



Balancing Timeline, Budget, and the
Unknown on K-12 Renovation Projects

KIPP DELTA PROJECT STUDY



PROJECT SUMMARY

Every project has a budget, but few are stricter than the budget for a K-12 project. The combined pressures of often using both federal and local dollars, as well as the obligation to return every unused dollar back to the school for other improvements, makes finding an experienced K-12 construction firm critical.

It also helps to have a relationship with that contractor. When [KIPP Delta](#) selected Nabholz to oversee the Blytheville Central project, it was just the latest in an eight-year partnership between our firm and KIPP Delta. Like most K-12 projects, this remodel came with a strict budget and strict timeline.

From a design and construction point of view, the Blytheville Central Elementary project stands out because it involved taking an existing 60-year-old structure that students had not occupied in two years and updating it to today's current standards for operations and life safety, while also updating it to facilitate KIPP

Schools' Commitment to Excellence. The old building was part of another school district and was shuttered several years back. Our task was to turn the building back over to KIPP Delta as an updated, functioning elementary school with a gymnasium, classrooms, warming kitchen, cafeteria, upgraded plumbing, electrical, fire alarm, cosmetic finishes, millwork, and restroom facilities.

*Funded by
taxpayer dollars,
K-12 projects
come with some
of the strictest
budgets.*



PROJECT TRENDS

This project follows a national trend of renovating facilities for K-12 use. According to an article by Clif Greim, PE, published by FacilitiesNet, communities are renovating instead of building for several reasons:

- Generally, schools built in the 1950s or earlier have impressive architectural character and often are fixtures in their neighborhoods. They are structurally sound and can accommodate new systems. In addition, there is often strong sentiment to keep them in some form. Newer schools built in the 1960s and '70s often become hand-me-down conversions from high schools to junior highs or from junior highs to elementary schools.
- The article goes on to state that another reason school administrators would choose to renovate older buildings is because there is no new land available to move the school or the available land is prohibitively expensive.
- A final factor is whether a renovation can be undertaken while a school is in use. If the goal is to continue to occupy the building, developing a phased construction schedule that separates construction from occupied areas is critical.



THE UNEXPECTED

On the KIPP Delta renovation project, neither the budget nor schedule left room for mistakes. Nabholz started work in early April 2016 with a turnover date of July 1, 2016. As luck would have it, existing factors in the building would soon halt the job, shortening the renovation schedule even more.

Renovating an existing building means preparing for the unknown, while simultaneously building a budget around what the end-user wants. We balanced these two objectives in the estimating stage. Throughout the estimating process, we kept the school informed of items that we might discover once work began and allowed contingencies for these circumstances in both budgeting and schedule. When the budget was finalized, we again ensured all parties were aware of the possibility of discovering concealed items such as mold, lead paint, asbestos, and HVAC, plumbing, and electrical issues. We made preliminary plans with the owners to handle any anticipated unknowns.

When demolition began in early April, samples of the VCT flooring collected during preconstruction tested positive for asbestos. We immediately submitted this to Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality and utilized our abatement contingency. Nabholz' in-house asbestos abatement team quickly removed the asbestos and worked with the project management team to turn over different areas of the project at a time to allow work on the floor to continue.

At the same time, the paint samples we gathered came back positive for lead. Again, we immediately utilized our lead-paint encapsulation contingency plan. Discovery of these hazardous materials shut down the entire jobsite for three weeks while we performed remediation and encapsulation. We called in a special lead paint remediation contractor for that scope of work.

Even with these challenges, our client could not extend the July 1, 2016 move-in date. School starts when it starts. We resumed demolition activities at the beginning of May, at which point it was determined the building had no existing hot-water capabilities. We performed design, pricing, and inclusion for this scope of work, using funds from the overall project contingency to cover the cost.

*Renovating an
existing building
means preparing
for the unknown.*

As work continued at an accelerated rate, the pace at which we needed owner-supplied color and finish selections picked up rapidly. We worked with KIPP Schools to coordinate our work schedule so owner representatives could review all selections and finishes without hurrying the process and possibly rushing a selection. With a three-month project schedule and possible eight-week lead-times for some materials, we had to impress upon the owner how important it was to make these selections while still being sensitive to their concerns.

We were in constant communication with KIPP Schools, the City of Blytheville, and [WER](#) (the designer) to ensure the concealed items or finish selections did not delay the final inspection and occupation of the building. As the project came to a close, a last minute decision to include a warming kitchen into the scope of the project was requested and included without extension of the July 1, 2016 completion date.

*When budgets
and timelines
are tight, good
communication
is crucial.*



THE RESULT

In the end, we completed the new Central Elementary for KIPP Public Schools on time and under budget. We are proud to have played our part—however small—in creating a place where the staff of KIPP Public Schools can provide the best possible education to their students every day.

This job also prepared Nabholz to tackle the ongoing trend of renovating decades-old school facilities.

*THINKING ABOUT A RENOVATION
PROJECT? GIVE US A CALL US AT
1.877.NABHOLZ AND ASK FOR YOUR
AREA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER.*