

Written Memories (via Email)

From: Michele F. Sims

To: Mary Lipsey

Wednesday, August 31, 2005

(Michele Sims, principal of Terra Centre Elementary School, responds to questions about the school, which is a unique energy efficient building, built largely underground.)

Hi Mary,

I'm keeping my word about responding by the end of the day today. I'm thrilled you spoke with Al Hlavin and have some of the history I didn't have. I hope you had an opportunity to speak with Steve Gossin who was my predecessor and was here for 11 years.

What is it like today, 25 years later, at Terra Centre?

Terra Centre Elementary is the school home for close to 600 students who live in Burke Centre. Among those students are students from approximately 100 countries speaking 100 languages. Over the past 25 years, plexiglass has been added to enhance the instructional environment. During the summer of 2004 a new boiler and new air ducts were put throughout the building.

What are the challenges with an underground school?

Prior to the change in the ventilation system, there appeared to be some temperature fluctuations in different areas of the building. That was addressed by the new system and everyone is comfortable now.

What are the benefits?

As the focus on safety has changed nationwide, it has been reassuring to be in a school building where we feel extremely safe.

Have there been structural modifications to the building over time?

There have not been any structural modifications of which I'm aware.

Do the students understand and appreciate how their school is different from others?

I think the students enjoy their school. I haven't heard any discussions about how their school is structurally different. For many of them this is the only school they've attended, so I don't think they've made any comparisons. It would be interesting to talk with them about the history, so I plan to do that this fall.

Do you have any cute mascots or newspaper names associated with being underground, like the mole?

Our mascot is the Terra Centre Tiger.

Have there been any studies to show the effectiveness in energy saving at the school?

That research would have been done at the central office level if it has been done.

Michele Sims, Principal
Terra Centre Elementary

(End of memory)