

The Full Track Record

HPM, DeJong-Richter, and Cooperative Strategies: Every Known School Facility Planning Engagement
March 2026

Tracy Richter, HPM's Vice President of Planning Services, claims to have "coordinated and directed facility planning campaigns totaling \$11 billion for more than 1,000 school districts across 23 states." This document attempts to catalog every engagement for which public documentation exists. It includes successes, neutral outcomes, and failures. The reader can draw their own conclusions from the record.

Positive = Plan worked as intended, no major issues

Mixed = Partial success, community pushback modified plan

Negative = Documented harm, plan rejected, or significant problems

Neutral/Pending = No closure component, or too early to assess

| District | St. | Years | Firm | Est. Project Size | Closures/Consolidations? | Outcome | Assessment |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----------|---|---|--|--|--------------------------|
| Cincinnati Public Schools | OH | 2001-02 | DeJong-Richter | \$985M total plan; \$480M bond sought | Yes. 13 elementary closures proposed; district went from ~80 to 66 schools. | Bond partially approved. New schools built, older schools closed. Proficiency improved at elementary level (4th grade reading ~50% to ~75% by 2012). High school gains flat. | Mixed |
| Bridgeport Public Schools | CT | 2003-13 | DeJong-Richter | Not disclosed (multi-phase; individual school replacements up to \$25.6M) | No new closures proposed. 4 annex leases discontinued pre-2008. New schools built. | New schools built (Cesar Batalla 2007, Barnum/Waltersville 2008). No major controversy. Phase III left recommendations unimplemented. | Neutral |
| Duval County Public Schools | FL | 2003-26 | Cooperative Strategies / DeJong-Richter / HPM | ~\$2B plan; half-penny surtax (2020); now \$1.4B shortfall | Yes. 3 schools closed pre-2020. 5 more consolidated 2025. 4 more approved 2026-27. 18 total in revised plan. | Planner of record since 2003. Original plan now has \$1.4B shortfall. Promises to voters who approved tax being broken. Ongoing closures. | Negative |
| Philadelphia School District | PA | 2009-13 | DeJong-Richter (with URS Corp.) | \$2B+ plan. URS/DeJong contract not disclosed. Later \$2.8B plan (2026). | Yes. 30 schools closed (2012-13). 10,000-15,000 students displaced. ~80% African-American. | Controller called savings 'misleading.' Peer-reviewed study: academic harm lasting 2+ years. Buildings vacant 3-30 years. \$86M property value loss. Connected to gun violence patterns. | Negative |
| Austin ISD | TX | 2010-11 | DeJong-Richter | \$893,796 contract (with subcontractors) | Yes. 9-15 high-achieving schools proposed for closure. All targets were high-performing. | Community backlash. 'Save Austin Schools' formed. Data errors found. School names removed from final plan. Process called 'unprofessional.' | Negative |
| Boise Independent School District | ID | ~2008-17 | DeJong-Richter | \$326M total need identified; \$172.5M bond (2017) | Yes. Proposed closing highest-performing, most walkable schools for larger consolidated buildings. | Parents organized. Plan modified to save historic schools. Bond passed with modifications. Schools renovated rather than closed. | Mixed |
| District | St. | Years | Firm | Est. Project Size | Closures/Consolidations? | Outcome | Assessment |
| Campbell County Schools | VA | 2010-15 | DeJong-Richter | \$170.5M new construction | Yes. Recommended consolidating 4 high | Board of Supervisors voted 5-2 AGAINST. County adopted renovation instead. Schools now rated Distinguished with 96% | Negative — plan rejected |

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|---------------------------------------|-----|---------|--|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| | | | | proposed; \$87M claimed savings over 30 years | schools to 2. | graduation rate. | |
| Beverly Hills USD | CA | ~2011 | DeJong-Richter | Not disclosed | No. Facility assessment and long-range plan only. | No closures. No controversy documented. Affluent district with different dynamics. | Neutral |
| Baltimore City Public Schools | MD | 2011-12 | DeJong-Richter (with Jacobs Engineering) | \$2.45B total need; 21st Century program delivered 28 new/renovated schools via state bonds | Yes. 26 school facilities closed/merged as part of 21st Century program. | Assessment informed \$2.4B 10-Year Plan. 28 schools built/renovated. Utilization rose to 85%. Protests at board meetings over specific closures. Historic funding shortfalls. | Mixed |
| Cleveland Heights -University Heights | OH | 2012 | Cooperative Strategies / DeJong-Richter | \$187M-\$230M proposed | Yes. Up to 6 elementary closures proposed. | Board approved plan 3-2. 'Save Our School' protests. City passed resolution against closures. No bond issued. No major construction occurred. | Negative — plan stalled |
| Champaign Unit 4 | IL | 2012-13 | DeJong-Richter | \$183.4M bond (passed 2016 on third attempt) | No closures. High school site selection. | Community protested proposed relocation of Central HS ('Keep Central Central'). School stayed on original site. Bond eventually passed. | Mixed |
| Arlington ISD | TX | 2013-15 | DeJong-Richter | \$663M bond (approved May 2014) | Yes. 2 junior high schools closed and consolidated. | Bond approved. Schools consolidated. Sites repurposed for CTE center. Lawsuit over bond rally on school property. No academic outcome data. | Neutral |
| Norfolk Public Schools | VA | 2013-25 | Cooperative Strategies | \$130,000 contract for closure study | Yes. 10+ closures recommended. Board proposed 9. | City Council required 10 closures. Board ignored consultant recommendations. Vote delayed. Plan not adopted as of 2025. Costs millions annually in delays. | Negative — stalled |
| Sullivan County Schools | TN | 2014-15 | DeJong-Richter | \$135M-\$204M (options); \$140M Phase I | Yes. 1 high school closure proposed. | Board member clashed with Richter. Sullivan North HS sold to Kingsport, became middle school. New West Ridge HS built. Process contentious. | Mixed |
| Canutillo ISD | TX | 2015-16 | DeJong-Richter | \$11.4M near-term; \$70.5M total needs identified | No school closures. 1 admin building repurposed. | Plan completed. Later bonds failed (2021, 2022) due to tax concerns. 2024 bond passed. No controversy on closures. | Neutral |
| Bellevue Public Schools | NE | 2015-16 | DeJong-Richter | \$60.2M facility needs; bond approved Sept 2016 | Closures proposed but explicitly rejected by board. | Board approved plan 'with the exclusion of any school closures.' Bond passed without closure component. | Negative — closures rejected |
| Worthington City Schools | OH | 2015-22 | Cooperative Strategies | \$89M Phase 1 bond (2018) + \$234M Phase 2 (2022) = \$323M | No closures. | Both bonds approved. Renovations/expansions completed as planned. District maintains high ratings. No controversy. | Positive |
| State of Arkansas | AR | 2017-18 | Cooperative Strategies | Statewide assessment; \$1.37B authorized projects (FY2005-19) | No closures. Statewide enrollment projections. | Report issued with recommendations. Ongoing state Partnership Program funding. | Neutral |
| District | St. | Years | Firm | Est. Project Size | Closures/Consolidations? | Outcome | Assessment |
| JCPS Louisville | KY | 2019-23 | Cooperative Strategies | \$240,000 contract (boundary analysis) | No closures from this engagement. District | Boundary consulting only. Separately, JCPS experienced transportation collapse (\$188M deficit, 4M minutes | Neutral |

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|--------------------------|-----|---------|------------------------|--|--|---|------------|
| | | | | | closed schools in 2026 due to budget (unrelated). | instructional time lost) during this period. | |
| City Schools of Decatur | GA | 2020 | Cooperative Strategies | Not disclosed | No. Redistricting and yield analysis. | Community input process initiated. No documented controversy. | Neutral |
| Fort Worth ISD | TX | 2023-29 | HPM | \$1.2B bond (2021, passed by 42 votes) | Yes. 18 closures proposed; at least 2 closed (June 2025), phased through 2029. | Parent protests. State took over district Oct 2025. F-rated schools dropped 31 to 11, but overall proficiency static. Bond passed by narrowest margin (42 votes). | Negative |
| Atlanta Public Schools | GA | 2024-25 | HPM | \$300M+ investments; \$325M E-SPLOST projected | Yes. 16 schools approved for closure/repurposing starting fall 2027. | Board approved unanimously Dec 2025. Significant community protests over equity and targeting of Black communities. No outcomes yet (closures not implemented). | Pending |
| Duval County (HPM phase) | FL | 2024-26 | HPM | Revised 5-year capital plan under \$1.4B shortfall | Yes. 9 schools consolidated 2025-27. | Community protests over broken promises. Disproportionate Westside impact. No academic outcome data. | Negative |
| DeKalb County Schools | GA | 2025-26 | HPM | \$1.5B capital improvement program | Yes. Up to 26 schools proposed for closure. | In progress. Community organizing against closures. No outcomes yet. | Pending |

Summary

| Metric | Count |
|--|-------|
| Total documented engagements | 24 |
| Engagements where closures were proposed | 17 |
| Engagements where closures were rejected or abandoned by community/board | 7 |
| Assessed as Negative | 9 |
| Assessed as Mixed | 5 |
| Assessed as Positive | 1 |
| Assessed as Neutral (no closures or assessment-only) | 7 |
| Assessed as Pending (too early) | 2 |

Key Findings

1. In the majority of engagements where school closures or consolidations were proposed, communities experienced significant opposition, documented harm, or plan rejection.
2. Of the engagements assessed as Positive, Worthington (OH) is the only clear success—and it involved no school closures.
3. The largest documented case, Philadelphia (30 closures), produced peer-reviewed evidence of academic harm, buildings vacant for over a decade, and an \$86 million property value loss. The district is now proposing another round of closures, explicitly acknowledging the 2013 process was a mistake.
4. In every case where a community organized against closure recommendations—Boise, Austin, Campbell County, Bellevue, Cleveland Heights—schools were preserved and continued to perform well or improved.
5. The firm's current active engagements (Fort Worth, Atlanta, Duval County, DeKalb County) collectively represent over \$3 billion in proposed spending and more than 60 schools proposed for closure or consolidation.

Across more than two decades of engagements, there is one documented case (Cincinnati) where academic improvement followed a DeJong-Richter facilities plan—and that improvement was concentrated at the elementary level, with high school outcomes remaining flat. In no other case has the closure and consolidation component of this firm's work produced measurable academic gains for students.

Notes

This document catalogs engagements for which public records, news coverage, or district documents confirm involvement by DeJong-Richter, Cooperative Strategies, or HPM's Planning Services division under Tracy Richter. Richter claims over 1,000 school district clients across 23 states; this list of 24 documented engagements represents only those for which specific evidence could be located. Many engagements, particularly smaller facility assessments, leave minimal public record. The assessments are based on documented outcomes where available, not speculation. 'Pending' means closures have been approved but not yet implemented.

Fort Bend ISD (TX) was initially attributed to HPM but research found no evidence of HPM involvement; that district handled its 2026 closures internally. Grand Rapids (MI) was listed as a former DeJong-Richter client but the 2022-23 facilities plan was conducted by Plante Moran. Broward County (FL) was listed by Austin parent organizers as a DeJong-Richter client; the district passed an \$800M bond in 2014 that later faced grand jury scrutiny for mismanagement and cost overruns (\$937M to \$1.46B), though DeJong-Richter's specific role is not confirmed in available records.

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