variety of sources. In this way, these descriptions offer a broad palette for identify stylistic influences and character.

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Figure 169. Old Vernon Avenue School (1876).  
Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 170. Old Canyon School (1894).  
Source: Heumann & Associates/SAIC for LAUSD.

## LATE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY STYLES

Some of the earliest schoolhouses built in Los Angeles were one- and two-story, vernacular-type wood buildings, generally modeled at the scale of domestic and small civic buildings and easily enlarged or modified to accommodate growth or multiple uses. During this era of school construction, the bell tower, echoing church design, was introduced as a signature element. Three known examples of Los Angeles's early wood-framed schoolhouses have survived; in Los Angeles, this construction type was in use from the earliest years of the district through approximately 1910. The library building at Canyon Elementary School, for example, was built in 1894.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- One- to two-story massing
- Wood-framed construction
- Horizontal wood or wood shingle siding
- Open cupola or bell tower
- Simple vernacular exteriors, or Queen Anne or Colonial Revival detailing
- Wood-framed, double-hung sash windows, often in groupings



Figure 171. Farmdale School, El Sereno (1892).  
Source: LAPL Photo Archive.

## EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: BEAUX-ARTS CLASSICISM & NEO-CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Early twentieth-century buildings brought a new architectural vocabulary to LAUSD school design. The monumental classical motifs of Beaux Arts Classicism, evident in courthouses and city halls accommodated a new scale of two and three stories. This scale was demanded by expanding enrollment and a need for increased capacity and rooms differentiated by grade level and curriculum.

Beaux Arts Classicism and Neo-Classical Revival styles were especially favored by designers following the lead of McKim, Mead and White and other prominent national firms. The impressive porticos, with classical orders and colossal columns, advertised the importance placed on public education. Primarily of masonry construction, most of these schools fell victim to the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. The San Fernando Middle School Auditorium, constructed as part of a 6-year high school in 1916, is one of the few remaining examples of this era.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Monumental scale
- Formal, symmetrical design composition
- Smooth stone, masonry, or concrete exteriors (often scored to resemble masonry)
- Elaborated entrance, often featuring portico with columns
- Classical detailing, such as use of gables and entablature, columns, and pilasters
- Multilight grouped windows with wood surrounds



Figure 172. A rare remnant of the Neo-Classical era in school design: San Fernando Middle School, Auditorium, John C. Austin, architect (1916). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 173. Detail, San Fernando Middle School (1916). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: INDIGENOUS REVIVAL STYLES AND THE ERA OF HISTORIC ECLECTICISM

As of 2013, a substantial number of LAUSD’s remaining school buildings were constructed between the early 1920s and World War II. These schools reflect the eclectic menu of revival styles popular at the time for a range of building types. Period-revival styles seen in LAUSD schools include Italian Renaissance Revival, Collegiate Gothic Revival, and Tudor Revival. In addition, for Southern California’s emerging architectural profession and academy, this era brought a new emphasis on the region’s indigenous architectural traditions and a desire to infuse design with local character. Indigenous revival styles that rose in popularity during this period included, most notably for LAUSD public schools, the Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival. Designers expressed regional character and flavor by relating buildings to the outdoors, with one-story schools easily opened to exterior spaces, and by providing open loggias and arcades for circulation.

Where design was a priority, the stylistic program of the school is generally most clearly expressed in the campus’s public buildings, such as the auditorium or administration building, and at primary entrances to buildings or classroom wings.



Figures 174 and 175. Renaissance Revival Style: Joseph Le Conte Middle School, Edgar Cline (1922). Source: LAUSD Le Conte Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2012 (left) Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD (right).



Figures 176 and 177. Northern Italian Renaissance: Hamilton Senior High School Administration Building, John C. Austin & Frederick C. Ashley, (1931). Source: LAUSD Hamilton Senior High School Pre-Planning Survey, 2010 (left) Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD (right).

## MISSION REVIVAL AND SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL

Beginning with efforts to restore California’s missions in the late nineteenth century, Southern Californian architects began looking toward regional history for stylistic cues. The region’s climate and Hispanic heritage figured prominently in these new directions. The Mission Revival vocabulary, most popular between 1890 and 1920, drew inspiration from Southwestern missions. Identifying features include curved parapets and red tiled, low-pitched roofs. Arches were used liberally, and wall surfaces commonly displayed smooth stucco. The Spanish Colonial Revival flourished between 1915 and 1940, reaching its apex during the 1920s and 1930s. This movement was catalyzed by architect Bertram Goodhue’s 1915 designs for Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The Spanish Colonial Revival style became one of the most popular idioms for a range of building types. Architects and builders embraced the style, which was employed for many LAUSD schools. The rise in popularity of the Spanish Colonial Revival style also coincided with the move toward more child-scaled schools, with lower massing and open, expansive campuses. With its emphasis on arcaded corridors and patios, the style fit this movement particularly well.

Spanish Colonial Revival buildings tend to be asymmetrical and sheathed with smooth stucco. Roofs generally consist of gabled, gabled and flat, and (less commonly) hipped roofs, clad in red clay tiles. Arched openings, whether for windows, doors, or gates, are a textbook feature. Secondary materials—including wood, wrought iron, and polychromatic tile—provide decorative accents. Windows are generally wood framed or metal, with molded wood surrounds or lintels.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Stucco-clad walls (usually smooth finish); occasionally might have brick or cast stone
- Asymmetrical design
- Use of towers, turrets, or cupolas
- Low-pitched gabled or hipped roof covered in red clay tiles or flat roof with parapet wall
- Shallow eaves or deeper eaves, lined with exposed carved wood brackets
- Arched openings for windows, doors, and use of arcades
- Secondary materials can include wrought iron, polychromatic tile, and cast stone
- Exterior patios and courtyards



Figure 178. Post-earthquake Mission Revival Style: Reseda Elementary School (1936). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 179. Late example of Spanish Colonial Revival: Verdugo Hills High School (1948). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

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## RENAISSANCE REVIVAL STYLE

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Renaissance Revival style began as a fairly literal translation of sixteenth-century Italian *palazzi* into two- and three-story buildings. The style evolved into one of the most popular of the 1920s, in particular for midrise office buildings. McKim, Mead, and White designed some of the United States' most elegant expressions of the revival during its earlier years. During the 1920s, local architects such as Walker and Eisen and John and Donald Parkinson designed many of Los Angeles's best examples.

Renaissance Revival buildings in Southern California are generally sheathed in brick or stucco. Facades are symmetrical or highly regular and divided into bays by the fenestration pattern or by piers, which are often treated as columns with bases and capitals. Variations in surface finishes, fenestration, and level of detail visually distinguish each section, creating a horizontal emphasis that is reinforced by prominent belt courses. A cornice, set above a frieze and/or architrave, traditionally tops a Renaissance Revival building. Windows on top stories are often distinguished from lower stories by different surrounds and configuration.



Figure 180. El Sereno Middle School, originally Woodrow Wilson High School (1937). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Rectangular massing
- Brick, stucco, and concrete, with trim of terra cotta or cast stone and bases of granite or masonry
- Horizontal emphasis; differentiated treatment of stories
- Symmetry and regularity
- Brick, stucco, or concrete exterior, often scored to resemble masonry
- Gabled and/or hipped roof, often sheathed in clay tiles
- Linear fenestration pattern
- Belt courses and cornices
- Classical detailing
- Cast stone or terra cotta architectural ornament



Figure 181. University High School (1924). A spring located on the school campus is registered as California Historical Landmark No. 522; the spring marks the location of three significant events: where the Portola Expedition camped in 1769, Father Junipero Serra gave Mass in 1770, and where the City of Santa Monica once obtained its water supply. Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



## GOTHIC REVIVAL / COLLEGIATE GOTHIC

Popularized by writers and art critics such as John Ruskin (1819–1900), the English Gothic Revival movement looked back to and idealized the preindustrial Medieval era as a more pure and moral golden age, for society as well as for architecture. First popularized for religious buildings and for school buildings—the “Collegiate Gothic”—the style began appearing in the Los Angeles area in the late 1800s. Few buildings were constructed locally in this style, and even fewer remain.

Most extant Collegiate Gothic schools in Los Angeles were constructed during the height of the period-revival era. In the 1930s, in school design, the style fell out of favor as more up-to-date architectural idioms began emerging. The 1933 Long Beach earthquake, and then the 1934 Field Act, hastened the need for widespread school repairs and new construction, which accelerated the stylistic shift during this period.

Gothic Revival schools share the same emphasis on verticality that characterizes other applications of the style. The emphasis on the vertical is often expressed through the use of uninterrupted piers or attached ornament, which extend from the ground to the roof. The style also makes liberal use of mullions, towers, spires, and pinnacles. Windows are arranged in vertical channels of glass, sometimes topped with pointed arches. Brick and concrete were the materials of choice, often accented by cast stone.

### ***Typical Character-Defining Features:***

- Concrete or brick exterior
- Emphasis on the vertical axis
- Attenuated windows and openings
- Use of full-length columns or pilasters
- Steeply gabled roof
- Liberal use of cast stone or terra cotta ornament and sculptural detailing
- Stylized openings, with Tudor, pointed, or round arches
- Windows and doorways outlined with archivolts and topped with decorative crowns
- Windows with mullions

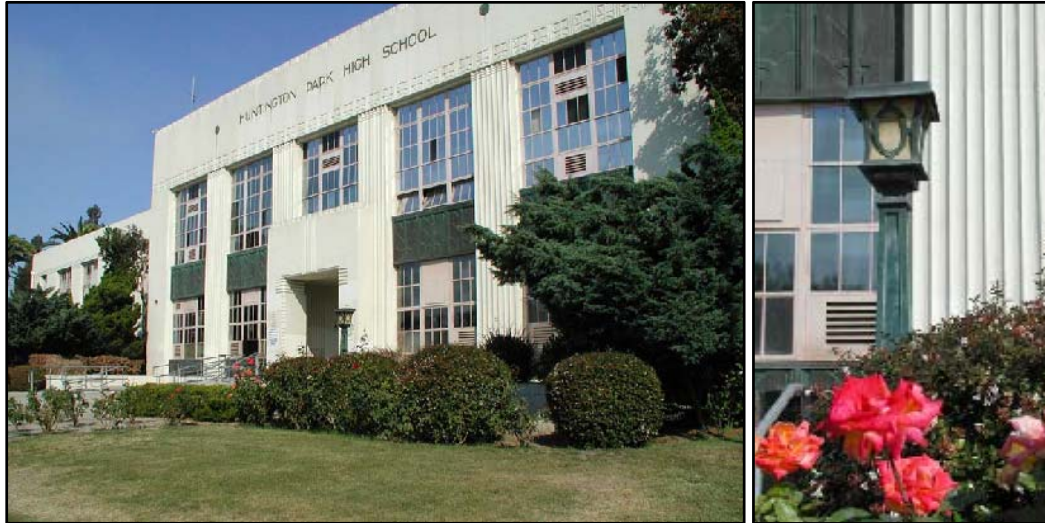


*Figure 182. John Marshall High School, George Lindsey, architect (1931). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.*



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figures 183 and 184. Huntington Park High School, Administration Building (1936). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

## ART DECO

As architects and designers began exploring alternatives to historic revival styles, one of the earliest modern alternatives was Art Deco. The term grew out of the 1925 exposition in Paris showcasing the “nouveau,” or new directions in design and decorative arts, at the *Le Musee des Arts Decoratifs*.

The idiom is highly decorative but rejects copying or adapting historical revival styles. Instead, ornamentation draws on geometric and foliate patterns and motifs, such as zigzags and chevrons, light, and color. Primarily in use between the 1920s and 1930s, the style was used most often in commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Emphasis on verticality through building massing, applied exterior features, and ornament
- Use of stylized, geometric motifs and decorative features, such as zigzags and chevrons
- Generally features smooth stucco- or concrete-clad wall surfaces
- Often features towers or other elements projecting beyond the roofline
- Often features steel-frame casement and fixed windows



Figure 185. PWA Moderne with Art Deco influence: Florence Nightingale Middle School, John C. Austin & Frederick M. Ashley, architects (1937-1939). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 186. Streamline Moderne: Thomas Jefferson High School, Stiles O. Clements (1933). Source: LAUSD.

### STREAMLINE MODERNE | MODERNE

The Streamline Moderne became a popular style during the Great Depression and World War II period. Its clean lines and minimalist ornament both celebrated the modern machine-age and signaled the period of austerity triggered by the Great Depression. Compared with its more ornamental predecessor, the Art Deco style, Streamline Moderne is more restrained in its ornamental program and emphasizes the horizontal rather than the vertical. This is achieved through incorporating bands of windows, decorative raised or grooved horizontal lines, flat canopies with banded fascia, and narrow coping at the roofline. Other characteristics include smooth wall surfaces, usually clad in stucco, glass block or porthole windows, and rounded corners. Reference to aerodynamic design is a signature of the style.

Compared with the Streamline Moderne, Moderne buildings also tend to be horizontal in emphasis but more clean-lined and rectilinear in their massing and detailing. Moderne designs are generally characterized by flat roofs, smooth stucco exteriors, and use of metal casement windows that often meet at the corners of the building.

#### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Horizontal emphasis, massing, and accents, such as moldings and continuous sill courses
- Smooth stucco or concrete exterior finish
- Curvilinear/rounded wall surfaces, corners, and features
- Recessed windows with no surrounds
- Flat or nearly flat roof



Figure 187. Moderne: Venice High School, Austin & Ashley, architects (1935-1937). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 188. Hollenbeck Middle School, Alfred P. Rosenheim, architect (1936). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 189. Hollywood Union High School, Marsh, Smith & Powell (1934-1935). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

## PWA MODERNE

Created by the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was founded within a few months of the March 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. Following widespread damage to Los Angeles public schools in the wake of the earthquake, much school reconstruction work was funded by the PWA. Consequently, a substantial number of Los Angeles public schools either built or remodeled during this time exhibit some degree of PWA Moderne styling. Also referred to as “Stripped Classicism,” the PWA Moderne often incorporates elements of a number of styles, including Classical Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and Streamline Moderne.

Compared with the Streamline Moderne, the PWA Moderne was more formal and symmetrical in its overall design, with less emphasis on curvilinear shapes and horizontality. This style is found throughout the United States, particularly for institutional buildings funded through the PWA. Although the PWA program was terminated in 1943, buildings continued to display these stylistic features.

### **Typical Character-Defining Features:**

- Emphasis on the vertical axis
- Symmetrical, formal design composition and massing
- Smooth wall surfaces, generally exhibiting stucco, concrete, and/or polished stone (rarely includes brick exterior elements)
- Usually displays a flat roof
- Piers, often fluted or reeded, separating recessed window channels
- Incorporation of shallow relief panels and interior murals



Figure 190. PWA Moderne meets Spanish Colonial Revival style: Canoga Park High School Auditorium (1939). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.





Figures 191 and 192. Emerson Middle School, Richard Neutra, architect (1937-1940). Source: LAUSD Emerson Middle School Pre-Planning Survey.

## EARLY MODERNISM | INTERNATIONAL STYLE (PRE-1945)

This style coincides with the emergence of modern architectural design and culture in Los Angeles, at a time when modernism was still in an experimental stage and carried out by a relatively small group of architects and designers. Although many of these same ideas informed postwar modern styles, this era was unique and experimental. The City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources describes this stylistic theme as follows:

With precedents in Europe dating to the first decades of the twentieth century, Los Angeles was one of the first American centers of the International Style due in large part to the import of ideas by Viennese expatriates Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra. Although never catching on as a widely-accepted style for domestic architecture, the International Style was embraced and regionalized by a number of Los Angeles architects and designers who established a formidable local Modernist tradition.

Rudolph Schindler came to Los Angeles from Austria in 1920 to oversee construction on the Barnsdall House (Hollyhock House) for the office of Frank Lloyd Wright. Fellow Austrian Richard Neutra came to Los Angeles at Schindler's urging in 1925. Schindler, Lloyd Wright and Neutra and the architects of the so-called "Second Generation" architects continued to design buildings in Los Angeles in the postwar years; however, by this time the work of these architects and their protégés took on an expression of a more regional modernism (see Mid-Century Modernism).<sup>179</sup>

### ***Typical Character-Defining Features:***

- Horizontal emphasis
- Use of simple, geometric volumes
- Smooth, unadorned wall surfaces, often sheathed in stucco or concrete
- Flat or nearly flat roof, often with cantilevered eaves
- Use of corner and casement windows, often with steel frames
- Windows generally set flush with the wall plane, with minimal trim or surrounds
- Continuous bands of windows emphasize the horizontal axis



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figures 193 and 194. On left, Fernangeles Elementary School (1954), Sun Valley. On right, Parmlee Avenue Elementary School (1962), southeastern Los Angeles. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2014.

## MID-CENTURY MODERNISM / REGIONAL MODERNISM (POST-1945)

Mid-Century Modernism, or Regional Modernism, represents a middle ground between the formal, machine-age aesthetic of the International Style and a regional idiom reflecting local precedent and identity. In the postwar period through the 1960s, as practiced in Southern California, Mid-Century Modernism took its cues from the region's first-generation modernist architects such as Richard Neutra, Rudolph Schindler, Gregory Ain, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Harwell Hamilton Harris. In the postwar period, second-generation practitioners such as Raphael Soriano, Whitney Smith, and A. Quincy Jones, among many others, established Los Angeles as a center for innovative architectural design and culture.

Mid-Century Modernism is characterized by an honest expression of structure and function, with little applied ornament. Aesthetic effect is achieved through an asymmetrical but balanced, rhythmic design composition, often expressed in modular post-and-beam construction. Whether wood or steel, post-and-beam construction allowed for open floor plans, ease of expansion, and generous expanses of glazing to heighten indoor-outdoor integration. Infill panels of wood or glass are common, with glazing often extending to the gable. Buildings are generally one to two-stories, with an emphasis on simple, geometric forms. Capped with low-pitched gabled or flat roofs, a Mid-Century Modern building often displays wide eaves and cantilevered canopies, supported on spider-leg or post supports. Sheathing materials vary, with wood, stucco, brick and stone, or steel-framing and glass. Windows are generally flush-mounted, with metal frames.



Figure 195. Pacoima Middle School, Administrative Building (1955), Wilmington. Source: LAUSD Pacoima Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2010.



Figures 196 and 197. Grover Cleveland High School, Administrative Building (left) and typical classroom wing (right), Matcham & Granger and Associates (1959), Reseda. Source: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2013.

This style was seen in postwar institutional and commercial buildings, as well as residences, from 1945 until circa 1975, when Title 24 restrictions on the use of glass curtailed the expansive glazing that characterizes the style.

***Typical Character-Defining Features:***

- Horizontal design composition and massing; generally one to two stories
- Simple, geometric volumes
- Flat or shed roof, often with wide, cantilevered overhangs
- Exterior materials include stucco, brick, or concrete
- Modular design and planning
- Aesthetic qualities derive from use of simply treated materials and excellent craftsmanship
- Direct expression of structural systems, often in wood or steel post-and-beam
- Lack of historicizing ornament
- Generous expanses of fenestration, including bands of grouped multi-light windows
- Extensive use of sheltered exterior corridors, with flat or slightly sloped roofs supported by posts, piers, or pipe columns

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969



Figure 198. Orville Wright Middle School, Cafeteria, Spaulding & Rex (1951). Source: LAUSD Wright Middle School Pre-Planning Survey, 2012.



Figure 199. Palisades Charter High School, Wilson & Associates (1961). Source: LAUSD Palisades Charter High School Pre-Planning Survey, 2012.

## **Mid-Century Modernism | Expressionistic/Organic Subtype:**

- Combines sculptural forms with basic geometric volumes
- Curved, sweeping wall surfaces
- Expressionistic roof forms, including butterfly, folded plate or barrel vault roof forms



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF LAUSD ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

### COLLEGIATE GOTHIC



Figures 200 and 201. John Marshall High School, George Lindsey (1931). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

### TUDOR REVIVAL



Figure 202. Gulf Avenue Elementary School, Henry Harwood Hewitt & Norman Miller (1926). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 203. John Muir Middle School, John C. Austin (1922). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

### MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL



Figures 204 and 205. Mediterranean Revival: Hamasaki Elementary School, originally Riggan School (1927). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## RENAISSANCE REVIVAL STYLE



Figure 206. Ritter Elementary School (1932). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 207. University High School (circa 1922). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC, LAUSD.



Figure 208. Italian Renaissance Revival: South Gate High School, George Lindsey & Erwood Elden (1930). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 209. Renaissance-inspired Walter Reed Middle School, originally North Hollywood Junior High School, John Austin (1939). Source: Heumann & Assoc. and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figures 210 and 211. John Burroughs Middle School (1922). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL



Figure 212. Eagle Rock Elementary School (circa 1919). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 213. North Hollywood High School, Hunt & Chambers (1926). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 214. Aldama Elementary School, Charles Plummer (1924). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 215. Pacific Palisades Elementary School, Albert Nibecker (1930). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

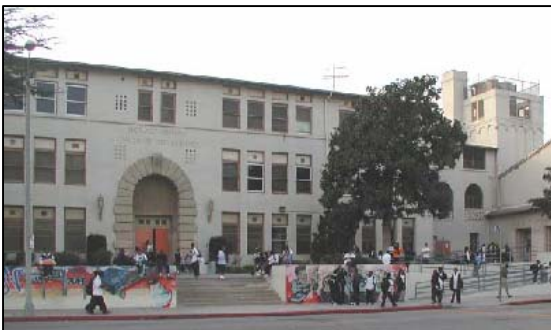


Figure 216. Spanish Eclectic: Horace Mann Middle School (1926). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.



Figure 217. Canoga Park Elementary School, Sumner Spaulding (1935). Source: Heumann & Associates and SAIC for LAUSD.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## ARCHITECTS

Since the early years of the district, the school buildings and campuses of LAUSD have been designed by some of the region's most prominent master architects region as well as the district's own architectural department. The following architects and firms were responsible for numerous designs of extant buildings throughout the district, since the early twentieth century:

- Thornton Abell
- Ain, Johnson & Day (Gregory Ain, Joseph Johnson, and Alfred Day)
- Robert Evans Alexander
- Allison & Allison (David Clark Allison and James Edward Allison)
- John C. Austin
- Austin and Ashley (John C. Austin and Frederic Ashley)
- Austin, Field & Fry (John C. Austin, Robert Field, Jr., Charles Eugene Fry)
- Edwin Bergstrom
- Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall, DMJM (Phillip Daniel, Arthur Mann, Kenneth Johnson, Irvan Mendenhall)
- Stiles O. Clements
- Roland Coate
- Edelman and Zimmerman
- Sidney Eisenshtat
- Henry L. Gogerty
- Heitschmidt & Thompson (Earl Heitschmidt and Whiting Thompson)
- Frank Hudson
- Hudson & Munsell
- Stewart S. Granger
- Myron Hunt
- Hunt & Chambers
- Hunt & Burns
- Gordon B. Kaufmann
- George Lindsey
- Marsh, Smith, & Powell (Norman Marsh, David Smith, and Herbert James Powell)
- A. C. Martin
- Matcham & Granger (Charles O. Matcham Sr. and Stewart S. Granger)
- Alfred S. Nibecker
- Richard Neutra
- C.E. Noerenberg and Johnson
- Parkinson and Parkinson
- Charles Plummer
- Alfred Rosenheim
- Sumner Spaulding
- Spaulding & Rex (Sumner Spaulding and John Rex)
- William Stockwell
- Whiting Thompson
- Walker and Eisen
- Adrian Wilson & Associates



**SECTION V THEMES OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

**THEME: LAUSD | FOUNDING YEARS**

Property Type: Institutional/Educational  
Property Subtypes: Wood-Framed School House  
Period of Significance: 1872 to 1894  
Area of Significance: Education  
Geographic Location: Citywide (rare)  
Area of Significance: A/1

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Is a rare example of an educational facility from the founding years of the Los Angeles City School District

**Character-Defining Features:**

- Retains most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- Wood siding
- Bell tower; some Victorian-era ornamental detailing
- One-story massing
- Wood-framed, double-hung windows

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Some materials may have been removed or altered
- Modern lighting and fencing of site acceptable alterations



Figure 218. Old Vernon Avenue School, built in 1876. Source: LAUSD.



Figure 219. Old Canyon School, built in 1894. Source: LAUSD.

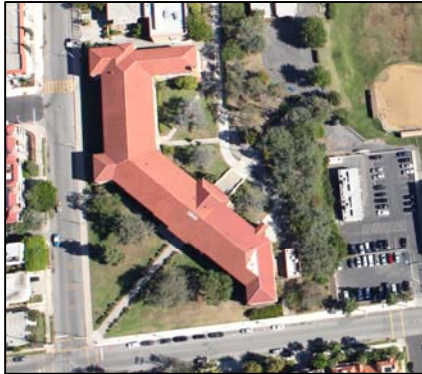


# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## THEME: LAUSD | PRE-1933 LONG BEACH EARTHQUAKE SCHOOL PLANTS, 1920-1933

### Pictorial Overview



Figures 220 and 221. The expansive plan and Renaissance Revival-style of University High School (1924). Designed open spaces have been retained for nearly a century. Source: LAUSD University High School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.



Figures 222 and 223. Vernon City Elementary School (1929), with courtyards and Spanish Colonial Revival arcades placing school corridors outside. Source: LAUSD Vernon City Elementary School Pre-Planning Survey, 2011.



Figure 224. One-story scale and E-shaped plan of Fishburn Avenue Elementary School (1926), in 1927 aerial photo. Source: LAPL Photo Collection.

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

**THEME: LAUSD | PRE-1933 LONG BEACH EARTHQUAKE SCHOOL PLANTS, 1910-1933**

Property Type:	Institutional/Educational
Property Subtypes:	Elementary, Junior High, and High School Buildings and Campuses
Period of Significance:	1910 to 1933
Area of Significance:	Education
Geographic Location:	Citywide
Area of Significance:	A/1

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Embodies LAUSD school planning and design ideals and principles of the era
- One of few remaining schools from the pre-1933 Long Beach earthquake era that was not substantially altered or remodeled
- Retains most of the associative and character-defining features from the period of significance

**Character-Defining Features | Buildings/Structures:**

- Articulated buildings plans, facilitating the creation of outdoor spaces (often T-shaped, E-shaped, U-shaped, and H-shaped plans)
- Generally low massing, usually one to two stories (with two to three stories more common for middle and senior high schools)
- Includes designed outdoor spaces, such as courtyards and patios, adjacent to classroom wings
- Exteriors usually lined with rows of grouped windows, including wood-framed multilight windows; expanses of windows often mark the location of classrooms
- Designed in popular period-revival styles of the era (including Spanish Colonial Revival, Renaissance Revival, Mediterranean Revival, and Collegiate Gothic)
- Often designed by prominent architects of the era

**Character-Defining Features | Campus/District:**

- Emphasis on a more spread-out site plan, with designed outdoor spaces
- More varied collection of buildings, differentiated by function and use (rather than a single building with all functions inside)
- Might include an elaborate administration building, usually the focal point of the campus, as well as classroom wings, auditoriums, gymnasiums, and outdoor recreation areas
- Middle or senior high schools might include a gymnasium designed in the style of the campus overall

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## Integrity Considerations:

- Most pre-1933 schools were substantially remodeled following the Long Beach earthquake
- Designed outdoor spaces, such as courtyards and patios, should be intact in use, if not with landscape design and hardscaping; development pressures over the years often resulted in these open spaces being in-filled with new construction; overall sense of relationship of building to designed outdoor spaces should be intact
- Should retain integrity of Materials, Design, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association from its period of significance
- Intact campus groupings from a single period of time are not common
- Some materials and features may have been removed or altered
- Modern lighting and fencing of site acceptable

## Comments:

Schools from this period generally include additional buildings and structures added after the period of significance (in particular after World War II), which may be non-contributing.

Eligible properties under this theme may be a single building (generally the Administration Building, in combination with a classroom wings) or a grouping (campus) of buildings constructed during the period of significance.

Buildings and campuses exhibiting distinctive design features might also qualify under Criteria C/3, as the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, an excellent example of the work of a master architect, or for high artistic values.



Figure 225. Marshall Senior High School (1931). The school has expanded over the years but also retains many of its designed open spaces and courtyards. Source: LAUSD Marshall Senior High School Pre-Planning Survey, 2010.

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

**THEME: LAUSD | POST–1933 LONG BEACH EARTHQUAKE SCHOOL PLANTS,  
1933–1945**

Property Type:	Institutional/Educational
Property Subtypes:	Elementary, Junior High, and High School Buildings and Campuses
Period of Significance:	1933 to 1945
Area of Significance:	Education
Geographic Location:	Citywide
Area of Significance:	A/1

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Exemplifies post–Long Beach earthquake school planning and design concepts of the period, including requirements under the 1934 Field Act
- One-story massing for elementary schools; up to two-stories for junior/high schools
- Retains most of the associative and character-defining features from the period of significance

**Character-Defining Features | Buildings/Structures:**

- One-story massing for elementary schools; up to two stories for middle and senior high schools
- Reinforced concrete, steel- or wood-frame construction
- Classroom wings designed for easy access and views to outdoors—with variations including L-, H-, T-shaped building plans
- Generous expanses of windows, including steel- and wood-framed multilight windows, awning and hopper casements, clerestories, and large-pane fixed windows; window groupings often mark the location of classrooms
- Stylistically more streamlined and less ornamental than 1920s period-revival styles
- Emphasis on “traditional Southern Californian” styles, such as Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival
- Styles can also include PWA Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, Late Moderne, and proto-modern styles
- May have been partially or fully funded through Works Progress Administration (WPA), 1935 to 1943
- WPA projects may include significant interior artwork such as murals, paintings and sculpture
- May have been designed by a prominent architect of the period



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## Character-Defining Features | Campus/District:

- Unified site plan consisting of buildings and structures designed and sited according to their use
- Use of designed outdoor and landscaped spaces, for outdoor study, recreation and dining
- Often displays connecting sheltered corridors throughout campus
- Emphasis on a more expansive site plan
- Varied collection of buildings, differentiated by function and use (rather than a single building with all functions inside)
- Might include an elaborate administration building, located near the campus entrance; administration buildings usually serve as the focal point of the campus
- Campus often composed of groupings of classroom wings, auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and outdoor recreation and dining areas
- Middle or senior high schools might include a gymnasium designed in the style of the campus overall

## Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- Some materials may have been removed or altered
- Modern lighting and fencing of site acceptable
- Schools from this period generally include buildings constructed after the period of significance, in particular post-World War II buildings, which may be non-contributing
- Eligible properties under this theme may be a single building, if it exemplifies the design ideals of the era, or a grouping (campus) of buildings constructed during the period of significance
- Intact campus groupings from the pre-1945 era are not common
- Many pre-1933 schools were substantially remodeled following the Long Beach earthquake—may retain a 1920s plan but with 1930s stylistic detailing.
- Pre-1933 schools rehabilitated post-1933 might exhibit added seismic supports of steel columns, beams, or diagonal bracing; original masonry might be covered by concrete/stucco sheathing
- Should retain integrity of Materials, Design, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association from its period of significance

**Comments:** Buildings exhibiting distinctive design features might also qualify under Criteria C/3, as the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type/period or method of construction, as an example of the work of a master architect, or for high artistic values.

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

**THEME: LAUSD | EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN THE MODERN, FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL PLANT, 1933–1945**

Property Type:	Institutional/Educational
Property Subtypes:	Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and High Schools
Period of Significance:	1933 to 1945
Area of Significance:	Education
Geographic Location:	Citywide; rare
Area of Significance:	A/1

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Clearly expresses the experimental ideas emerging during this period for the modern, functionalist school plant
- One-story massing for elementary schools; up to two-stories for junior/high schools
- Classrooms, in detailing and plans, clearly express their function, with axial, finger-like wings, plentiful fenestration, and connections to the outdoors
- Retains most of the associative and character-defining features from the period of significance

**Character-Defining Features | Buildings/Structures:**

- One-story massing for elementary schools; up to two stories for middle and senior high schools
- Usually reinforced concrete, steel- or wood-frame construction, clad in cement/stucco
- Classrooms are often single- or double-loaded finger-like wings, arranged along a central axis or semicircle
- Classrooms open directly onto patios/play areas through glass doors or movable walls
- Varying elevations might display differentiated window sizes and configurations, in order to tailor interior light to sun patterns and create cross-lit classrooms
- Windows are plentiful and include steel- and wood-framed multilight windows, in double-hung sashes, awning and hopper casements, clerestories, and fixed panes
- Displays an informal, nonmonumental scale and spare ornamental program
- Stylistically modern; might display influence of Late Moderne or PWA Streamline Moderne
- May have been partially or fully funded through WPA, 1935 to 1943; WPA projects may include significant interior artwork such as murals, paintings and sculpture
- May have been designed by a prominent architect of the period

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## Character-Defining Features | Campus/District:

- A unified, nonmonumental, nonhierarchical site plan
- Displays inventive site plan incorporating buildings, landscaped courtyards, and circulation corridors into a unified campus design
- Swaths of landscaped patios and terraces adjacent to classroom wings
- Designed outdoor spaces, including patios, courtyards
- Use of outdoor corridors, with simple canopy supports and posts or *pilotis*, form links between classrooms and other buildings

## Integrity Considerations:

- School expansion and new construction over the years, in particular in the postwar period, might have resulted in the addition of in-fill buildings and structures in areas that were originally designed open spaces. Such new additions should not interfere with or serve as a visual impairment to the designed connections between buildings, in particular classroom wings, and adjacent outdoor patios and spaces.
- Some materials may have been removed or altered
- Modern lighting and fencing of site acceptable
- Should retain integrity of Materials, Design, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association from its period of significance

**Comments:** Buildings exhibiting distinctive design features might also qualify under Criteria C/3, as the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type/period or method of construction, as an example of the work of a master architect, or for high artistic values.

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**

**THEME: LAUSD | EDUCATING THE BABY BOOM: THE POSTWAR MODERN, FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL PLANT, 1945–1969**

Property Type:	Institutional/Educational
Property Subtypes:	Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and High Schools
Period of Significance:	1945 to 1969
Area of Significance:	Education
Geographic Location:	Citywide; with concentrations in the San Fernando Valley and west Los Angeles
Area of Significance:	A/1

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Clearly embodies the characteristics of a postwar modern functionalist school campus
- Displays a unified, functional site design, with buildings extending across the site and oriented in relation to outdoor spaces (courtyards, patios, outdoor play areas)
- One-story massing for elementary schools; up to two-stories for junior/high schools
- Classrooms, in detailing and plans, clearly express their function, with axial, finger-like wings, plentiful fenestration, and connections to the outdoors
- Retains most of the associative and character-defining features from the period of significance

**Character-Defining Features | Buildings/Structures:**

- Building plans and site design clearly express their function; classroom wings often exhibit one-story “finger-like” wings, arranged on an axis
- Easily identifiable indoor-outdoor spaces, connections to classrooms through the incorporation of patios, courtyards, and outdoor canopied corridors
- One-story massing, particularly for elementary schools; up to two to three stories for junior and high schools
- Building types and plans expressive of postwar ideals in school design; these can include (1) finger-plan schools (usually in 1940s through 1950s); (2) cluster-plan schools (beginning in 1950s); and (3) variations and combinations of these typologies clearly expressive of the ideals for informality, indoor-outdoor connections, and zoned planning for the site
- Varying elevations might display differentiated window sizes and configurations, in order to tailor interior light to sun patterns and create cross-lit classrooms



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## Character-Defining Features | Campus/District:

- Unified campus design includes most or all of the following attributes: lack of formality and monumentality; low massing (usually one stories for classrooms and up to two stories for auditoriums/multipurpose rooms); strong geometric ordering of buildings and outdoor spaces; decentralized, pavilion-like layout; rational, function-driven site design; buildings extend across the site; buildings are oriented to outdoor spaces (courtyards, patios, outdoor areas), purposeful indoor-outdoor integration
- Automobile traffic/drop-off areas separated from campus; linked to interior via extended canopied corridors
- Buildings often turn inward, toward green spaces and courtyards, lawns
- Outdoor corridors, sheltered beneath simple canopies, forming links between the buildings of the campus
- Classrooms often consist of a series of axial, modular units
- An informal, domestic scale for the buildings and campus might be especially evident in elementary schools
- Swaths of patios, terraces, and plantings adjacent to and alternating with buildings
- Generous expanses of windows, including steel- and wood-framed multilight windows, in awning and hopper casements, clerestories, and fixed panes
- Flat roof or broken-plane roof often used for lighting and acoustical issues
- Modular design, with a rhythmic, asymmetrical but balanced composition
- Usually displays a modern design idiom, usually either regional modernist (with use of native materials such as stone, brick, and wood siding and/or framing), International Style modernist, or, by the early 1960s, Late Modern (more expressive and sculptural)
- Some examples might include some degree of historicist detailing or styles popular in the postwar period (such as American Colonial Revival); these are less common than modernist examples
- May have been designed by a prominent architect of the period
- Often associated with post–World War II suburbanization and growth near major employment centers beyond the city periphery (such as the San Fernando Valley and southwest Los Angeles)
- Often built in residential neighborhoods on large expanses of land, with swaths of land devoted to landscape design and playing fields (in particular for high school campuses)

## **Integrity Considerations:**

- Retains most of the essential physical features from the period of significance
- School expansion and new construction over the years, in particular in the postwar period, might have resulted in the addition of in-fill buildings and structures in areas that were originally designed open spaces. Such new additions should not interfere with or serve as a visual impairment to the designed connections between buildings, in particular classroom wings, and adjacent outdoor patios and spaces.
- Many postwar schools were designed to be easily expandable as enrollment increased; the original site design and building types and plans should be readily discernible. If additional wings were added or the campus extended, the additions should be compatible with and visually subordinate to the original.
- Some materials may have been removed or altered
- Modern lighting and fencing of site acceptable
- Should retain integrity of Setting, Materials, Design, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association from its period of significance
- Addition of portable or permanent buildings after the period of significance acceptable as long as original campus design is intact

**Comments:** This theme would most often apply to a campus evaluated as a historic district. Individual buildings and/or campuses exhibiting distinctive design features might also qualify under Criteria C/3, as the embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type/period or method of construction, as an example of the work of a master architect, or for high artistic values.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

**CONTEXT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | EDUCATION**  
**THEME: LAUSD AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, 1954–1980**

Property Type: Institutional/Educational  
Property Subtypes: Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and High Schools  
Period of Significance: 1954 to 1980  
Area of Significance: Education/Ethnic Heritage  
Geographic Location: Citywide  
Area of Significance: A/1 and/or B/2

## **Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed during the theme of significance
- Was the site of significant integration initiatives, challenges, or activities related to the Civil Rights Movement and school integration
- Directly reflects the movement for equal access to schools and/or to employment opportunities in LAUSD schools
- Has a well-established, long-term association with a figure who was significant in the Civil Rights Movement and school integration (eligibility under B/2)

## **Character-Defining Features:**

- Retains most of the associative and character-defining features from the period of significance

## **Integrity Considerations:**

- Retains integrity of Location, Design, Setting, Feeling, Association
- Some materials may have been removed or altered
- If there are multiple buildings on campus constructed during the period of significance, these should be evaluated as a potential historic district

## SECTION VI CONCLUSION | RECOMMENDATIONS

LAUSD is the second largest public school system in the United States and encompasses nearly 800 campuses distributed across more than 700 miles. Since its founding in 1872, the district has commissioned, designed, and acquired a remarkable collection of buildings, campuses, and facilities. These properties reflect more than a century of social, architectural, and technological advances, as well as ongoing educational and curricular reform. Extant properties range from a few late-nineteenth-century, wood-framed schoolhouses to mid-twentieth-century superblock campuses exemplary of modernist architectural design.

This Historic Context Statement represents a first step in creating a framework for context-driven evaluations of educational facilities in Los Angeles (and beyond). As LAUSD begins planning for campus-wide redevelopment and modernization under Measure Q, to be launched in 2014, this study provides a guide for conducting evaluations of LAUSD's many historically significant buildings and campuses.

Through research conducted for this study, four distinct periods emerged: (1) Founding Years, 1870s through 1909; (2) Progressive Education Movement: Standardization and Expansion, 1910 to 1933; (3) Era of Reform: Great Depression, Earthquake, and Early Experiments in the Modern, Functionalist School Plant, 1933 to 1944; and (4) Educating the Baby Boom: Postwar Expansion and the Modern, Functionalist School Plant, 1945 to 1969. Specific themes of significance associated with each era were prepared for this study, along with eligibility standards, character-defining features, and integrity thresholds for each.

Given the project need and parameters, this study focused on the potential eligibility of school buildings and campuses under Criteria A/1, as outstanding examples of LAUSD design ideals and principles, according to the era under consideration. Because the postwar era largely fell outside the scope of 2002 survey work, and postwar schools will be the focus of much of the modernization work for LAUSD in the coming years, the postwar era was explored in detail in the present study.

In addition, by identifying the character-defining features that lend campuses historic significance, this study also establishes a framework for the development of district-wide design guidelines. The guidelines are being prepared by Sapphos Environmental, Inc. to be included in environmental compliance documentation currently being prepared by LAUSD.



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

## **Recommendations | Areas for Further Research**

Additional research on areas and topics beyond the current scope would further broaden the framework for evaluating significant events, people, and the architectural legacy of LAUSD. Recommendations related to the Historic Context Statement and historic resources survey are as follows:

### **1. Expand the LAUSD Historic Context Statement and Historic Resources Survey to include the period to 1980**

Pursuant to Measure Q, district-wide modernization and redevelopment will unfold gradually, over many years. Broadening the LAUSD Historic Context Statement and survey to consider all schools constructed in the past 35 years (rather than 45 years) would allow the district to take proactive steps to identify historically significant campuses (and therefore historic resources under CEQA) prior to redevelopment planning and work. This would also bring the LAUSD Comprehensive Historic Resources Survey up to date with the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources citywide survey, SurveyLA.

### **2. Conduct additional archival research to expand property eligibility under additional criteria**

In the current scope, campus-specific work included research on events, patterns of development, and significant people associated with the schools included in the accompanying survey. However, project limitations precluded extensive research on LAUSD's history that might result in eligibility under Criteria A/1 (such as LAUSD and the Civil Rights Movement) and Criteria B/2 (for an association with significant figures in the history of public schools in Los Angeles). These areas represent excellent areas for further study. (The context of the Civil Rights Movement and Los Angeles schools was addressed, however, in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation form for African-Americans in Los Angeles.<sup>180</sup>)

### **3. Expand study of school plant property types and subtypes**

As a general framework, this treated senior high, middle, and elementary schools, as well as other LAUSD educational facilities, with a broad brush, as a single property type. Noteworthy distinctions, generally in scale and massing, were noted throughout the context. Should subsequent survey work reveal significant distinctions among educational property types, these differences could be incorporated into an updated Historic Context Statement.

#### **4. Update and expand the LAUSD Historic Resources Survey**

Sapphos Environmental, Inc. also recommends that LAUSD take proactive steps to update its comprehensive historic resources survey, in order to consider all as-yet unevaluated LAUSD assets. With planning for district-wide modernization work under way, it will be critical that the LAUSD survey be comprehensively updated.

The survey could be initially broadened to include all post-1945 school buildings and campuses that have not yet been subject to context-driven evaluation.

According to the *Los Angeles Unified School District History of Schools, 1855 to 1972*, this includes roughly 175 campuses constructed between 1955 and 1969, as well as approximately 125 campuses constructed between 1945 and 1954.<sup>181</sup> (The current scope with Sapphos Environmental, Inc. covers 55 campuses.)

A comprehensive survey update would help streamline and guide district-wide redevelopment plans and help LAUSD in its continuing stewardship of its many historically significant school buildings and campuses.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

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ENDNOTES

1. Lee, Antoinette, and Linda F. McClelland, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form," *National Register Bulletin* No. 16B (1999).
2. Local criteria were not included in this study. Under the provisions of California State Government Code, Section 53094, the properties of California school districts, including LAUSD, are statutorily exempt from most provisions of local ordinances, including landmark designation. California State Government Code, Section 53094 permits "the governing board of a school district, by vote of two-thirds of its members . . . [to] render a city or county zoning ordinance inapplicable to a proposed use of property by such school district . . . ." The legislative history of Section 53094 indicates that "the Legislature deliberately accorded different treatment to school districts than to other local agencies because it was well aware that school construction was subject to almost complete control by the state. . . . The Legislature accordingly provided in section 53094 that school districts, as opposed to other local agencies, should retain the right to exempt themselves from local zoning ordinances (*Santa Clara, supra*, 22 Cal.App.3d at p. 158 fn. 3.)," Court of Appeal, State of California, Second Appellate District, Division 7, *Los Angeles Unified School District, Petitioner and Appellant, v. City of Maywood, et al.*, Respondents and Defendants, Nos. B238629, B238630, Los Angeles Superior Court, filed 13 February 2013.
3. California Office of Historic Preservation, "California Register and National Register: A Comparison (for Purposes of Determining Eligibility for the California Register)," *Technical Assistance Series* No. 6. (Sacramento, CA, 14 March 2006). Available at: [http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1056/files/06CalReg&NatReg\\_090606.pdf](http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1056/files/06CalReg&NatReg_090606.pdf)
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6. Gibson, Charles D., *California School Buildings, 1960 to 1965* (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1966), 1.
7. Bhatia, Pavan, "Modern Concept for Los Angeles Public Schools," Doctoral Dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Advanced Management Development Program in Real Estate, July 2009), 28.
8. Hille, R. Thomas, *Modern Schools: A Century of Design for Education* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 13.
9. Eales, John R., "A Brief, General History of the Los Angeles City School System," Doctoral Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of California, June 1956), 78.
10. *Ibid.*, 78.
11. *Ibid.*, 78.
12. Bhatia, "Modern Concept," 30.
13. Briggs, Warren Richard, *Modern American School Buildings* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1906), 8.
14. Hille, *Modern Schools*, 13–14.
15. See, for example, Baker, Lindsay, "A History of School Design and Its Indoor Environmental Standards, 1900 to Today," PhD Dissertation (Berkeley: Department of Architecture, Center for the Built Environment, University of California, Berkeley, January 2012).



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16. Engelhardt, N.L., Jr., "Trends in School Architecture and Design," *Review of Educational Research* 12, no. 2 (April 1942): 171–77, at 174.
17. Baker, "A History of School Design," 4.
18. Science Applications International Corporation, *Historic Context Statement: Los Angeles Unified School District*, 12.
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20. Turner, Timothy G., "Rediscovering Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 April 1936.
21. "Course of Study: What Methods Best in Our Schools? All Citizens, Good and True, Appealed to by Committee of Ten," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1900.
22. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 63.
23. Los Angeles Board of Education, *Annual Report, 1884-85*, cited in Eales, "A Brief, General History," 62–63.
24. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 63.
25. Ibid.
26. Population figures from Fogelson, Robert M., *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1903* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 78.
27. "Los Angeles Public Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1898.
28. "Los Angeles Public Schools: Schools and Teachers," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1898.
29. Ibid.
30. Ogata, Amy F., "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, no. 4 (December 2008): 562–91, at 564.
31. Holmes, William Henry, *School Organization and the Individual Child: A Book for School Executives and Teachers* (Worcester, MA: The Davis Press, 1912), 1.
32. Howell-Ardila, Deborah, "Writing Our Own Program: The USC Experiment in Modern Architectural Pedagogy," Master of Historic Preservation Thesis (Los Angeles, CA: USC School of Architecture, December 2010)
33. Donovan, John J., *School Architecture: Principles and Practices* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), ix.
34. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 564, emphasis added.
35. Donovan, *School Architecture*.
36. Hille, *Modern Schools*, 14.
37. Caudill, William Wayne, *Toward Better School Design* (New York: FW Dodge Corporation, 1954), 16. Caudill himself was an early leader in the community of reform-minded school architects and designers. In 1946, California Department of Education official Charles Gibson informed Caudill that his book, *Space for Teaching*, was often used in Californian schools. Wrote Gibson to Caudill, "Your reputation as an authority on school design is already established in California. We use your Bulletin 'Space for Teaching' almost as a Bible in this state." Cited in Ogata, "Building for Learning," footnote 76.
38. Donovan, *School Architecture*, 96.
39. Hamlin, Alfred D. F., *Modern School Houses, Being a Series of Authoritative Articles on Planning, Sanitation, Heating and Ventilation*, vol. 1 (New York: The Swetland Publishing Company, 1910), 9. Cited in Baker, "A History of School Design," 6.
40. Hille, *Modern Schools*, p. 17.
41. Ibid.
42. Donovan, *School Architecture*, 48.
43. "In the Public Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 December 1911. "In the Public Schools" was a weekly column with news and notes of interest from Southern Californian schools, published in the *Los Angeles Times* in the early 1910s.

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

44. Ibid. In the Los Angeles City School District, Bettinger singled out the outdoor study programs at Micheltoreno Street School, Griffin Avenue, Loreto Street, and 21st Street Intermediate School. Said Bettinger, "Nearly always at these schools the passer-by will note a happy group of children studying and discussing their lessons out in the fresh air and sunshine."
45. Donovan, *School Architecture*, 9.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 6.
49. Ibid., 7.
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51. "City's Schools Highly Praised: Pamphlet Draws Comparisons Showing San Francisco System Interior," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1914.
52. Barnhill, O.H., "The Los Angeles School's Business Department," *The American School Board Journal* (February 1927): 51–52.
53. Marquis, Neeta, "A Tour through a Great Modern Plant and a Glimpse into the Stupendous Development of the Mechanical and Business Side of Our Educational System," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 January 1928.
54. This figure of 400 square miles is equivalent to 112 more square miles than the City itself at the time. This reflects the fact that school districts, as state, rather than city, agencies, pursuant to the Education Code of 1872, included both incorporated cities and adjacent unincorporated land, as well as portions of other incorporated Cities. See Science Applications International Corporation, *Preliminary Historic Resources Survey of the Los Angeles Unified School District*, prepared for the Los Angeles Unified School District, Facilities Services Division (Pasadena, CA: June 2002), 6.
55. Leslie Heumann & Associates and Anne Doehne, Science Applications International Corporation, March 2002, "Historic Schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District," a presentation prepared for LAUSD Facilities Services Division (March 2002), 6.
56. Population statistics are drawn from Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 78. School-related statistics are drawn from Eales, "A Brief, General History," 172.
57. Los Angeles City Board of Education, *The Reconstruction Program of the Los Angeles City Schools, 1933 – 1935 (inclusive)* (1933), 5.
58. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 164.
59. Ibid., 165.
60. Ibid., 158.
61. Ibid., 155.
62. Ibid.
63. Holy, T.C., "Needed Research in the Field of School Buildings and Equipment," *Review of Educational Research* 5, no. 4 (1935): 406–11. Cited in Baker, "A History of School Design," 8–9.
64. Mock, Elizabeth, and Rudolf Mock, "Schools Are for Children," *The American School and University* 15 (1943): 37–42.
65. Baker, "A History of School Design," 8.

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## HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

66. Throughout the United States, the Great Depression ushered in modern reform in many realms of architectural practice, pedagogy, and design. Two major examples in Southern California were in education and housing reform. In the early 1930s, Los Angeles's only collegiate school of architecture at USC shed its Beaux-Arts influenced curriculum and launched a modern curriculum. USC's design philosophy emphasized the same qualities advocated by school plant reformers: functional, modern design, thoughtful, integrated site planning, and indoor-outdoor integration as the key for the "good life." See Howell-Ardila, "Writing Our Own Program." In terms of housing reform, the Garden Apartment movement also emphasized these qualities as the key to providing better housing and living conditions for all. These movements shared practitioners and proponents, as well as the conviction that "modern" architecture was as much a social movement as it was an aesthetic one. For an outstanding history of the Garden Apartment movement in Los Angeles, see Architectural Resources Group, Inc., *Garden Apartments of Los Angeles Historic Context Statement*, prepared for the Los Angeles Conservancy (Los Angeles, CA, October 2012). Throughout the United States in the 1930s, these ideas occasioned a major shift in the national conversation about modern architecture.
67. Sachs, Avigail, "Research for Architecture: Building a Discipline and Modernizing the Profession," PhD Dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 161.
68. Baker, "A History of School Design," 8.
69. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 228.
70. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 564.
71. Mock, Elizabeth, *Built in USA, 1932 – 1944: A Survey of Contemporary American Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1944), p. 41.
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73. Lescaze, William, "The Functional Approach to School Planning," *Architectural Record* (June 1936): 481–97, at 481.
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75. McCoy, Esther, *Richard Neutra* (New York: G. Braziller, 1960), 20.
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78. Hille, *Modern Schools*, 81–82.
79. "Progress in School Design, As Evidenced in the Work of Marsh, Smith & Powell, Architects," *The Architect & Engineer* (November 1938): 14–22.
80. Engelhardt, p. 175.
81. Sapphos Environmental, Inc., *City of Long Beach Historic Context Statement*, prepared for the City of Long Beach Department of Development Services (Long Beach, CA, 2009).
82. Los Angeles City Board of Education, *The Reconstruction Program of the Los Angeles City Schools, 1933 – 1935 (inclusive)* (Los Angeles, CA: 1933), 5.
83. Engelhardt, "Trends in School Architecture and Design," 176.
84. *Ibid.*
85. "Safety, Simplicity and Old-California Beauty Combined in Mission-Type Schools of Reconstruction Program," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 January 1934.
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 8 October 1937, 12.
88. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 272.
89. *Ibid.*, 208.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

90. *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, 14 September 1943.
91. Eales, "A Brief, General History," 277.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., 236.
94. Quoted in Engelhardt, "Trends in School Architecture and Design," 175.
95. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 1.
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97. Engelhardt, "Trends in School Architecture and Design," 175.
98. Ibid.
99. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 570.
100. Ibid., 581.
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102. "Educators Will Take Air Tour," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 June 1964.
103. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 581.
104. Murphy, Jean, "Panel Views New Trends in Education," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 February 1968.
105. Caudill, *Toward Better School Design*, 16.
106. Ibid., 17.
107. Greg Hise describes the origins of the movement for "a new conception of modern houses," and the work of Farwell Bemis, one of the early authors of the movement to place manufacturing technology in the service of housing. Hise, Greg, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 56–85.
108. "Case Studies" and "Pioneer School Has Proved the Value of Its Scientific Design," *Architectural Forum* 91 (October 1949): 103–14, at 104.
109. Tanner, C. K., and J. A. Lackney, *Educational Facilities Planning* (Boston: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon, 2005), 12; cited in Baker, "A History of School Design," 11.
110. "Case Studies" and "Pioneer School."
111. Ibid.
112. McQuade, Walter, *Schoolhouse: A Primer about the Building of the American Public School Plant* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1958), 206.
113. Mock, *Built in USA, 1932 – 1944*, 41.
114. McCoy, *Richard Neutra*, 22.
115. If the finger-plan school remained the dominant trend for so long in spite of these shortcomings, it is in large part because the plan represented the perfect counterpoint to what reformers were still reacting against: the institutional "big block schools with internal corridors and windowless classrooms" (Gibson, *California School Buildings*, 1) These words came from the California Department of Education in 1965, long after the battle against the late-nineteenth-century big-block school had already been won. It is noteworthy that, even as late as 1965, the specter of the unfriendly, institutional school still provided the antithesis against which new ideas were measured.
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117. Ogata, "Building for Learning," 572.
118. Gibson, *California School Buildings*, 1.
119. Ibid.
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121. Los Angeles Conservancy, "Curating the City: Modern Architecture in Los Angeles," Westchester High School. Available at: <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/orville-wright-middle-school>.
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## HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT, 1870 to 1969

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130. Ibid., 583.
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132. Ibid., 106.
133. “Prominent Architect Honored by Engineers,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1956.
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148. Turpin, Dick, “Failure of Bond Issues, Tax Increase Linked to More Half-Day Sessions,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 1962.
149. Steinberg, Warren L., “Down to Defeat Again: Education Tax and Bonds Victims of Our Ignorance,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 April 1969.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
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170. Ibid., 2.
171. See, among others, Fanucchi, Ken, “Pacoima Pupils Transfer to Encino Blocked,” *Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1967; “Compromise Reached to Bus Some Negro Students to Encino,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 September 1967; “Parents Win Victory in Bus Campaign,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 September 1967.
172. Boyarsky, Bill, “Dixie Canyon-Hobart Plan: Two Schools—and One Big Step to Integration,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 August 1977.
173. Birnberg, Judith R., “Flash! An Integration Program That Works,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 January 1978.
174. Lindsey, Robert, “Los Angeles Schools Plan Busing Amid White Flight,” *New York Times*, 11 October 1977.
175. Ettinger, David S., “The Quest to Desegregate Los Angeles Schools,” *Los Angeles Lawyer* (March 2003), 56; *Crawford v. Board of Educ. of the City of Los Angeles*, 113 Cal. App. 3d 633, 642 & n.2 (1980), 62–3.
176. Engelhardt, “Trends in School Architecture and Design,” 176.
177. The scope of the 2002 survey included a detailed look at all pre-1945 LAUSD campuses, with a focus on representative architectural styles and their character-defining features. This study reframes those results to ensure continuity. Photos in this section attributed to Heumann & Associates are drawn from: Leslie Heumann & Associates and Anne Doehne, Science Applications International Corporation, “Historic Schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District.”
178. Blumenson, John J.-G., *Identifying American Architecture* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977); Gebhard, David, and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1977), 683–708; Harris, Cyril M., *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998); McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American House* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); and Whiffen, Marcus, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

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179. These descriptions are drawn and adapted from the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources guidelines for evaluating modern resources in Los Angeles. Excerpts in this passage were drawn from: Architectural Resources Group, "Pre-War Modernism," prepared for the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources (Los Angeles, CA, n.d.). The "Early Modern" category fits within the SurveyLA context as follows: Context: Architecture and Engineering, 1850 – 1980; Sub-Context: LA Modernism, 1919 – 1975; Theme: Pre-War Modernism, 1919 – 1945, International Style, 1920 – 1945.
180. Grimes, "Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles."
181. These figures are drawn from: Los Angeles Unified School District, Educational Housing Branch, School Planning Division, Los Angeles Unified School District History of Schools, 1855 to 1972 (January 1973).

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