

GUEST OPINION

Reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and remodeling

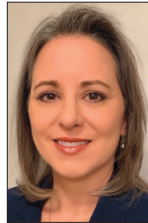
West Bend district looks at facility needs for both short and long terms

By Jen Wimmer

The West Bend School District offers multiple summer opportunities for students; however it is also a time with reduced building use. This is the optimal time to attend to facility maintenance and improvements across the 1.2 million square feet of space the district maintains. Almost half of our buildings are more than 50 years old. Projects this year and in the past include remodeled libraries, replaced and repaired playground, sidewalks, parking lot pavement, new doors and locks, HVAC improvements, classroom and hallway lighting, locker replacement, bathroom remodeling, as well as the always necessary roofing.

The West Bend School Board has increased the capital improvement budget annually by 4% to provide \$1.725 million toward our 2022-2023 maintenance, repair, and remodeling projects. The majority of the projects are for maintenance. For example, the district allocates \$600,000 annually to attend to the roofing replacement cycle.

This summer, two schools will receive roof replacement/repairs



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and all buildings will have some concrete repair as well as asphalt maintenance. The summer projects also include new lighting in the high school fieldhouse and replacement of the HVAC controls in the high school building. In addition, some of the restrooms at McLane show the advanced age of the building. We are replacing them, with one set replaced last year and two sets this year. There are also two sets of restrooms in the high schools building being replaced this year.

With 13 buildings, there are more improvement and maintenance projects than there is budget. To determine which projects are moved forward into the completion cycle and which are deferred, they are reviewed by facility staff to determine what is the most pressing and urgent keeping in mind safety, instruction, and minimizing structural degradation. Recommendations are then reviewed by the School Board. Some widely used items are nearing the end of their life cycle,

such as the high school track and football field. And, there are a number of deferred projects including new bleachers in the high school fieldhouse, HVAC controls in Green Tree, and roof replacement at Decora. Both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 capital improvement budgets include \$5 million of deferred projects.

Our schools have served generations of district residents well and our dedicated maintenance staff do amazing work to stay on budget and keep the buildings clean and maintained. The list of the 2022 projects approved by the board is located on the Facilities Management page of the West Bend School District website, west-bend.k12.wi.us. As the 2022-2023 projects are being completed, our facilities staff is already reviewing its replacement cycles and deferred projects. Their commitment to the safety in and around our buildings and to the maintenance and repair of our buildings helps our district to offer a supportive environment for students and staff.

(Jen Wimmer is superintendent of the West Bend School District.)