

# CFR THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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## The Effect of a Learning Facilities Condition on the Occupants

At the recent Starnet meeting in Nashville, Tennessee held on November 4th and 5th there was an APPA Facility Managers panel discussion sponsored by Tandus that essentially discussed the effect of learning facilities condition on occupants. By condition we mean the design and aesthetics of the space and how they relate to the occupants attitudes while populating that space. APPA used to stand for the Association of Physical Plant Administrators in the late 1960's through the early 1990's. Today, the association is known as APPA: Leadership in Educational Facilities, and is most easily recognized and referred to as simply "APPA." The panelists at this presentation were from the University of Tennessee, Tennessee State University and an APPA Leadership consultant.



Starnet executives, from left: Leah Ledoux, director of strategic accounts; Jeanne Matson, president and CEO; and Fred Williamson, executive vice president.

Inclusive in the discussion, relative to flooring materials, was the appearance of the space and how it helps creativity. Of major importance is the performance of the flooring products, their sustainability and getting the right product in the right place. One question was, "what does this have to do with flooring products and flooring contractors." The answer is that the flooring and the flooring contractor accommodates the needs and desires of the institution through the facilities managers to foster creativity in the student body. Believe it or not the appropriate flooring material will help to attain and retain key graduate students which equal funding for the institution. This is important because graduate students who produce change in all aspects of education and knowledge put the learning establishment on the cutting edge of whatever they focus on in any of the sciences whatever they may be – for example from business to physics.

Researching the subject some of the definable differences the environment makes on the students and teachers are as follows:

Changing from worst to best Overall Environmental Compliance Rating leads on average to a 36 point increase in a school's API (Academic Performance Index) which is a school performance measurement system.

Approximately 5% more teachers are likely to stay in a building in "A" condition vs. "F" condition.

In schools with poor facilities, students attended less days on average and therefore had lower grades in ELA (English Language Arts Standards) and Math standardized tests.

Attendance was found to be a full mediator for grades in ELA and a partial mediator for grades in Math.

Teachers in schools in satisfactory conditions are significantly more likely to express positive attitudes

about their classrooms than teachers in unsatisfactory buildings.

There is a significant relationship between building condition and test scores. Additionally, at least 75% of principals indicated that the adequacy of the school facility impacted teacher attitudes, teacher recruitment and retention, student behavior, and parent and community attitudes and support. \*conducted by the 21st Century School Fund

In other words, if we want kids to succeed, then we must provide them with the necessary infrastructure to do so. – Ulrich Boser US News

Every study researched indicates a positive relationship between student performance and a facilities condition – factors or components of the built environment. A school building has a measureable influence on student achievement.

Heat, Lighting and Acoustics are the three primary components.

Studies have proven that school facilities affect learning. Spatial configurations, noise, heat, cold, light, and air quality obviously bear on students' and teachers' ability to perform. Facilities managers already know what is needed: clean air, good light, and a quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment. This can be and generally has been achieved within the limits of existing knowledge, technology, and materials. However, it requires adequate funding and competent flooring design, construction, installation and maintenance.

So you can say without hesitation that flooring does indeed impact student's success and enhances creativity to the extent that the space in which students learn or create has to be accessible 24/7 and conducive to fostering creativity. Thought has to go into what the space has to and should look like in order to allow for the student using the space to feel fully involved in the area in which they



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are working allowing the most productivity. Heating, lighting and acoustics are the most important aspects, of the space, as mentioned but the flooring – the surface everything is based and rests on – plays a significant role in accommodating creativity.

Most of the information on flooring facilities managers receive comes from the Architect but the architect cannot be an expert in every interior finish and feature of the project. Enter the professional flooring contractor who is much more expert in flooring product knowledge and creating a unique space that embodies whatever learning activity is planned for that particular environment. The facilities managers need guidance on specific flooring products, installation and maintenance that the architect, general contractor, manufacturer and the facilities managers themselves don't have. Because professional flooring contractors work with a variety of flooring products on a daily basis and install them in a multitude of different applications, who better to guide the facilities managers in their quest for the best product for the application that will perform up to their expectations, have a long life and withstand the maintenance demands of an active space.

Universities understand that students creativity is not combined to day light hours but is a 24/7 cauldron that can boil at any time of day or night. The space has to be accessible then to those students that want to occupy it whenever they want and, again, be a lure to creativity. The right flooring with the right design certainly can create such an environment.

What types of flooring products are being used in schools and universities? There is more LVT and LVP not only because it performs but it possesses a pleasing, warm and creative environment that allows for the implementation of endless design elements. Carpet tile is also a favorite for the same reasons especially with the myriad of sizes, shapes, textures and coloration. It is also easy to replace if damaged. Stained concrete is also a favorite as it is easy to maintain and allows for creative graphics and is the epitome of sustainability. This is also true of the modular flooring materials mentioned and that can lend themselves to the universities



brand which is their name and the college theme. That is the flooring can exhibit the universities brand such as the University of Tennessee's orange "T" or Big Orange brand name.

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No longer does it seem, with any flooring in any institution of learning, is the tried and true still the norm. When the environment makes such a huge difference in the effects the space has on the student body to the positive, it must be considered by those supplying flooring to this market. I would add that to be true in any market the flooring material is going to be used. Who better to know how to do that than the local professional flooring contractor? We must not forget that the flooring material has to be installed properly, that it stays in place, is not compromised by some threat to its integrity – that of the product and the installation, that it be capable of being maintained and that it is sustainable; that is long lasting.

We at LGM provide the types of services facilities managers need and want. We can help with projects from the outset writing specifications to assist the Architect for the flooring installation and assisting in the selection of the products and working with and helping select a professional flooring contractor. We help keep our clients out of trouble daily by making them aware of the pitfalls they may encounter on a project.



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In a recent trip to Trinidad working on a flooring problem, we shared in Free Art Friday by gifting our client with a piece of art from Lisa Caldwell. Click the photo to read her blog about this project.



Here's Lew giving the painting to Edward Millet of Bouygues Batiment.

In the June 2010 issue of The Commercial Flooring Report I wrote, “As a result of substrate moisture, carpet tiles can lift on the corners and edges.” Allow me to explain; Moisture will not affect the planar stability (Flatness) of carpet tile. Out of the box carpet tile should be flat, square, and stable. Unless, something in the backing is affected by moisture such as carpet fiber recycled into the backing. A more likely mechanism for the edges lifting would be purely mechanical. Excessive moisture can cause liquid water to form under the tile. While this does not cause curl, it can cause the adhesive to emulsify and can carry this emulsified adhesive and the alkaline salts present in all concrete to the edges of the tile in the form of a semi liquid “goop”.

When this “goop” works its way to the edges of the tile and the liquid water evaporates through the seams, a ridge of dried adhesive and alkaline salts is deposited directly under the seam edge mechanically preventing that edge from contacting the floor. This is not product related curl but does show up as the edges of tile lifting off the floor. This is an unusual condition and requires an extreme moisture situation to occur. Typically encountered moisture levels do not cause carpet tiles to lift on the corners and edges.

