

Dudley classrooms, media center are all shiny and new

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Students move into remodeled classrooms.

Standing outside Dudley Elementary's newly remodeled upper-level classrooms Tuesday morning, fifth grader Bryce Young was excited to go inside.

Bryce and several other Dudley students had just cut a ribbon signifying that the \$690,000 building project was finished.

"I think it's really fun going into the new rooms," she said.

Since school started on Aug. 18, she and other students—in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades—had attended class in different rooms throughout the school and at the former 100R Attendance Center because the project wasn't done.

Last Friday, they didn't have school at Dudley so teachers could move into their rooms as well as the media center.

Fifth-grade teacher Becky Costello described the renovation as a tremendous opportunity to teach in a great environment.

"We have quality teachers in Gothenburg...and it's a great building to do great things in," Costello said.

During an earlier interview, superintendent Mike Teahon said he could describe the project as the perfect storm if he wanted to.

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Teahon said the timing of the decision to go out for bids last May by school board members couldn't have been better.

At the time, members were betting that a stagnant economy may work in the district's favor with lower commodity and construction prices.

They were right.

Paulsen Inc. of Cozad, the low bidder, offered to renovate 3,000 square feet of Dudley Elementary's upper-class rooms and the media center for \$37.21 per foot compared to new construction estimated at \$120 per square foot.

Through careful planning which started five years ago, Teahon said the board saved the district \$300,000.

"The plan was designed and on the capital improvement list so we were ready to address it and react to the market," Teahon explained.

Paulsen's bid \$570,000 to remodel fifth- and sixth-grade classroom pods and the media center which boosts the number of classrooms from 10 to 12.



Also included in the plan is a conference room and four small testing areas as well as remodeled bathrooms to accommodate five stalls each for boys and girls.

With \$50,000 in construction contingency costs, \$68,000 in architecture and engineering fees

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and \$2,000 in miscellaneous expenses, the project total is \$690,000.

Special building and qualified capital improvement funds will be used to pay the bill instead of a bond issue.

More importantly, Teahon said the renovation addresses district needs in the elementary such as keeping classroom sizes small.

“We feel the smaller classes provide a more effective learning environment for kids,” Teahon said.

By keeping classroom size between 10 to 20 students K-2, districts also receive more money through state aid.

Teahon said the district maintains a long-term capital improvement plan to do projects like the elementary remodel and keeps a working relationship with DLR to maintain the plan.

DLR Group of Omaha is the architect employed by the district.

“This allows us to partially fund projects so we can address needs as they evolve,” he said.

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