

The Story Behind Build Our School Inc.

Build Our School Inc. was not created from comfort. It was created from survival, pain, growth, and the determination to change communities that have long been ignored. The board of directors behind Build Our School are individuals who experienced hardship firsthand and chose to transform their struggles into purpose. Their mission is rooted in community development, youth empowerment, prison reform, media outreach, agriculture, education, and creating opportunities for people who feel forgotten.

DS — Founder, Community Builder, and Advocate

DS grew up in poverty and trauma. At only 11 years old, he witnessed his mother being set on fire, a life-changing event that deeply impacted his childhood and mental state. Growing up surrounded by violence, instability, and destructive influences, DS found himself navigating environments where survival often came before guidance and opportunity. At the age of 17, DS became associated with older individuals involved in dangerous lifestyles. One of those individuals, who was significantly older, was connected to the tragic killing of a nine-year-old boy in the Brewster Projects. Although DS was ultimately found not guilty, the media portrayed him negatively, creating a public image that followed him for years. Over the last 12 years, DS has focused on rebuilding himself, rebuilding trust, and rebuilding the community around him. Rather than allowing his past to define him, he redirected his energy into positive action through Build Our School Inc. Today, DS is active in:

- Prison reform initiatives
- Basketball tournaments for youth engagement
- Food giveaways and homeless outreach
- Media production and live podcasts
- Community mentorship and youth guidance

His mission is simple: teach young people not to repeat the same mistakes or fall into the same destructive environments he once experienced.

WS — Community Elder, Agriculture Visionary, and Mentor

WS experienced many of the same hardships as DS but from an earlier generation. Growing up during the crack epidemic, he witnessed addiction destroy families and neighborhoods across the community. As chaos surrounded him, WS was forced to mature quickly and help raise his younger siblings while also becoming a father to his daughter, AS. Despite difficult circumstances, WS committed himself to becoming a positive force in the community. Over the years, he became heavily involved in nonprofit work and volunteer outreach, including his work with VACamp — Wayne State's self-esteem camp. WS is known within Build Our School as:

- A mentor and community organizer
- A shoe designer and creative visionary
- An agriculture advocate focused on sustainable food systems
- A specialist in locating affordable land opportunities
- A developer of community farm initiatives in underserved areas

His vision is to help communities become more self-sufficient through agriculture, ownership, and mentorship.

AS — Designer, Strategist, and Real Estate Professional

AS, the daughter of WS, grew up surrounded by resilience, creativity, and community service. From an early age, she developed a passion for design, architecture, and visual planning. AS has contributed to major design and redevelopment projects and has become known for her creative approach to modernization and urban improvement. Her experience in design and real estate helps Build Our School maintain long-term strategic direction and community-focused planning. Within Build Our School, AS contributes through: • Community and redevelopment design concepts • Strategic planning and organization • Real estate knowledge and property guidance • Creative direction for projects and branding AS helps ensure that the organization's ideas are not only inspiring, but also structured for long-term impact and sustainability.

Together, DS, WS, and AS represent different generations of struggle, survival, and transformation. Build Our School Inc. stands as a symbol of redemption, rebuilding, and reinvestment into communities that deserve opportunity, hope, and leadership. Their collective mission is to create programs, businesses, events, and spaces that help young people avoid destructive paths while building stronger futures through education, creativity, entrepreneurship, agriculture, and community engagement.