

Construction, Design & Engineering

Work as a team: School district, community create best project

My project superintendent's phone rings as the day's construction is getting under way at an elementary school in Boulder Valley School District. It's the school principal. A math test is being held later that afternoon in a classroom adjacent to where the construction team is working. The teacher is requesting that construction in the area desist until after the test is over so the students aren't disturbed. It's an easy fix. The superintendent moves all work to an administrative portion of the school.

This type of easy communication between the owner and the project team helps make construction projects in BVSD successful. In this difficult economic climate, where hard-bid projects are becoming more common and project costs are kept as low as possible, it's important for construction projects to maintain a collaborative team environment between the owner, the contractor, the architect and the community. Constant communication ensures that fewer mistakes are made and a project is completed more efficiently.

Dedication to teamwork on a construction project can benefit the community as well. BVSD school board's philosophy is that "widespread public participation in school policymaking is one of the best guarantees that community interests will be reflected in the school program" (<http://bvsd.org/policies/Pages/IndexA.aspx> Community Involvement in Decision Making). How is BVSD implementing this philosophy



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in the construction process? It starts with the design advisory teams during design and continues through the construction period, where a unique key component is involving the school principal in weekly

owner meetings with the project team.

The ultimate benefit of this involvement is that the principal can act as a conduit between the construction team and the community. Schools become more in tune with what's going on in the construction process and the construction team gets better feedback, whether it's fielding complaints about noises or smells, or getting more involved in the community. The following are examples of how listening to and working hand-in-hand with the owner can ultimately benefit the community and the project:

The project team participates in school assemblies to describe the project and safety program with staff and students. This puts the staff at ease with the construction team and emphasizes that student and staff safety is the first priority.

The project team attends back to school night so parents and community members can ask questions about the project. This alleviates parents' concerns by knowing that the safety and

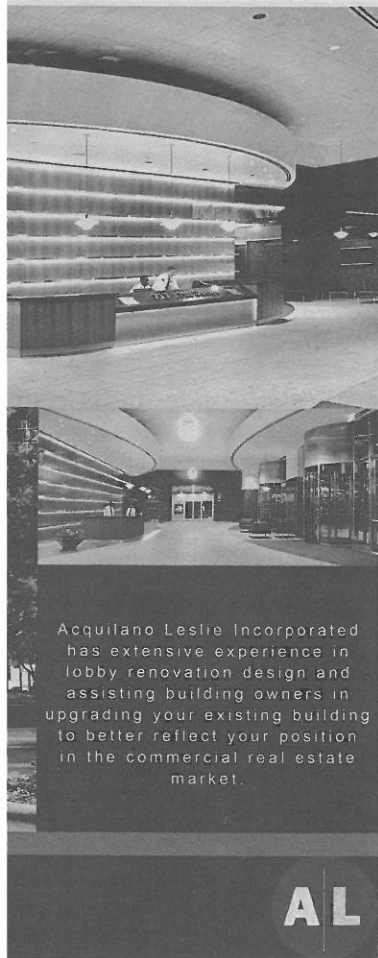
education of the students will not be compromised during the construction project.

The project team provides job site tours for students and staff. This gives teachers and administrators an opportunity to provide their input for the final arrangement of their rooms and saves the school from making future costly changes if staff is unhappy with the space.

The project team gives presentations to classes that correspond with current curriculum. Instead of simply reading about a topic, this provides students a hands-on opportunity to see what they're learning and how it applies to everyday life.

The project team hosts construction clubs with updates and tours for interested students. In addition to providing a learning opportunity to students, it gives kids the knowledge that they'll have access to the site, abating their curiosity. Because it also gives students a sense of school ownership, they tend to take better care of the space after project turnover.

Ideas to benefit the community and the project can be vetted from the construction team and the owner when the latter is heavily involved in project communication the way BVSD is. It can be easy to forget about the community and the team in favor of maintaining a project at an absolute budget, but ultimately teamwork and close communication go a long way in producing a product that benefits the most important group, the end users.▲



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