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# USBuildersReview

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# Park High School

## Enriching Education in Big Sky Country

Produced by Alice Evans & Written by Jane Catoe

Livingston, Mont. features beautiful blue skies, mountain views and wide-open spaces that make it a destination for outdoors enthusiasts, film crews and artists colonies. But, even in parts as alluringly picturesque as this, it isn't all fun and games; kids still need to go to school.

After 50 years of growth, the Park High School Rangers needed more elbowroom. There's a fine line between cozy and cramped, and when the local public high school (originally constructed in the 1960s) crossed that line, the high school put itself on

the advanced placement list for improvement. The challenges unique to improving an existing, operational school required an expert in the subject and the school system knew just where to turn.

Livingston School District selected Langlas & Associates (Langlas) for guidance with its plan to expand and upgrade the campus. Langlas, founded in 1973, has Montana offices in Billings and Bozeman and specializes in education projects. The firm of 40 professionals, skilled in coaxing the best out of education



environments, offers preconstruction and construction phase management throughout Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, North Dakota, Iowa and California.

### Langlas Does Its Homework

Langlas signed on for the \$15 million, 119,000-square foot remodel that includes a new multipurpose room, additional classrooms, major mechanical and electrical upgrades, asbestos abatement, and grounds expansion. In addition, the athletic field was renovated, 200-plus seats were added to the stadium, and added a new all weather track. Before all of that could happen, however, there was plenty of research to do. The firm worked with Tate Management, the project owner's representative, and DSArchitects to assist in developing a plan that was within the budget approved by the taxpayers. This included working with key subcontractors to understand the existing systems and structure to prepare accurate costs in which the School Board could make informed decisions for which to authorize the use of the approved funds and ensure that the bond language was being followed.

A precise and detailed 11-phase work schedule was drawn up. The first phase began May 2011 and continued through the summer with a 29,000-square foot remodel of the existing building. Roger Davis went to the head of the class as project manager for the endeavor. "We do a lot of school projects, renovations, working with the school board and design teams," says the veteran, a Montana native, whose job it was to keep the 130-plus project participants on the same page.

Davis, who's been in the business for 20 years, joined Langlas eight years ago. "I was born and raised in Montana, and went to Seattle, then Boise, then wanted to come back to Montana," shares Davis. "And I came to Langlas as a project manager, because I heard a lot of good things about this family owned company."

### Math Test

Davis' familiarity with both the educational sector and the Montana region has proven invaluable, as renovating vintage schools comes with its challenges and it's important to know what to prioritize to assure the end result of a publically funded project. Langlas had to seriously crunch the numbers to get the budget right for the Park Hill



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project. “Budget was the initial challenge; we had to do value engineering up front,” states Davis.

Though it sounds like a lot, there was much to do both inside and out. Science and vocational classroom technology was upgraded; new energy codes had to be fit into the existing building; and there was a total mechanical system rebuild. Davis says, “Our onsite staff – Bill Langlas, superintendent, and Ira Couture, project engineer – had to keep everything up and running with

the old boilers while simultaneously installing new boilers. We worked daily to keep classes going for the students and keep work going for our subcontractors. I was lucky to have Bill and Ira on this project. They made my job easy.” In the end, \$15 million was minimal funding. But Langlas met the challenge and delivered a quality project, on time and under budget.

But that was nothing compared to the logistics of working during the school year with classes in session. Safety issues were prime in Davis’s mind. “We had to keep the kids separate from the construction traffic,” he explains. “We worked through school year, had to move people around – making all those phases work with staff, community and sporting events.”

Langlas used subcontractors to break up the workload into maneuverable units. The firm did the framing work and was awarded the concrete bid package, but subbed out 80 percent of that job. The company also subbed out their drywall and painting bid. However, Davis assures, “We were able to keep the bond money in the community and kept local subs involved. Subs were able to break up the scope of the project and to keep money local.”

***Congratulations to **Langlas & Associates** on your well-deserved recognition and success!***

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### School Project Turned in Early

And with such a local community institution as the publicly funded high school, it pays to keep things close. Davis judges a project's success by owner satisfaction, which is doubly important when working on a vital community resource. In the end the proactive, client-oriented Langlas approach proved perfectly suited to delivering the project on budget and to the satisfaction of all involved. "We had a great relationship with the owner and team," says Davis proudly. "Every day they would come and thank us for something that we did. How well we worked together."

The new Park High School reopened to students in July 2012, a little over a year after renovation began, and six weeks ahead of schedule. The school now boasts ample room, updated infrastructure and increased energy efficiency, all of which earn the Park High School project and Langlas an A+.

The Langlas firm's biggest asset is its staff. Bill Langlas, superintendent; Ira Couture, project engineer; Matt Drake, assistant project manager; and Roger Davis, project manager, show that educational construction and renovations can be a fun and worthwhile endeavor when you have a great team working together with the project's owner, its design team and the school's teaching staff. These types of projects do not need to be hard and enduring. Hiring the right team for a project is the most important decision to make, and Langlas & Associates shows that it is at the head of the class. •

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