

Making Every Square Foot Count:

*Maximizing Today's Learning Environments While
Planning for Tomorrow*



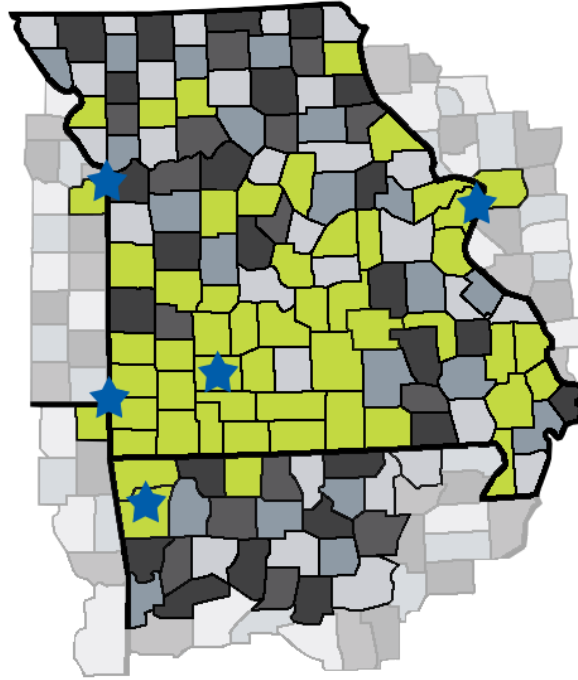
Annual MARE/MO K-8 Conference

October 21-23, 2026

About Paragon Architecture



About **75%** of
our projects are
in the **EDUCATION**
sector each year.



★ **5 Office Locations:**
Springfield (HQ), Joplin, Kansas City,
St. Louis, Northwest Arkansas

■ Counties in green indicate regional
project experience



Lindsay Reichert
Project Manager



Dana Hubbard
K-12 Market Leader

The Challenge: More Needs. Finite Resources.

- Aging facilities
- Competing priorities
- Limited budgets
- Evolving educational needs
- High expectations

The challenge isn't simply finding more space or money. It's making better decisions about the spaces we already have.

Purpose Statement

Today we will explore how viewing school spaces through different lenses could help your team:

- Recognize overlooked opportunities*
- Identify meaningful improvements with current resources*
- Distinguish immediate needs from future capital investments*
- Make more intentional, student-centered facility decisions*

What Will You Walk Away With?

-  A new perspective
-  Practical ideas
-  A prioritization mindset
-  A longer –range perspective
-  Walk away with a process you can start using tomorrow

Same Space. Different Lenses. New Possibilities.

Move away from thinking:

- What's broken?
- What needs replaced?
- What failed?

Through new lenses, begin asking:

- What's working?
- What's getting in the way?
- Within the space you have, what small changes could make the biggest impact?

Lens #1: Flexibility & Durability

Lifecycle value, maintenance, adaptability



We design for longevity and change. Our environments are built to withstand intensive daily use while remaining adaptable to evolving needs. Durable materials, thoughtful detailing, and resilient systems ensure long-term performance without sacrificing warmth or character. Flexible planning strategies allow buildings to shift and respond over time.

Valley Park School District
Elementary School – Kindergarten Classroom

Flexibility & Durability



**Springfield Public Schools
York Elementary**



**Neosho School District
High School Restrooms**

Flexibility & Durability



**Valley Park School District
High School – Charging Stations in Locker Voids**

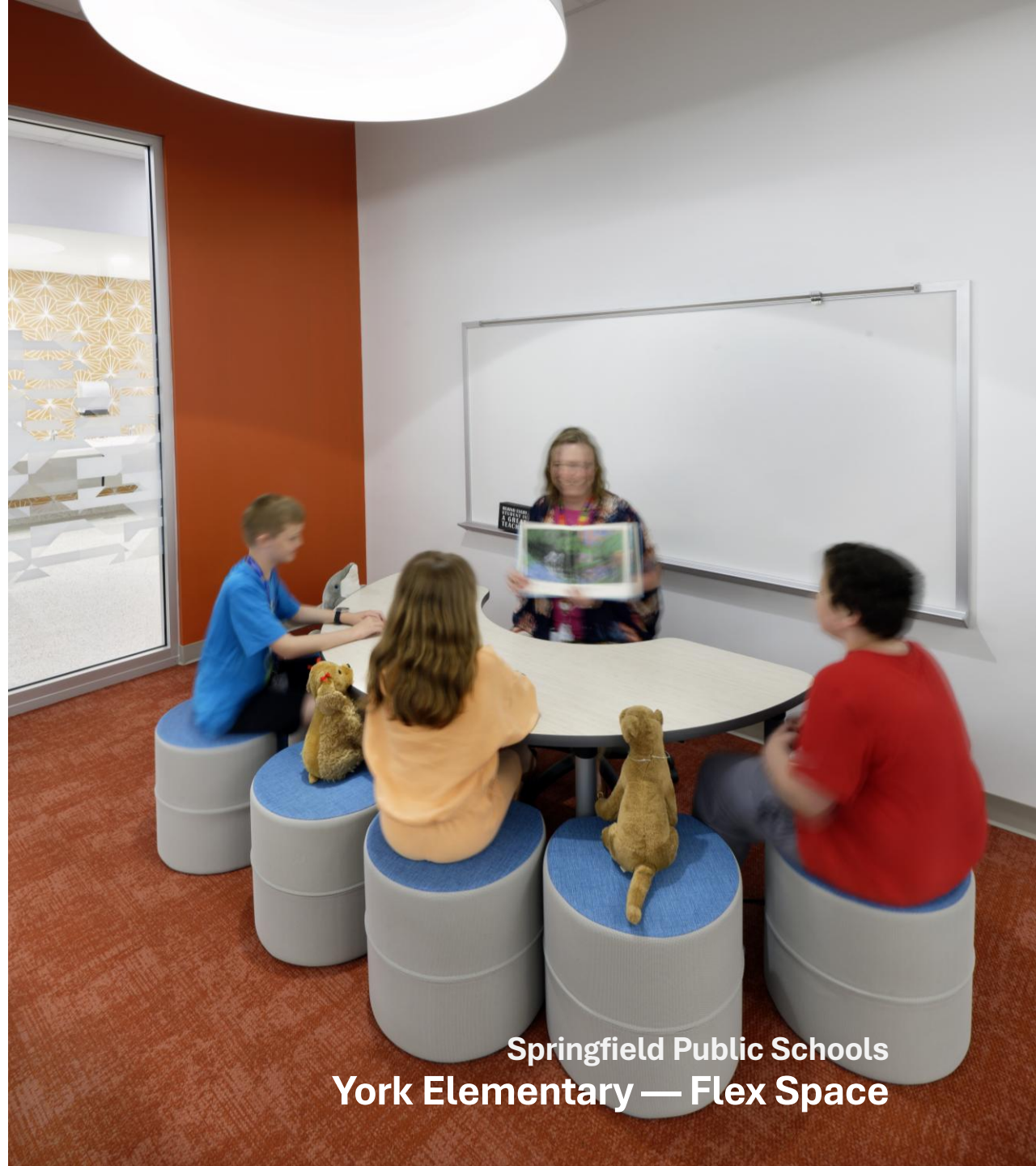


**Forsyth School District
Cafeteria Updates**

Flexibility & Durability



**Springfield Public Schools
Williams Elementary — Flex Space**



**Springfield Public Schools
York Elementary — Flex Space**

Flexibility & Durability

How easily can this space adapt?

- *Which spaces have changed the most over time?*
- *Which spaces aren't adequately supporting instruction?*
- *Where do maintenance staff spend the most time?*
- *If enrollment shifts, what spaces would struggle first?*

Lens #2: Human Centered

Safety, occupant well-being, educational outcomes



We design environments that prioritize safety, dignity, and emotional comfort. Our approach integrates physical safety, trauma-informed strategies, mental health awareness, and inclusive design principles to create spaces that are resilient, welcoming, and supportive for all users.

Centralia School District
High School — Secure Entry

Human Centered



**Marshfield School District
Early Learning Center**



**Willard Public Schools
Central Elementary**

Human Centered



**Forsyth School District
Fifth Grade Classrooms**



**Marshfield School District
ELC Storage**



**Bolivar School District
Parson ECC Storage**

Human Centered



**Willard Public Schools
Central Elementary**

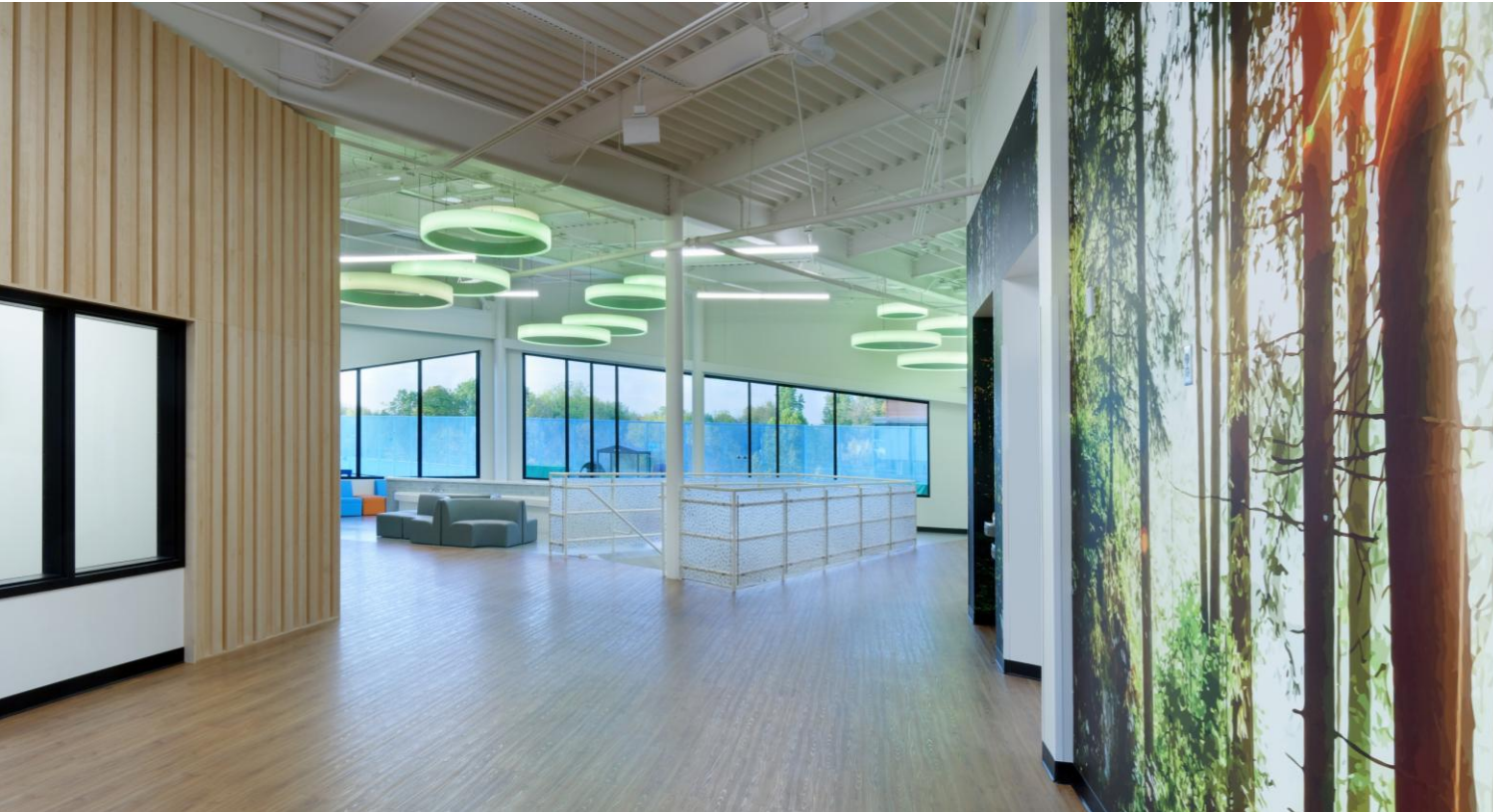
Human Centered

How does this space make people feel?

- *Which spaces are naturally kid-friendly?*
- *Where do staff enjoy working?*
- *Which areas serve to reduce stress?*
- *Are there spaces where conflicts tend to occur?*
- *Which spaces in your building seem to work especially well for the people who use them – and what is it about those spaces that makes them successful?*

Lens #3: Biophilic & Environmental Harmony

Healthy, efficient learning environments



We strengthen the connection between people and the natural world. Through materials, texture, color, and daylight, our buildings support well-being and comfort while reinforcing a sense of calm and belonging. These elements work together to regulate light, acoustics, and visual complexity. Our biophilic strategies are intentional design tools that shape how people feel and function within a space.

Springfield Public Schools
Adah Fulbright Early Childhood Center

Biophilic & Environmental Harmony



**Springfield Public Schools
Williams Elementary**



**Springfield-Greene County Library District
Republic Branch Library**

Biophilic & Environmental Harmony



**Springfield Public Schools
Pipkin Middle School**



**Willard Public Schools
South Elementary**

Biophilic & Environmental Harmony

Is this environment naturally inviting?

- *Where is daylight missing?*
- *Which rooms feel calm?*
- *Which spaces are noisy?*
- *Where do students seem most engaged?*

Lens #4: Contextual Harmony

Identity, stewardship, and community



Designing an experience begins with understanding place. We create a cohesive relationship between site, building, and interiors so the project feels intentional at every scale. By responding to context—natural, cultural, and architectural—we shape environments that feel grounded and intuitive, allowing users to experience the building as a connected whole rather than a series of spaces.

**Centralia School District
High School Secure Entry & Classrooms Addition**

Contextual Harmony



**Neosho School District
Agricultural Center**

Contextual Harmony



**Cassville School District
Performing Arts Center**

Contextual Harmony



**Springfield Public Schools
York Elementary**



**Houston School District
High School Gymnasium**

Contextual Harmony

Does this building reflect its community?

- *What spaces make your community proud?*
- *What space best captures the spirit of your school?*
- *Which areas unintentionally signal they have been forgotten?*
- *If you had visitors to your site tomorrow, what spaces would you show them first? Which areas would you avoid?*



***What things come to mind as you view
your facilities through these lenses?***

**Flexibility &
Durability**

**Human
Centered**

**Contextual
Harmony**

**Biophilic &
Environmental
Harmony**

VALLEY PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

OVERALL SITE PLAN
06/22/22
22-716

DISTRICT WIDE IMPROVEMENTS

CEILING AND LIGHTING REPLACEMENT
UPDATES

REPLACEMENT UPDATES FOR ALL
ASPHALT PAVING LOTS

CIRCUIT UPDATES FOR CENTRAL
CONTROL LIGHTING

REPLACEMENT OF ALL WINDOWS WITH
LOW E LOTS

INSTALLATION OF INTRUSION RESISTANT
PLASTIC UPGRADE LEVEL WINDOWS

FOUNDATION IMPROVEMENTS

IMPROVED LIGHTING IN ALL PARKING
AREAS

REPAVING AND REPAINTING PARKING
LAYOUT

RESURFACING OF ALL PARKING LOTS

UPDATED FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY SYSTEMS

IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE
FACILITY UPDATES

STADIUM LIGHTS AND SCOREBOARD
UPDATES TO ATHLETIC FIELDS

IMPROVEMENTS TO PLAYGROUND
BASKETBALL COURT

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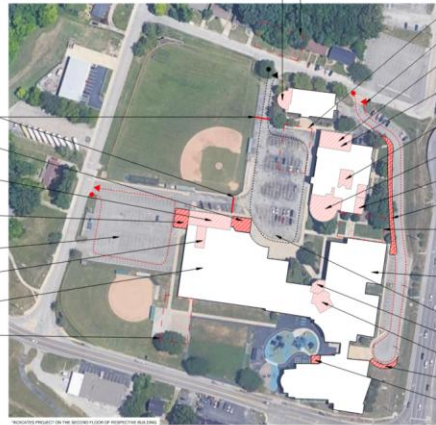
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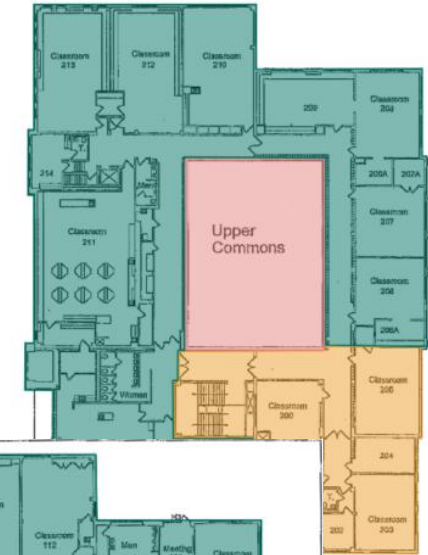


- 1. LOCKABLE PARKING LOT ACCESS GATE
- 2. NEW FENCE/POST AND RAILING FOR BASKETBALL FIELDS
- 3. RENOVATED KITCHEN EQUIPMENT AND SERVING LINE
- 4. NEW REFRIGERATION UNIT ENCLOSURE AND POSSIBLE RESTRUCTURING FOR BASKETBALL FIELDS
- 5. REPAVING AND REPAINTING PARKING LOTS
- 6. RENOVATED STAGE WITH CAFETERIA SEATING
- 7. REPAIR/REPLACE EXISTING OVER ROOF FOR FITNESS ROOM
- 8. NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER OR RECONFIGURED BAND AND CHORUS ADDITION
- 9. RENOVATED BAND ROOM TO DISTRICT OFFICE USE
- 10. POSSIBLE FUTURE BUILDING
- 11. EXPANDED ENTRANCE
- 12. RENOVATION OF INDUSTRIAL TECH AND RELOCATION OF ART
- 13. RENOVATE ENGLISH AND BUSINESS CLASSROOMS FOR BETTER UTILIZATION
- 14. RENOVATED STUDENT COMMONS BY FURNITURE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR HS STUDENTS
- 15. UPDATE LIBRARY FURNITURE & TECHNOLOGY
- 16. RENOVATION TO FOOD AND HOME SCIENCE LABS
- 17. EXPANDED ECC DRUG/PEP LINE AND DRIVEWAY ENTRANCE
- 18. NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER OR RECONFIGURED BAND AND CHORUS ADDITION
- 19. RE-PURPOSE EXISTING SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS AND RELOCATE INTO BETTER SUITED SIZE SPACES TO CREATE STEM AREAS IN EACH GRADE LEVEL WING
- 20. REPAIR/REPLACE OF PARKING LOT
- 21. UPDATE LEARNING LAB FOR PBL
- 22. UPDATE LIBRARY FURNITURE & TECHNOLOGY
- 23. EXTENDED ECC DROP OFF PICKUP
- 24. EXTERIOR RESTROOM SUPERROOM

OVERALL SITE PLAN

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- Phase 1
Summer 2025 - Summer 2026
Complete Renovation
- Phase 2 - Summer 2025
Finishes Only
- Phase 3 - Summer 2026
Finishes Only
- Phase 4 Summer 2026 or 2027
Finishes Only





Facility Assessment Field Guide Walkthrough

Facility Assessment Walkthrough Form

Make a copy of both pages of this form for each walkthrough pair

Name (First Last): _____

School: _____

Space Being Evaluated: _____

Date: _____

Which Lens

- ☐ Flexibility & Adaptability
- ☐ Human-Centered
- ☐ Biophilic & Environmental
- ☐ Contextual Harmony
- ☐ Compositional
- ☐ Playfulness & Rhythm

Your Role: _____

OBSERVATIONS

What do you SEE?

What do you HEAR?

What do people DO in this space?

What draws your attention?

What area feels intentional? What feels overlooked?

If this were your first visit, what message would this space communicate?

Decision-Making Framework

DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

CHOOSING THE RIGHT RESPONSE

After identifying an opportunity, determine which type of response is most appropriate. Not every observation requires a renovation.

QUICK WINS

Small changes that can be implemented immediately with little or no cost.

EXAMPLES:

- Rearrange furniture
- Improve lighting
- Add signage
- Declutter spaces
- Display student work
- Create calming spaces

ASK: What can we improve within the next 30 days?

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Facility improvements requiring long-term planning, funding, or inclusion in the Capital Improvement Plan or future bond issue.

EXAMPLES:

- Renovations
- Additions
- HVAC replacement
- Building systems
- Major reconfiguration

ASK: Should this become part of our long-term facility plan?

NOT A FACILITY ISSUE

The challenge is not primarily a facility issue and should be addressed through organization, programming, or other means.

EXAMPLES:

- Scheduling changes
- Room assignments
- Traffic flow
- Super
- Class
- Staff

ASK: Is construction the answer?

BEFORE MAKING A RECOMMENDATION—ASK YOURSELF:

- ☐ Have we identified the true root cause?
- ☐ Have we considered teacher and administrator feedback?
- ☐ Could furniture, organization, or procedures solve this challenge?
- ☐ What's the smallest change that could have the greatest impact?

Every decision shapes the learning experience. | Choose the right response. | Maximize impact.

Every learning space is an opportunity.
Better questions lead to better decisions, and
decisions create better learning environments.

OPPORTUNITY TRACKER

Improvement Planning Worksheet

Use this worksheet to capture opportunities identified during your facility walkthrough and plan next steps.

School / District: _____

Building / Space Evaluated: _____

Date of Walkthrough: _____

CATEGORY (Select One)

QUICK WIN

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT

NOT A FACILITY ISSUE

WHO WAS THERE?

NAME	ROLE / TITLE	DEPARTMENT / AFFILIATION

DESIGN LENS(ES) APPLIED (Check all that apply)

FLEXIBILITY & DURABILITY

HUMAN-CENTERED

BIOPHILIC & ENVIRONMENTAL HARMONY

CONTEXTUAL HARMONY

COMPOSITION

PLAYFULNESS & RHYTHM

WHAT DID WE OBSERVE?

What stood out during the walkthrough?

PATTERNS THAT EMERGED

What themes surfaced during the walkthrough or from stakeholder feedback?

CELEBRATE A STRENGTH

What should be preserved or replicated elsewhere?

TOP THREE OPPORTUNITIES (List the top three highest priority opportunities)

1

2

3

ROOT CAUSE (What is the primary source?)

☐ Building Design

☐ Building Systems

☐ Furniture

☐ Room Layout

☐ Organization

☐ Process / Procedures

☐ Scheduling

☐ Maintenance

☐ Culture

☐ Other:

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

What type of response is recommended?

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

☐ Within 30 Days

☐ This Semester

☐ This School Year

☐ 1 - 3 Years

☐ Future Capital Plan

ESTIMATED INVESTMENT

☐ No Cost

☐ Under \$500

☐ \$500 - \$5,000

☐ \$5,000 - \$25,000

☐ Capital Project (Over \$25,000)

SUCCESS MEASURES

How will we know this improvement made a difference?

EXPECTED IMPACT

Who will benefit and how?

ASSIGNED TO

Lead:

Supporting Team:

Target Completion Date:

NOTES / NEXT STEPS

Additional notes, ideas, or follow-up actions.

STATUS (Check One)

☐ Identified

☐ Planning

☐ In Progress

☐ Completed

☐ Deferred

FOLLOW-UP NEEDED?

What information, approvals, or resources are needed to move forward?



Let's continue the conversation.

If you need support with a comprehensive facility master plan or are ready to plan for capital investments, Paragon Architecture is here to help.

Paragon Architecture
417-885-0002

Closing

When you walk your building tomorrow, don't look for what's broken.

Instead, look for one small change that could:

- help students feel more welcome...
- help teachers teach more effectively...
- or, help staff maintain the building more efficiently.

***Building better schools doesn't always
begin with building something new.
It begins with seeing the buildings we
already have in a new way.***

Thank You!

Lindsay Reichert, AAIA
Project Manager

reichert@paragon-architecture.com

637 W. College St.
Springfield, MO 65806
Office: (417) 885-0002 ext. 1019
Mobile: (417) 830-9201

Dana Hubbard
K-12 Market Leader

hubbard@paragon-architecture.com

637 W. College St.
Springfield, MO 65806
Office: (417) 885-0002 ext. 1020
Mobile: (417) 825-4320

