

Life **Learn**

SPRING 2015

Maple Grove Community Gymnasium

**Facility Planning:
Justifying the Future**

Breaking Ground

Join CEFPI at Vantage Program Tour

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FACILITY PLANNING: JUSTIFYING THE FUTURE

Bringing a new school design to fruition involves identifying the need and creating a vision, Tom Tapper, Ed.D., ATS&R Senior Education Planner.



There are really two steps in the communication process that lead to creative, innovative school designs. The first step is identifying the need or asking “why?” The second step is creating a vision or asking “what can be?”

Identifying the need

Two “whys” usually drive the need for new facilities. The first is enrollment growth, and second is concern surrounding the age, adequacy and efficiency of the building.

While new construction related to enrollment increases may seem straightforward, communicating the need can be challenging; especially if the increase is a recent phenomenon and the prior history of enrollment was one of decline. All too often the objection heard from the public goes something like this, “I graduated from that school and we had 100 more kids in our graduating class. Why do we need more space now?”

Useful communication strategies to address an objection like this might include:

- The use of newsletters/websites to highlight changes in how students learn today (i.e., special education, project-based instruction, technology, etc.).
- Presentations to service organizations and other community groups that emphasize current instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction and computer-enhanced classrooms.
- Listening posts that provide opportunities for school leaders to listen/learn from community members, as well as tell their own story about how education has changed.
- Communicating needs related to age, adequacy and efficiency can be even more challenging, despite the fact that these facilities can no longer properly support the teaching/learning processes utilized by teachers. Again the refrain is, “The school was good enough for me, so it’s good enough for my children (or more commonly other people’s children)!”
- School tours (while students are present) that highlight the “good,”

the “bad,” and the “ugly.” Accentuate changes (good) that are taking place in instruction, as well as the efforts/ investments the district has made to properly maintain its schools. As for the bad and the ugly, it is better to show than tell, since any overt commentary on deficient aspects will likely prompt finger pointing about insufficient maintenance, etc.

- Listening posts that provide opportunities for school leaders to listen/learn as well as share important information with the community.

Creating a vision

School buildings are steeped in tradition. Oftentimes, there is a strong bond between the school building itself and the community it serves. Educators have long had to “make do” with what they have. So, when tasked with designing new, innovative school spaces, there are several successful communication strategies to use:

- Create focus groups of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members and ask each group, i) what’s working in your school, ii) what’s not working and iii) if you could, what would your school look like?
- Use school newsletters/websites to share what is new in schools in the immediate area and nationwide.
- Invite educators who teach in schools with innovative designs to share their thoughts and ideas with their fellow educators in your school.
- Bring school design specialists to board meetings and into the community for a “show and tell” about innovation in school design.

Communicating from the very beginning and using a variety of communication tools is imperative to creating schools with truly innovative designs.



BREAKING GROUND

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS MOVE FORWARD

Arcadia Middle School Addition & Alteration

The Arcadia Middle School (WI) groundbreaking took place on the afternoon of April 14. Students formed the outline of the new two-story 48,150 square foot middle school addition that will house students in grades 5 to 8. This addition will feature 13 classrooms, two science rooms, one art room, and four special education rooms with small group rooms being located between pairs of classrooms. FTLAs on both floors will offer “cave spaces” at one end providing students the opportunity for personalized learning or small group collaboration. The addition will also include a cafeteria/commons area, learning stair, media center with reading window seats and nooks, and a telepresence/computer lab. A double gymnasium/fitness center that will be shared with the community is planned as a future addition to the middle school.



Southwest High School Expansion & Improvements

Congratulations to Southwest High School and Minneapolis Public Schools on the April 16th groundbreaking for their upcoming improvements project. The primary project goal prioritizes classroom count and enrollment capacity. The second project goal is the improvement of classroom support spaces where existing capacity is already inadequate or where the enrollment increase will render them inadequate. The third project goal is enhancement of building security. The final project goal is to leave the site better poised for future development, whatever that may be and whenever it may occur. ATS&R worked with school and district administrators and staff to design an 60,000 square foot addition to link the east & west buildings, new classrooms, new commons area, new entrance and school office, and a new media center. Renovation activity will also occur throughout the east and west buildings.



Kasson-Mantorville High School Addition & Elementary School Addition

On April 20, Kasson-Mantorville Schools hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to kick-off two significant additions to their high school and elementary school. A 66,000 square foot, two-story addition at the high school includes an 800-seat auditorium, kitchen/building services, a commons/cafeteria space, administrative areas, and a 200-seat forum room. Renovation of the gymnasium and an expansion/renovation of the existing media center are also planned. A 21,530 square foot addition to the elementary school will feature ten kindergarten classrooms that will boast built in window seats, flexible furniture and plenty of space for students and teachers to enjoy. Breakout areas featuring individual niches will be located between the classrooms and allow for personalized learning and individual instruction. The elementary school will also receive an 11,074 square foot gymnasium addition with office, lobby, and storage areas.





8501 Golden Valley Road, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55427
T 763.545.3731 | F 763.525.3289
www.atsr.com | information@atsr.com

To opt out of receiving LifeLearn or to add a recipient, please e-mail information@atsr.com.

JOIN CEFPI AT VANTAGE PROGRAM TOUR



Join the Minnesota CEFPI Chapter on a tour of the Vantage Program at Minnetonka Schools. Come and hear more about where students learn through case studies, partner-directed projects, and immersion in a profession-based program.

Thursday, May 21

12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

4350 Baker Road
Minnetonka, MN

Space is limited to 25 / RSVP
eanderson@atsr.com by May 19

ATS&R enjoyed working with administrators and staff from Minnetonka Public Schools to upgrade the interior space of their Vantage Program.