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Midvale makeover to help create more positive image

By Susan Troller

Midvale Elementary School Principal John Burkholder knows that first impressions count.

So he has been troubled by the cracked pavement in the Midvale parking lot and on the playground.

He winces, thinking of the 20,000 cars that pass his school on Midvale Boulevard each day and the negative public perception of aging, flawed windows that are so streaked and cloudy no matter how many times they're washed, the children can't see out of them.

And he is thrilled that his school is going to get a partial makeover with some of the money voters approved last year to spend on maintenance at Madison schools.



Photo by Mike DeVries/The Capital Times

John Burkholder, principal at Midvale Elementary, in a math enrichment class with Maya Wilson (left) and Kathleen Jankovich.

"You can't have parents and community members feel good about a school if it looks like a mental institution," Burkholder said.

Instead, he says an elementary school should look and feel joyful, expressing the energy and colorful creativity of young children. And it should be a comfortable, safe environment.

With a grant from the Foundation for Madison's Public Schools, parents, students and friends of the Lincoln-Midvale pair are building a cob wall and archway that provides a new

symbolic entrance to Midvale Elementary that can be seen from Midvale Boulevard. A similar wall is also planned for Lincoln.

Also in the works at Midvale are community gardens, a rain garden and a native prairie.

Burkholder praised the hundreds of hours of volunteer work parents, students and others have put into improving the environment at Midvale. The various projects have also helped create bonds among parents across the school boundaries as they join forces to help their schools and schoolyards become a larger community resource.

Many upgrades are slated for Midvale this summer. Burkholder said they will not only improve school aesthetics but reduce energy costs. They include re-paving the parking lot and playground, refurbishing the gym floor, installing new windows, entry doors, fire detectors and alarms and upgrading the restrooms.

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