

2026 VA CHAPTER CONFERENCE

Educational Environment Empowering Learners

WHEN: APRIL 20-22, 2026

WHERE: Downtown Hilton, Richmond, VA

The Association for Learning Environments is a professional association whose sole mission is improving the places where children learn. Association for Learning Environment members — individuals, institutions, and corporations — are actively involved in planning, designing, building, equipping, and maintaining schools and colleges.

SCHOOL DESIGN AWARDS

The 2026 A4LE- VA Chapter Conference will be held at the Downtown Richmond Hilton Richmond, Virginia on April 20-22, 2026. As a leader in the field of educational facilities, you are invited to participate in the 2026 Educational Environment Empowering Learners Conference School Design Awards.

This Award recognizes innovative solutions in school design that provide spaces serving as a catalyst for inspired learning.

All projects will be displayed as a part of the conference exhibition.

Eligibility

- All PreK-12 grade school buildings located in the A4LE-VA Chapter region and occupied after the Summer of 2023
- Entries must be the following categories:
 - New construction
 - Addition/ Renovations
 - Creative small space designs that support learning
 - Outdoor learning spaces
 - For Exhibition only projects

FOR EXHIBITION ONLY – not to be juried.

1. On the Boards – grades PreK-12 projects in design or under construction, fitting any of the categories above.
2. Post-secondary – completed academic/educational.

SPECIAL PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

There will also be a special People's Choice Award. This award will be voted for by all attendees. Only (1) project will be awarded.

Criteria

The jury, which will consist of nationally recognized industry-specific professionals, will consider the planning and design responses in the following focus areas:

- Community Environment,
- The Learning Environment,
- The Physical Environment,
- The Planning Process,
- Additional factors that will be considered are:
 - Response to educational program and design criteria,
 - Innovative elements,
 - Spatial organization,
 - Technology integration,
 - Design efficiency and expansion capability,
 - Safety and security features,
 - The level of community involvement and the degree to which the building facilitates teaching, fosters learning, and raises the bar and promotes excellent school planning, design and construction,
 - Any other criteria deemed important by jury.

Entry Fee

The entry fee for each entry (up to two entries) is \$150 per entry for members, and \$300 per entry for non-members, including "On the Boards" and "Post-secondary" categories. This exhibit fee may be paid online together with the registration fee, or by check made to A4LE. Entry fee payments can be made on-line along with the conference registration, or by check.

Checks should be mailed to:

Association for Learning Environments
SE Region Conference
11445 E. Via Linda, Ste. 2-440
Scottsdale, AZ 85259

Registration should be completed no later than Monday, March 16, 2026

Submittal Package

Registration will be online only – questions can be emailed to Julie Fried at julie@a4le.org

The project award submittal to:

Vijay Ramnarain and Ann Belanger

Virginia Department of Education
101 N.14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Vijay.ramnarain@doe.virginia.gov

Deadline to receive submittal: Monday, March 23, 2026

NOTE: Proof of Registration required with submittal.

Downloads from the A4LE webpage:

- 2026 School Design Awards Submittal Package
This packet includes the Photo Release Form, copy of your Project Registration (print after you register online) and the Descriptive Data Sheet as well as submission instructions.
- PowerPoint Exhibit Template

Schedule

Registration deadline:	<i>Monday, March 16, 2026</i>
Submittal of entry materials:	<i>Monday, March 23, 2026</i>
Display boards set up	<i>Monday, April 20, 2026</i>
Display boards' removal:	<i>Wednesday, April 22, 2026</i>

Supervision and Services

The Conference committee reserves the right to assign exhibit space and to withhold from exhibition entries deemed unsuitable for display. No special individual lighting or display setups are permitted.

Submittal Format

Both digital and print material will be reviewed by the jury. Complete one set of entry forms for each project being submitted. Each project submission will include (1) one CD or thumb drive of high resolution including, the PPT slides, photographs and the completed entry information and release forms. All digital materials must be transmitted to Vijay Ramnarain/Ann Belanger to be reviewed by the jury.

NOTE: Only slide # 10 may contain the logo, names of architects, engineers and other professionals involved in the project.

Participants are responsible for the setting up the display of their printed board materials in the exhibit space at the designated display area no later than 8:00 a.m. April 20, 2026

Digital Materials

Digital submissions must utilize the pre-formatted PowerPoint templates.

Slides 1-8: Project slides. Each entry should be accompanied by eight (8) digital slides depicting the essence of the design and its relationship to the educational program. Content should include at a minimum:

- a site plan with north arrow
- representative floor plan(s) with relative scale(s)
- building section (if desired)
- exterior elevation(s) – drawings and/or photographs
- interior elevation(s) – drawings and/or photographs
- before/after images for renovations/additions

Slide 9: Descriptive data slide. Entrants shall include a ninth slide listing essential data:

- size of site (acres)
- student capacity*
- area of building (SF)
- total project cost**(\$)
- cost per square feet (SF/S)
- cost per student (\$/student)
- space per student (SF/student)

Slide 10: Identification slide. Entrants shall include a tenth slide listing:

- the name and location of the project (city, state)
- owner (school division & superintendent)
- owner's representative
- design firm including principal-in-charge, project designer and construction administrator
- educational planner (if any)
- landscape architect (if any)
- engineer(s)
- builder
- photographer

A digital image of the company logo shall also be included on slide 10 only. Do not include slide transitions, animations, or video/audio in your slides. Do not use proprietary fonts.

Mounts

All entries shall be exhibited on two 24"x24" dry-mount boards displayed on easels provided by the exhibitors. Boards must conform to the specifications indicated. Composition of individual boards shall be at the discretion of the entrant. Due

to space constraints, only easels will be allowed; all other forms of display are prohibited.

Material can be shipped directly to the hotel no more than 5 days prior to the conference at the following address:

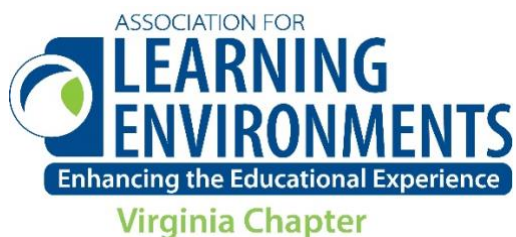
A4LE Conference
Attn: Julie Fried
Hilton Richmond Downtown
501 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Drawings/Photographs

Drawings and/or photographs should emphasize the design's relationship to the educational program. The inclusion of information about instructional areas is essential. Drawings shall include graphic indications of scale. Likewise, the inclusion of scale models in photographs is helpful. Drawings and/or photographs should include short (one or two word) captions describing the major idea (e.g. Second floor plan, north elevation, science lab).

Display

The architectural exhibits (boards) will be displayed in a designated location and space assigned on a first come - first served basis.



This should be online only

2026 A4LE VA Chapter Conference

ENTRY FORM

Please send this form to Julie Fried at Julie.Fried@A4LE.org by Monday, March 16, 2026

Firm Name: _____

Principal/Contact Person's name: _____

Email address: _____ Tel: _____

Firm's Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Membership chapter: _____ Region: _____

Project Information:

Name of School: _____

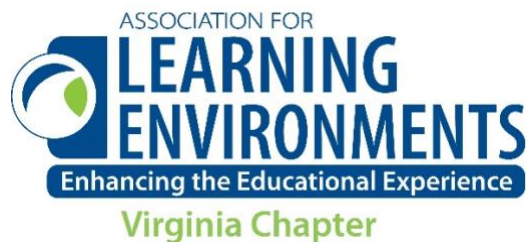
School Division/district: _____ State: _____

Entry Category (from information sheet): _____

Entry Fee: Entry Fee must be received by the project registration date of Monday, March 16, 2026

Please check one:

- Entry check mailed to Julie Fried/paid online with registration.
 - Sponsorship contribution has been submitted with Conference Registration
- Electronic Images:** Images (photographs, drawings, etc.) shall be placed on the PowerPoint template provided and saved to a CD/electronic device that will be mailed to the Architectural Exhibit Chairperson along with the Printed Entry Form, Printed Project Identification form, and Printed Photo Release Form. **The images from the PowerPoint will be used for the awards presentation as well as for the judging.**



Project Identification Sheet

The following form should be completed and submitted with the entry.

1. A/E Firm/Architect: _____

Phone: _____

Website: _____ Email Address: _____

2. Location of Project: _____

3. Project Address: _____

4. Owner - School Division/District: _____

5. Superintendent: _____ Primary Contact: _____

6. Design Consultants: _____

7. Contractors: _____

8. Photographer: _____

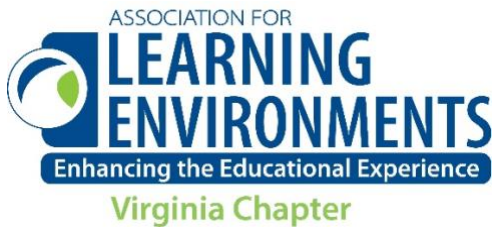


Photo Release Form

Name of Project: _____

Location of Project: _____

A4LE has our permission to:

- Send photos electronically to jury members (required for entry).
- Display photos in the award winners' area of the website, if selected as a finalist.
- Display photos on other sections of the website as representative A4LE projects.
- Print photos in A4LE newsletters.
- Print photos on A4LE marketing materials, i.e. brochures, awards, call for entries, etc.
- Print photos and project details in the A4LE Design Portfolio, if selected as a finalist.
- Special projects with prior permission.

Please Note: A4LE maintains an in-house archive of school designs as part of our research library. Your information will be entered and recorded as one of those designs.

A/E Firm Name: _____

Responsible Party/Photographer: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Release: _____