

SUMMARY:**Spokane (WA) Public Schools**

Spokane (Washington) Public Schools (SPS) serves an urban population of 31,000 students and has over 50 school facilities. *See* http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/wa/district_profile/247. The district has developed a comprehensive program to integrate healthy, high performance design and construction into its 25-year facility improvement plan. The district began with a pilot phase, and is now applying high performance building guidelines to all of its capital projects that qualify for state matching funds. Community involvement and state programs have played an important role in developing the initiative.

BACKGROUND**Building Program**

In March 2003, Spokane voters approved a \$165.3 million school facility improvement bond to fund the first six years of the district's 25-year school building plan. With this money, Spokane Public Schools is replacing three elementary schools and remodeling two high schools. The remodeling projects are underway, with the larger building projects to follow.

School District Support for High Performance Schools

According to district officials, concerns about indoor air quality and increasing utility costs helped create an interest in high performance design among district officials. After passage of the bond measure – and using funds from the bond sale proceeds – the Superintendent convened a two-day conference to begin planning for the long-term building program. Participants included SPS staff, parents, students, local architectural firms and representatives from the city, business community and area colleges. “Green design” was one of the themes discussed at the meeting, and the district invited experts in the field to lead discussions in this area. *See* <http://www.spokaneschools.org/ConstructionUpdate/Conference.stm>.

Outside Support for High Performance Schools

Community Support. Community residents and groups helped advance the initiative by participating in the planning conference. Conference participants generated a set of “planning directions” to guide the development of draft design standards, and one of the six goals listed was “sustainability,” including the incorporation of green building technology. After the initial planning conference, SPS convened two district-wide community groups to decide on space requirements for elementary schools and high schools. Each building project has a local community group that meets with the design team, and the district has temporarily assigned a principal to work full time with these groups. *See* <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2004news/2004-036.html>.

In addition, two community groups have partnered to encourage SPS to build sustainable schools. These groups have helped generate community participation in public meetings convened by the district. They also helped incorporate an innovative green construction apprenticeship agreement into the building program. *See generally* <http://www.spokaneschools.org/ConstructionUpdate/Apprentices.stm> and http://sql.iel.ctc.edu:81/TECC/Building_Green_Training/GreenOverview.htm.

State Support. Another significant influence on the district's high performance school building initiative has been the Washington Sustainable Schools (WSS) program. In 2003, the state legislature provided \$1.5 million in the State Board of Education's capital budget to “examine the impacts of resource efficient building techniques on K-12 construction projects.” *See* <http://www.djc.com/news/co/11159917.html>; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, “Bulletin No. 041-04 Washington Sustainable Schools Program” (June 2004), at: http://www.k12.wa.us/bulletin_smemos/bulletins2004/B041-04.doc. The state has been implementing the WSS in three phases: (1) drafting a technical protocol and planning workbook, (2) demonstrating sustainable strategies and piloting the protocol in five schools, and (3) reporting the results of the pilot projects to the legislature. As discussed below, Spokane Public Schools is participating in the pilot phase. The state's sustainable schools program will continue to influence the Spokane initiative, as well as other school building programs in

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the state. In April 2005, the state legislature further institutionalized high performance school building with the enactment of a law requiring that all major K-12 school facilities projects that receive state funds meet either the state's WSS criteria or the equivalent of a LEED™ silver rating. Wa. Sen. Bill 5509.

School Board Support. In October 2004, the School Board adopted a resolution to design and build the three elementary schools financed by the 2003 bond to meet the WSS minimum criteria (described below). Spokane School District No. 81, Resolution No. 2005-6 (October 27, 2004) (on file with ELI).

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Pilot Project

The Washington legislature directed the State Board of Education to develop a technical manual and to provide support to five pilot projects to evaluate high performance school building practices. *See* <http://www.k12.wa.us/SchFacilities/pubdocs/WSSfollowup.p.doc>. In 2004, Spokane Public Schools applied for and received a \$310,000 grant from the state to take part in the WSS pilot, in connection with the design and construction of a new elementary school. According to district officials, the funds have been used in three areas: consideration and evaluation of various high performance design strategies for the pilot project (*e.g.*, geothermal heat pump system, displacement ventilation, daylighting); implementation of some of the sustainable building practices selected; and preparation of a report evaluating the pilot.

Framework for High Performance Design

SPS also has decided to implement the WSS "Protocol for High Performance School Facilities" as a baseline standard for all new buildings and major modifications that qualify for state matching funds. The WSS Protocol, which was issued as a working draft in 2004, is "partially adapted" from the Collaborative for High Performance Schools Best Practices Manual, modified to Washington's specific climate and needs. *See* Protocol (Working Draft 2004), at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SchFacilities/pubdocs/FinalProtocol-March2004.pdf>. [For a description of CHPS, see the summary of LAUSD.] The WSS Draft Protocol is structured as a menu of design features.

An individual project can choose from among these features to achieve the minimum 38 points required to be considered a sustainable school under the Protocol. The Protocol includes a number of prerequisite design features (including those required by state law), and establishes point values for other high performance design features that go beyond the minimum requirements to ensure that the school is "healthy, operates efficiently, increases student productivity, and reduces environmental impact." *Id.*

According to district officials, implementation of the WSS Protocol will evolve as the district evaluates its pilot program. Currently, the district asks design firms to submit the WSS Protocol checklist sometime in early design development, and expects firms to report back to the district on how they plan to meet the standard and stay within their budget. Officials also note that they provide guidance to firms on high performance design issues throughout the design process.

Training and Education

Spokane's program also includes an education component. The district and the state's Department of Ecology have worked together to carry out a series of workshops on green design and construction for designers and architects. In addition, architects who applied to work with Spokane Public Schools were required to attend the two-day conference on the facility improvement plan. As noted above, the District has also agreed to incorporate an innovative apprenticeship program into its construction process. Apprentices will be graduates of a local Green Building Training Program that educates trades people (*e.g.*, bricklayers and plumbers) on high performance design and construction. *See generally* <http://www.spokane.schools.org/ConstructionUpdate/Apprentices.stm>.