

Historical Overview of Clovis Unified School District

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HISTORY AND PLANNING OF FACILITIES

Maintenance of Facilities

The philosophy that fuels the maintenance of facilities within Clovis Unified School District is simple, yet profound in its implication: when something is broken, fix it fast, fix it well, and **fix it right!**

At the time of unification, it was common for repairs to be done with whatever materials happened to be handy: leaks in a roof would be repaired with a tin can from which both the top and bottom had been cut; the remaining tube would be cut and flattened, and then it would be put on the roof of a building as a patch. Similarly, if a door needed to be repaired or replaced, an old door would be used; rarely would the paint on the door match the rest of the classroom, however, and it would be 2 to 3 months before it was repainted. This was absolutely unacceptable to the new District administrators, and a policy was born that insisted repairs be made properly and immediately.

The belief behind this policy was basic: if the school buildings looked good, the students, teachers and community felt good about their school; if the school looked like it was falling apart, it appeared no one cared; thus, there was no reason for the students, teachers, or community to value what went on in the school. Appearance sends a message, and the administrators of Clovis Unified wanted that message to be one of pride in the community's schools.

This same philosophy marks the District's procedures for addressing the problems of vandalism and graffiti. Acts of vandalism or graffiti are cleaned up immediately. Once a problem is discovered, maintenance personnel correct it without delay; frequently, the situation is rectified before students arrive on campus in the morning. Such diligence in handling a problem prevents the perpetrator from having an audience for his action, so its value as an attention-getting device is decreased. Furthermore, if the act of vandalism isn't seen, it prevents copycat incidences from occurring.

Such swift response to acts of vandals has had a marked impact: during the 1987-1988 school year, the District lost \$35,599 to vandalism, burglary, or "mysterious disappearance" of District property. This amounts to an average loss of \$1.99/student/year, compared with the national average loss of \$10.00/student/year. By keeping vandalism controlled as much as possible, District administrators seek to limit the amount of money needed to repair damaged property. In the long run this allows them to have more money to meet student needs.

Proper maintenance of school facilities, carried out in a timely fashion, is necessary also to protect the substantial investment in facilities and materials within the District. With over



\$100,000,000 worth of capital investment in District facilities, protection of this investment is essential. Quick response to maintenance problems obviates the certitude that anything that isn't repaired will naturally deteriorate; since it can also become an "attractive nuisance," it is imperative to fix a problem as quickly as possible: once students have noticed it, they start picking at it and tearing down other things. Vandalism can be a cancer: treated early and well, the likelihood of recurrence is greatly diminished.

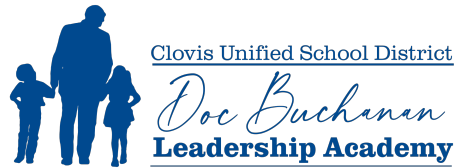
In 1985, after assessing the overall maintenance program and problems within the District, C.U.S.D. administrators supplemented an already active preventive maintenance program, when they added two "roving" preventive maintenance men to staff. These people visit every school site throughout the year, spending at least one week at each site. While at the school, they answer directly to the principal, who has them do whatever maintenance jobs have been accumulating. Working from a fully equipped maintenance truck, which is constantly at their disposal, not only maintenance, but "nuisance items are handled, all in an effort to help keep each school site an efficient, well-maintained environment for learning. These people evaluate the entire school site, deciding what repairs are necessary, and they make whatever repairs they can, working on small electrical problems, locks, leaky faucets, etc. Any problems requiring more specialized maintenance than they can handle are scheduled with the appropriate electricians, painters, or plumbers, so the campuses remain in peak condition.

Another advantage to keeping abreast of maintenance problems is in learning if a school has a structural problem, poor application of design layout, or improper equipment for a particular use. All maintenance orders, as submitted by the on-site administrator, are processed through, and signed by the Superintendent. As Dr. Buchanan has pointed out, "If, all of a sudden, within six months after we build something, if it starts showing up on maintenance orders, I can get with the architect, or I can call the school and get with the maintenance people and say, 'Okay, what is happening with this? Did we make a mistake?'" Being aware of and attuned to possible problem areas allows District administrators to adjust and make changes to them and prevents the recurrence of similar problems at other sites, if the problem can, indeed, be precluded.

It is this attention to detail in maintaining District facilities that has allowed District administrators to provide the Clovis community with facilities that are both functional and pleasant. By establishing and sustaining high levels of maintenance standards District personnel know what they can demand of their students; in turn, the community now expects and demands a level of excellence from its schools.

Preventive Maintenance

"People will live up or live down to the example around them." Keeping in mind this observation of Dr. Buchanan, C.U.S.D. has maintained an aggressive policy of preserving and improving the condition of all District facilities. The reasons for this policy are diverse and numerous.



Initially, District administrators wanted school facilities to be attractive and welcoming to students and the community at large. To accomplish this, buildings and grounds were maintained so schools were never “so far gone” that the District couldn’t repair them. When the District unified, almost none of the schools was landscaped; rather, the school yards consisted of dry dirt and puncture vines. Besides being unattractive, the puncture vines destroyed any balls that landed in them, so students had no place to play. Clovis Unified’s policy of landscaping to add to the appearance of a school site and to provide a safe play area for students was borne of this situation.

C.U.S.D. has followed another well-founded policy concerning vandalism and graffiti. Graffiti is not only destructive to a school facility; it can be an example to other students of an attention-getting activity that spurs copycat stunts that can be equally disruptive and harmful. The cost to repair vandalism can be staggering. To curb this, Clovis Unified has had a long-standing policy that calls for maintenance crews to be notified immediately, if there has been vandalism or graffiti at a school site. Frequently, because these crews are mobilized as soon as the first person arrives on a campus and finds a problem, the crews have cleaned up the problem before most students arrive. Without an “audience” to appreciate his handiwork, a student receives no encouragement to vandalize. This saves countless dollars.

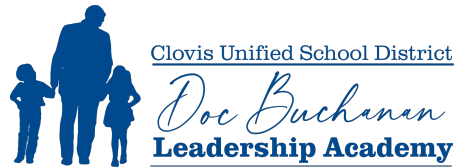
Individual school site administrators are responsible for overseeing the preventive maintenance performed at their schools. By repairing problems when they first appear, cost containment is more effective: problems do not worsen before being corrected, so maintenance costs are lower, and the school is a safer environment.

An added benefit to maintaining buildings and grounds in excellent condition is reduced insurance premiums. Because the potential for accidents is reduced by maintaining a school’s facilities, premiums are lower. In fact, in the early 1980’s, when many communities were having difficulty obtaining any insurance, Clovis Unified kept its insurance precisely because of its record for maintaining facilities and being actively involved in ensuring safety on campus. Careful planning and maintenance of school facilities has helped free funds for other District programs.

EFFECTIVE USE OF FUNDS

Quality Construction

Originating from Dr. Buchanan’s premise that, “For some kids, the best environment they’re ever going to see is their school environment,” C.U.S.D. has focused on giving students, teachers, parents, and the community at large a network of school sites designed to serve as role models for the entire community. The District’s goal has been, and is, to provide top quality facilities and supplies to all students. The rationale for this is threefold.



First, although the capital outlay for quality goods and construction is initially higher than using less expensive products, maintenance and upkeep expenditures are considerably less with top quality materials. Consequently, when all costs are totaled for the construction and life-long maintenance of a building, it is more cost effective to “buy the best” at the beginning, than to build less expensively, but with higher maintenance costs.

Second, by insisting on building the best quality school structures and supplying them with the highest-grade equipment, students find themselves in an environment that is attractive, safe, and welcoming. The school buildings themselves become essential tools in educating the children.

Third, when equipment (e.g., desks, chairs, pencils) is sent to a school, students learn quickly whether the supplies are excellent, adequate, or a distraction. If the District allows desks that wobble in a classroom, students will naturally rock the desks during class. This is a distraction to that student, those around him, and to the teacher. Similarly, if the quality of something as small as pencils is such that they break easily, students begin to receive the message that the District cannot really be serious about them learning. For this reason, C.U.S.D. strives to supply its students with materials that enhance the classroom experience and underscore its commitment to quality education.

The building and renovation programs that have been undertaken by Clovis Unified emphasize these beliefs. Besides presenting a more appealing environment, carpeting requires less maintenance. Air conditioning for each school site makes everyone more comfortable; but, it has the added value of helping children learn: it is a well-documented fact that students’ abilities to learn are impaired when room temperatures rise above 80 degrees.

By utilizing State funds to renovate some of the District’s older schools, the District has been able to prepare these facilities for year-round use, should the need arise in the future. Additionally, through efficient use of State funds, Clovis Unified has been able to direct money, which would otherwise have been needed for renovation, into other District programs. Consequently, a quality environment is provided with the least expenditure possible.