

A Peter Li Education Group Publication

June 2006

SCHOOL

Planning & Management

CONSTRUCTION • FACILITIES • BUSINESS • TECHNOLOGY

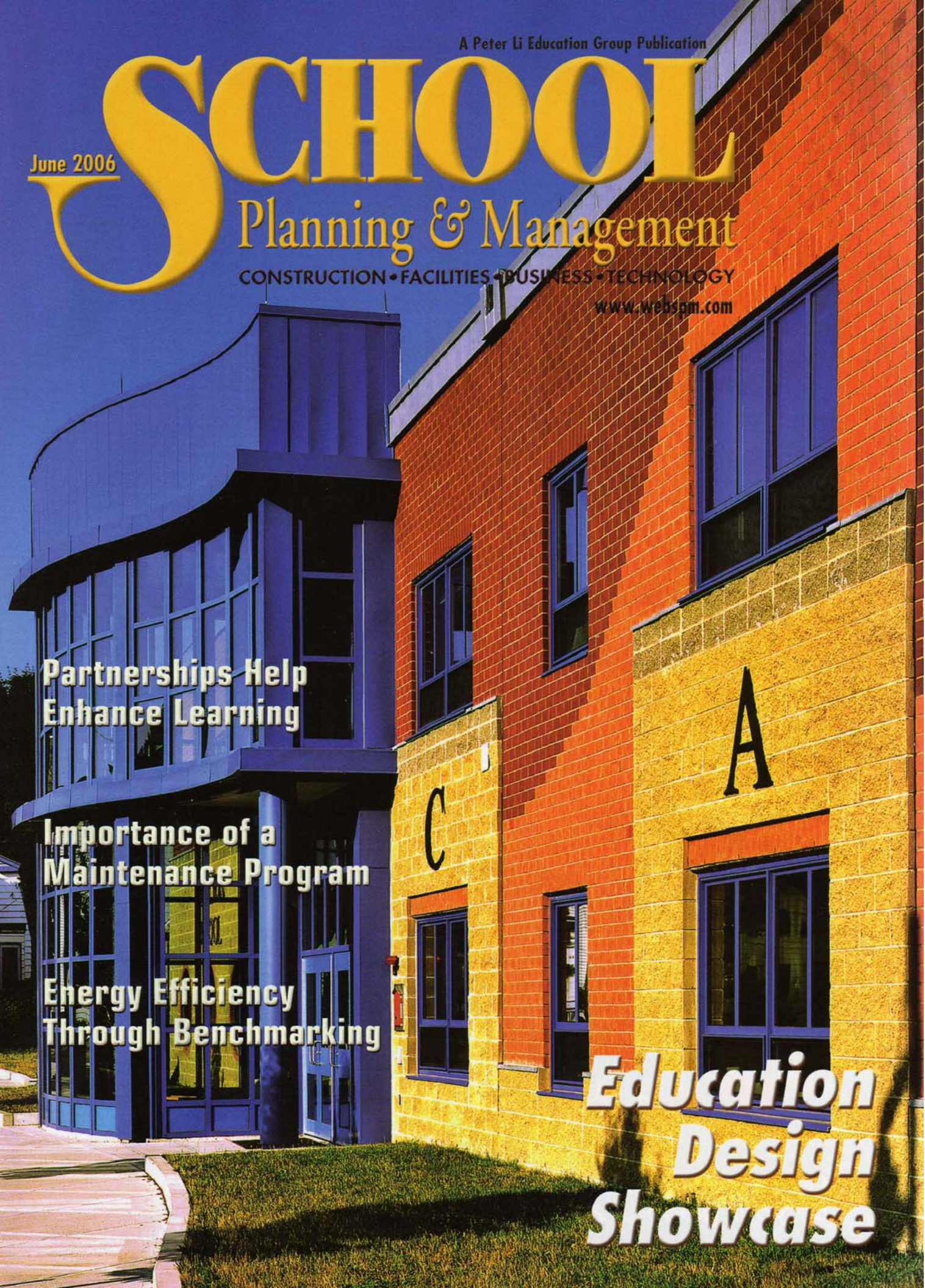
www.webspm.com

**Partnerships Help
Enhance Learning**

**Importance of a
Maintenance Program**

**Energy Efficiency
Through Benchmarking**

**Education
Design
Showcase**



Balancing Innovation and Cost in Facility Planning

Just a few decades ago, almost every tight-knit community in America played an integral role in its small neighborhood school. Community members looked out for their neighbors, and children felt safe and secure. Since then, communities have expanded and school enrollment has increased, often ending the intimate relationship between the two. Fortunately though, educational facility planners have watched an interesting trend growing across the nation: school districts are partnering with their communities to create facilities that save taxpayers money in the long run by using buildings more effectively, while fostering a sense of community. These collaborations balance innovation and cost, and are limited only by the imagination of those who create them.

Serving All Ages

The Mason City School District, located 25 miles north of Cincinnati, OH, serves more than 9,700 students. In early 2000, taxpayers approved a bond issue to fund a new high school and adjacent community center on a 73-acre site close to the original high school. The high school and community center are connected, so students can access the pool, weight room and indoor track. The community center also offers a child-care program and senior center.

Another positive result of this partnership is that Mason taxpayers saved money on two fronts. First, there was no duplication of space. Without the collaboration, the high school and community center might have proposed bond issues to build similar pools, weight rooms and indoor tracks. Also, the district would have had to duplicate some of its existing athletic facilities that are located on the current middle school site. Because of the location, the middle and high schools can share these facilities.

Second, the city saved on the cost of the land by leasing the land to the school district for \$1 a year, with the agreement that the district would levy the bond issue and construct the facility.

The Mason City School District has created additional partnerships since then. For example, a bank on school property provides convenient access for teachers and students. The bank offers internships that give high school students real-world experience. And when the district partnered

with Middletown Regional Hospital, the high school gained a full-time trainer free of charge, and the hospital gained a new target market.

Sharing Resources

Another interesting community and school collaboration thrives in Juneau, AK. Located on the state's southeastern panhandle about 900 miles north of Seattle, Juneau is home to nearly 31,000 people; the Juneau School District serves approximately 5,400 students.

When the school district wanted to build a new high school and the city wanted to expand one of its libraries in the late 1990s, both parties decided to collaborate. The result was the Juneau-Douglas High School Library.

This public library is adjacent to the high school and is available to both the community and school district. It functions as the information center for the students by providing access to a full range of resources, in both traditional and electronic formats, as well as interdisciplinary learning activities that support their curricula. It also serves as the community's information center by providing the same access to resources and technology.

The facility's layout includes separate spaces for school use only, community use only and shared use. The entrances and corridors are designed so that each area can be accessed separately; however, the library staff works hard to integrate all services. On most school days, the library is open to the community from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; hours are extended on the weekend.

Both Mason and Juneau are excellent examples of school and community partnerships. When schools districts and their communities collectively agree on their goals and decide how to reach them together, everyone benefits. **SPM**

Tracy Healy, REFP, a founding member and former vice president of DeJONG, opened a DeJONG affiliate in March 2006 and is a member of the Association of School Business Officers (ASBO). DeJONG-Healy focuses on demographics and facility planning projects in the Midwest.