

March 10, 2006

**A brighter
future
for the
school
district
community
and its
students.**

**A message from
Dr. Don Helmstetter**



Election results. A first look at bond project timelines.

February 28 was a great day for our students and for the Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley school communities of District 16.

As a result of the community's support of a \$95 million bond referendum, this and the next generation of students will benefit from the additional classrooms at all schools, major renovation and new construction at our 35- to 50-year-old facilities, and construction of a new elementary school. We will meet the challenge of significant population growth and we will have up-to-date schools that will be a source of pride for all.

The support of the community is greatly appreciated. Our kids and our communities are the real winners. Working hand-in-hand with the community, our future is, indeed, bright.

While the successful referendum is obviously good for students, it is also good for our community as well, because it means that community members will be investing effectively, with the District's comprehensive long-range facilities plan as its road map, rather than resorting to a less effective, more expensive, piecemeal response to the many needs identified by the district and citizen facilities task force.

Now, the needs will be addressed in a comprehensive and systematic manner. And soon. Many have expressed their excitement that our communities have approved a referendum with such far-reaching, positive benefits.

Election Day was a great day for students and the community, but one with many subsequent responsibilities.

We've spent a lot of time, over the past year or more, telling you about our schools' facilities needs and about the bond referendum. As stated before the election, **we pledge to keep you continually updated on the plans,**

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progress, and timelines of the many projects over the next few years; projects that will substantially improve our facilities and be a source of great pride.

We want to assure you that **the approved referendum dollars will be used for the projects that we’ve discussed.** And, while there will be no “Taj Mahals,” all projects and construction WILL reflect quality. A soon-to-be-formed **community Construction Oversight Group will provide even more opportunities for citizen input and feedback** throughout the three-plus years of renovation and new construction. Please contact the District Office if you would like to be a part of this group.

How long will we have to wait?

Construction will begin already this summer, with additional classrooms at Park Terrace and Westwood Elementary Schools, as well as repairs and renovations at Spring Lake Park High School’s Panther Field.

After spring break, architects and engineers will meet with district staff to begin the planning and design stage of this large and significant process. Much of the construction will then begin in earnest in one year.

Construction of the new elementary school and the high school Fine Arts and Physical Education areas will begin in spring 2007, as will the major repairs and renovations at each of the elementary schools.

The new elementary school, to be located near Highway 242 and Cloud Drive, will be open in the fall of 2008.

Most of the work at the Westwood and High School complexes will begin in spring 2008, with all work completed in late 2009 or early 2010.

While it would be more exciting to have all projects completed sooner, the work requires significant staging, and timing, and the greatest amount of the work must and will be done when school is not in session.

But please know that the real “construction” in our district has been going on for years, including multiple efforts and innovations in our schools to close the achievement gap and, more importantly, to raise the achievement levels of all students.

These changes and improvements are all a part of the emerging new face of District 16 schools in Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley.

How will it ultimately look? We can’t control how many and which children come to our schools. But we CAN control the climate, values, instruction and support that are emphasized, implemented, and reflected in our schools. And we CAN set high expectations, and we CAN provide the training and support for staff so that those expectations will be met.

And we will. That is our mission. That is our obligation.

A community-approved plan to revitalize our facilities . . .

A plan and a process to raise achievement levels of all students . . .

Everything points to a brighter future for this school district and its students.