

The Grand Forks School District experienced losses that were likely as great as any school system has ever faced as a result of the 1997 Red River flood. Of the twenty-two buildings owned by the district, three had damage exceeding 50% of their value, which resulted in their discontinuance as school buildings. Thirteen other buildings were substantially damaged. In total, the estimated damage to the Grand Forks Public School District was \$72,404,621. The renovation and replacement of the damaged facilities were incorporated into 33 projects. According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the number of projects and the constructions costs were the equivalent of two normal years of school projects for the entire state.

| <u>SUMMARY OF 1997 FLOOD LOSSES/DAMAGES</u> | | | <u>RENOVATIONS AND REPLACEMENTS</u> | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <u>Buildings Lost</u> | <u>Buildings Damaged Significantly</u> | <u>Buildings With Minor Damage</u> | <u>New Buildings</u> | <u>Major Renovations and Additions*</u> | <u>Minor Repairs</u> |
| Belmont | Central High School | Century Elementary School | Phoenix Elem. | *Schroeder Middle | Century Elementary |
| Lincoln | Red River High School | Ben Franklin Elementary School | South Middle | *Valley Middle | Ben Franklin Elementary |
| South | Schroeder Middle School | Winship Elementary School | Service Center | Central High School | Winship Elementary |
| | Valley Middle School | Stanford Centre | | Red River High School | Stanford Centre |
| | Kelly Elementary School | Twining Elementary (GFAFB) | | Kelly Elementary | Twining Elementary (GFAFB) |
| | Lake Agassiz Elementary | Eielson Elementary (GFAFB) | | Lake Agassiz Elementary | Eielson Elementary (GFAFB) |
| | Lewis & Clark Elementary | | | Lewis & Clark Elementary | |
| | Viking Elementary School | | | Viking Elementary | |
| | West Elementary School | | | West Elementary | |
| | Wilder Elementary School | | | Wilder Elementary | |
| | Education Center | | | | |
| | Buildings and Grounds | | | | |
| <u>FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETED SINCE THE FLOOD USING LOCAL RESOURCES</u> | | | | | |
| | | Ben Franklin Elementary | | Twining Elementary (GFAFB) | |
| | | Winship Elementary | | Eielson Elementary (GFAFB) | |
| | | Lake Agassiz Elementary | | | |

The school district approached the recovery by organizing activities into several tracks that were worked on concurrently by various teams. These teams focused on damage assessment and clean up, arrangements for school year ending activities and summer school, arrangements for the beginning of school in September of 1997, and planning for a longer term desired future.

Damage assessment and clean up were facilitated by the employment of the Mortenson Company. Their people worked with the school district facilities team to provide targeted clean up for four summer school sites followed by cleaning of the remaining sites and development of thorough damage assessments at all sites.

Arrangements for immediate activities including graduation, prom, and summer school were facilitated by a team of GFPS administrators and staff. Graduations occurred as previously scheduled and drew two full houses at the Hyslop field house while receiving national media attention. Prom was hosted by the Grand Forks Air Force Base and was a huge success, and also was featured on national news outlets. Summer school attracted 4,000+ students. A special component of summer school was the SPA musical, created by local students and staff and based on the flood experiences of our community, entitled "Keep the Faith". Ten "sold out" performances at the Chester Fritz Auditorium drew 25,000 attendees.

In order to house students from some of the badly damaged buildings for the 1997-98 school year, the school district rented various facilities including Calvary and Sharon Lutheran churches, approximately 100 relocatable buildings, and the National Guard Armory. In addition, the lower level of Red River High School and the wrestling gym at Central High School were organized into temporary classrooms.

Planning for a desired future in the midst of the flood aftermath was challenging but proved to be invaluable. A large group of

staff, parents, citizens, students, and administrators met weekly to update the district's best options. Two heavily attended public forums were then held to receive reaction to these options. The school board and administration used the outcomes of this process to guide their critical decisions on facility and program directions over the following months and years. This "game plan" provided focus and consistency to the extended recovery process.

Some things did not change. The focus of the district operations intensified on the goal of providing opportunities for all children to realize their maximum potential. Parents, children, and citizens reminded the district that schools are about hopes and dreams for the young people of Grand Forks. The flood lessons capitalized in bold letters that education is the priority of Grand Forks.

Many things changed. The district's reliance on coordinated teams after the flood carries over today. Everything from budget to policy to program has become more grassroots. The school board establishes big picture expectations and the administration has organized staff and community partners in a manner that attempts to utilize everyone's strengths and contributions to meet or exceed those expectations. Dedicated resources have been identified to support facility modernization and technology updates and training.

Most important is the fact that the students are doing very well by all measures. In addition, staff members, schools, and the district are receiving state and national recognition every year for a variety of programs.

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