

Week of January 8 - 12 Newspaper Article

Tri-City United Building Strong Futures (Part 4)

Happy New Year to all! 2018 has been a great start for Tri-City United and there's nothing better than having our students back in school; learning, growing, and engaged in many activities.

This is Part 4 of the Tri-City United Building Strong Futures series. Part 1 focused on the need for additional space for growing enrollment. Part 2 focused on the need for addressing critical maintenance issues at TCU Le Center and the proposed solutions. Part 3 focused on the proposed solutions and impacts the bond referendum would have on classroom space and preschool at TCU Montgomery and TCU Lonsdale.

This week's article provides information on the need and proposed solutions for safe, secured schools.

Safety and Security

Safety and security are the highest priorities for children, families, and staff in schools. The Minnesota Department of Education conducted a school safety seminar a number of years ago and one of the comments that has stuck with me was the importance of having a secured entry as one of the first steps in any school safety plan. A report conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that in the 2013–14 school year, 93 percent of public schools reported that they controlled, monitored access to school buildings during school hours.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety created a safe school self assessment checklist and the majority of items in the building access section all refer to the need for:

- a single point of public entry/exit
- with the main entrance being observable from the main office

- and the ability for school staff to monitor the entrances and exits during the school day.

Safe and monitored entrances are set so that visitors must walk through the main office before entering a school. This allows staff to see and talk to anyone who enters and provides the opportunity to determine if there might be any concerns. Some schools are even implementing ID scanning systems to further insure safety measures.

TCU Le Center only has a buzzer system at the main entrance and TCU Montgomery's east preschool area doesn't even have this level of system. That entrance is only a regular door where the teacher and/or paraprofessional needs to go outside to meet the buses or parents and bring students into the school; often times having preschool age children wait at the door while the staff member goes to meet the next students.

The current nurse's office at TCU Le Center is small with room for only one resting area and if more students are ill, the other small beds are down a hallway, and the bathrooms are even further down another hallway. This not only causes health and safety issues, but privacy for students as well.

The proposed solution is to renovate the TCU Le Center main office and basically shift the office over to the main entry, thus creating a safe monitored entrance. This whole office renovation will also create a nurse's office area that has adequate room for students who are ill, while maintaining their privacy and close access to the main office for when parents need to pick up their children.

A secure monitored entry would also be included in the lower level renovation at TCU Montgomery that will provide classroom space, expand preschool education, and serve as a handicapped accessible entrance. (This proposed solution was outlined in the last TCU article.)

Remember, Tri-City United's bond referendum is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, 2018 and early/absentee voting already began on December 29, 2017 and continues through February 12, 2018.

To learn more about our facility needs, proposed solutions, estimated tax impact, and voting information; go to our website at www.tcu2905.us. Click on the Referendum button at the top of the main page.

This website also includes an online tax calculator so property owners can locate property specific estimates, which has been very valuable for voters in the past.

Building Strong Futures for our students, families, and communities means keeping our children in our district, meeting families' needs in educational options for their children, and addressing the structural needs of our buildings to keep them safe, healthy, and solid for the long term.

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