

# Education On Target

by Supt. Niemann

## School Board Studies Building Improvement Goals

The first goal the Ashby School Board is considering is the “Need for Additional Space”. As mentioned in my September article in this newspaper, enrollment in Ashby School has grown by nearly 70 students over the last five years and necessitated the re-purposing of the computer lab and the ITV rooms into classrooms. Additionally, enrollment is expected to grow by another 40 students over the next 12 years or so which will require additional classrooms. With this in mind, the Ashby School Board Facilities Committee has been busy looking at proposals for a building addition.

This provides an excellent opportunity to not just add more space but rather to significantly “Enhance K-12 Programs”; which represents the second building goal. First, in the K-4 elementary school, two additional classrooms built specifically to meet the needs of kindergarten students could be added which in turn would also provide adequate space for all K-4 classes. Second, to fully implement a 5-8 middle school, a second science classroom is needed along with two classrooms to move grades 5 and 6 into the middle school area. With this plan, a greater amount of collaboration could occur with middle school teachers. And finally, at the 9-12 high school level, the additional space will provide for more elective courses being available to our students. With additional classrooms being built, current rooms which are not well suited for classrooms will become work spaces for paraprofessionals, sensory spaces for special education, breakout rooms, spaces for students completing online college courses, an expanded weight room area, and storage space.

“Improved Security” is a third building improvement goal. A minor remodeling of our main door would have visitors during school hours directed through the main office to better secure the school building and to better assist the visitor. Additionally, more security cameras would be located in and around the building along with an updated door locking system.

The fourth building goal would be to “Improve Air Quality and Heating System Efficiency”. It has become abundantly clear in this year of COVID-19 that virus mitigation and proper air flow can go a long way to not only reduce the risk of the COVID-19 virus but other viruses and bacteria as well. A good performing HVAC system simply would improve the overall health of anyone frequently being in the school building. By adding a smaller, more efficient boiler, significant cost savings could be realized especially for those times in the year when a large boiler simply is not needed.

Finally, building goals five and six would be “Gain Additional Storage Space and Parking Spaces”. Ashby School is already short on storage space and parking spaces and as enrollment continues to grow these problems will also grow. In closing, public meetings will be presented in the next month or two to provide additional details of a building project as well as to seek input from the public on the plans.

## Learning Model Changed to Start the 2021 Calendar Year

Following the Christmas Holiday break, students in grades 10-12 will move to learning in the hybrid model. No changes will be made to the in-person model currently used in grades PK-5 and the hybrid model in grades 6-9 that were utilized before the Holiday Break. The plan is to stay in this model until at least the end of the semester which occurs on Jan.15th. While the least restrictive learning model, in-person learning PK-12, is the goal; a negative trend is rearing its ugly head and that is a sudden sharp increase in positive COVID cases in Grant County; especially in the Ashby zip code area. As Ashby’s Superintendent I encourage all residents in the Ashby School Community to employ all COVID mitigation strategies including mask wearing, hand washing, social distancing, and avoiding large group gatherings. Additionally, be willing to get vaccinated as soon as possible. Thanks in advance for your help in getting our students back in school as soon as possible.