

There is a lot going on in the Washington Community School District. We are approaching the last qua



Facilities:

The big move is coming. As soon as school is out, our custodial staff and several volunteers will be putting in a big summer as we shift and do a grade realignment. The new high school looks good and is a little ahead of schedule. The original plan was that the new high school would be turned over to the district the 1st of July. We are pleased to say that we are actually going to be moving furniture and equipment into the facility as early as April. While finishing work will continue into the summer, there should be no issues with having the facility ready in the fall. The new high school will include the current junior high building. It will be a 9-12

facility. The new addition will be geo-thermal heat and air throughout. The geo-thermal is already operating in the building. The existing junior high addition will continue to operate on a boiler and will have window air.

The current high school will house grades 6, 7 & 8. Several upgrades and improvements are already happening in this facility. The old boiler system is now gone. Currently we are operating on one of the new boilers and the 2nd new boiler will be operating within the new couple of weeks. The old hot water heater and holding tank has been removed and replaced. The controls in the classrooms will have been repaired and/or replaced by the end of March. The district should see a lot of savings with new 85% efficient boilers and classroom controls that will be a big improvement on the old system. We also anticipate that we will install new ceilings and new energy efficient lights throughout the facility no later than the middle of April. We also will be installing window air units in the classrooms that do not presently have them. We will be installing a new roof on the 1953 addition before the start of school next year as well as upgrading the electrical system throughout the building. Expect some new paint, new white boards and a few wall repairs. We are hopeful that we will find enough grant funding to be able to install media enabled equipment throughout the building. Without grant funding, we will do what we are able to afford to do. One thing is for sure, the facility will be a much better environment for the incoming middle school than what it has been for the high school students of the past decade. While there are hopefully other future upgrades on my wish list, we certainly should be pleased that improvements are being made, almost exclusively with grant dollars.

The Lincoln building will become grades 3, 4 & 5. The Lincoln building had a little bit of renovation done this last December when a new entry way was installed. The Lincoln building would be a good focus in the future as far as looking towards a geo-thermal upgrade or refit similar to what we did at Stewart. I guess you would classify that as a future wish list item as well. We need to project what will happen in the future and possible expansion of pre-school in making this decision.

Speaking of Stewart, the building has had a major refit with the installation of Geo-Thermal, new windows, new lights, and door replacement. While it probably is not a fair comparison for the winter of 2011-2012 due to the mild weather, it is fair to say that utility cost are running about 60% less than before. The district is appreciative of the Iowa Energy Grant and Riverboat funding that made this possible. Stewart will become a PK-2nd grade. The Board will be considering options on whether or not to keep Stewart West open for pre-school or not. While it will be a little tight, we do have space to move everything into the Stewart facility.

Budget:

The Washington Community School District has made several good decisions in the last few years to correct budget problems that existed four years ago. The unspent balance and cash balance have continued to grow. While we still are not at levels we quite want to be at yet, we are getting close to those targets. As a result, we are able to reduce the requested property tax levy for the second consecutive year. The district reduced the levy 70 cents last year and will be at least another 29 cents this year. I really anticipate it will be even more than that because I expect to see the Iowa legislators to pass some kind of property tax relief bill this spring. The other good news is that the district anticipates that we will see a trend of property tax reductions for at least the next three or four years. Enrollment is stable and growing slightly, valuations continue to grow within the district, the district should not need to levy for the budget guarantee for the next few years and the need to levy cash will continue to decrease for the near future. All those things are good news for property tax payers.

Legislation:

As suggested earlier, I expect to see some property tax relief to be passed by the legislature this spring. While this is not dollars that will directly assist students in our buildings, it is good news for our property tax levy. While I could optimistically hope that a 4% allowable growth figure for fiscal year 14 will happen, I really don't believe it will. With the expense the state will have with the aforementioned property tax relief, I do not see education getting more than 2%. I also don't expect to see a lot of change coming from the proposed education reform for at least another year. With the Iowa Legislature, they have a history of making last minute late night decisions when the session is wrapping up, so they are very difficult to predict. The good news is that our local representatives are very approachable and open to conversations, which we very much appreciate.