

Category: 11 – Best Building Project – GC (\$30M)

Contractor: Fransen Pittman Construction

Project Name: Wray PK-12 School

As our superintendent CJ Campbell looked out over the incomplete Wray K-12 campus, the most striking feature was the utility pipes floating in their trenches as torrents of rain unleashed over the project site. This was a 100-year storm event. Situated in a valley bordered by bluffs 300 yards away from Republican creek, the damage to the site wrought by eight inches of rain threatened to derail the entire project. With students scheduled to be back in their new school by fall of 2021 it was up to the Fransen Pittman team to mitigate the situation.

In 2018, the Wray School District issued a bond proposition on their November ballot. Built in 1954, the middle school for the rural community had become almost unusable. Between frequent infrastructure failings, poor air-quality, mold, carbon monoxide concerns, and a lack of natural light, the school was nearing condemnation. The elementary and high school were not in much better shape. In 1985 the district built a new elementary and high school on the same site to consolidate resources and create more ease for parents. However, this campus was not fit for a 21st century learning population and included several safety concerns over the multiple entrances. In partnership with Wold Architects, the District created a plan to consolidate all schools into one, connecting the high school and elementary school and adding a middle school wing. With the support of BEST grant funding, the community rallied to support the district and passed the bond giving the district their necessary match.

Preplanning for the project, knowing that it would be an occupied campus, our team faced several challenges as we worked to transform the Wray K-12 campus. On top of the 100-year flood event and global pandemic we had already made a promise to the Wray community that students would be learning in their new school by fall of 2021.

Before we could begin construction, our team had to address the budget. Initially, the project was five million dollars over their expected final cost. We used our unique preconstruction process to put the project back on track. Our preconstruction team was able to utilize our MET™ system to help the district prioritize what was most important to their school. The school superintendent, Levi Kramer, stated in a letter of recommendation, “FP provided consistent, reliable and easy to understand information to me throughout the project. This allowed me and the board of education to feel confident in making decisions that best served our school and community”. Through this process we assessed 52 scope items and guided the district to a modified project that kept the most important elements of the school. As we explored site-work options, our team saw that self-performing site work would allow us to return significant savings to the district. We bid against the two other subcontractors and were able to share savings with Wray ultimately totaling \$600,000 dollars.

Throughout this project, our goal was to become a partner for the community. We achieved this in several ways: focusing on using local talent wherever possible, opening accounts at local hardware stores, and our team living in Wray to become part of the Wray community. Our superintendent CJ Campbell made Wray his family’s home throughout the project and made a point to be recognizable to the whole town. He could be found attending Wray football games throughout the fall as well as other school and community events. Being a rural community, it can make it more difficult to bring subcontractors back out to fix issues that arise. By using local labor, we provided the Wray community with better resources to be able to maintain the campus.

As a community partner, keeping students safe was our top priority through the entire project. We had to ensure that high school and elementary students were still able to learn without disruption or safety concerns. Originally, the district had planned to keep the courtyard between the schools open. When our team and the school sat down to plan it became clear that to keep the project on schedule, we would have to complete the link earlier than expected. After making this shift, our team worked to plan out egress paths for all classrooms so that every teacher and student knew how to safely exit the building in the event of an emergency. Each week we held weekly meetings with school staff and the project team to go over what would be happening on

site and any changes to the plan so everyone would be on the same page. We completed this project with no incidents or injuries.

As the project began to take shape, COVID 19 hit. Our early relationships with the community allowed us to respond comprehensively and quickly. We had to immediately pivot our site to adjust to new protocols to keep the project on schedule. Levi Kramer, Superintendent, stated, “The availability and genuine concern shown by every member of the team allowed very strong relationships to be developed early on between the school district and FP. These relationships are always valuable but became critical when dealing with the Covid-19 issues of the past year”. In a matter of days, we implemented new cleaning policies, symptom monitoring, temperature checks, and mask requirements. The whole project team took the measures seriously to protect the job. Our FP team was able to manage all the laborers and subcontractors to ensure that the jobsite remained open. As a result, the project remained fully operational with no closures.

As a BEST Grant Project, we had to ensure that we were hitting the top levels of sustainability. We worked closely with the CHPS coordinator to ensure that we met the certification. Beginning in preconstruction, we planned out how to modify components of the building to meet the certification from the start. During construction we ensured that all our practices aligned and exceeded state sustainability codes. We recycled materials and tracked all project waste. We also installed negative air machines to ensure that dust was circulated properly so that students and construction workers could breathe safely.

After the storm hit, our team began to take stock of the flooded site. Fortunately, most of the addition had been dried-in, minimizing building damage. Unfortunately, the same wasn't true for the site work. The project included a full utility package replacing all the existing tie-ins. At the time of the storm, we had the trenches dug and the pipes placed but not secured. The trenches quickly filled with water and filled the pipes with mud and silt. We took extra steps to ensure that the pipes were properly cleaned to ensure that we were meeting the highest stormwater management criteria by hiring a third party to professionally clean each pipe. After the pipes had been restored the team recorded the inside of each pipe as a final check. Once all the pipes were

properly drained the team was able to reinstall them in the trenches. Within three days we had the damage mitigated and were continuing to make progress on the schedule.

Our team was dedicated to the Wray School District from day one of this project. We continually worked to ensure that the final school would be a top-level facility for the students and staff. This fall students will walk down the hallways of their new school and gather in the Eagle's Nest between periods. Middle school students will say goodbye to their building of 50 years and move into a state-of-the-art wing with the rest of their K-12 peers. After this project our service with Wray wasn't completed, however. We were asked to return this summer to complete another small project for the district with Levi Kramer stating: "I have always believed that actions speak louder than words. This summer we are embarking on a \$1 million dollar construction project. After such an exceptional experience over the last two years, I immediately asked to partner with FP."









