

Inspiring Great Spaces®



CASE
STUDY

The next chapter in school flooring



photo: Tonda McKay

Pilot program for district-wide improvements

Located in Williamson County, TN, Franklin Elementary School was undergoing a significant upgrade. It would be significant, certainly, for the school itself. But in addition, the facility enhancements – from safety to general aesthetics – were to serve as a model for improvements to the district's seven other schools.

Franklin Special School District facility supervisor Chip Sternenberg hadn't been involved in the initial specification process, but he was facing an array of issues similar to any of today's educational facility managers: questions about durability and the lifespan of materials, complicated by tight budgets that limit options and resources.

A shifting path for school floors

For decades, the flooring material of choice for education projects has been vinyl composite tile (VCT). Found in virtually every school built since the 1940s, this go-to flooring solution is durable and long-lasting, but it requires significant maintenance. For schools, this means emptying classrooms, music rooms, cafeterias and other rooms every year, stripping down the floor, and polishing it before students and staff return each fall.



While high-performance luxury vinyl tile (LVT) products have started to replace VCT and other traditional floorcovering materials in schools around the country, its use is generally limited to lower traffic areas. When LVT is an option, facility managers are faced with a difficult choice: spend more money up front or decrease the initial spend only to face higher maintenance costs down the road.

For many school districts, the choice is difficult to make, as strict budgets and government specification guidelines limit choice and design flexibility to a handful of products. In addition, established relationships in the industry are hard to overcome and make it difficult to select alternative products during the specification process.

A casual conversation, and a valuable recommendation

At a school function, Sternenberg met Kelly Allem, a regional sales manager for Armstrong Flooring. Interested in the Franklin Elementary School project, she asked to see the mockups for the plan currently out for bid.

The design team had specified LVT in conference rooms and VCT in classrooms to match recent renovations in the district's administrative offices. This made sense in terms of standardizing maintenance procedures and creating a unified aesthetic. But, as Allem pointed out, the flooring choice could potentially fall short of the performance demands of a busy elementary school – or any of the district's middle school and high school projects that would follow. She recommended Natural Creations® with Diamond 10® Technology as a superior alternative to the existing specification.

Not only did the Natural Creations LVT product provide the right combination of performance features, its reduced maintenance meant the district would save substantial time and money by avoiding the yearly expense associated with stripping and polishing the floors in each room, corridor, office and common space. It would also eliminate the inconvenience of teachers having to tear down and set up their room each summer, which requires extensive planning, packing and labor. Furthermore, it would expand the usage potential of the school facility, making it available for summer programs and use as a shelter location if disaster struck locally.



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Making a Case for Natural Creations® with Diamond 10® Technology

Sternenberg immediately suggested a project change order to address the flooring choice. This was a major development and not an easy decision. But he believed that a cost-benefit analysis would reveal the significant savings in labor (maintenance, stripping, polishing), materials and additional benefits in a way that would convince the school board and architect to change course on the flooring specification. The numbers were startling.

Even though the material costs of installing Natural Creations with Diamond 10 Technology were greater than the existing specification, the return on investment Sternenberg calculated was significant and made an impression on the board.

***By retrofitting the space,
we will see return on
investment in as little as
three and a half years,”***

- Chip Sternenberg, Facility Supervisor, FSSD

“Using actual cost differences between standard VCT and Natural Creations with Diamond 10 Technology on our 65,000-square foot project, the upfront price difference amounted to nearly \$90,000,” admitted Sternenberg. “However, by retrofitting the space,



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we will see return on investment in as little as three and a half years," he added. "If this was new construction, the return would be as little as two and a half years. Considering energy incentives and grants require at least a five-year return, this is impressive."

Sternenberg helped make the case by presenting additional value-added advantages that came with switching the spec. These included eliminating potential workers comp claims associated with the stripping/waxing process (including the labor and heavy lifting involved in moving furniture in and out of classrooms); and the dramatic reduction in maintenance costs and cleaning product usage thanks to the dirt and stain resistance of Diamond 10 Technology.

Results

For Franklin Elementary School, Natural Creations with Diamond 10 Technology was the right solution for the long-term performance of the facility. Plus, the district now has a cost-saving model that serves as the prototype for future renovations.

"It came down to maintenance, durability and longevity, all of which will translate to significant savings and an ROI of just a few years."

***– Kelly Allem, Regional Sales Manager,
Armstrong Flooring***

"It wasn't about the cost of materials per square foot, or the total amount of money the district had to put towards the installation," said Kelly. "It came down to maintenance, durability and longevity, all of which will translate to significant savings and an ROI of just a few years."

"By looking at the full list of value-added features and improvements, it's not just the money savings that justifies taking a new approach to flooring," said Sternenberg. "Architects will like the options that Diamond 10 Technology offers, and in our case, we were able to create a totally different and unique look, transforming the aesthetics."

To learn more about Natural Creations with Diamond 10 Technology and how it can help transform your school or commercial environment, **[visit www.armstrongflooring.com/commercial/en-us/products/lvt-luxury-flooring.html](http://www.armstrongflooring.com/commercial/en-us/products/lvt-luxury-flooring.html)**