

CHAPTER 16

Public Elementary and Secondary School Facilities*

A. NATURE AND COMPOSITION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

(a) *Physical Characteristics*

Public school facilities are of various types ranging from one-room structures of wooden frame to massive steel-ribbed and masonry buildings. In the cities multistoried structures often touch the sidewalk and provide limited land area for a playground. In the suburbs the average facility occupies only a small proportion of the acreage available and ample space can be found for parking, grass, and several play fields.

TABLE 1.—*Number of acres in the median school site by organizational level for selected decades United States: 1965*

Completion date of original building	Elementary	Combined	Secondary
Before 1920.....	1	5	3
1940-49.....	4	10	10
1960-65.....	10	15	27
Median all sites.....	3	8	11

Source: George J. Collins, *National Inventory of School Facilities and Personnel, Spring 1962*. Washington, D.C., Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education. 1963.

The structural characteristics of permanent school buildings and additions are shown in table 2 for selected periods of construction. The characteristics of school construction reflect the gradual transition from the predominant type of buildings constructed "before 1920" to the more modern look of a slab-on-grade, one-story, masonry outline filled with glass, and more fire resistive than structures of earlier periods. The urban and nonurban school structures were different before 1920 and in the sixties also reflect notable differences. Before 1920, the typical urban school was multistory, masonry, with wooden interiors. In the sixties, it is still multistory, masonry, but more fire resistive. The nonurban schools before 1920, were single story, wooden, and combustible. In the sixties with the great growth in the suburbs, the elementary schools are mainly single story, but utilize steel framing with masonry walls and are more fire resistive. Secondary schools in the suburbs are multistory and otherwise similar to the elementary structures.

(b) *Services Rendered*

School facilities must, above all other considerations, serve the main objective of the educational program—*learning*. Learning in public

*This chapter was prepared by Dr. George J. Collins, National Center for Educational Statistics, Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, with minor editing by committee staff.