



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Office of the Inspector General

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The Honorable Mitt Romney  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Kerry Healy  
Lieutenant Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Romney and Lieutenant Governor Healy:

I am writing in response to a request from the Executive Office of Administration and Finance for suggestions of potential cost-saving ideas for the Commonwealth. I am recommending that you consider establishing a program to create prototype designs for state-financed public school buildings.

As you know, there is a tremendous demand for state funding of local school building projects. Continuing financial constraints have threatened the state's ability in the near term to meet its obligations to communities already on the M.G.L. Chapter 70B school construction aid list.

Today, each municipality must spend significant sums on architectural/engineering fees for unique sets of plans and specifications for each new school project. I recommend as a cost saving reform that the Department of Education, in consultation with the Division of Capital Asset Management, develop multiple prototype designs for school building projects, which design would be provided at no cost to municipalities. The designs would be developed through a comprehensive design competition conducted in consultation with education and design leaders in Massachusetts. Potential benefits of a prototype design program include:

- Lower design costs for each project since the principal focus of design efforts would be on adapting prototypes to specific locations.
- Reduced opportunity for inadequately or overly-designed schools.
- Quicker review and approval by local communities and by the Department of Education.
- Expedited contracting and construction with fewer change orders and contractor claims.

- Savings through bulk purchasing of material and equipment.
- Assurance that each new school building will meet state design standards incorporating program and technology requirements for effective, high quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Opportunities to benefit from the application of value engineering and careful consideration of total life-cycle costs, energy efficiency, and environmental suitability.

The state would benefit by avoiding the reimbursement of duplicative base engineering and design costs. The state would establish funding levels for local projects based on the costs of constructing prototype school buildings. Communities that prefer not to use the prototype designs could assume responsibility for covering the additional cost beyond the level of funding provided for prototype schools.

Numerous state and local governments across the country are currently using prototype designs for school building projects. A preliminary review by my staff has identified prototype school building design efforts in North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Colorado, Texas, and Oregon, and in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Miami-Dade County. I strongly recommend that you consider establishing a prototype school building design program for Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Sullivan  
Inspector General

cc: Daniel Winslow, Governor's Legal Counsel  
Eric Fehrstrom, Governor's Communications Director  
Peter Flaherty, Office of the Lieutenant Governor  
Eric Kriss, Secretary, Executive Office for Administration and Finance  
Harry Grossman, General Counsel, Executive Office for Administration and Finance  
David Perini, Commissioner, Division of Capital Asset Management  
David Driscoll, Commissioner, Department of Education