

PRESS RELEASE



Ministry of Education

FLEXIBLE SCHOOL DESIGN CONCEPTS TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. The Ministry of Education (MOE) will introduce a new framework to provide greater flexibility in the design of primary and secondary schools. The framework, called **Flexible School Infrastructure (FlexSI)**, will ensure that the school infrastructure is sufficiently flexible to support teaching approaches to better engage students in learning. These include interactive, experiential, independent and hands-on learning. The new framework for flexible school design was announced by Minister for Education, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, at the 8th Appointment Ceremony for Principals on 29 December 2005.

2. FlexSI is introduced to support recent initiatives such as *Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development (SEED)* and *Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM)*, which have spurred greater exploration in pedagogical strategies and student engagement within and beyond the classroom. FlexSI will give schools more room to innovate in teaching and learning, and to adjust classroom arrangements whenever necessary.

3. Under FlexSI, the design of school facilities will support ground-up initiatives that are school-based and teacher-owned. FlexSI will encourage increased school involvement in the shaping of school designs to meet their specific teaching and operational requirements, and to reflect their own school identity and culture. Examples include schools which decide to design an eco-street to provide for new experiences in the learning of the sciences; or an outdoor amphitheatre designed for dual use as a space for the performing arts as well as a conducive space for students to interact.

4. With FlexSI, schools will have the flexibility to:
- a. Come up with new school design concepts such as modular classrooms that can be opened up for larger group lectures, or partitioned to become smaller areas for small group discussions.
 - b. Design rooms that are currently constructed for specialised subjects to enable multiple-usage. For example,

- i. By using mobile and flexible furniture and fittings, a music room and audio visual room can be designed so that it can open up into a bigger space for additional use as a dance studio;
 - ii. Canteen tables and chairs can be fitted with wheels so that they can be easily tucked aside to convert the canteen space into a multi-function space.
- c. Arrange and design up to 10% of the common areas such as corridors and study areas so that they can be integrated with formal teaching spaces like the classroom to form expanded learning spaces, to provide for further flexibility in learning.

Implementation

5. MOE will be setting aside \$40 million to implement FlexSI for 60 primary and secondary schools over the next 5 years. These are new schools and schools undergoing PRIME (**P**rogramme for **R**ebuilding and **I**mproving **E**xisting Schools).

6. For the remaining primary and secondary schools which are not undergoing PRIME, MOE will also allow for flexible designs to be implemented through renovations to existing facilities. For a start, an additional \$5 million will be set aside for 10 pilot schools, which will be identified amongst these non-PRIME schools, to implement FlexSI, so that the framework can be fine-tuned before it is rolled out to the rest of the existing schools.

7. Independent Schools currently have full flexibility in deciding on their facilities, while Junior Colleges are already provided with a wide range of facilities including lecture theatres and tutorial rooms. The FlexSI framework will nevertheless serve as a guide to Independent Schools and Junior Colleges, and provide them more ideas on how they can make their infrastructure more flexible.

BACKGROUND

Current Specifications for School Infrastructure

8. Schools are built to standard building specifications based on approved standard areas for school facilities. The facilities in schools are designed to enable principals and teachers to provide an all-round education to develop students to their fullest potential.

9. Schools that wish to have different facilities can tap on the School White Area (SWA) concept. The SWA concept allows schools to swap some

designated facilities for those that will better support their niche programmes. The SWA is for up to 20% of a school's net floor area.

Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development

10. *Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development* (SEED) is a school-based initiative that comes up with strategies to better engage pupils in the early primary years. It helps our primary schools better enhance their foundation-year teaching programmes, pedagogy and assessment approaches.

“Teach Less, Learn More”

11. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his inaugural National Day Rally Speech last year that our schools should “Teach Less” so that students can “Learn More”. “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM) is a call for all educators to teach better - to engage our students and prepare them for life - rather than to teach more for tests and examinations. This would mean deeper and richer interactions between teachers and students, and more opportunities for students to learn and develop holistically. Better engagement will encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning, and go beyond academic excellence to develop attributes and mindsets they need for life, particularly in having strength of character and being rooted in sound values.

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National Archives of Singapore