

HILLMEN HIGH-FIVES

I find myself using the words “beautiful” and “amazing” a lot lately. I am so proud of the work that was accomplished in the Platteville Schools over this last year and most especially, this summer. Every student in the district will benefit from safer and updated learning spaces as they walk through our doors this week.

About a year and a half ago, we went to the community and said “We believe that this investment to update and maintain our facilities will help support the continued success of our schools and our students.” There are so many thanks to go around, starting with the Platteville Community. We are very appreciative of and recognize the importance of the community’s trust and support and we intend to continue our efforts to achieve the right balance between being fiscally responsible and providing an outstanding education for the youth of our community.

Plunkett, Raysich Architects designed and provided the technical expertise to take our ideas and vision and turn them into beautiful and functional learning spaces. Kraemer Brothers Construction took those plans and brought them to life on an incredibly tight timeline and equally tight budget. I am so thankful to both firms and so impressed by the work they have done. They have become a part of the Hillmen Family and took great care to help us create something lasting for our students into the future.

The Platteville School District staff put individual employment roles aside and stepped in wherever and whenever they were needed. It was obvious how much they care and wanted everything to be perfect and ready for our students on opening day. I could not be more thankful for their efforts and while there may be a few things that were left undone or unready, it was not for lack of effort on anyone’s part.

I am thrilled to be able to update the community on where we are at with this project and showcase the various projects in our buildings by holding community open-houses prior to each of the next four board meetings:

Westview Elementary, September 12, 6:00 p.m., Cafeteria – Dedication of the classroom addition, placement of the time capsule, and tour

Platteville Middle School, September 26, 6:00 p.m., Library

Platteville High School, October 10, 6:00 p.m., tour starts in Commons, Board Meeting in Library.

Neal Wilkins Early Learning Center, October 24th, 6:00 p.m., Cafeteria

I am also thrilled to share how we were able to expand the scope of the project, address unanticipated facility issues, and still come in on time and for the most part, on budget. We ended up only going about \$70,000 above budget...ON A \$16.62 MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT!

We promised that we would not increase the share of our tax levy that went to debt service. Our 2014-15 Mill Rate was \$10.73 per \$1000 of property. At last month’s annual meeting, we approved a projected mill rate for 2016-17 of \$10.27, a **5.47% DECREASE**.

We promised that the timing was right and projected an estimated bonding rate of 4.00%. Instead, we were able to borrow \$10 million at 2.39% and \$5 million at 1.39%, allowing us to pay it off in 15 years instead of 20 years as originally planned, saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We promised that we were going to disrupt learning as little as possible and keep the greatest amount of construction to the summer months. Thanks to our incredible contractors, we are opening doors on time.

We promised safer and more secure entrances because we recognize how important that is to our families. They will all provide more control over access to the buildings and visibility to the outside. We believe parents will love the new separated bus and parent drop-off at Westview.

We promised updated Science labs at the high school and middle school to match the quality of instruction our students receive. I am not sure that “beautiful” is the term you use to describe Science Labs, but they are BEAUTIFUL!

We promised to address capacity issues at Neal Wilkins, Westview, and Platteville Middle Schools, not just for today, but going into the future as well. We now have learning space for up to 150 students in each graduating class, but even more importantly, it includes learning space for today’s learning. We created space for students to work together on projects and engage in exploratory learning. Wait until you see the new gym at Westview. It is set up to allow community access during non-school hours and I am afraid we will have to establish a waiting list once our community groups get a look at it. Our students will love the remodeled Fine Arts space, improved handicap accessibility, and opened up library and cafeteria spaces at Westview to accommodate the additional students.

We promised to address maintenance issues and though they may not seem as glamorous, the asbestos removal and air-handling and electrical updates will bring peace of mind to many and we truly have some of the nicest restroom facilities in Southwest Wisconsin.

I could go on and on but in the interest of column space, I will leave it that as Superintendent of Platteville Schools, I am so pleased to be able to say, “**Promise Kept and Go Hillmen!**”