Emerging Trends in Educational Facilities

As school districts wrestle to assure that their facilities are meeting the needs of students both today and into the future, several reports and studies have been completed to identify emerging trends in school facility use, as a way to help provide guidance in the planning process.

Examples of the data we used to help underscore the current research include:
- Steve Lenar, Holly Area Schools; Jeff Johnson, Integrated Design Solutions; Ed Roy, Steelcase – *Using Technology to Reach Your Students*;
- Jennifer Landrum Hadden – *Educational Facility Design Features in Georgia Schools* (2005);
- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities – *Education Trends Shaping School Planning, Design, Construction, Funding and Operation* (September 2010);
- William DeJong – *Top 10 Trends in School Facility Planning* (March, 2009);
- Kuuskorpi , Cabellos – *The future of the physical learning environment: school facilities that support the user* (2011);
- Locker – *Future Proofing Schools: strategies and implementation* (August, 2007);
- Torlakson – *Schools of the Future Report* (September, 2011);
- Pearlman/21st Century Skills – *Designing New Learning Environments to Support 21st Century Skills*;
- Makitalo, Zottmann, Kaplan, Fischer – *Classrooms of the Future (*2010);
- Copa – *Linking Learning and School Design: Responding to Emerging Ideas*;
- Prakash Nair – *Schools for the 21st Century: Are You Ready?* (July, 2000);
- Staples – *Six Cost-Effective Trends for Educational Facilities* (June, 2011)

There exists a great deal of similarity among the research as it relates to planning for future facility needs in order to support effective instruction and maximize student learning opportunities. In summary:

Schools should be built with as much flexibility as possible.

> Since the future cannot be accurately predicted and constantly evolving technology is impacting the learning environment so quickly (not just with the tools students will use, such as computers, tablets, phones, etc… but the location of school – i.e. on-line learning, virtual schools, etc.) it is difficult to determine one specific school set up that will address the needs of future learning environments.

Student learning and teacher instruction is evolving into a more interactive, student led experience.

> Learning and classroom experiences are trending to become more project-based, self-directed, interactive and collaborative for the student. Learning is evolving to and will look like the following: student led, collaborative, and group-oriented with students working together to explore, research, inquire, develop, and demonstrate their learning under the guidance of a teacher; as well as students consulting with other students locally, nationally, and globally, and learn from real-world experiences. With the technology available, "anytime anywhere" is a new trend in learning.

Concrete suggestions to create flexibility and meet the collaborative, multi-purpose environment described above are as follows:
- A robust wireless network that will allow access to the internet and other technology just about anywhere in the building;
- Use of mobile learning devices;
- Creation of multi-purpose spaces;
- Informal spaces for collaboration;
- Shared common areas;
- Furniture that is flexible and can be organized to support different and flexible learning configurations (i.e. individual, small group, large group-presentations, informal);
- Connections between classrooms by the use of doors and/or windows;
- Common area connections between classrooms;
- Turn passing space into learning space;
- e-LMC's connecting students to the virtual world

(Attached are visual examples)

Other emerging trends in educational facilities which were outlined in the research included:
- Green schools/energy efficient schools;
- Safety and security upgrades;
- Partnerships with the community or other entities in the community (i.e. shared libraries or recreational facilities);
- Stations for on-line assessments

Our Plans vs. Emerging Trends
As we look at the initial plans to upgrade our facilities, which were shared with the Board, the following concepts from the "emerging trends" identified above are addressed:
- Wireless network throughout schools
- Mobile learning devices
- Green schools/energy efficient schools
- A certain level of furniture replacement with possible flexible configurations
- Stations for on-line assessments

The ability to create the multi-purpose, informal, collaborative areas in a school can be done in different ways. For schools like ours with old architecture, the infrastructure is not as flexible based on traditional classroom design. Some districts create common areas if they can spare classrooms from regular classes. Our enrollment, specifically at the high school and middle school, cannot accommodate a significant number of spare classrooms, even as enrollment declines. We could consider creating a few added common areas or repurpose a few areas in the school for such purpose. We will identify the cost of such improvements in a separate document.

The most significant and cost effective change would be through the selection of flexible, multi-purpose furniture. We will also estimate in a separate document the added furniture cost to do so. Thus, the most cost effective way to address this emerging trend would be to create classrooms and other areas within our schools with flexible set up and furniture design to allow a variety of learning configurations. If this was a direction in which the Board wished to proceed, we would want to add dollars into the school infrastructure budget and furniture budget to accommodate a level of change. Then, if a bond issue was approved sometime in the future, we would have teams of staff at the school and district level determine the most logical locations and configurations.