

FREEMAN ELEMENTARY

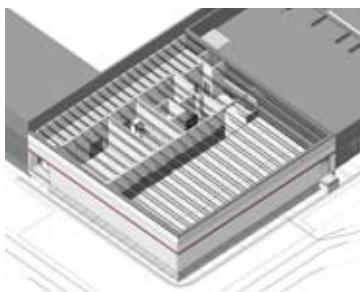
A Community School

NEWS

Dakota Valley's **Nylen Science Center** nears completion.



Beresford Schools' new wrestling facility bids were under budget and construction is underway.



Public buildings of all kinds should serve their communities well, at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, while improving the built, social and cultural environments. This is especially true in rural areas, where limited funding has to stretch further and the active, tight-knit populations are perennially in need of multipurpose public spaces.

"The community is proud of our educational heritage, and generally is very supportive of education and recognized the need to upgrade our facilities as we head into the future," said Superintendent Don Hotchkiss. "The timing seemed right and the cost seemed right, given the anticipated repairs. Things just came together and the dream became a reality."

The new elementary school was designed as an addition to the Junior/ Senior High, reducing costs for the community in several ways:

- No land acquisition costs
- Centralized maintenance
- Shared play fields
- Shared kitchen facilities
- Junior/ Senior High access to new computer/ SDN labs

- Geothermal system tied back to Junior/ Senior High
- Shared staff

"We see a lot of savings from the previously lost time due to students and staff moving between both ends of town. We now have a more streamlined approach with our course offerings and ease of movement between the two schools," Hotchkiss explained. "Obviously, down the road, we anticipate the geothermal heating/cooling will be a big savings for the school district."

Community needs were a priority throughout the design process, resulting in a multipurpose building that will allow many opportunities for public use. "I think the planning from day one was a group effort, with the administration, staff and design team working closely together to identify and understand exactly what the needs were," said Principal Ryan Mors. "From there, we could determine the most cost effective way to meet those needs and build a school that will last for the next 75 years." The building is designed so classroom areas can be locked off while the library and/ or





A large skylight and exposed structure enhance the library.



The main entrance opens into the spacious, naturally lit commons.

commons area remain open for after-hours use. The gymnasium is located adjacent to the existing gym/locker room wing so spaces can be shared during and after the class day. The new gym also allows much greater capacity for volleyball and basketball tournaments, flea markets and other large events. Freeman will be able to expand and improve these events, while bringing in more and still larger productions in the years to come.

“The community as of now has probably utilized the gym more than anything else, but we have been designated as a POD by the State Department of Health. Our entire elementary commons area, kitchen area and gymnasium area in

conjunction with our 7-12 facility made it possible to set up two flu vaccination centers with the Hutchinson Emergency Management team and the Department of Health,” said Hotchkiss. “We do have several graduation parties set for this spring in the elementary commons area also, and the Southeastern Electrical Association is making plans for a 1,200-person general meeting and banquet this summer.”

By taking a few simple, deliberate steps in the planning process, Freeman Elementary School will save taxpayers money, attract more events, visitors and revenue to the town, and further enrich the community’s social and cultural offerings.

“The community reaction to the building has been overwhelmingly positive,” said Hotchkiss. “Everyone that talks to us is very impressed and overall, I think the community looks to this addition with great pride and a sense that we are moving in the right direction” 📍