

Thursday, September 20, 2001

◆ Fort Collins Coloradoan ◆

City editor: Kevin Duggan, 224-7744

Tour makes Harris kids part of process



Rich Abrahamson/The Coloradoan

THIS BIG! John Sinnett of Fort Collins-based Sinnett Builders answers students' questions about the expansion project at Harris Bilingual Elementary School on Tuesday. Officials expect the construction to be finished by the start of the 2002 school year.

Empty spaces hold
future dreams

Students explore building project

By **STACY NICK**

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With a hard hat on her head, 9-year-old Anna Hernandez got to experience life as a construction worker.

"Ow," Hernandez said after being tapped on the head with a chunk of concrete. It didn't really hurt, the Harris Bilingual Elementary School fourth-grader said, but it would have if she hadn't been wearing the hard hat.

That's exactly why construction manager John Sinnett used her as an example, tapping her on the head to show the need for hard hats and other safety gear on construction sites.

Sinnett led Harris students on a general tour of the school's construction site this week and explained the tools being used to convert the empty space they stood on into a new gymnasium.

The school has been under massive renovation since May, when classes at the

school ended early for the summer so crews could begin working on 10 new classrooms and a new cafeteria/gymnasium. The project, which is being contracted by Sinnett Builders, won't be completed until next summer.

It's good to let the students be part of the process, Principal Larry Slocum said of the tour. It gives them ownership of the school.

Hernandez agreed.

"All summer, I told my mom that I wanted to go to school to see (what was being done)," she said.

But the tour also was done to cure students' curiosity about the site and remind them it is a dangerous place for anyone, Sinnett said. Even those who are trained in construction work have to be careful.

Usually, the area is fenced off and students are not allowed onto the site, he said. But on a day when things

were relatively quiet on the site, students were allowed past the fences. The crew were pouring concrete in some of the new classrooms, but the main area was clear.

The students gasped when they learned just how much their new classroom and gymnasium/cafeteria were going to cost.

"Six thousand dollars, one boy guessed. 'Ninethousand dollars,' shouted another.

"Nope," Sinnett told the children, "\$4,050,000."

In the spring, students again will get to walk through the site so they can witness the changes that have taken place, Sinnett said.

Originally, school officials were hoping to create an observation area where students could watch the workers throughout the year, Slocum said. However, a lack of available safe space made that impossible.