

# DODEA IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL PEDAGOGY



## Introduction

### Objective

In January 2011, President Obama released a report concerning the strengthening of our military families. One of the President's top four priorities is education—the report specifically endorses an initiative to ensure educational excellence for children of military families. To guarantee that the families of military personnel have access to world-class K-12 educational facilities, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) sought progressive expertise incorporating innovation in educational curriculum, the use of future technology, and current best practices in facility design including the growing expectation for sustainability.

### Background

DoDEA is responsible for managing the education for children of military families around the world. DoDEA operates 194 schools serving 86,076 students. Additionally, American servicemen and women have over 1.2 million students in local educational agencies (LEA's). Considering only DoDEA schools, this identifies DoDEA as the 34<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the nation, just larger than Jefferson County Public Schools west of Denver and the largest school district in the state of Colorado. Considering the total number of schools, DoDEA is the 21<sup>st</sup> largest school system, just smaller than Baltimore City Public Schools. By some measures, DoDEA is like any other large school district, with all the challenges present in our nation's public schools, including student achievement and dropout rates, curriculum, technology, teacher performance, and

facilities improvement. In fact, the organizational structure at DoDEA resembles that of other large urban school districts.

### DoDEA—Global Education

DoDEA designs and builds schools throughout the world, represented by these two components:

1. The Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) is located overseas, with a presence in Europe and Asia Pacific. The DoDDS operates a total of 130 schools.
2. The Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) of the Americas is located stateside and includes Puerto Rico. The DDESS operates 64 schools at stateside locations.

### Unique Features and Opportunities

DoDEA fosters a thriving cultural environment throughout all military installations. Facilities such as commissaries, hospitals, and schools are the foundation of a cohesive and welcoming community. The school is central to the military community, providing not only a place for student learning, but also for adult engagement in the performing arts, continuing education, and general community events.

DoDEA operates as a global school district and thus can leverage its resources across the globe in an effective and efficient manner. The central administration can implement policy to achieve the district plans and objectives more efficiently than traditional school districts.

A major benefit of DoDEA schools is the existing community and support network. Although each military installation is unique, DoDEA bases have ample amenities as well as support and involvement of parents and the military community. Furthermore, DoDEA's military resources such as simulators and immersion techniques can be integrated into the curriculum for a richer, more diverse learning experience.

Finally, DoDEA has the privilege of truly operating within a global community. This comes with many opportunities that can benefit the students within the system. Ideas such as "global curriculum" and "global attendance" can provide students with world-wide exposure to learning, both virtually and physically.

### Unique Requirements and Challenges

DoDEA schools face a number of unique challenges. The challenges include the large geographic distribution of facilities and the variability in climate for school facilities. In addition, DoDEA schools are faced with a large variety of cultural influences and the need for consistency across the educational platform as service men and women migrate among military installations.

The emotional needs of children in military families are significant. These needs result from conditions including parent deployment, the hazards inherent in military assignments, and frequent transitions disrupting social relationships and school experiences. DoDEA must respond with adequate psychological support for these students.



One of DoDEA's main objectives is continuity in educational standards worldwide. Whether in the United States or in foreign countries, providing a consistent educational and built environment is critical because students often spend just two to three years at any one military installation. Foreign countries often have varying guidelines and specifications for school construction. In developing countries, incorporating new standards such as sustainable "green" buildings may prove difficult. Similarly, DoDEA must provide consistent operations and instructional pedagogy to provide a healthy transition for students that relocate frequently during their school years.

Security at military bases is another challenge, with facility standardization and the availability of technology. Implementation of Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) requirements for buildings within a military installation may differ depending on the site.

DoDEA typically has a 3-to-5-year planning cycle from facility design to move-in and occupancy.

## DoDEA Guiding Principles, Mission and Vision

### Guiding Principles - Facilities

Ongoing dialog among subject matter experts, design architects, and other project participants resulted in three main guiding principles for facilities. These key points for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning facilities are consistent with existing DoDEA Education Guiding Principles and the DoDEA Mission and Vision.



### Provide student-centered facilities for all learners:

The contemporary educational paradigm shifts the focus of instruction from teacher-centered to student centered. This paradigm aligns with current behavior patterns that have evolved with technological advancements.

**Be flexible and adaptable:** The student-centered paradigm requires a variety of space types and spatial arrangements. To accommodate this concept, furniture and spaces must be flexible and adaptable enough to be rearranged throughout the course of the day. Spaces should also accommodate the evolution of technology and teaching methods without the need for new construction or significant building alteration.

**Be global community-centered:** The world is becoming increasingly globalized and requires enhanced capabilities to interact with diverse human cultures, languages, and behaviors. It is important that 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning facilities embody this emerging reality. While DoDEA must provide consistency and familiarity across all schools, it is important that schools incorporate features of the local culture and community.

### Mission and Vision

The DoDEA Community Strategic Plan (CSP) mission: **“EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND EMPOWER EACH STUDENT TO SUCCEED IN A DYNAMIC WORLD.”**

The DoDEA CSP vision: **“TO BE AMONG THE WORLD’S LEADERS IN EDUCATION, ENRICHING THE LIVES OF MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE.”**