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 news

The 2007 Awards jury will be evaluating projects from June 1 through the end of July. [Find out more about the jury here.](#) Winners will be announced in 9/07.



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Results of the 2004 DesignShare POE Program

Students and teachers tell us what they really think

[Jeffery A. Lackney](#), PhD, AIA

DS/SCN Jurists have often critically reflected on their desire to know more about how teachers and students really experience so-called innovative award-winning schools. Through the DesignShare **Post-Occupancy Evaluation Program**, our intention is to give voice to the individuals whose lives are directly influenced by school design around the world. For the past four years, the DS/SCN Awards process has included an unique and unprecedented opportunity for submitters to offer the users of their school designs the chance to tell it like it is: What works, and what doesn't about your school?

This year marks the first year the assessment tool is available for use online during the submission process. Using the online survey tool [Zoomerang.com](#), responses were gathered from seven projects out of the field of 63 projects submitted.

Victoria School's sustainable features are 'marvelous'

[Victoria School](#), a secondary school in Singapore, was evaluated by a total of 29 students, 17 teachers and two parents. The Victoria School features an innovative 'eco-street' that connects outdoor and indoor learning spaces, forming a central artery through the school.

A student comments, 'I think the ways the school design has integrated principles of sustainability is marvelous.' Another student remarks, 'It is unique and the scenery makes me somehow refreshed after my lessons while moving from class to class!'

A teacher responds, 'To relax, students can sit close to the eco garden complete with two large fishponds.' Another teacher remarks, 'The eco garden simulates an actual ecosystem for students to learn sciences,' while another teacher adds, 'It is a beautiful environment with pockets of space where students can study and do their group work/projects.'



'Everyone knows about our building...Debates have arisen in the newspapers concerning the pond... we are as famous as William Hung,' comments another teacher.

A parent suggests, 'The open nature of the school encourages civic and business leaders to support

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and participate in the activities of the school.'

Cyber-Fair College 'gives good vibes'

Twenty-one teachers, 11 students and 3 community members took the time to evaluate the new [Cyber-Fair College](#) project located in the United States. The Cyber-Fair project created a unique opportunity to design a community college from the ground-up, using a lake to integrate the new campus that included both formal and informal collaborative spaces within and between every building on campus.

A student remarks, 'The scenery around the college is wonderful, it gives you a good vibe towards education.'

A staff member comments, 'The campus lakes and use of natural native plants provides an almost 'retreat' type atmosphere...an extraordinary design promotes emotional and spiritual well-being.' Another teacher adds, 'I feel connected and inspired every time I walk on the campus.'



Remarking about classrooms, one teacher says, 'Classrooms can be changed to accommodate different learning styles, with their different sizes and shapes...and are the most popular with faculty,' and continues, 'the suite system allows professors to interact informally and achieve collegiality.'

Finally, a community member sums up many of the comments about the college setting, 'The overall surroundings make the school feel not as a school but almost a resort...and leave the students and faculty with a comfortable, friendly feeling.'

Other projects that submitted assessments this year were:

- Fuhua Primary School (Singapore)
- Bal Shikshahn Mandir (India)
- North Shore Community College (US)
- The Riverside School (India)
- Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood Center (US)

We expect the number of awards submissions that include self-assessments to increase in the coming years as the demand grows to know which innovations are most successful and why. The goal of the Design Share POE program is to give a meaningful voice to students and teachers for the benefit of everyone involved in school planning and design.

Why should our Planning Team conduct a Post-Occupancy Evaluation in the first place?

A **post-occupancy evaluation** (POE) refers to the process of systematically evaluating the extent to which a facility, once occupied for a period of time, meets the intended organizational goals and user-occupant needs. There are numerous reasons to consider including a POE on your next project. Traditionally, POEs are seen as a way to learn from the past and to inform future design decisions. Lessons learned might be of interest to a large district, but lessons might not be as useful for a smaller district that does not build on a regular basis. Nevertheless, POEs have many other tangible benefits for all school projects large or small:

1. POEs have an important educational function: conducting an evaluation of your existing building can foster the development of a common language among stakeholders to begin an informed discussion

2. POE results can be used to structure design criteria from which all school planning and design process outcomes can be monitored
3. POEs can be used as a tool to support the inevitable fine-tuning and settling-in process immediately after first occupancy
4. POEs provide a framework for establishing best-practice policy across the school district for all future projects
5. Finally, POEs can accelerate organizational learning by allowing decision-makers to build on successes and not repeat failures

Post-occupancy evaluation Tool

Following the nine DesignShare categories as a framework, the DesignShare post-occupancy survey tool asked the following questions. You might consider asking these questions when either conducting your own project evaluation or self-assessing the performance of an existing project during strategic planning or architectural programming:

1. Personalizes Learning: How well does the environment support individual learning styles and needs?
2. Fosters Social Interaction: To what degree does the school design foster formal and informal social learning of students? To what degree does the school design foster collaboration and collegiality of teachers?
3. Emphasizes Real-World: To what extent has the school been designed to emphasize real-world project-based learning?
4. Involves Community: To what degree did the design of the school involve all stakeholders, students, teachers, parents, civic and business leaders?
5. Accommodates Change: How well does the school design accommodate educational program change?
6. Supports Health: How well does the school design support health and well-being of occupants?
7. Supports Safety and Security: To what extent has the school design responded to safety and security issues?
8. Integrates Principles of Sustainability and High Performance: To what extent were sustainability and high-performance principles considered in the school design?
9. Integrates Technology and Global Connections: How well does the school design integrate technology to reinforce curriculum and make global connections?

For more information:

For commentary on the first 2000 School Design POE Awards:

http://www.designshare.com/Awards/Awards2000_Commentary.htm

For a brief history of the state-of-the-art in post-occupancy evaluation in school design:

<http://schoolstudio.engr.wisc.edu/poe.html>

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