

Buildings Do Make a Difference

People often say, “Does the actual school building really matter? It’s what happens inside that makes the difference.” It is true that the relationships between students and teachers and the classroom instruction are what make education effective; however, it cannot be denied that quality facilities support academic achievement.

The following information from a paper entitled “The Impact of School Facilities on Student Achievement, Behavior, Attendance, and Teacher Turnover Rate in Central Texas Middle Schools” helps explain the impact that facilities have on learning.

Research conducted in 1999 and 2000 by David O’Neill Ph.D. and Arnold Oates, Ph.D.

- Exterior environment was positively/significantly related to the percentage of 8th graders passing all sections of the TAAS (Texas State Assessments). The exterior appearance of the school facility, including whether entrances and walkways were sheltered from the sun and inclement weather, building materials, landscaping, and the condition of external paint were all correlated with various measure of student achievement.
- As a public building, a school should make a statement about education in the community. The overall façade or appearance of the facility should reinforce the school’s function as a safe haven for young people, symbolizing the community’s heritage and aspirations for the future (Meek, 1995).
- Building age had the strongest relationship with student achievement. A strong relationship existed between “building age” and the percentage of eighth grade students passing reading assessments.
- Students in modern buildings score significantly higher on all components of achievement than did students in an older facility (Bowes & Burkett, 1989; McGuffey & Brown, 1978).
- Old school buildings cannot compare with new ones in terms of facility qualities. Facilities in old school buildings are obsolete and cannot meet the current educational needs without major renovations (Chan, 1996).

The following is information from “School Facility Conditions and Student Academic Achievement” by Glen Earthman, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Oct 2002.

- School building design features and components have been proven to have a measurable influence upon student learning. Among the influential features and components are those impacting temperature, lighting, acoustics and age. Researchers have found a negative impact upon student performance in buildings where deficiencies in any of these features exist.
- The overall impact a school building has on students can be either positive or negative, depending upon the condition of the building. In cases where students attend school in substandard buildings they are definitely handicapped in their academic achievement.

The Board of Education, as well as teachers and community members, is committed to improving the facilities in which our children attend school. Leavenworth children deserve buildings that support the educational needs of today and best prepare them for a successful future. Please watch for more information regarding the facilities improvement plan and bond issue.