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What Were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island

Carolyn Jane Reid
Roger Williams University, creid449@g.rwu.edu

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Carolyn Jane Reid

Master of Science

Historic Preservation

School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation

Roger Williams University

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Carolyn Jane Reid, Author, Date of Signature

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Jeremy Wells, Advisor, Date of Signature

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Jason Martin, Preservation Planner, City of Providence, Reader, Date of Signature

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Dean Stephen White, Dean of SAAHP, Date of Signature

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Abstract

This thesis, *What were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island,* addresses the problem that historic schools are being abandoned in favor of new construction because based on the literature there is the perceived relationship between school facilities design and pedagogical outcomes, there are state and local policies that discourage the use of older or historic schools, and there is uninformed decision making. The purpose of this research was to determine the issues and policies that are most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island through a survey research methodology. This was done so that in the future school officials who want to remain in their historic schools will have the opportunity and resources to fully understand how to make this possible or what measures can be put in place, by law if necessary, to keep their schools, and other historic schools, in continued use.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

When driving around the small towns of Rhode Island, many sights can be seen: tree lined streets, historic houses, small locally owned shops on a main street, a town common, boats on the water, and people strolling down the streets enjoying the day. This paints the picture of a picturesque New England town, but it also fails to include other sights seen that are present in every town in Rhode Island: the civic buildings such as town halls, libraries, police stations, fire stations, and schools. All these civic buildings share one commonality except for the schools; they are all being used. The schools, however, sit vacant by the dozens, and have been that way for many years, if not more. This is not a New England phenomenon but a nationwide issue that has been being studied and addressed since 2000. Even with all information being discussed, Rhode Island schools are still being abandoned with no future use in mind. This thesis will determine the exact reasons why historic schools in Rhode Island are being abandoned so that in the future changes can be made to keep historic schools in continued use. Historic schools are character defining features of Rhode Island towns.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem that this research is addressing, which is explicitly based on the literature review (see chapter 2), is that historic schools, usually located in the center of the community, are being abandoned in favor of newly constructed suburban schools.

The first issue is that there is a perceived relationship between school facilities design and pedagogical outcomes. There is the belief that only new schools can function to educate children. There are also minimum square footage requirements and minimum school size requirements that historic schools may have difficulty meeting. Technological advancements are an issue

because most believe that historic schools cannot be retrofitted with twenty-first century technology. There are many environmental concerns that people believe are associated with historic schools (Cherry-Farmer, 2009; Yurko, n.d.; National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2010).

The second issue is that state and local policies exist that discourage the use of older and historic schools. One policy is that if rehabilitation is going to cost over a certain percentage of what it will cost to build a new schools then the new school must be built instead (Highum, 2003; Glen et al, 2009; National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003; Building Educational Success Together, 2005).

The third issue is uninformed decision making. This is related to a misperception of the cost of rehabilitation versus new construction. Feasibility studies are not being done; this needs to be addressed or required before the decision making process takes place (Earthman, 2009; Norton, 2007; McClelland et al, 2004; PHMC, 1998; Safe Route to School).

With these three issues, it has been observed that the decision making process regarding school facilities and historic schools needs to be more informed, and that this is a major problem that is occurring all across the nation, and that even with the push of national organizations and some states making informed decisions, more research is desperately needed to enable school officials to thoroughly consider historic school rehabilitation.

1.3 Background and Need

1.3.1 Historic Community Centered Schools are a Preservation Problem

The preservation of community centered schools has been problematic, but the issue is becoming more nationwide. A community centered school is "both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on

academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends" (Coalition for Community Schools, n.d.). These schools are located in the center of the town, and are easily accessible to the majority of the town, as well as local businesses and organizations.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has recognized this issue as a major one since 2000 when they added historic neighborhood schools to the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, and is trying to be the forerunner in making a difference again. This second big push began in May 2008 when they launched the *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities Through Smart Policy* project. Community centered schools are an issue because in many towns across the nation, structurally sound, easy to rehabilitate (bringing them up to current codes) schools are being abandoned and left empty for years, while brand new schools are being built miles outside of the town. This means that millions of dollars are being wasted to build a brand new school while there is still a perfectly good school sitting in a prime location in the town. This also means that children can no longer walk to school, and must ride the bus which adds an even bigger budget to the town. The town budget for schools could be spent minimally on the historic school building bringing it up to code if necessary, but then it would still be largely spent on educating the children, buying textbooks and supplies, running special programs, funding the arts or sciences, paying the teachers well, etc. The abandoned historic school will sit empty for years, and then be given a new use that does not promote the historic character and importance of the building, and then possibly become vacant again and sit empty for decades until eventually it will probably torn down because it is in such disrepair that it can

no longer be saved.

Even to the people who are not preservationists, when comparing the two scenarios of keeping a historic school in use or building a new school on the outskirts of town, it should sound a lot less complicated to use the historic school. Building a new school should not even cross people's minds when they have schools right in town. That is before the discussion even begins about the historic and cultural significance of the school buildings.

1.3.2 Benefits of Historic Community Centered Schools

Schools should always be community centered if possible. There are numerous benefits, even more so if the school is historic. The first benefit is the location. Community centered schools are centrally located in the town or city. This allows for many available modes of transportation and travel distances are kept short. The National Trust for Historic Preservation states this as "location efficiency" (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits). Since the school is centrally located it means that most of the student population is within two miles of the school. This means that a large percentage of the students can walk or ride a bike. Students can also take the bus or be driven. Faculty and staff are more likely to live near the school as well, which cuts down on travel times and vehicle emissions. More students living closer to the school means less money that the school district needs to spend on busing in the students (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits). This also means that there will be fewer cars and buses on the road, which results in less traffic, and fewer accidents.

Historic schools were built at a time when the world was not as auto centric as it is today. Schools needed to be located near the children they served because otherwise it would have been difficult for the children to get there. This meant that schools were built in the center of town surrounded by houses and businesses. Since they were built in densely populated areas, there

were not minimum acreage standards as there are today. The recommendations at the time were to build compact multi-story buildings. Today this means (in most cases) that these schools are "grandfathered in" in terms of being able to have smaller sites in dense areas, which is one of the reasons they promote the vision of community centered schools.

The second benefit to community centered schools is that they contribute to a better environment. Community centered schools use existing buildings. When the building is renovated instead of being demolished, it means that waste intended for the landfill will be reduced drastically. Land will also be conserved since no new land will be required. According to NTHP, "the construction and operation of buildings account for 48% of the United States' greenhouse gas emissions. When reusing schools this number decreases dramatically" (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits). This is in addition to the reduction in vehicle emissions. There is less air pollution because of this.

Families are healthier when schools are community centered. Children get more exercise when they walk or ride their bike to and from school every day. When the children are younger, their parents may walk them to school which enables the parents to get more exercise. If the family has a dog, then the parent could also walk the dog while walking with their child to school. When school is not in session, if the school is in walking distance, parents, children, and community members are more likely to use school facilities, such as the playground, to play and get exercise. This is also true for the basketball courts, fields, tennis courts, gym, etc. In addition to being more physically active, when there is less air pollution due to less construction and vehicle emissions, children will have healthier respiratory systems. "Increased physical activity improves children's health and decreases their likelihood of obesity" (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits). Less air pollution means that there is less chance for

childhood asthma, and also reduces the risk for cancer (Smart Growth Schools: A Fact Sheet).

The next benefit of community centered schools is that they encourage "close ties with community members" (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits). When parents are closer to the school, it makes it more likely for them to help out in the classroom, meet with teachers, and attend meetings. When afterschool activities are offered, children are more likely and more able to participate because they do not need to be driven home. The schools are also able to be used by town residents when they are community centered. Schools are used after hours and on the weekends for town meetings, voting, athletics, emergency services, and other services. Since the activities take place in a familiar and easily accessible location, residents are more likely to attend or take advantage of the services being offered. It has also been shown that when schools are used by more than just the students, faculty, and staff, "improvements are likely to be supported through local bond measures" (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits).

Finally, and importantly, community schools offer educational benefits. Schools have a smaller student population since they are based in a specific neighborhood. "Studies have shown that smaller sized schools see more students graduate, have better attendance records, and experience strong participation by students in extracurricular activities" (Helping Johnny Walk to School 13).

Wendy Radmacher-Willis (2005), a mother of four from Portland, Oregon sums up the benefits of community schools: "We chose our neighborhood because it had a neighborhood school. We chose a motley and idealistic band of neighbors who will meet us on the playground in the evenings and who will help keep an eye on our kids in the afternoons. We chose to have our children walk to school, rather than spending endless hours in the car."

1.3.3 Historic Schools are Community Centered

Historic neighborhood schools fully support the idea of community centered schools when they are renovated. They can also be on par with new schools in terms of 21st century innovations, technology, and education standards. In 2003 the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities put out a publication called "Schools as Centers of Community: A Citizen's Guide for Planning and Design." This organization provides information on planning, designing, funding, building, improving, and maintaining schools, and is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This publication states six design principles, two of which are key to this discussion: design principle two, "the learning environment should serve as a center of the community," and design principle five, "the learning environment should make effective use of available resources." Historic schools support design principle two because most historic schools exist in the center of older neighborhoods. A Building Educational Success Together (BEST) initiative describes how this is true;

> Schools are often the most important public building in our neighborhoods. Beyond serving a core teaching mission, schools need to be planned, designed, constructed, renovated and operated to serve the larger community. Also, historic schools are important civic landmarks, and when properly maintained and renovated, they can contribute to a community's identity and cohesiveness and serve as first-class learning environments. Architects and planners must consider community needs and history when evaluating a school building's adequacy and planning its future (BEST 4).

Design principle five is supported by historic schools because renovating an already existing school and bringing it up to code is a very effective use of an available resource.

The materials and quality of workmanship that went into building historic schools cannot be duplicated today (Pennsylvania Department of Education 2). No matter when the school was originally built, a school that is renovated properly will have the same life span as a new school. (Pennsylvania Department of Education 3) Many people think that because the schools are old and were built when the educational standards were different and the technology was not as

innovative that historic schools should just be demolished. In most cases these schools are more structurally sound (since many were constructed of masonry) and exceed the building expectations and standards of today. In most cases these schools were "built with the finest materials and highest level of craftsmanship the community could afford" and exceed the building expectations and standards of today (Pennsylvania Department of Education 10).

Historic schools can be renovated to meet state-of-the-art educational standards. According to architects who have worked on both historic schools and new schools, historic schools are better built. Historic schools can be adapted to meet ADA standards, educational program needs, technological needs, and to bring the building up to code. Skilled architects in rehabilitation install sprinklers, ramps, elevators, knock down walls to make larger classrooms, and wire the school for the latest technology. School officials can work with other local agencies and organizations to fulfill all other school needs, such as playing fields, and transportation (Why Johnny Can't Walk to School 45).

Schools were built when they were needed, and they were built to last. "Their presence spans centuries, reflecting the evolution of state education policy and funding. The locations of historic school buildings also reflect, or were influenced by, community development and settlement patterns" (Pennsylvania Department of Education 10).

Historic schools really are the center of the community. People from the towns can tell story after story, and a lot of the time they are stories about themselves going to the school, events that happened there, stories about family members going there. The majority of a child's life is spent going to school, and those are the stories they are going to tell for years to come, especially when friendships can last for a lifetime, and those friends could have been made at that school. "Historic schools embody a shared experience for generations of residents, more

than any other building. There is a sense of community pride because of this" (Pennsylvania Department of Education 10). In the video Our Living Legacy: Saving Colorado's Schools, one little girl, Mallory Morgan, talks about how her favorite thing about the school she goes to (Wiley Elementary) is that her mother and her grandmother both went there too. The town could have changed a lot since her grandmother attended, stores could have come and gone, and the town could have grown a lot, but the one thing that remains the same is the school. In a way it could be said that the school is the backbone of the community. It is what is holding the community together and allowing it to grow. A large reason that people move to a town, is to give their children a good education at good schools, and a large reason that people stay is because of the community.

> "A thriving elementary school, with lots of pedestrian activity surrounding it, says that people care about their neighborhood and take pride in their community. Although the feelings evoked may be intangible, the benefits —high property values, safe streets, stable taxes—are significant and unmistakable" (Pennsylvania Department of Education 14).

Children can learn about local history, culture, and preservation because the building is tied to the past, and teachers can use that to provide a richer education. Morgan Arline, a student at East High School, said she "thinks it amazing to learn about the history behind the place (the school), the traditions that they have, and the people that went there before her" (Our Living Legacy: Saving Colorado's Schools). Children are then able to "buy into" the school's traditions and history and it will engage them to learn more. This will encourage a sense of community pride. If that sense of community pride exists where everyone "buys into" the school, then if something needs to be done, nobody will be able to stop those individuals until the community has met their goal. When people care about something, whether it is saving the school or just fixing something at the school, they will band together, advocate and raise money for it, and it

will get done. This is exactly how a lot of the schools in Colorado got built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Neighbors went around and raised the money, or built the school themselves so that their children would have a school to go to in order to get a quality education. Schools were considered a mark of stability (Our Living Legacy: Saving Colorado's Schools). Education is what was important to people back then, and that is what is still important today.

Community centered schools are usually those that are historic. This encourages the support of the community for these schools, but also leads to protest when the school building is at risk of closure.

> "Schools have served as centers of community for over a hundred years. Indeed, it is precisely because historic neighborhood schools have filled this function for so long that community residents protest vehemently when school districts announce plans to close or demolish these schools. While these protests sometimes reflect a lamentation over the loss of beautiful, architecturally distinctive school buildings, more often and more fundamentally, they are a protest against the destruction of community anchors – of public social institutions that have inspired civic pride and held neighborhoods together for decades" (State Policies and School Facilities 3).

1.3.4 *Why New Schools Are Not Better*

Contrary to popular belief, new is not always better. Building a new school is not better than using the centrally located historic neighborhood school. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, new construction of schools costs $204.10 per square foot, while additions and renovations to existing buildings cost $114.24 per square foot (Neighborhood Schools). It costs nearly twice as much to build new as it does to renovate and bring up to twenty-first century standards, a historic school. "In 1930 there were 262,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States; today, there are 99,000 schools. Over the same time period, the number of students rose from 28 million to 50.1 million which means we are accommodating almost twice as many students in almost two-thirds fewer schools. In 1969 some 87 percent of students lived within one mile of their school; by 2001, only 21 percent lived

within one mile of their school" (Helping Johnny Walk to School 15). Schools that are historic and community centered are being closed, and new schools are favored which is why there are fewer schools open today. In many cases, two or three schools are closed while only one new one is built. Already it has been seen that student populations at schools located on the outskirts of town are larger than they should be, larger than they would have been if the schools were community centered.

There are many other consequences in addition to fewer schools and larger student populations. Since schools are located on the outskirts of town, it means that fewer children live within two miles of the school, which means that fewer children can walk or ride their bikes to school. This results in more children taking the bus or being driven to school each day. This in turn leads to more funding that is needed to bus the children to school and more cars on the road at the beginning and end of the school day. It has been discovered that between 7:15 and 8:15 a.m. during the school year that there is a 30 percent increase in the number of cars on the road. (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2003) Since there are more cars in the road, there is more air pollution. In addition to the air pollution, children are not getting as much physical exercise each day when they must ride the bus, and are more likely to be obese and at risk for asthma (Consequences of Distant Schools).

Another consequence is that children and parents' connections to the community are weakened (Consequences of Distant Schools). When schools are located on the outskirts of town, it is less likely for parents to attend meetings or events at the school. Children are also less likely to become involved in afterschool activities because they are not able to walk home from school and therefore require alternate forms of transportation, which often cannot be provided by working parents. Community members are less likely to take advantage of the positive aspects

that a school has to offer outside of school hours. It becomes more of an effort to go use the gym, the fields, or the playground, when the community member must get in their car and drive there instead of just walking down the street. The aspect of a community center is completely destroyed. The school is no longer easily accessible to most town residents, and is not centrally located. This results in less multiuse of the school facility, and far less connections between the town organizations and the school.

Finally, it has been found that property values decrease when neighborhood schools are closed, or demolished. In neighborhoods with an open elementary school, property values of houses rose at a three percent higher rate than those within a half mile of a close elementary school according to Michigan reasearchers (Consequences of Distant Schools). The researchers figured out a surprising piece of information while conducting their study; in nine years they (the schools, city, and county) would have received two million dollars more (in property taxes) if that one school had stayed open (Consequences of Distant Schools).

1.4 Purpose of the Study:

The phenomenon that is occurring is the rapid abandonment of historic schools in favor of new construction that has been occurring all across the country for over a decade. The intent of this thesis is to understand the issues involved in the decision-making process that threatens historic schools.

The sites that were researched are all of the historic schools, elementary and secondary, in the State of Rhode Island, that are or have been part of the public school systems and districts. Historic in this case means it must be fifty years or older, so having been built in 1962 or before.

The population is the school officials that have the power to make the decision as to whether a historic school is continued to be used, or if a new school is to be built. This is the

state superintendent, the 36 district superintendents, the seven Board of Regents members, and their two staff persons.

1.5 Research Questions:

The main research question that will be answered by this thesis is which issues and policies are most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island. A sub question of this is what actions do school officials, who support the continued use of historic schools, think can prevent the abandonment of historic schools. The sub question will be answered via a qualitative method, the interview methodology. My hypothesis, based on the literature, is that the most cited policies and issues for the abandonment of historic schools will be based on lack of knowledge about historic preservation, the belief that the advanced technology of today cannot be implemented within the framework of a historic school, and the strict regulation of state policies that ultimately promote new construction.

1.6 Significance to the Field:

There are a few expected outcomes of this research. The first outcome will be a list of issues and/or policies that were given by school officials as to why a historic school did not remain in continued use. There will be descriptive statistics that show the percentages of the reasons being stated. This thesis has a potential of offering a basis for school officials in other states to learn what school officials think the issues are with historic schools, and how this can be addressed in their own states, if they want their historic schools to remain in continued use. In the future, this could give school officials policies to follow that will allow them to promote or choose to rehabilitate their historic schools instead of closing many schools and building one large brand new school. By talking to the key decision-makers in this process about what they think the issue is, school officials across the nation can use this as an insightful, motivational

case study and save their schools.

1.7 Limitations:

A major limitation in this thesis is time. If more time were available, every person that is taking the survey would also be interviewed, not just those who want to be interviewed. By doing so, that would have given a broader look at the issues, and what could truly fix the problem at hand. Another limitation is the lack of superintendents and Board of Regents willing to fully complete the survey, as only nine out of 46 people did.

1.8 Ethical Considerations:

There were not any major anticipated ethical issues for this thesis. There was no more than minimal harm incurred by participants. The only discomfort was not having complete knowledge of the question that is being asked, or feeling that he/she (the respondent) was not in the position to answer some questions. This was addressed by giving a "Don't know" option to the questions. If the respondent was uncomfortable answering questions because of criticism they received for making a decision then there was an opportunity to "opt out" of answering those questions. In addition, I, as the investigator, will be the only one who knows who gave what responses.

Informed consent was obtained through the use of one of three informed consent forms based on whether the person is participating through a mailed survey, an online survey, or an interview.

For the survey, informed consent was obtained through the cover letter and introduction page online to the survey. Personal identifiers were only collected to make sure that there was 100% completion by the population and if the respondent had an interest in the continued use of their historic schools and chose to put his/her name down for an interview. The interviewees

were self-selected through the survey. However, as there are always a lot of politics surrounding school decisions, potential risk to school officials was minimized by keeping their name, position, and the school district that they work for anonymous if the respondent asked for this treatment. This will be especially important if their job has ever been at risk for decisions that they have made regarding school building use, or any other school related decisions.

The findings of the research will be presented without identifying specific participants by their real name: where necessary and appropriate, pseudonyms will be used in order to protect participants from political harm. The survey data will be discussed as a whole, aggregating all of the data that was received. Interviewee's names and positions will remain confidential. Personal identifiers will not be included in the final research product. When participants took the survey, personal identifiers were only collected to determine who still has yet to complete the survey so that a census of the population can be obtained.

1.9 Conclusion:

In the smallest state in the United States of America with such a large number of historic schools being closed and abandoned, this thesis will work to save Rhode Island's other historic schools in order to preserve a unique aspect of these small New England towns, and to show this country that after a decade of talk, action can be taken, and a difference can be made in the quest to save historic neighborhood schools.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

   Historic schools are one of the most important assets to a community. This literature review

will study the abandonment of historic schools to find out why government and school

administration policies encourage the closing of historic schools and the construction of new

suburban schools in order to understand more effective ways in which historic schools can be

saved. Understanding the literature on this topic will enable the objective analysis of historic

school rehabilitation case studies, to determine which state policies made them successful

projects, and which policies created huge hurdles that had to be jumped, in which case, the

rehabilitated school may be on a cyclical discussion of abandonment or even worse, demolition.

This literature will, in turn, come up with a list of policies that result in the no-discussion-

required decision to rehabilitate historic schools.

   This literature review will address the decision making process for the rehabilitation or

replacement of a historic school, policies that states have that promote and favor new

construction, and policies that encourage the rehabilitation of historic schools. It will also

explore a few case studies of success stories, as well as schools that chose demolition and built a

new school.

2.2 Perceived Relationship Between Pedagogical Outcomes and School Facilities Design

   There are many discussions that come into play when school officials are faced with the

decision of rehabilitation of their existing school or replacement with a brand new school.

Sometimes, this can be at a time when upgrading is actually needed, though sometimes school

officials just want new "gadgets," or spaces. There are tangible and intangible reasons that need

to be looked at when making a decision, as well as many resources available to help make a

decision.

Amy M. Yurko, AIA, (n.d.) discusses the intangible aspects to look at for this decision making process; she is one of the few to do so. The first step is the vision for the future of the school. This needs to be decided independently of the physical space, though eventually it needs to be decided which school will foster the vision the best. The second step is an objective evaluation of "the physical building, its educational adequacy (both current and future), operational issues (both short and long-term), expansion needs & opportunities, aesthetic considerations, historical and community significance, safety/security, accessibility, and sustainability." Possibilities for a new school should also be evaluated to see what desired and undesired effects may arise. Fit analysis ties in with the vision, in determining which option is a better fit in supporting the vision of the school. Value comparison should take into account monetary values, as well as historical and cultural values.

Rehabilitation and renovation needs to be fully considered, discussing the facts and long-term implications before dismissing the idea. One way to make sure this is understood thoroughly is to undertake a feasibility study. "A feasibility study evaluates technology needs and barriers, scheduling to complete a school construction project from start to finish, options and alternatives, and potential implications of decisions to the surrounding neighborhood and community" (NTHP, 2010). A list of questions about and common steps of a feasibility study are also given to make sure the feasibility study is completed as accurately and objectively as possible.

By becoming familiar with the process of rehabilitation, parents, students, officials, and board members can participate in and advocate for the continued use of historic schools. Architects and

consultants that are well versed in rehabilitation of historic schools should be contacted, because

they will be familiar with the process, and unbiased.

- They will know the truth about rehabilitation, not the prejudices that exist.
- Understand the community that the school is servicing, and the educators who teach there 180 days of the year.
- Organize a group of stakeholders who will be the most motivated to make sure that the school stays in continuous use, while being upgraded to meet the needs of the school.
- Plan for being successful but also know that obstacles always will come up.
- Listen to the argument for replacement so that each and every point that is made can be combated up with hard facts about why rehabilitation is a more feasible choice. By doing so, it will make the case for rehabilitation that much stronger.
- Develop a campaign that will get a clear mission statement circulating through the community, and will make the situation well known to get people involved.
(Older and Historic Schools, NTHP, 2010)

Rehabilitation and replacement options for historic schools must be discussed at the same

time, side by side. By doing so, the best choice for the school is able to be made. This will in turn

make a much stronger case for rehabilitation, no matter what policies there are in that specific

state that promote new construction instead.

2.3 State Policies Discourage the Use of Older Schools

Many states and school officials favor new construction over rehabilitation. Research has

shown that this is because the officials are misinformed, have prejudices about rehabilitation, or

just want brand new schools.

Some states will only provide money for schools if the school officials follow the policies or

guidelines that they (the state) have set in place. School construction funding formulas are in

place that give a limit on what can be spent for rehabilitation as opposed to new construction. An

example of this is the two-thirds rule. This states that if rehabilitation is going to cost two-thirds

of the cost for new construction that the school district must build new (Beaumont 2003). This

does not make sense however, as rehabilitation will still be costing less, and will last and already

has lasted much longer than the new school building will.

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Minimum acreage standards are also in place saying that for every school plus every 100 students the school must be situated on a specific sized lot. This means that historic schools within the centers of towns do not meet this requirement. (Safe Route to School, n.d.)

State officials and school officials also do not realize that historic schools can be retrofitted just as effectively for the most up to date technology as new schools can. For education, parents often claim that children learn better in new schools. However, it has been proven that the highest performance has been achieved in the oldest schools. (McClelland, Mac, and Keith Schneider, 2004)

As other laws and policies in this country are updated throughout the years, policies regarding schools should be too. There is no reason for state officials to keep favoring new construction when it just leads to sprawl, and the abandonment of valuable resources.

2.4 Uninformed Decision Making

In many ways, state and school officials are uniformed when it comes to making a decision regarding the use of historic school buildings. This no longer has to be the case as there are many policies that the states can implement to protect historic neighborhood schools and that promote the idea of historic community centered schools. An example of this kind of policy is the BEST Initiative which will work to preserve and modernize historic schools which are often important civic landmarks and neighborhood anchors. "The system should make it easier for communities to preserve these institutions when they can be renovated to meet 21st century educational standards," says Constance Beaumont of the National Trust for Historic Preservation." (BEST)

The first two policies are not policies per se but are tried and true methods in the historic preservation field for saying that something is important, and for making sure it stays around.

Schools could possibly be listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A which states that the school is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history" or criterion C which states that the school " embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction" (National Register Brief 15, 2002).

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, states that any undertaking that uses federal (or for 106-like processes state money) must be reviewed if it will affect historic resources. Since schools almost always use state or federal money to demolish, or alter the buildings, this means that the work would be reviewed and it could possibly keep an abandoned school, or school that is about to be demolished open and in use. School districts in New York must contact the State Historic Preservation office to get advice as to whether historic resources may be affected by a state assisted project and how any adverse effects can be mitigated. This includes renovations involving any school over 50 years of age" (State Policies and School Facilities 30).

The first policy that states can implement to protect historic schools is to remove minimum acreage requirements (Helping Johnny Walk to School 23). It is usually suggested that a high school for 2,000 students have 50 acres of land. Most historic schools are located on only five to ten acres of land. If the requirements are removed, then schools can occupy existing buildings without having to put on additions, or buy up additional land, which is not typically possible in historic dense neighborhoods.

Maryland is the leading state behind this policy. Since 1970, Maryland has not had any acreage requirements. The state officials realized that having such policies would require almost

all of Baltimore's schools to close. This would also be true for older cities. Maryland also has a national reputation with its Smart Growth Program, which is strong because of the criteria that are used when state financial assistance is given to local municipalities (Why Johnny Can't Walk to School 40).

The second policy is to remove minimum school size requirements (Helping Johnny Walk to School 24). Since many schools are located in the center of communities to serve a particular community they usually have small populations, around 300 students. The reason many historic schools are abandoned is because they do not have a large student population and therefore many historic schools are shut down and combined with other neighborhoods that will attend one large school on the outskirts of town. By removing this requirement it allows historic schools to keep their doors open.

The third policy is to "remove bias in state funding for new construction." Many states use a percentage rule which means that when school renovation costs exceed a certain percentage of the cost of a new school, then the new school should be built instead of renovating the old school. However, this does not take into account costs such as buying new land, or demolishing the old building. What is also interesting is that school renovations always cost less than building a new school (Helping Johnny Walk to School 25). Pennsylvania is a good example of a state with a best practice when in 1998 they eliminated their 60% rule. By doing this, they leveled the playing field in terms of funding (Why Johnny Can't Walk to School 44). They enabled the conversation and decisions to lean towards historic school rehabilitation and away from new construction.

The fourth policy is to educate local school officials in the state about renovation and rehabilitation, provide technical assistance on how to do so, and provide incentives for the

adequate maintenance and repair of buildings. The successful renovation of historic schools school be presented as case studies, and should take time to address the reuse of historic buildings in terms of green standards for operating and construction of schools (Helping Johnny Walk to School 34). It is always said that the greenest building is the one that is already built (Carl Elefante).

The fifth policy is to "require feasibility studies comparing the cost of building a new school with the cost of renovating, and perhaps expanding, an existing school" (Stevenson 1). A feasibility study is case specific and must be tailored to fit the community's needs. A feasibility study should contain a programmatic fit by schematic analysis, technical conditions assessment, and synthesis and comparative cost estimates (Older and Historic Schools 5). Massachusetts is a state that has a best practice with this policy. They require feasibility and cost analysis of renovation before new construction for all schools (Stevenson 4).

The sixth policy is to "ensure broad and well-informed public involvement in decisions regarding school facilities so that they inspire a sense of ownership and pride by communities served by the schools" (State Policies and School Facilities 25). This means that the community should know if an addition will be added to the school, or if it is going to be renovated. If nothing else, citizens should at least know if their local school is going to be demolished. When they find that out, they will be advocating, fundraising, petitioning, and doing anything else they can to save that school.

For this policy, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Vermont all have their own policies in place that support this idea. This policy in Kentucky has public forums and hearings to enlist citizens opinions and idea, enforcing broad community involvement in school facility planning and decisions. Minnesota policy states that voters must be made aware of objective information

regarding school bond proposals. In Vermont, historic preservation professionals must be included if a state-assisted project involves a renovation to a historic school. "Vermont's School Construction Guide states: The broader the participation in the development of a school construction proposal, the better will be the school board's presentation of the project to the voters for funding" (State Policies and School Facilities 27-28).

Many states have grants available to them when they chose to renovate and rehabilitate a historic school. Colorado State Historical Fund has granted over $211 million since 1993 (Our Living Legacy: Saving Colorado's Schools). In order to assist with grant giving, Colorado Preservation, Inc developed a "historic schools reconnaissance-level survey form for schools over 50 years of age, and made a database of all schools and the condition that they were in" (Helping Johnny Walk to School 21). In Mississippi, a program was established to provide grants to rehabilitate historic schools, Community Heritage Preservation Grant Program (Helping Johnny Walk to School 21).

A calculator has been created to determine how much operating a space within schools costs school districts. It is called the Joint Use Calculator and was developed by colleagues at the 21st Century School Fund and the Center for Cities and Schools at the University of California-Berkeley. This gives these school districts the knowledge to decide a fair price to charge other organizations who are looking to use the space for their own activities (Hide and Seek: Where is Your School?). By renting out space to other organizations in the town, it makes the school even more community centered but also allows the school to gain revenue which could help keep the historic school open and functioning. According to Renee Kuhlman, Director of Special Projects at the Center for State and Local Policy (NTHP), it makes them more "economically viable" (Hide and Seek: Where is Your School?).

Another useful tool for keeping community centered schools in use is "State Policies for School Construction and Renovation: Seen Through a Community Preservation Lens." This is a report that was released in May of 2003 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2003). It goes through state by state and lists state policies, requirements, and programs for aspects pertaining to school construction and renovation of historic schools. These aspects are funding, site standards, maintenance, planning, disposition, transportation, schools as community centers, preservation-related policies, other, and contacts/sources.

Once these recommended policies are put in place, historic schools will be on a level playing ground with new construction, if not favored more. This will allow money to be saved, but more importantly, quality education will be continued in a valuable historically significant place that is close to home, and now state of the art.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review discussed rehabilitation versus replacement, states favoritism of new construction, and policies that would promote the continued use of community centered historic schools. All of the literature states the same thing; schools should be renovated and rehabilitated instead of being demolished to make way for new construction. Even with all the resources out there, nothing has changed. A new approach needs to be taken. This literature review provides the backdrop that is necessary to go observe first hand schools that have been rehabilitated, as well as schools that have not, in order to determine policies that actually work to promote the continued use of historic schools. This will make sure in the future that no historic schools are demolished without the scrutinous consideration of what they have to offer, and what would be lost if they were to be torn down.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Introduction

When any form of research is to be undertaken, there must be a plan laid out in advance. There are steps that need to be completed in a certain order to make sure the research at the end of the process is sound and valid; this is where methods play an important role. This thesis has been undertaken using a quantitative method, a survey.

3.2 Theory

The theoretical perspective that was used for this research is post-positivist for the quantitative method aspects because there is measurable evidence that can be obtained via a survey methodology. The assumption is that an invariable truth exists, is objective, and is understood from an etic, or outsider perspective (Dillman 2007).

3.3 Sample/Participants

The population for this research consists of Rhode Island school officials, state and district superintendents, and the Board of Regents, because these individuals have the power to make the decision as to whether a historic school will be continued to be used, or if a new school is to be built. This means the state superintendent, the 36 district superintendents, the seven Board of Regents members and their two staff persons were selected.

By including all the individuals stated, it enabled the research to cover all historic schools, elementary and secondary, in the state of Rhode Island that are or have been part of the public school systems and districts.

This census included every single public school and public school official in the state. The total population is too small to only obtain a representative sample; the results would not have been statistically valid. This research design turned out to be based on a convenience

sample because neither a census nor a probability sample was feasible given the limitations of the study.

3.4 Measurement/Instruments

The research methodology that was used is quantitative. A survey methodology was used to collect variables about the issues and reasons for historic school abandonment. The quantitative method, a survey methodology, was used to answer the following main research question: Which issues and policies are most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island? The survey questions (see Appendix B) were drawn from the literature review because this allowed the significant research that others had done on this topic to be addressed and to see if the same issues nationwide were those key issues for historic school buildings in Rhode Island.

It was intended that a qualitative methodology, interviews, would also be employed to follow up on the information obtained through the surveys. This would have given a chance for officials to state their opinions and ideas as to why they though historic schools were being abandoned in Rhode Island, and to see if they had any suggestions on how to stop this from happening. The interview aspect of this research did not occur because it was a self-selective process and only one superintendent stated that he would like to be interviewed, however he never responded to the email with the interview questions.

3.5 Data Collections/Procedures

There were few materials needed to complete this research. The survey was created as a Google form document. Google Docs was preferred over Survey Monkey because it allowed for a more customizable end product. Google Docs gave more options for question types, and allowed for an unlimited number of questions to be asked. With Survey Monkey, only ten

questions could be asked per survey without purchasing an account. By distributing the survey

through Google Docs, it saved money and paper by not having to purchase enough envelopes

and stamps to not only send the survey out, but also for it to be sent back. It also saved a lot of

time by sending out the survey electronically. All the survey required for the superintendents and

Board of Regent's members was access to a computer, which they all have. The survey also

required use of a cell phone in order to follow up on the emails that were sent to the

superintendents.

The surveys were sent out to the state and school superintendents and the Board of

Regents as a link with an email explaining the intent of this research. Their email addresses were

obtained from the Rhode Island Department of Education's website where they are all listed in a

spreadsheet. The survey was an online survey distributed as a Google document because it was

more feasible and realistic with the limited time and resources available. It made more sense to

be able to distribute the survey online as the responses could be obtained immediately. While

superintendents get a large amount of emails per day, it was more likely for a response since it

could go directly to them, than a paper survey mailed out which would take more time to get to

them, if it did at all. A paper survey would have been opened by the superintendent's secretary

and then likely placed in a huge stack of mail for the superintendent to then review. It could have

been seen as just another survey, and then possibly just discarded.

In order to make sure that the survey was brought to the superintendent's attention, it was

distributed initially with an email explaining why the survey was being distributed, why it was

being sent to them specifically, how it would inform the overall research, and how it could

possibly benefit them. The URL in the email linked to the informed consent form to make sure

that the participants had read it and agreed to participate. Another email was sent two weeks later

with more incentive as to how this would benefit them, along with the same informed consent letter and link to the survey. After the two emails were sent, two weeks later a follow up phone call was to all superintendents in the state that had not yet completed the survey. This was done to make sure all superintendents had seen the survey, and to provide multiple chances to complete it.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data that was collected from the surveys was analyzed altogether so that all issues and policies that were stated were represented. The answers obtained for each question were compiled together and analyzed to observe similarities and differences, as well as percentages of answers given. Answers of different questions were also grouped together to determine what the issues were in Rhode Island, and to see if any conclusive evidence was found as to why those issues are true.

3.7 Conclusion

By undertaking this research with a quantitative method, it allowed for gathering information quickly from a large group of superintendents and Board of Regents. The survey methodology provided a convenient and easy option to connect with more superintendents and Board of Regent's members than would have been possible completing interviews. It was a more viable option for the limited amount of time available. The survey gave the ability for those taking it to all have the same experience in regard to what questions were asked, how they were asked, and the order in which they were asked. This approach was necessary to obtain enough information to draw valid conclusions from.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Existing literature is an important resource to understanding the major aspects of school facilities and the campaign to save historic schools that has been occurring to keep these historic buildings in use. The literature alone however does not allow for an in-depth understanding for the reasons why schools in specific parts of the country are being abandoned. By undertaking new research, the reasons why historic schools are being abandoned in Rhode Island can be understood more thoroughly. This research, undertaken by surveying the school superintendents, has allowed for a comparison of data collected in order to understand knowledge gaps in the literature and why historic schools are being abandoned. This research was supposed to be obtained through surveys and followed up by interviews, though much difficulty was faced so new information was only discovered through surveying. This chapter describes in detail those difficulties. It also includes a table of the raw data, and then delves into interpreting and explaining the responses obtained through the use of specific categories.

4.2 Surveys

The key component to this research was the ability to survey the key decision makers who made and oversaw a decision to keep a historic school in continued use or close and abandon it in favor of a constructing a new school. While at first surveying seemed like it would be an easy task to accomplish, that did not turn out to be the case at all.

First the names, school district, telephone number, address, and email address of every superintendent in the state of Rhode Island were identified, which was thirty six superintendents. Then, the same information was also collected for the state superintendent. Finally, an attempt was made to obtain email addresses and phone numbers for the Board of Regents. This was

slightly more difficult to obtain as everything had to be sent through the contact person for the Board, namely the Liaison to the Board of Regents for the Rhode Island Department of Education. The Board of Regents could not be contacted personally at any point to solicit their help in filling out a survey.

Next, a blind carbon copy email was sent out soliciting the help of all those listed above along with the informed consent form for the online survey (see Appendix A). Only two superintendents and one member of the Board of Regents took the time to respond to the survey. One additional superintendent sent an email stating that he tried to fill out the survey but that he had never closed any schools so the questions seemed irrelevant to his district, and therefore did not submit his responses to the survey. The two superintendents that completed the survey were male. One is in charge of six schools, while the other presides over five schools. The Board of Regents member was a female. All three respondents have held their positions between four and five years.

Since the first email did not obtain many responses, a reminder email was sent out a little less than two weeks later (see appendix.) This email was sent out on a Sunday night so that it would be one of the first emails that the superintendents saw when they opened their inbox on Monday morning. This reminder email was successful in obtaining three more completed surveys. One additional person appeared to view the survey, but did not submit any answers. All three were male superintendents. One presides over six schools, another over eight, and the final superintendent oversees thirteen schools. The three superintendents had each only held that position for one or two years.

Out of the 47 people asked to complete the survey, only six people took the time to complete it. That is less than thirteen percent of the total population of officials. In order to try to

gain more responses, each superintendent received a personal phone call two weeks after the reminder email was sent out. This was still not successful in obtaining a high response rate. Many times, it was required to leave a message with the superintendents because they were either busy or not in the office. The message left contained the investigator's name, phone number, and email address and a brief message mentioning that the phone call was a follow up to the email sent two weeks previously regarding the use or abandonment of historic schools in Rhode Island, and if they could please complete the survey that would only take five to ten minutes of their time that it would be greatly appreciated. The link to the survey was left as well. A few superintendents and administrative assistants requested that the email be sent again.

This additional effort resulted in two more completed surveys; one half completed survey with the demographic info sections left blank, and one survey completed two weeks later. One superintendent contacted by phone for a survey reminder stated that he would fill it out right away. He seemed unwilling to complete it until it was mentioned that it would only take five to ten minutes of his time. A female superintendent's administrative assistant requested that the solicitation email be sent to her own personal email and that she would personally make sure that the superintendent filled it out when she was free. The final superintendent who completed the survey is a male who presides over eight schools. The three superintendents have held their positions between one and seven years.

In total, only nine people completed the survey out of 47 officials that were solicited. Even though this sample was not random, the information gathered is still valuable and some important conclusions can be drawn from it.

4.3 Interviews

The interview methodology was secondary to the survey methodology and was only

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going to be undertaken if there was sufficient time to do so. After having much difficulty with the surveys, the interview methodology was employed to be able to flush out the initial data gathered from the surveys, and to gather some more conclusive information that could substitute for the lack of completed surveys.

The last section of the survey dealt with conducting the interview. In order to be able to keep track of who filled out the survey, and who had yet to do so, personal identifiers and school districts were collected. After asking for the person's name, it was asked if they were interested in being contacted for an interview to further expand on their answers, to be able to give more insight into their school facility decisions.

Out of the nine people who completed the survey, only one person was interested in being interviewed. This person gave their email address to be contacted, yet when they were contacted again and sent interview questions, they did not respond. After a second attempt, this person still did not respond. The interview questions (see appendix) that were sent were based on a standard list of questions that were going to be asked of all interviewees. Based on the person's answers for the survey, the original questions were tweaked slightly and a few more were added, in order to make the most of the interview.

When the superintendents were all contacted as a reminder to fill out the survey, they were also asked if they would prefer to have an interview instead. While this would take a bit more of their time, some people prefer interviews to surveys, and this was a way to try to get as many more responses as possible. The only people that were not contacted again regarding an interview were those five officials that had said they were not interested in being interviewed. While it would have been good to gain insight into their particular decisions and answers, it was also important to respect their answer.

<u>4.4 Data</u>

While only nine surveys were completed fully, the responses still gave insight into the abandonment of historic schools in Rhode Island and helped reveal the internal decision-making process in these school districts, as well as at the level of the Board of Regents.

4.4.1 Relationship Between Knowledge and Decisions

Before the basis of any decisions can be understood, background information must be gathered to try to see where the respondent is coming from, including their viewpoints and their knowledge. Two questions that were asked at the beginning of the survey were whether or not the responder had an educational background in historic preservation, and if they have an educational background in economics. This section includes the analysis of ten surveys, though only nine were fully completed.

All respondents stated that they do not have an educational background in historic preservation. While there was a small chance for superintendents to have a background in preservation, it was still very unlikely to have anyone that would have a background in historic preservation when they hold such a high position in the education realm. The reason for this conclusion is based on the observation of educational and career paths for many superintendents: it seems that most receive a teaching degree at the undergraduate and graduate level. Superintendents tend to gain experience as a teacher for many years and then move up to become principals, and then move on to becoming a superintendent. If someone was to have an educational background in historic preservation, it would be more likely to have those people teaching educational programs at historic sites, or teaching at the undergraduate or graduate level.

This education question was asked in order to understand where these superintendents

and Board of Regents members were coming from regarding historic preservation decisions. It gives the ability to analyze certain decisions further from multiple viewpoints based on the understanding that maybe the official did not completely understand the implications of their decision. This analysis is of course done at the same time while looking at it from the other side; thinking that the officials knew everything they needed to know in order to make a solid informed decision.

The second question regarding educational background in economics helped determine whether or not officials had the ability to analyze and determine the cost of rehabilitating an existing building versus new construction. Three superintendents had a background in economics which was slightly surprising considering that most people who end up as a school superintendent, or on an educational board that makes policy, start out as teachers.

It would seem that if a superintendent had an educational background in economics, then he/she would understand the information that can be obtained from feasibility studies. The related question attempted to determine how often a feasibility study is conducted to determine if an existing school should be rehabilitated or if a new school should be built. One respondent said feasibility studies were occasionally conducted while the two others stated that feasibility studies were completed almost every time.

When comparing this answer to answers of other superintendents, the superintendent who has a background in economics and responded that he only occasionally or sometimes employs feasibility studies had the lowest use of feasibility studies. The rest of the respondents complete feasibility studies almost every time or always complete them. It seems as if the superintendents who have a background in economics would understand the importance of feasibility studies and always employ them, yet this was obviously not the case.

4.4.2 Relationship Between Historic Preservation Support and School Facility Decisions

Just as it was important to understand the officials' educational backgrounds, it is also important to understand their support or dislike of preservation as this can give insight into why they made the decisions that they did, what motivated them to do so. Of the nine respondents who fully completed the survey, eight stated they have strong support for historic preservation while one respondent indicted they have total support.

The responses of strong support for historic preservation by respondents do not match up with the amount of historic schools in the State of Rhode Island that have been and are being closed. The strong support for preservation exhibited by respondents could have resulted from a bias in the way the survey itself was presented. The subject heading of emails, and what was mentioned during follow up phone calls, regarded the abandonment of historic schools in Rhode Island. Respondents that were interested in the topic were more likely to complete the survey as well as respondents that wanted their opinions and specific situations to be known. Officials that do not support historic preservation, support new construction, and/or might have had a lot of attention on them when making decisions regarding school facilities could have seen the subject and decided to not bother even opening the email. While the word "historic" could have been left out, there is not really anything else that could have been done to make them complete the survey once they realized what it was about. Unfortunately, those officials were the ones whose opinions and situations really needed to be stated and understood.

4.4.3 Lack of Knowledge Regarding Requirements

It was especially necessary for this specific section to have Board of Regents members complete the survey in addition to the superintendents. The Board of Regents makes policy for all school districts in the State of Rhode Island and know whether or not there are certain

policies. Two questions addressed the existence of guidelines to determine whether a school should be closed and minimum requirements for the size of a school.

Out of the nine respondents, four stated that they do not have guidelines. One of these respondents is a Board of Regents member. One respondent, a superintendent, who said no has never recommended that schools be closed, or closed any of the historic schools in his district.

Another superintendent that said no they do not have guidelines has recommended only once during his time as superintendent that a historic school should be closed. However, out of the eleven historic schools in his district, three are currently under consideration for being closed.

The last superintendent that responded with a no has recommended between two and four times that a new school should be built in place of rehabilitating an existing historic school. This person was also the one who has total support for historic preservation. There is only one historic school in this district. Five superintendents stated that they do have guidelines on whether a school should be closed and stated that they have strong, but not total, support for historic preservation. Of these five respondents, three stated that they have never recommended that a historic school be closed. However, one respondent had a historic school closed in their district this year. Another has one under consideration for being closed. The third stated that no schools are under consideration for being closed.

Of the other two respondents who stated that they have guidelines, one has recommended between two and four times that a historic school should be closed and that a new school should be built. There are no historic schools under consideration for being closed at this time in that district. The other has recommended once that a new school should be built in place of rehabilitating a historic school. In this district, there are three historic schools that have been closed or will be closed soon.

The Board of Regents for the Rhode Island Department of Education has stated in their

School Facility Regulations (current as of May 2007) that there are minimum requirements for

the size of their school buildings. They have given requirements based on the type of school:

elementary school, middle school, or high school. Requirements are also determined based on

the student population. Requirements are also broken down based on the type of classroom or

space that it is. Of the nine respondents, four stated that there are no minimum requirements for

the size of a school. All four have never recommended that a new school be built in place of

rehabilitating an existing school. Two of the four respondents have each had one historic school

be closed or be under consideration for closure. The other two respondents do not have any

historic schools in their district that are under consideration for being closed.

All four were superintendents who are misinformed as there are indeed minimum

requirements for the size of school buildings. It should be mentioned though that no schools are

in the process of being built in their districts, yet one school had been built in the past ten years

in two of those districts. The superintendents were most likely not there when these two schools

were being built, as one has only held his position for a year, and the other has held his position

for two years. None of the superintendents stated the size of the school as a reason they would

give for a historic school to be closed.

Of the five respondents that were aware of the minimum school size requirements, one is

a Board of Regents member and the other four are superintendents. Four of the respondents have

strong support for historic preservation, and one has total support for historic preservation. Two

of the four superintendents have recommended once that a new school be built in place of

rehabilitating an existing historic school and the other two superintendents have recommended

this two to four times.

One superintendent who recommended once that a new school should be built in place of rehabilitating an existing historic school has three historic schools under consideration for being closed. There are eleven historic schools in the district. This superintendent however, did not state the size of a school as one of three reasons as to why historic schools should be closed.

One of the four superintendents who stated yes there are minimum requirements for size of a school, and has recommended that a historic school be closed, stated that the primary reason why historic schools have been closed is that they are too small. In that district three schools have been or will be closed, and one school is currently being built.

Another superintendent of the four who recommended two to four times that a new school be built in place of rehabilitating an existing historic building stated buildings not meeting current codes as the second reason why historic schools in the district have been closed. This is relevant because there are sometimes exceptions for historic building not having to meet all current codes or not having to meet specific codes. A current code that could be being referred to is the one for minimum school size requirements. There are five historic schools in that district, and there are no schools that have been built within the past ten years. There are also no historic schools under consideration for closure right now.

4.4.4 Decision Makers and the Process

In the School Facilities Regulations written by the Board of Regents, it states that decisions for school closure, rehabilitation, or new school construction must be submitted in writing by "the school committee, superintendent, and a representative of the municipality in which the district is located" (1.08-1, Page 17). Two questions were asked regarding the decision makers in any of these processes. The first question asked who typically makes the decision to decommission existing schools. The second question asked who typically makes the decision to

build a new school.

The Board of Regents member who completed the survey made clear who the decision makers are, and the answers matched up with the School Facilities Regulations. This Board of Regents member was not on the Board when the regulations were written. The answer to both questions was that the local school committee in conjunction with the superintendent makes the decisions to decommission existing schools and building new schools.

The other eight respondents, all superintendents, had similar, but somewhat varying answers. Four of the respondents stated that the school committee makes the decision for both decommissioning and building new schools. One of the four has three schools currently under consideration for being closed. Another superintendent has three schools that have closed or will be closed, and one that will be built. The other two respondents have no schools under consideration for closure, and none that are being built at this time. For the two that have been dealing with decommissioning schools or building new schools, it shows that they understand the process and that the correct people as stated by the Board of Regents Regulations have been making the decisions.

One superintendent stated that in Rhode Island by regulation, the facilities committee of the district makes the decisions. This district has one school that has been closed recently, though none that are being built. The facilities committee may be synonymous with the school committee, but this is not known for sure.

Two superintendents had similar answers to one another. One stated that the school committee makes the final decision to decommission existing schools, but that the voters of the town are the ones who make the final decision to build a new school. This district does not have any schools under consideration for closure, and none that are being built. The second

superintendent stated it is the town that makes these decisions. This superintendent only has one school in their district. No schools are being built at this time in that district.

The last of the eight superintendents stated that the Rhode Island Department of Education makes the decision about decommissioning existing schools and building new schools. The Rhode Island Department of Education does not make specific decisions for the districts; they only come up with the regulations on who makes decisions and the process behind the decisions. Hopefully they will be informed or realize soon that the school committee, superintendent, and representative of the town make the final decision to decommission a school as one school in this superintendents district is under consideration for being closed.

In order to find out more about how these decisions are reached, it was necessary to determine if public forums influence decisions to rehabilitate an existing school versus constructing a new one. The public, community members, are the tax payers that fund the schools, and the ones who choose to send their children to these schools: they should be asked what they think about school facility decisions. The final decision should be informed by the community members even if they do not, by regulation, get to make the actual decision.

The Board of Regents member did not answer this question as the Board of Regents do not make decisions specific to individual schools. According to the respondents, public forums are sometimes, often, or are always held in these cases. Out of the eight respondents, twenty-five percent stated that sometimes public forums influence the decision. Fifty percent of respondents stated that public forums often influence this decision. The final twenty-five percent stated that public forums always influence the decision as to whether a historic school will be rehabilitated or a new school will be built.

Of the two respondents that answered with a five, one only has one school in the district

with none that are in the process of being built or closed. The second respondent has one school under consideration for being closed. The two superintendents that responded with a three have no schools currently being built, and none under consideration for closure. Of the four superintendents that gave a four as their answer saying that public forums often influence the final decision, one had one school closed this year, one has three under consideration for closure, one has no schools being closed or built, and the last respondent has one school currently being built, and three that will be closed or have been closed.

In addition to public forums, the decision makers turned to a number of resources to help them make their decision to close or keep in use historic schools. Many turned to professionals such as architects and engineers to help tell them information that they themselves could not determine. This is important to know how much rehabilitation or construction is going to cost, design issues, and structural information. Contractors also helped with the decision making process. In one of six responses, historic preservation professionals were also turned to. This was in a district where one historic school was closed within the past year. The Rhode Island Department of Education was also a resource to the same district. In two of the six responses, the community and community leaders were listed as a resource that was turned to for help.

In addition to the resources that the many professionals described above could have provided, specific resources were mentioned, as well as specific information from two school districts. One school district mentioned that they turned to public safety and NASDTEC predictions. NASDTEC is the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. Another district chose to review the schools in the district, and determine information on educational needs as well as financial upkeep.

4.4.5 Historic Schools Versus New Schools

Two questions asked whether school superintendents lean more towards rehabilitating an existing historic school or if they would rather build a new school. The first question asked was, when decisions need to be made to determine of an existing school should be rehabilitated versus constructing a new school, how often is a feasibility study of both scenarios completed to assist in the decision-making process. The eight responses showed that most officials give an equal chance to rehabilitation and new construction, by taking the time to figure out how much each will cost, and other important factors such as life span of the completed projects. Fifty percent stated that they always conduct feasibility studies when trying to make this decision. Three out of eight superintendents stated that they often conduct feasibility studies. Only one respondent stated that only sometimes does the district conduct feasibility studies. Fifty percent of the superintendents are clearly informed about the school facility regulations that exist by the Board of Regents. According to page 19 of their regulations, feasibility studies must always be conducted when an existing school is being considered for closure, as must a facilities analysis.

The other question asked about existing schools being cost-effectively rehabilitated to facilitate effective student learning. These answers tended to favor new construction more than rehabilitation of historic schools. Of the eight superintendents that responded, fifty percent stated that they disagree with that statement. Twenty-five percent stated that they neither agree nor disagree, and another twenty-five percent stated that they agree that existing schools can almost always be cost-effectively rehabilitated. Of the two superintendents that stated they agree, each have one school that has been built within the last ten years, and one has a school that is under consideration for being closed. One district has two historic schools and four schools newer than 49 years, while the other district also has two historic schools but six schools that are newer than

49 years old. Both of these individuals are strong supporters of historic preservation.

4.4.6 Most Important Aspect of a School Building

It is necessary to determine what officials think is the most important aspect of a school building as that will be their top priority when making decisions regarding school facilities. If this top priority is found to be lacking or compromised, then it is more likely that the idea of new construction will be brought up. A question about the most important aspects of a school building showed a division between what can be learned and how the school functions.

Out of the nine respondents, two stated that safety was the most important aspect. If the building itself is not safe, then students are at risk when attending school. When safety becomes an issue, it becomes the main focus, which takes away from learning. This ties directly into infrastructure, which one respondent stated, and up to date learning facilities, as another respondent stated. The school building must be updated with twenty-first century technolog. Another respondent stated that the school building must serve student needs appropriately. Functionality was also an answer given. The building must be able to serve all school activities well. Finally, three of the nine respondents stated that the learning environment is the most important aspect. Children go to school to learn so they must be able to do that successfully within the school building. There should not be any impediments to successful learning outcomes.

4.4.7 Consensus among School Closing Reasons

The most important aspect of this research was to determine the reasons that school officials were stating why historic schools in their districts are being closed. To give an opportunity to give the whole picture, or a clearer picture of why historic schools in Rhode Island are being closed, the primary, secondary, and tertiary reasons were requested.

The primary reason why historic schools were closed was split between student population and cost. Fifty percent of the six superintendents stated that declining enrollment was the primary reason for closing historic schools. Two respondents stated that finance and a lack of resources to repair the schools were their primary reasons. One stated that the historic schools were too small, and also mentioned economies of scale.

The secondary reasons given did not have as much consensus among superintendents as the primary reasons, though there was some agreement. One superintendent stated that maintenance was the second reason why historic schools were closed. Either the building costs too much to maintain, or there were maintenance issues that were making the school go beyond repair and getting closer to being unsafe. Two superintendents seemed to agree that money was a big second issue. One superintendent stated that the historic schools were the most expensive to keep open, while the other simply stated budgetary reasons. One superintendent stated that the historic school did not meet current codes. The final two superintendents' answers both had to do with safety. One stated that the historic schools were unsafe, while the other stated that there was a lack of ability to provide an environment that was safe and conformed with the disabilities act.

Fifty percent of the superintendents who had given primary and secondary reasons for historic school closures did not give a third reason. One superintendent even stated that the first two reasons made the financial decision clear as to why the historic schools should be closed, and a new school should be built. The other answers did not correlate at all. One superintendent stated that the location of the school was the third reason for why it was closed. Another stated the student population decline was the reason. It is interesting that this was the last reason given for one district when fifty percent of the primary reasons given were based on declining enrollment. The third superintendent that stated a third reason for historic school closure based it

on condition issues.

4.5 Conclusion

The twenty-five survey questions that were asked of the nine respondents provided valuable data as to why historic schools in Rhode Island are being closed. It was unfortunate that only nine surveys were fully completed even after multiple emails were sent along with a follow up phone call. It was also unfortunate that the two people who asked to be interviewed did not respond to an interview request, and that the majority of the respondents for the survey specifically stated that they did not want a follow up interview. An interview would have allowed more insight into the situation.

The data gathered, however, did allow for comparisons to be made and an analysis of the situation to be considered from many different viewpoints. This analysis was done through the relationship of knowledge that the superintendents had to the decisions that were being made as well as how their level of support for historic preservation influenced the process being undertaken and the final result of decisions that affected school buildings.

It was important to know who the decision makers were in each district and their decision-making process in order to determine what can be done to keep historic schools in use, and how these individuals can become more informed. The chance for historic schools versus new schools based on decision maker preference was discussed. Finally, the most important aspects of school buildings were given as were the primary, secondary, and tertiary reasons for historic schools being closed.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The existing literature regarding schools being closed sheds light on a lot of the issues surrounding the problem, however, this does not allow for solutions to be realized. This is a nationwide issue but similar to other issues that occur all across the country, there may be different components to it in different locations. This thesis set out to determine what issues and policies were most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island. The hypothesis, based on the literature, was that the most cited policies and issues for the abandonment of historic schools would be based on lack of knowledge about historic preservation, the belief that the advanced technology of today cannot be implemented within the framework of a historic school, and the strict regulation of state policies that ultimately promote new construction. School administrators cited more general issues for why they closed their historic schools, therefore disproving this hypothesis.

While school administrators stated their answers in a variety of ways, the reasons for historic schools being closed in Rhode Island came down to three issues: decline in student population, cost, and maintenance and safety. All three issues directly correlate with what every school administrator stated: "The learning environment is the most important aspect about a school building." School buildings should be functional. They need to be able to serve student needs appropriately and effectively. Finally, they need to be up to date. People believe that students learn better when they have the most advanced technology, and that teachers can teach more effectively. This is not necessarily true, but if it is what those making the decisions believe, then it has to be addressed.

<u>5.2 Overall Findings and Other Observations</u>

With this review, it has been found that there is a large amount of information and research that has been done on historic community centered schools. There is now a good ten year push behind this preservation issue which has led to a constant updating of information. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is not the only leading organization anymore as they were in 2000, when they published "Why Johnny Can't Walk to School." Many other organizations from the national level all the way down to the local level are providing information on what community centered schools are and what to do about the issues they face. In addition to these organizations, there are a lot of people locally that are giving input on their communities. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has at least twenty solid case studies on the issue, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education has a variety of case studies also.

It has also been observed that while there is a lot of information on this topic, there is not as much that is solely focused on historic schools. Many sources deal with new construction in community centered areas. That information was still informative because it gave a good sense of what a community centered school is, which allowed a combination of information in order to set up the argument that historic schools are community centered schools. It was noticed that the NTHP seems to be trying to be more user friendly in their publications. "Why Johnny Can't Walk to School" was cover to cover text with the only graphic being the front cover, while "Helping Johnny Walk to School" has pictures, charts, graphs, and supplementary sections on case studies of the issue right on the corresponding page. It is interesting to see that the National Trust for Historic Preservation is not as concerned about historic schools staying in use, just as long as they do not get torn down.

In "Hide and Seek: Where is Your School?" Kuhlman (2010) sums it up best:

"Preservationists need to join with those interested in reducing waistlines and budgets. We need to work with those who are concerned about property values as well as those concerned about property taxes. Our best buddies should be those encouraging walkability and climate change. There are a lot of places where preservation interests converge with others around school siting. By creating a broad coalition, we can ensure a healthier future for both our children and our communities." Even though this initiative was started at the national level, the local communities are now the driving force behind making it happen with the use of the national organizations resources, while it is really the states policies that are being affected and amended.

When historic schools are kept inn continued use, a lot of money is saved when renovating the buildings, historically significant buildings that define the character of the town are preserved, communities are brought together, and children are educated with 21st century educational standards and state-of-the-art technology. Community centered schools are a major preservation issue right now but with the push that is happening from all across the nation, the education of children will be the best it has ever been with this combination of all good aspects from the past, the present, and continuing on into the future.

5.3 Decline in Student Population

Out of 16 possible answers, decline in student population was given four times. According to the literature, this is a problem that has been stated multiple times as to why historic schools are being closed. Of course, this is always given in conjunction with other reasons: schools are very rarely closed based on this issue alone. Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done to change a decline in student enrollment. A solution that is sometimes used is to close a few schools and to build a new school that can house all the students in one building. This is unfortunate because it means that many historic schools are abandoned.

According to the literature, the new school is usually built on the outskirts of town causing transportation issues and other new issues.

An issue was stated that the historic schools were too small; this can fit in with decline in student population because the conversation and its solutions can be the same. If a school is too small, classrooms will be overcrowded, students must be redistricted to other schools, or a new school facility must be found. Economies of scale was also tied into this issue. A school that is too small can be thought to not perform as efficiently as a new bigger school.

5.4 Cost

No matter what the topic is, a discussion of money is usually brought up. It can be said many different ways, but it usually comes down to money and whether or not there is enough of it. Cost was given as a reason for closing schools five times. There is a false opinion that exists out there in the non-preservation world that rehabilitating historic buildings costs more than new more modern buildings. This is not true as has been stated multiple times in the existing literature. It was said that the historic schools that were closed were the most expensive to keep open.

Budgetary reasons are also cause for school closure. The money to fund schools comes from tax payers' dollars. This money is provided to individual schools by the state usually accompanied by guidelines that address how it can or cannot be spent. Budgetary issues can be started at the state level or at the local level. Local school committees and superintendents could have other priorities therefore leaving little money to maintain their historic schools. It is also a possibility that they did not have enough money in the first place, no matter how old the school buildings were.

When someone states that there is a lack of resources to repair a school building, this

usually refers once again to money. If there is a lack of money, then the materials and labor needed to repair or rehabilitate the building are not available either. This issue in conjunction with other reasons can end up with a new school being built, regardless of the lack before of money. In this case however, the historic school was closed and a new one was not built, showing a clear lack of funding.

Finances can also come up as part of the cost discussion. This can be brought up solely on its own or as part of other conversations. Other issues with school buildings can lead to the financial decision being made.

5.5 Maintenance and Safety

Maintenance and safety can be a part of the cost discussion as well or it can stand on its own. There can be issues with the condition of the school building due to a lack of maintenance. School buildings due to an extreme lack of maintenance can become unsafe for students, teachers, and staff to be in every day. A school environment needs to be safe. School buildings, historic or otherwise, have an exceptional amount of people going through them each and every day of the school year, and can be used during the summer as well. Finally, the issue of historic schools not being up to code and not conforming to ADA standards was a concluding factor of why historic school buildings were closed. Historic buildings can be exempt from certain current codes, though since it is a public building, it must meet ADA standards.

5.6 Future Benefits for Preservationists

This study set out to determine why historic schools are being closed in Rhode Island and now will be able to add a quantitative aspect to a preservation issue that has been mostly qualitative since the initiative to preserve historic schools started back in 2000. The data that comes out of this study allows for a more in depth analysis of why historic schools are being

abandoned in a particular state instead of the overarching principles stated for the whole phenomenon. While solid research has been done on why historic schools are important and what can be done to help issue of abandonment and school closure, it has not resulted in a widespread continued use of historic school buildings. This study has now shown exactly why historic schools are being closed in Rhode Island. It shows where the misconceptions are and some of the thought process behind the decisions being made. Another preservationist can now take this research and combat those issues with practical solutions that will keep historic schools in use or at least encourage and make it easier for the rehabilitation of historic schools instead of new construction, whether this be by guides and workshops to give local school committees and superintendents an informed decision making process or by enabling legislature. Widespread generalizations at this point cannot be made until the majority of superintendents and Board of Regents members have responded.

5.7 Conclusion

The three issues stated as to why historic schools are being closed in Rhode Island were decline in student population, cost, and maintenance and safety. These issues have all be discussed in the literature of reasons why historic school buildings are being abandoned though they are much more simplified than the hypothesis suggested they might be.

The hypothesis, based on the literature, was that the most cited policies and issues for the abandonment of historic schools would be based on lack of knowledge about historic preservation, the belief that the advanced technology of today cannot be implemented within the framework of a historic school, and the strict regulation of state policies that ultimately promote new construction. Cost and maintenance can be a key part of any of the aforementioned policies and issues.

It was important to understand the specific reasons why historic schools were being abandoned in Rhode Island so that solutions can now be found. The fact that there was such consensus among the key issues was astounding, and will be a great component towards solving this problem.

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Individual Research Project Proposals
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARD
COVER SHEET FOR NEW INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSALS
Name of Principal Investigator: Carolyn Reid
Date of Submission: January 28, 2012
Department: Historic Preservation
School: School of Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation
Name of Faculty Advisor: Jeremy Wells

Title of Research Project: *What were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island*
Grant funding supporting this research: Not Applicable

Researcher code of ethics: I declare that I have read the Roger Williams University Statement of Researchers' Ethical Principles for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research and am familiar with my obligations thereunder. Furthermore, I agree to abide by that Statement of Ethical Principles adopted by Roger Williams University as part of the Human Subject Review Board Policy.
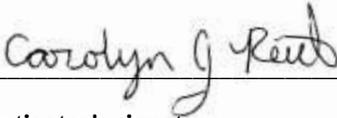
Carolyn G Reid
_____
Investigator's signature

Review status sought by principle investigator. Circle one using the guidelines published by the HSRB. Note that the HSRB may change the status of the review.

EXEMPT   **(EXPEDITED)**   **FULL**

For HSRB Board use only:

Committee decision regarding review status:

EXEMPT   **EXPEDITED**   **FULL**

_____X_____ Approved- Completed, signed form on file with Roger Williams's University HSRB

_____ Resubmit

_____March 7, 2012
Signature of Chairperson   Date

_____
Signature of Chief Academic Officer   Date

Faculty/Staff/Graduate Student New Individual Research Projects

1. Project Description

The problem that this research is addressing, which is explicitly based on the literature review that was previously completed, is that historic schools, usually located in the center of the community, are being abandoned in favor of newly constructed suburban schools. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has recognized this issue as a major one since 2000 when they added historic neighborhood schools to the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000) In May 2008 they launched the *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities Through Smart Policy* project. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008) Historic schools are an issue because in many towns across the nation, structurally sound, easily rehabilitatable schools are being abandoned and left empty for years, while brand new schools are being built miles outside of the town. This means that millions of dollars are being wasted to build a brand new school while there is still a perfectly good school sitting in a prime location in the town. This also means that children can no longer walk to school, and must ride the bus which requires more money to come out of the town's budget.

The town budget for schools could be spent minimally on the historic school building bringing it up to code if necessary, but the majority of the money could still be spent on educating the children; buying textbooks and supplies, running special programs, funding the arts or sciences, paying the teachers well, etc. The abandoned historic school will sit empty for years, and then be reused with a use that does not promote the historic character and importance of the building. Then it could still possibly become vacant again and sit empty for decades until eventually, and unfortunately, it is probably torn down because it is in such disrepair that it can no longer be saved.

Based on the literature review, the first major theme is the perceived relationship between school facilities design and pedagogical outcomes. An example of this is the belief that only new schools can function to educate children. There are minimum square footage requirements, minimum school size requirements, the issue of technological advancements, and environmental concerns. (Cherry-Farmer, 2009; Yurko; National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2010) The second theme is that there are state and local policies that discourage the use of older or historic schools. One policy is that if historic school rehabilitation is going to cost over a certain percentage of what it will cost to build a new school then the new school must be built instead. (Highum, 2003; Glen et al, 2009; National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003; Building Educational Success Together, 2005) The third theme that comes out of the literature review is uninformed decision making, which is related to a misperception of the cost of rehabilitation versus new construction. Feasibility studies are not being done; this needs to be addressed or required before the decision making process takes place. (Earthman, 2009; Norton, 2007; McClelland et al, 2004; Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1998; Safe Route to School)

With these three themes, it has been observed that the decision making process regarding school facilities and historic schools needs to be more informed, and that this is a major problem that is occurring all across the nation, and that even with the push of national organizations and some states making informed decisions, more research is desperately needed to enable school officials to thoroughly consider historic school rehabilitation.

The phenomenon that is being studied is the rapid abandonment of historic schools in

favor of new construction that has been occurring all across the country for the past 10 years or so. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000, 2008) While much research has been undertaken, this is still a major issue as stated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other preservation organizations. (Providence Preservation Society, 2011) If historic schools continue to be used, a lot of money will be saved when renovating the buildings, historically significant buildings that define the character of the town will be preserved, communities will be brought together, and children will be educated with 21st century educational standards and state- of-the-art technology. (Community Centered Schools Offer Numerous Benefits; Why Johnny Can't Walk to School 2000)

Historic schools are a major preservation issue right now but with the push that is happening from all across the nation, and with this thesis that will provide the descriptive statistics on what is going wrong and how it can be changed, the education of children will be the best it has ever been with this combination of the historic school from the past and the technology of today, and can continue to flourish into the future.

Participants will be told that they are completing a survey and/or being interviewed in order to determine the reasons why historic schools in Rhode Island are being abandoned instead of being kept in continued use. They will complete a survey online or through a mail in survey, whichever is more convenient to them that will only take five to ten minutes of their time. The questions that will be asked have been provided in the appendix. If they were a supporter of the continued use of their historic schools and choose to write down their name, then their survey will be followed up with an interview that will take no more than thirty minutes of their time. Sample interview questions have also been provided in the appendix.

2. Participants

The sites that will be researched in this thesis are all of the historic schools, elementary and secondary, in the state of Rhode Island that are or have been part of the public school systems and districts. The population is the school officials that have the power to make the decision as to whether a historic school is continued to be used, or if a new school is to be built. This is the state superintendent, the 36 district superintendents, the nine Board of Regents members, and their two staff persons. All participants will be over the age of 18. A chart with all of their names and contact info is included in the appendix.

3. Research Procedures and Methodology

The main research question that will be answered by this thesis is which issues and policies are most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island. A sub question of this is what actions do school officials who support the continued use of historic schools think can prevent the abandonment of historic schools. The sub question will be answered via a qualitative method, the interview methodology. My hypothesis, based on the literature, is that the most cited policies and issues for the abandonment of historic schools will be based on lack of knowledge about historic preservation, the belief that the advanced technology of today cannot be implemented within the framework of a historic school, and the strict regulation of state policies that ultimately promote new construction.

The intent of this thesis will be to answer the research questions and sub questions and to either prove or disprove the hypothesis. At the end of all the research, the issues and policies that are given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island will have been determined. The second, and primary, intent of this thesis is to find a way to keep schools in continued use so that they are no longer abandoned when this decision (to abandon the schools) is not necessary, whether this thesis accomplishes that on its own, or gives another researcher the ability and leads

to do so.

      A quantitative method, a survey methodology, will be used primarily, to answer the main research question. If time allows, a qualitative methods approach, an interview methodology, will also be used to answer the sub research question.

      The sites that will be researched in this thesis are all of the historic schools, elementary and secondary, in the state of Rhode Island that are or have been part of the public school systems and districts. The population is the school officials that have the power to make the decision as to whether a historic school is continued to be used, or if a new school is to be built. This is the state superintendent, the 36 district superintendents, the nine Board of Regents members, and their two staff persons. This census will include every single public school and public school official in the state. The total population is too small to only obtain a representative sample; the results would not be statistically valid.

      The theoretical perspective that will be used for this research is post-positivist for the quantitative methodology aspects because there is measurable evidence that can be obtained via a survey methodology. An invariable truth exists and is objective. There will be an etic, or outsider perspective. When the interview methodology is undertaken however, the theoretical perspective will be constructivist though also very pragmatic. This is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the post-positivist, because truth is relative, subjective, and has meaning.

      The research methodology that will be used will be primarily quantitative, but may include a mixed methods approach as well. A survey methodology will be used to compile descriptive statistical data with the issues and reasons for historic school abandonment. If there is sufficient time, an interview methodology will also be undertaken with those school officials that had to make the decision to abandon their school[s] even though they wanted to keep them in continued use. This will allow those officials to become empowered to make a difference to other school officials who are in the position where they once were.

      The specific methods that will be used are surveys, and interviews. The surveys will be sent out with a letter explaining the intent of this research, or if more feasible and realistic, a survey instrument such as Survey Monkey will be used. The interviews will be done through email if possible, if it is wished that there is a strict set of questions, or in person, to fully understand what the school officials would like to have happen, and what they think could truly help this situation. This information will then be shared among all participants so that they can as a group see what the commonalities were, and what they think might be the best solutions. I will be directly involved in collecting the data. Interviews will only be written down, not recorded.

      The data that has been collected will be analyzed altogether so that all issues and policies that were stated are represented. This will be done through descriptive and multivariate statistics. The data from the interviews will be compiled into a list in order to understand what is going wrong that is resulting in many schools being abandoned, and what might help in order to change this. This will help see where the commonalities lie, and what schools officials think might be the best solution.

4. Consent Procedures

      Informed consent will be obtained through the use of one of three informed consent forms based on whether the person is participating through a mailed survey, an online survey, or an interview.

      For the survey, informed consent will be obtained through the cover letter and introduction page online to the survey. Personal identifiers will only be collected to make sure that there is 100% completion by the population and if the respondent had an interest in the

continued use of their historic schools and chooses to put their name down for an interview. The interviewees will be self-selected through the survey. However, as there are always a lot of politics surround school decisions, potential risk to school officials will be minimized by keeping their name, position, and the school district that they work for anonymous if asked to do so. This will be especially important if their job has ever been at risk for decisions that they have made regarding school building use, or any other school related decisions.

5. Data Confidentiality

The findings of the research will be presented without identifying who said what. The survey data will be discussed as a whole, combining all of the information that was received. Interviewee's names and positions will remain confidential. Personal identifiers will not be included in the final research product. When participants are taking the survey, personal identifiers will only be collected to determine who still has yet to complete the survey so that a census of the population can be obtained.

6. Risks /Discomfort to the Participants

There are not any major anticipated ethical issues for this thesis. There will be no more than minimal harm incurred by participants. The only discomfort may be not having complete knowledge of the question that is being asked, or feeling that they are not in the position to answer some questions. This will be solved by giving a "Don't know" option to the questions. If they are uncomfortable answering questions because of criticism they received for making a decision then there will be an opportunity to "opt out" of answering those questions. In addition, I, as the investigator, will be the only one who knows who gave what responses.

7. Benefits of the Study

There are a few expected outcomes of this research. The first outcome will be a list of issues and/or policies that were given by school officials as to why the historic school did not remain in continued use. There will be descriptive statistics that show the percentages of these reasons being stated. This thesis can then be the basis for school officials in other states to learn what school officials think the issues are with historic schools, and how this can be addressed in their own states, if they want their historic schools to remain in continued use. If there is a sufficient amount of time, this thesis will undertake research with school officials who wanted to remain in their historic schools, or who did remain in them, in order to fully understand how they made this possible or what measures can be put in place, by law if necessary, to keep their schools, and other schools, in continued use. It will give school officials policies to follow that will allow them to promote or choose to rehabilitate their historic schools instead of closing many schools and building one single large brand new school. By talking to the key decision-makers in this process about what they think will help this rapidly growing issue, school officials across the nation can use this as a insightful, motivational case study and save their schools.

Informed Consent Form for Survey (Letter)
What were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Carolyn Reid, a Master's in Historic Preservation Candidate in the School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University. You are being asked because you are one of the 36 district superintendent in the state of Rhode Island, the state superintendent, or one of the Board of Regents members.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why historic schools (fifty years or older) in Rhode Island were closed and abandoned instead of being kept in continued use.

Procedures to be Followed: You will be asked to fill out a survey regarding the historic schools in Rhode Island. You will only be contacted again after completing the survey if you wrote your name down requesting a further interview.

Time Duration of the Procedures and Study: Only five to ten minutes of your time will be required to complete the survey. All surveys will be conducted during the month of March. If you so choose, you may write down your name for a further interview which will be conducted within the month of March, and will only take an additional thirty minutes of your time.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the investigator and his/her assistants will have access to your identity and to information that can be associated with you. Personal identifiers will only be collected during the survey in order for the investigator to make sure that there is 100% participation from participants. In the final research document, no personal identifiers will be included. All information will remain confidential.

Right to Ask Questions: If you have any questions, please contact the investigator Carolyn Reid at creid449@g.rwu.edu. You may also contact the faculty advisor Jeremy Wells at jwells@rwu.edu or at (401)254-5338. The university address is School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, One Old Ferry Road, Bristol, RI 02809.

Compensation: No additional costs will be incurred from participating in this survey. Compensation will not be provided for your participation.

Voluntary Participation/ Risks: Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You will not incur any more than minimal harm by participating.

This is to certify that I consent to or give permission for my participation as a volunteer in this research study. I have read this form and understand the content. I certify by signing this form that I am at least 18 years of age.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date

This is to certify that I have defined and explained this research study to the participant named above.

_____ _____
Investigator's Signature   Date

Informed Consent Form for Survey (Online)
What were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Carolyn Reid, a Master's in Historic Preservation Candidate in the School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University. You are being asked because you are one of the 36 district superintendent in the state of Rhode Island, the state superintendent, or one of the Board of Regents members.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why historic schools (fifty years or older) in Rhode Island were closed and abandoned instead of being kept in continued use.

Procedures to be Followed: You will be asked to fill out a survey regarding the historic schools in Rhode Island. You will only be contacted again after completing the survey if you wrote your name down requesting a further interview.

Time Duration of the Procedures and Study: Only five to ten minutes of your time will be required to complete the survey. All surveys will be conducted during the month of March. If you so choose, you may write down your name for a further interview which will be conducted within the month of March, and will only take an additional thirty minutes of your time.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the investigator and his/her assistants will have access to your identity and to information that can be associated with you. Personal identifiers will only be collected during the survey in order for the investigator to make sure that there is 100% participation from participants. In the final research document, no personal identifiers will be included. All information will remain confidential.

Right to Ask Questions: If you have any questions, please contact the investigator Carolyn Reid at creid449@g.rwu.edu. You may also contact the faculty advisor Jeremy Wells at jwells@rwu.edu or at (401)254-5338. The university address is School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, One Old Ferry Road, Bristol, RI 02809.

Compensation: No additional costs will be incurred from participating in this survey. Compensation will not be provided for your participation.

Voluntary Participation/ Risks: Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You will not incur any more than minimal harm by participating.

By clicking on the survey link you consent to complete the survey and that you are at least 18 years of age. It also certifies that the research study has been defined and explained to you.

Informed Consent Form for Interview
What were School Officials Thinking: The Abandonment of Historic Schools in Rhode Island

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Carolyn Reid, a Master's in Historic Preservation Candidate in the School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University. You are being asked because you are one of the 36 district superintendent in the state of Rhode Island, the state superintendent, or one of the Board of Regents members.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons why historic schools (fifty years or older) in Rhode Island were closed and abandoned instead of being kept in continued use.

Procedures to be Followed: You will be interviewed regarding your responses to the previous survey, and your thoughts as to what can be done to prevent the abandonment of more historic schools in Rhode Island. The interview will be conducted in person, through email or over the phone, whatever your preference may be. The interview will not be recorded.

Time Duration of the Procedures and Study: This interview will be conducted during the month of March and will only take thirty minutes of your time.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the investigator and his/her assistants will have access to your identity and to information that can be associated with you. In the final research document, no personal identifiers will be included. All information will remain confidential.

Right to Ask Questions: If you have any questions, please contact the investigator Carolyn Reid at creid449@g.rwu.edu. You may also contact the faculty advisor Jeremy Wells at jwells@rwu.edu or at (401)254-5338. The university address is School of Art, Architecture, and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, One Old Ferry Road, Bristol, RI 02809.

Compensation: No additional costs will be incurred from participating in this interview Compensation will not be provided for your participation.

Voluntary Participation/ Risks: Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You will not incur any more than minimal harm by participating.

This is to certify that I consent to or give permission for my participation as a volunteer in this research study. I have read this form and understand the content. I certify by signing this form that I am at least 18 years of age.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date

This is to certify that I have defined and explained this research study to the participant named above.

_____ _____
Investigator's Signature   Date

Solicitation Email #1

Hello,

My name is Carolyn Reid and I am a Master's in Historic Preservation Candidate at Roger Williams University. I am writing my thesis on the abandonment of historic schools in Rhode Island, and am hoping that you could spare a few minutes of your time to complete out a survey regarding this matter. It will only take five to ten minutes of your time but will have a huge impact on my research. This survey will allow me to understand why historic schools are being closed, why new schools are being built, and the overall decision making process. I want to make sure I understand all the issues behind school facility decisions, and to make sure that all opinions and facts are represented.

I hope you can help me in this endeavor, I would great appreciate it.

Feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Reid

Solicitation Email #2

Hello,

My name is Carolyn Reid and I sent an email (attached) two weeks ago about completing a survey regarding the abandonment of historic schools in Rhode Island. I would really appreciate it if you could complete my survey. It would only take five to ten minutes of your time, and will give you a chance to see how other school districts in Rhode Island are dealing with school facility issues, or how they are succeeding. I will provide you with a copy of my thesis when completed if you are interested in seeing the results. You can find the survey at http://goo.gl/vvzRg.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Reid

Contact Solicitation List

Code	Name	Grades	Administrator	Title	Type	Address	City, State Zip	Phone	Email	Website
	Deborah A. Gist		State Superintendent			255 Westminster Street	Providence, RI 02903		Deborah.gist@ride.ri.gov	http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/
	Hayley Jamroz			Executive Staff Assistant				(401) 222-4600	Hayley.jamroz@ride.ri.gov	
01	Barrington	PK - 12	Robert McIntyre	Superintendent	LEA	283 County Road PO Box 95	Barrington, RI 02806	(401) 245-5000	mcintyrer@bpsmail.org	barringtonschools.org
03	Burrillville	PK - 12	Frank Pallotta	Superintendent	LEA	2300 Bronco Highway	Harrisville, RI 02830	(401) 568-1301	pallottaf@bsd-ri.net	www.bsd-ri.net
04	Central Falls	PK - 12	Frances Gallo	Superintendent	LEA	21 Hedley Avenue	Central Falls, RI 02863	(401) 727-7700x132	gallof@cfschools.net	cfschools.net
06	Coventry	PK - 12	Michael Convery	Superintendent	LEA	1675 Flat River Road	Coventry, RI 02816	(401) 822-9400x223	converymike@coventryschools.net	www.coventryschools.net
07	Cranston	PK - 12	Peter Nero	Superintendent	LEA	845 Park Avenue	Cranston, RI 02910	(401) 270-8170	superintendent@cpsed.net	www.cpsed.net
08	Cumberland	PK - 12	Phil Thornton	Superintendent	LEA	2602 Mendon Road	Cumberland, RI 02864	(401) 658-1600	phil.thornton@cumberlandschools.org	www.cumberlandschools.org
09	East Greenwich	PK - 12	Victor Mercurio	Superintendent	LEA	111 Peirce Street	East Greenwich, RI 02818	(401) 398-1201	vmercurio@egsd.net	www.egsd.net
10	East Providence	PK - 12	Edward Daft	Interim Superintendent	LEA	80 Burnside Avenue	East Providence, RI 02914	(401) 433-6222	edaft@epschoolsri.com	www.epschoolsri.com
12	Foster	KG - 05	Davida Irving	Superintendent	LEA	160 Foster Ctr Rd/Isaac	Foster, RI 02825	(401) 647-5100	dirving@fg.k12.ri.us	www.ri.net/schools/Foster
13	Glocester	PK - 05	Patricia Dubois	Superintendent	LEA	Glocester Town Hall 1145 Putnam Pike	Chepachet, RI 02814	(401) 568-4160Ext 3	rid25595@ride.ri.net	www.glocesterri.org/school.htm

						P.O.Box B				
15	Jamestown	PK - 12	Marcia Lukon	Superintendent	LEA	76 Melrose Avenue	Jamestown, RI 02835	(401) 423-7020	Lukon.marcia@jamestownschools.org	www.jamestownri.com/school/
16	Johnston	PK - 12	Bernard DiLullo	Superintendent	LEA	10 Memorial Avenue	Johnston, RI 02919	(401) 233-1900	bdilullo@johnstonschools.org	www.johnstonschools.org
17	Lincoln	PK - 12	Georgia Fortunato	Superintendent	LEA	1624 Lonsdale Avenue	Lincoln, RI 02865	(401) 721-3313	gfortunato@lincolnps.org	www.lincolnps.org
18	Little Compton	KG - 08	Kathryn Crowley	Superintendent	LEA	28 Commons	Little Compton, RI 02837	(401) 635-2351	kcrowley@littlecomptonschools.org	www.littlecomptonschools.org
19	Middletown	PK - 12	Rosemarie Kraeger	Superintendent	LEA	26 Oliphant Lane	Middletown, RI 02842	(401) 849-2122	rkraeger@mpsri.net	www.mpsri.net
20	Narragansett	PK - 12	Katherine Sipala	Superintendent	LEA	25 Fifth Avenue	Narragansett, RI 02882	(401) 792-9450	ksipala@narragansett.k12.ri.us	www.narragansett.k12.ri.us/
21	Newport	PK - 12	John Ambrogi	Superintendent	LEA	15 Wickham Road	Newport, RI 02840	(401) 847-2100	johnambrogi@newportrischools.org	www.newportrischools.org
22	New Shoreham	KF - 12	Robert Hicks	Superintendent	LEA	,		(401) 466-7727	rhicks@bi.k12.ri.us	
23	North Kingstown	PK - 12	Philip Auger	Superintendent	LEA	100 Fairway Drive	North Kingstown, RI 02852	(401) 268-6431	phil_auger@nksd.net	www.nksd.net
24	North Providence	PK - 12	Donna Ottaviano	Superintendent	LEA	2240 Mineral Spring Ave.	North Providence, RI 02911	(401) 233-1100	rid25071@ride.ri.net	www.northprovidenceri.gov/schooldept.htm
25	North Smithfield	PK - 12	Stephen Lindberg	Superintendent	LEA	83 Greene Street PO Box 72	Slatersville, RI 02876	(401) 769-5492	slindberg@nsps.us	www.northsmithfieldschools.com
26	Pawtucket	PK - 12	Debbie Cylke	Superintendent	LEA	286 Main Street PO Box 388	Pawtucket, RI 02860	(401) 729-6315	cylked@psdri.net	www.psdri.net
27	Portsmouth	PK - 12	Lynn Krizic	Superintendent	LEA	29 Middle	Portsmouth, RI	(401) 683-	krizicl@portsmo	www.portsmouth

ID	District	Grades	Name	Title	Type	Address	City, State Zip	Phone	Email	Website
						Road	02871	1039	uthschoolsri.org	schoolsri.net
28	Providence	PK - 12	Susan Lusi	Interim Superintendent	LEA	797 Westminster Street	Providence, RI 02903	(401) 456-9211	Susan.Lusi@ppsd.org	www.providenceschools.org
30	Scituate	PK - 12	Paul Lescault	Superintendent	LEA	197 Danielson Pike PO 188	North Scituate, RI 02857	(401) 647-4100	plescault@scituateri.net	www.scituateri.net
31	Smithfield	PK - 12	Robert O'Brien	Superintendent	LEA	49 Farnum Pike	Smithfield, RI 02917	(401) 231-6606	robrien@smithfield-ps.org	www.smithfield-ps.org
32	South Kingstown	PK - 12	Kristen Stringfellow	Superintendent	LEA	307 Curtis Corner Road	Wakefield, RI 02879	(401) 360-1300	kstringfellow@skschools.net	fc.skschools.net
33	Tiverton	PK - 12	William Rearick	Superintendent	LEA	100 North Brayton Road	Tiverton, RI 02878	(401) 624-8475	wrearick@tivertonschools.org	www.tivertonschools.org
35	Warwick	PK - 12	Peter Horoschak	Superintendent	LEA	34 Warwick Lake Avenue	Warwick, RI 02889	(401) 734-3100	horoschakp@warwickschools.org	www.warwickschools.org
36	Westerly	PF - 12	Roy Seitsinger	Superintendent	LEA	15 Highland Avenue Babcock Hall	Westerly, RI 02891	(401) 315-1516	rseitsinger@westerly.k12.ri.us	westerly.k12.ri.us
38	West Warwick	PK - 12	Kenneth Sheehan	Superintendent	LEA	10 Harris Avenue	West Warwick, RI 02893	(401) 821-1180	ksheehan@westwarwickpublicschools.com	westwarwickpublicschools.com
39	Woonsocket	PK - 12	Giovanna Donoyan	Superintendent	LEA	108 High Street McFee Administration Building	Woonsocket, RI 02895	(401) 767-4600	gdonoyan@woonsocketschools.com	woonsocketschools.com
96	Bristol Warren	PK - 12	Melinda Thies	Superintendent	LEA	151 State Street	Bristol, RI 02809	(401) 253-4000x5123	thiesm@bw.k12.ri.us	www2.bw.k12.ri.us
97	Exeter-West Greenwich	PK - 12	Thomas Geismar	Superinten dent	LEA	940 Nooseneck Hill Road	West Greenwich, RI 02817	(401) 397-5125	thomas_geismar@ewg.k12.ri.us	ewg.k12.ri.us

98	Chariho	PK - 12	Barry Ricci	Superint en dent	LEA	455A Switch Road	Wood River Junction , RI 02894	(401) 364-7575	barry.ric ci @charih o. k12.ri.us	www.ch ar iho.k12. ri. us
99	Foster-Gloceste r	06 - 12	Michael Barnes	Superint en dent	LEA	91 Anan Wade Road	North Scituate, RI 02857	(401) 710-7500	mbarnes @ fg.k12.ri .u s	www.fg. k 12.ri.us

Boards of Regents Members

Angela M. Teixeira

 Special Assistant to the Commissioner and Liaison to the Board of Regents

255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903

401-22-8435Angela.Teixeira@r ide.ri.gov

George D. Caruolo, Esq., Chairman

Patrick A. Guida, Esq., Vice-Chairman

Colleen A. Callahan, Ed.D,. Secretary

Lorne A. Adam

Carolina B. Bernal

Dr. Robert L. Carothers

Karin Forbes

Mathies (Mat) J. Santos

Betsy P. Shimberg

Neil Galvin, Legal Counsel

Survey questions:

In order to answer→ Which issues and policies are most given as to why historic schools are abandoned in Rhode Island.

Yes or no questions:

1. Do you have an educational background in historic preservation?
2. Do you have an educational background in economics?
3. Are you a supporter of historic preservation? Likert scale 1-5. 1 being no support, 5 being total support.
4. Over the past x years, how many times have you recommended construction of a new school building in place of rehabilitating an existing school building? Never, once, one to five times, five times or more…
5. How familiar are you with the detailed costs and scope of work in rehabilitating an existing school building versus constructing a new one? Likert scale 1-5 with 1 being "Not familiar at all" and 5 being "Very familiar."
6. To what extent do public forums influence decisions to rehabilitate an existing school building versus constructing a new one? 1-5 scale with 1 being "Never" and 5 being "All the time."
7. Where decisions need to be made to determine if an existing school should be rehabilitated versus constructing a new school, how often is a feasibility study of both scenarios completed to assist in the decision-making process? 1-5 scale with 1 being "Never" and 5 being "All the time."
8. To what extent do you agree with this statement: Existing schools can almost always be cost-effectively rehabilitated to facilitate effective student learning? Likert scale of 1-5 with 1 being "Disagree," 2 being "Somewhat disagree", 3 being "Neither agree nor disagree," 4 being "Somewhat agree," and 5 being "Agree."
9. Do you have guidelines on how to determine whether a school should be closed?
10. Are there minimum requirements for the size of a school?

Multiple Choice Questions:

11. Who typically makes the final decision to decommission existing schools?
12. Who typically makes the final decision to build a new school?
13. What do you believe is the most important aspect about a school building?
14. What is the primary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?
15. What is the secondary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?
16. What is the tertiary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?
17. Who played a role in this decision making process?

18. What resources did you turn to when making the decision to close or keep in use historic schools?

Insert a # question:

1. How many schools are there in your district?
2. How many historic schools (fifty years or older) are there in your district?
3. How many new schools (newer than 49 years old) are there in your district?
4. How many schools have been built within the last ten years?
5. How many schools are in the process of being built?
6. At the moment, how many schools are under consideration for closure?
7. How long (number of years) have you been a superintendent in your current district for?

Sample Interview Questions:

In order to answer → What actions do school officials who support the continued use of historic schools think can prevent the abandonment of historic schools.

1. Why did you support the continued use of the historic schools in your district/the historic schools in the state?

2. What factors went into the decision of whether to keep a school in continued use or to abandon it?

3. In the majority of cases when a historic school was closed, was a new school built or were many schools closed and consolidated even if they still remained in one of the historic schools?

4. What do you think can be done to keep schools in continued use?

5. What are the barriers of historic schools being kept in continued use?

6. What were the reasons in your district that the historic schools were closed?

7. Are there any organizations that you think could help keep schools in continued use?

8. Were there any resources that you turned to when making these decisions?

Survey Data:

Respondent	Job	# of Years in Position
1- Male	Superintendent	5.5 Years
2- Male	Superintendent	5 Years
3- Female	Board of Regents	4 Years
4- Male	Superintendent	2 Years
5- Male	Superintendent	2 Years
6- Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
7- Male	Superintendent	1 Year
8- Male	Superintendent	7 Years
9- Female	Superintendent	3 Years
10- Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
11- Male	Superintendent	1 Year

	Do you have an educational background in historic preservation?	Do you have an educational background in economics?	Do you have guidelines on how to determine whether a school should be closed?	Are there mimimum requirements for the size of a school?	Are you a supporter of historic preservation?
3/21/2012 6:18:50	No	No	Yes	No	4
3/21/2012 8:05:01	No	No	No	No	4
3/27/2012 12:40:09	No	No	No	Yes	4
4/1/2012 21:02:11	No	Yes	Yes	No	4
4/2/2012 8:24:13	No	No	Yes	Yes	4
4/2/2012 8:34:54	No	Yes	No	Yes	4
4/2/2012 10:41:46					
4/17/2012 16:04:42	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
4/18/2012 9:32:55	No	No	No	Yes	5
5/3/2012 15:15:07	No	No	Yes	Yes	4
5/3/2012 15:26:07	No	No	Yes	No	4

About how many times have you recommended construction of a new school building in place of rehabilitating an existing school building while you have had this current job?	How familiar are you with the detailed costs and scope of work in rehabilitating an existing school building versus constructing a new one?	To what extent do public forums influence decisions to rehabilitate an existing school building versus constructing a new one?	When decisions need to be made to determine if an existing school should be rehabilitated versus constructing a new school, how often is a feasibility study of both scenarios completed to assist in the decision-making process?	To what extent do you agree with this statement: Existing schools can almost always be cost-effectively rehabilitated to facilitate effective student learning?
Never	5	4	5	2
Never	4	3	5	2
	1			
Never	4	5	3	4
One to four times	4	3	5	2
Once	4	4	4	3
Once	4	4	4	2
One to four times	1	5	4	3
Never	3	4	4	3
Never	2	4	5	4

Who typically makes the final decision to decommission existing schools?	Who typically makes the final decision to build a new school?	What do you believe is the most important aspect about a school building?
In RI, by regulation, the Facilities Committee of the district does. does.	Facilities Committee	safety
School Committee	School Committee	Functiionality
Local School committees in conjunction with superintendents	local school committees in conjunction with superintendents	serving student needs apporpriately
Ride	Ride	Learning environment
School Committee	School Committee	up to date learning facilities
School Committee	School Committee	Infrastructure
School Committee	School Committee	Teaching and Learning
The town	The town	Safety
School Committee	Voters of the town	Learning environment

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What is the primary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?	What is the secondary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?	What is the tertiary reason why historic schools in your district have been closed?	Who played a role in this decision making process?	What resources did you turn to when making the decision to close or keep in use historic schools?
Lack of resources to repair it.	unsafe	location	Members of the Facilities Committee and City fathers	RIDE, Historic Preservation Society, Private firms
None have been closed	None have been cosed	None have been closed	N/A	n/a
Finance	Maintenance	Student population decline	Admin, school committee, building committee, town council	Architet, community leaders, contractors
declining enrollment	building not meeting current codes	N/A	Superintendent and school Committee	Public safety and NASDEC predictions
Declining Enrollment	Budgetary Reasons	Condition Issues	Superintendent	Community
Too small;economies of scale	ability to provide a environment that is safe and conformed with disabilities act.	The first two made the financial decision clear.	Community	analysis by professional engineers and archetects
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Decline in enrollment	Most expensive to keep open		School Department leadership, School Committee, citizens	Review of schools in district, educational needs, financial upkeep

How many schools are there in your district?	How many historic schools (fifty years or older) are there in your district?	How many new schools (newer than 49 years old) are there in your district?	How many schools have been built within the last ten years?	How many schools are in the process of being built?	At the moment, how many schools are under consideration for closure?
7	2	5	none	none	one closed this year
5	1	4	0	0	0
7	2	4	1	0	1
8	5	3	0	0	0
13	11	2	0	0	3
6	3	3	0	1	
1	1	0	0	0	0
8	2	6	1	0	0

Appendix C: Rhode Island Department of Education School Facilities Regulations

RIDE School Construction Regulations (5/24/07)
 RIDE 1.00

1 RIDE School Construction Regulations (5/24/07)

http://www.ride.ri.gov/finance/funding/construction/Documents/FY08%20Housing%20Aid/Prior%20to%20May%2031%20Updates/School_Constr_Regs_FINAL.pdf