

# Whitworth upgrade more than seismic

Work at the school includes technology, fire alarm system update

**By Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Whitworth Elementary School's summer seismic upgrade project is beginning to feel like a full-scale overhaul for district maintenance officials.

Before work began, Whitworth had been the school in the most danger of collapse in an earthquake. After this summer, it will be the stoutest building in the district.

The \$2.2 million, grant-funded project takes out some windows and replaces them with walls to prevent buckling, and other structural improvements to increase stability and prevent earthquake damage.

"It makes everything in this building not be able to twist or rotate," said Seth Arnesen, who is the site manager for the district on the project.

Evidence of the structural improvements will be buried in the floors and walls of the school once summer ends, but the district is taking advantage of workers already being in the building to do other repairs discovered along the way.

Contractors have found evidence of a past fire and a fire alarm system sorely in need of replacements. They've faced challenges on how to run data cables throughout the building without resorting to expensive options, such as hiding them within the walls.

Fixing those issues will cost money — \$347,181 through change orders and upgrades — but are now viewed as an opportunity to get necessary work done at a lower cost.

Kevin Montague, the district's facilities director, said when crews opened the walls, they found the school's aging fire alarm system wasn't set up properly and needed to be fixed.



A construction crew member works in a Whitworth Elementary classroom on Monday.

"With the work that it required to put the old system back to operable condition, it really didn't make a lot of sense to spend that much and still have a system that is an antiquated system," Montague said.

With much of the building already being worked on, the district asked for bids to replace the system. The contractor already working on the project provided the lowest estimate, \$86,036, reducing the cost by timing the improvements with seismic upgrades.

"This will bring us up to current code compliance with our fire system, which has been on our bond list for a long time. That's a system that is antiquated and needed replacement. It didn't make sense to do it until we got in and started cutting wires."

Montague said the next issue was the ceiling. The plan was to attach new ceiling tile to the ceiling panels

installed in the remodel, but that created another problem.

"That lead to a challenge we've had in that building all along is that we have no accessible routes for data wiring and additional things that we may need to do throughout time," Montague said.

His solution was to install "drop ceilings" to allow space between ceiling tiles and panel for water lines and data cables to easily run throughout the school. Installing the ceilings, including all-new LED lighting, in the classrooms and hallways will cost \$188,145. Part of that total will be credited back to the district through energy incentives, about 55 percent of the cost of putting in the new lights.

"We are going to benefit from this change, essentially forever," Montague said. "Whenever we need to run a new data line or change a configuration, we

now have pathways."

Montague said before the new ceilings are installed, it seemed the right time to use those pathways for yet another needed project: replacing old data cables.

Running new cable throughout the school would move the Whitworth from early 2000s technology to modern capability. The school probably won't need updates for 10 years, according to the district's tech department.

The project cost is \$73,000.

Dallas School Board members approved the change orders to the seismic projects, totaling \$274,181, and the technology update on Thursday.

With new ceilings, LED lighting and new walls throughout the building, Whitworth will emerge from the summer with a modern look, Arnesen said.

"This will be our best-looking school," he said.

# Indy is an 'inclusive city'

**By Stephanie Blair**  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — The Independence City Council passed a resolution on July 25, declaring Independence an inclusive city.

The meeting was highly attended, with citizens ranging in age, race and profession. Some came to the podium to voice their opinions. Of the 11 citizens who spoke before the council, not one opposed the resolution.

Among the speakers was an undocumented immigrant who came to America to seek medical treatment.

"I am undocumented. I have no documentation and, even though this community is great, it's always in the back of my head, the boogie man is always there, because who knows who might betray me and send me back?" said Juan Navarro. "I am a person that loves to help the community. I love it so much, and I'm blessed to graduate from Western, and I'm blessed to be the first one

in my family to attend a master's program this fall, but, like I said, I am not safe. I know I'm safe here (in Independence) but it's not always the same."

After the testimonies of the various citizens, the council had a brief discussion amongst themselves.

"As I understand it, this resolution doesn't change anything. We will continue to be an inclusive city, as we have been. We will continue to follow the state laws and the federal laws. We're just stating what we're already doing and will continue to do," said Councilor Michael Hicks.

"This describes things we already do," agreed councilor Marilyn Morton. "The resolution puts kind of a bow on it and makes it visible, and makes the statement: 'We are part of a group here, we are part of the group of people who live in Independence.'"

The resolution passed with a unanimous vote. For more information or to read the resolution: [www.ci.independence.or.us](http://www.ci.independence.or.us).

# ACADEMIC HONORS

## Lucas Costa graduates from RMA

FRONT ROYAL, Va. — Lucas Costa, of Monmouth, graduated from Randolph-Macon Academy on May 27, 2017. The ceremony was held in Melton Memorial Gymnasium in front of friends, family, faculty, staff, and honored guests.

Lucas was accepted into Babson College, University of Oregon, United States Air Force Academy, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia, and will be attending Virginia Tech this fall.

Lucas is son of Cinthia Costa Jones, of Monmouth, and Alexandre D T Costa, of Curitiba, Puerto Rico.

# SCHOOL NOTES

## WOU announces tuition increase

MONMOUTH — Following a Board of Trustees meeting on July 26, Western Oregon University released its final decision as to the amount that tuition will increase for incoming students beginning this fall.

Oregon residents and students who qualify for the Western University Exchange will have their tuition raised by 6.5 percent, while out-of-state residents, international students and graduate level students will receive a 10 percent increase.

For more information: Lisa Catto, 503-838-8163

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