HISTORIC MEADVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INITIATIVE

The Crawford Central School District includes the City of Meadville and surrounding areas as well as the near-by borough of Cochranton. The School District operates six elementary schools, three of which are historic schools within the city limits of the Borough of Meadville built in the 1920s and 30s as well as three in suburban and rural settings.

The school board asked Landmarks Design Associates to study the conditions of all six elementary schools and report back on a plan for rehabilitation and restoration. The study included the option of de-commissioning two of the historic city schools and making substantial additions to the school with the largest site area and the nearest suburban school. The study showed that the costs for rehabilitating the six schools were considerably less than new construction and, while operating costs were slightly higher, it would take approximately thirteen years before operating costs would exceed the initial savings in construction costs. Further, the board saw an advantage in maintaining schools within three neighborhoods within the City of Meadville.

In July of 2007 the board adopted a Master Plan for rehabilitation of all six elementary schools including the three historic city schools. The plan projected the rehabilitation of two schools per year for three years, investing nearly $6 million in each of the three historic neighborhood schools.
During 2008 - 2009 the First District School (built 1938) and Second District Elementary School (built 1929) were rehabilitated and additions made for new libraries, administrative space, and cafeterias.
In 2009 - 2010 the East End Elementary School (built 1926) was rehabilitated to the same standards.
These three city schools were rehabilitated using the following guidelines.

- Retain and restore the character defining elements of the schools including historic brick and stone facades, terrazzo and tiled corridors, wide steel and terrazzo stairs, historic circulation patterns and traditional classroom spaces.
- Construct additions for critical new needs which included multimedia libraries, administrative areas, and cafeterias.

At the First District Elementary School there was an earlier building on the site that had various uses including a trade school and administration offices and was used as an annex. The building had been repeatedly altered and modified and lost its original character. Removal of this building allowed a modestly scaled addition to the First District Elementary School that allowed the building to function smoothly as a single building using less space and less energy than the former annex and allowed a better organization of the site.

Classrooms were fitted with new technology and lockers were added in the corridors to provide more teaching space within each classroom. New group bathrooms were designed in central locations and the historic corridors and stairs on the interior were retained and restored. Since the buildings are fully sprinklered the historic doors at the stairs could be retained. Due to the favorable bidding climate during the 2009 - 2010 construction season, complete replacement windows modeled on the originals were provided for the East End Elementary School.

During the construction phases the students were shifted from school to school but beginning with September 2010 all of the students will return to their restored neighborhood schools within the City of Meadville.