

Verndale Public Schools



Project

29,700 ft.² addition 10,700 ft.² remodel

AREAS

science classrooms, gymnasium, locker rooms, administrative offices, storage; renovated kindergarten classrooms, cafeteria, art and special education areas

BUDGET

\$5,637,378

FINAL COST

\$5,637,378

Referendum: May 2013
Design: May – November 2013
Bid phase: September and November 2013
Project started: October 2013
Completed: September 2014

Balancing opportunities, opposition

The schools in Verndale attract many students to open-enroll, which presents challenges and opportunities. In addition, the district had an existing bond that was expiring and wanted any new requests to be tax-neutral.

"A few years ago, a facilities task force prepared a bond request for some classroom and athletics upgrades and additions," says Superintendent Paul Brownlow. "There was some active campaigning against the referendum, which also caused confusion to residents, and the referendum failed by less than 100 votes in May 2011."

Getting to "yes"

When Paul and his team put together a new task force, they were more strategic about the entire process, and they enlisted pre-referendum services from R.A. Morton. The revised plan called for renovations and additions to truly reflect community input. "Every detail of the project focuses on usable space: nothing fancy, yet very modern," Paul explains. "That's the tone of our community."

"Our "Yes" committee was very engaged in the community, too, with everything from yard signs supporting the referendum to public meetings. We also gave tours of the current facilities while school was in session. This allowed residents to see our full hallways at passing times and a full cafeteria during serving times, so people saw our needs for more space," Paul says. This time, the referendum passed.

"right from the start"



“R.A. Morton kept contractors and lots of details on schedule, plus brought integrity and fiscal frugality to our district's project. Schools opened on time that fall in our new and renovated spaces.”

— PAUL BROWNLOW
Superintendent, Verndale Public Schools

No missed school days

R.A. Morton also helped prepare the project budget and timelines, which were ambitious – Verndale wanted to go through the last day of school in the spring and have school open on time that fall.

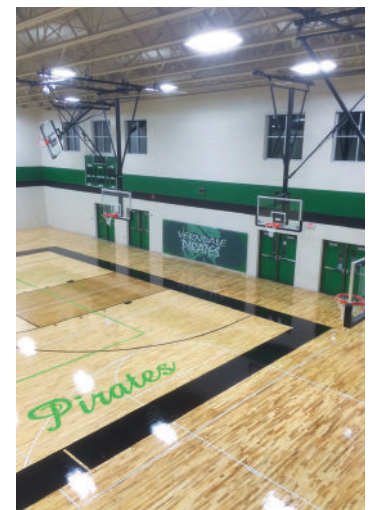
Some construction work was completed during the winter, which was abnormally cold and did cause some construction delays. Yet R.A. Morton was able to keep the project on track.

“We held our graduation on a Friday evening in May, right on schedule,” Paul recalls. “On Monday, demolition began. Even before that, with a plan and approvals, we had students helping move things and clean out areas. They were proud to help.”

R.A. Morton and the project architects and contractors worked all summer to add and renovate a wide variety of areas. Just under four months later, Verndale Schools held its open house. “In addition to R.A. Morton keeping contractors and lots of details on time, they brought integrity and fiscal frugality to the project,” Paul says.

R.A. Morton contributions

- Facility Analysis
- Pre-Referendum Planning
- Estimating
- Competitive Bid
- Value Engineering
- On-Site Construction Management – Full-Time
- Project Management
- Project Cost Accounting
- Budget Management
- Schedule Management
- Project Closeout



A fresh start

On freshly waxed hallway floors, school started on time in September. Even those opposed to the original referendum now attend events at the school theater and sports fields. That's balancing opportunities.