Why Galaxy Elementary is Aiming for LEED Platinum

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Parents want to know: is building a school as a LEED school expensive? It all depends. Initial construction costs can sometimes be high, but with a careful budget and post construction energy performance studies, building to LEED standards saves a great deal of money over time. Additionally, green schools can be created at or below regional K-12 construction costs and operated within existing facilities budgets.

We've seen a lot of examples of this in the School District of Palm Beach. An excellent case in point is Pirtle Construction, which has been contracted for the LEED Platinum Galaxy Elementary project. Pirtle looks to have brought the base bid and alternates for the project in under budget thus far. Once the building is occupied, there will be studies of the energy consumed (energy performance studies) over the years to show the cost savings. An important fact to note is that $2.3 million of the dollars necessary for the construction of Galaxy Elementary will be secured through grants and donations, not through taxpayer dollars.

The school board for the district of Palm Beach has made it mandatory for the district to build all new construction to decrease student absenteeism due to causes such as asthma. An added bonus in regard to Galaxy is that according to community leaders, the new Galaxy Elementary School is considered an important part of the economic revitalization of Boynton Beach.

The argument can be made that with the shortfall in district budgets, it can be perceived as extravagant to build a school to LEED Platinum standards. Thankfully the costs of building to LEED standards have flattened out, especially since one of the requirements of certification in the process requires that everyone involved with the project submit a precisely specified budget for the building to be built. Most importantly, a building constructed to LEED standards will recoup the investment with a facility that's less costly to operate each year, and the investment will yield returns for the life of the building.

So the next time you hear someone talking about LEED schools and why they are important, hopefully you will understand the benefits of the LEED rating system, and why green schools can save money and provide educators and students with a healthier learning environment.

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