

# Education On Target

by Supt. Niemann

## Review and Comment Approved

At a Special School Board Meeting on April, 12th, the Ashby School Board unanimously approved the "Review and Comment" plan required by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for any school facility costs in excess of \$2 million per school site. This plan has since been sent to Dr. Heather Mueller; Minnesota's Commissioner of Education. The commissioner, by statute, has 60 days in which to provide a school facility project with a positive, negative, or unfavorable review and comment. [Ashby's full Review and Comment Document can be seen by going to our website.](#)

Ashby's building project calls for 5 additional classrooms, expanded parking lots, an updated HVAC system to improve air quality, and security improvements. K-12 enrollment at Ashby School has increased by 25% over the last five years and is expected to continue to grow going forward. With primary classes ranging from 26 to 30 students, Ashby has been moving to two sections per grade level in the lower elementary; currently in grades K-3. To allow for double sections, Ashby's building project includes the addition of two rooms specifically designed for kindergarten students. As stated by kindergarten teacher Cindy Welch, *"Designing a room meant specifically with kindergarten students in mind is important because it helps encourage learning, improves engagement, and also supports positive classroom behaviors. The room needs to have enough space to allow students to be active throughout the day moving to and from different learning stations and taking brain breaks throughout the day to help them to continue focusing on their learning. Besides having the space to be active students also need the room to be placed in an arrangement that will keep them focused on lessons being taught and deter them or others from learning. A classroom with a bathroom in a kindergarten room is also beneficial for the teacher and students because students just entering kindergarten in the fall have recently turned 5 years old and at times may need some assistance. The teacher in the room is able to assist the student(s) in the classroom bathroom instead of having to take the rest of the students down the hallway to the bathroom to help a student or find a staff member to help out."*

Similarly, to accommodate Ashby's Middle School program, a second science lab and two classrooms are being added to move grades 5 & 6 into the middle school. Small and windowless rooms currently being used as classrooms will be repurposed into paraprofessional rooms, special education resource rooms, an expanded weightroom, and storage areas. Currently, paraprofessional and special education aides often have to use the hallway to work with their students which is very distracting. The high school will also gain space to add electives to our course offerings. To this end, a CTE teacher has already been hired for next year to begin the expansion of our course selections.

Other improvements include an update to our HVAC system which will improve air quality as mentioned earlier but also includes the addition of a smaller, more efficient, cost saving boiler. And finally, the main entrance will be remodeled to direct visitors through the main office during school hours to improve security. Along with this change, more and better cameras will also be installed inside and outside of the school.