

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Dodge Momentum Index**  
(Year 2000 = 100)

	April-18	Mar-18	% Change
Dodge Momentum Index	163.0	153.7	6.1%
Commercial Building	173.4	163.1	6.3%
Institutional Building	150.2	142.0	5.8%

Source: Dodge Data & Analytics

**Dodge Momentum Index Moves Higher in April**

The Dodge Momentum Index jumped 6.1% in April to 163.0 (2000=100) from the revised March reading of 153.7.

The Momentum Index is a monthly measure of the first (or initial) report for nonresidential building projects in planning, which have been shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year.

Both components of the Momentum Index moved higher in April, with the commercial component up 6.3%, and the institutional component up 5.8%. Over the last two months the commercial portion of the Momentum Index has posted the most aggressive growth, fueled by continued low vacancy rates for commercial buildings as well as the potential benefits from the tax cuts passed in December.

The gains for the institutional component, while healthy, have been more moderate reflecting the ebb and flow of public funding for larger education and public building projects.

In April, 12 projects each with a value of \$100 million or more entered planning. The two leading commercial projects were office buildings—a \$200-million building in Boston and a \$175-million building in Atlanta.

The leading institutional projects were a \$100-million hospital in San Luis Obispo, Calif., and a \$100-million training center in Pelham, Ala.

**Dodge Momentum Index**  
(Year 2000 = 100)



**NAMES in the news**

• **Paul Reu** has been promoted to principal at Colorado Springs-based RTA Architects. Reu joined RTA in 2008 and has more than 30 years of experience.

As one of the leaders of the firm's health care team, his most recent projects include Craig Hospital; the St. Francis Medical Center Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Dept., Operating Room (NICU/ED/OR) expansion; and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center.

His previous experience also spans schools, senior care facilities, commercial offices, retail, multifamily housing and religious facilities. "Paul has particular expertise in managing complex projects that require diverse skills and a high standard of communication among the team members," said RTA Health Care Principal John Hoelscher. "It is because of his unique abilities that he was chosen to lead RTA's first integrated project delivery project featuring a true multi-party agreement with risk and reward incentives—one of the few in the state of Colorado—at the St. Francis Medical Center for their NICU/ED/OR expansion."

Reu is a member of the American Institute of Architects and a 2018-2019 board member of the AIA Colorado South Chapter.



Reu

**RUSH - TIME VALUE NEWSPAPER**

**COMMENTARY**

**Designing Schools for Teacher Retention: A Fresh Approach**  
*Can school pride, better collaboration help improve teacher attrition?*

By Sue Rose  
Construction Writers Collaborative

A February 2017 study by the Learning Policy Institute states that, in addition to salaries and resources for teaching, key factors in the professional decisions of educators include school culture and collegial relationships, as well as time for collaboration.

High levels of attrition are responsible for the largest share of annual teacher demand—90%, according to the Learning Policy Institute, which posits that decreasing attrition among teachers would change the projected shortages more than any other single factor.

Considerable evidence shows that teacher shortages historically have disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged students, and those patterns persist today.

"In 2014, high-minority schools had four times as many uncertified teachers as low-minority schools," said Stuart Coppedge, principal of RTA Architects, Colorado Springs. "When there are not enough teachers to go around, the schools with the fewest resources and least-desirable working conditions are the ones left with vacancies."

**Retaining Teachers**

RTA Architects is helping to instill school and community pride in rural areas of Colorado. "We are seeing promising results," said Coppedge. "School pride is contagious. When school districts pull their resources together to provide new, vibrant, 21st Century schools, a message is sent to teachers that what they do is valued. Students feel new school pride, which influences teachers, administration and the community at large. RTA has seen dramatic transformations in districts that have replaced dreary, outdated schools with modern, sunlit, sustainable facilities."

RTA emphasizes the creation of flexible spaces in schools to encourage collaboration and offer comfort and safety in a healthy atmosphere. Two examples are Ignacio School District and Moffat Consolidated School District #2—both in underserved rural districts of southwestern Colorado. The schools received BEST Grants after intensive master planning by RTA and community members.

**Ignacio School District**

Ignacio School District in southwestern Colorado's La Plata County had been saddled with below-standard performance ratings and lack of space for educational programs, and was losing students and staff to neighboring schools. Superintendent Rocco Fuschetto said that improvements to Ignacio's schools have had a tremendous impact on the entire community.

He said that the district has increased enrollment from 677 students in 2012 (completion) to 788 in 2015—a 16% increase.

"Our new buildings brought many of the students back, but I believe the overall improvement in academic achievement and the changes we made to the culture of the community—that education is important—was a big factor," he said.

"The beautiful buildings, plus our academic improvements, have really elevated the perception of the Ignacio District as a high-performing one. The new buildings have changed the attitude of the students and make them feel important. We have

had very little vandalism because the students are proud of their new school and the environment of higher expectations. As you walk through the buildings, you can feel the pride from the teachers, students and community members. We are attracting better students and staff, but all of it is due to the many changes that we have made in the last seven years. We are becoming the district of choice in our area," he added.

**Moffat PK-12**

The Moffat PK-12 School sits in the northern San Luis Valley and serves nearly 135 PK-12 students in this district in eastern Saguache County. The original school was a single-story building, constructed in 1921 and modified in the 1950s, in 1982 and 1997. By 2013, the foundation was crumbling and the roof leaked. Other deficiencies included health hazards, a lack of technology, excessive operating costs, a poor learning environment, non-ADA compliance and possible asbestos. The majority of the building systems were beyond their life expectancy.

The new building was designed with a mix of green features: a metal panel exterior, expansive south-facing windows to facilitate heat gain in the winter, a state-of-the-art HVAC system, and other passive two-story heating and cooling strategies.

Moffat teachers and students are enthusiastic about their new school. A new vote space has inspired the art and vote teachers to collaborate in offering a different type of teaching that will utilize the building's full potential.

"Our new home has had an incredible effect on our students and staff. The sense of belonging that was created by this building has and continues to make an immeasurable impact," said Kirk Banghart, then the superintendent of Moffat Consolidated School District #2. He is now chief facilitator of the Colorado Rural Education Collaborative.

Banghart said he has noticed a drop in teacher absenteeism, as well as teacher attrition, a problem in the old facility. "Since the new school was completed, we have not lost a single teacher," he said. "The improvements helped to keep our teachers vested in our school."

Banghart also sees a heightened level of interest in new teacher positions since the improvements were made. "We're definitely getting new candidates. Having a new facility and being able to show off our new technology is an added bonus for our district," he said. "Many of Moffat's students do not experience safe, clean environments at home. Having a safe, high-tech, attractive and healthy environment at school has shown them that they are valued."



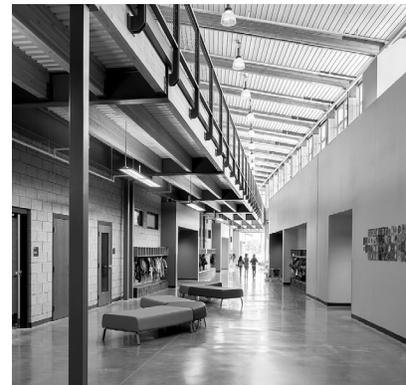
Photos courtesy of RTA Architects, David Lauer Photography  
In Ignacio's elementary school library, bright, cheerful colors and ample natural light are emotionally uplifting, and modular seating provides flexibility for students and staff.

**Giving Teachers More**

A May 2016 report by Education Commission of the States found that teachers value openness and teamwork, environments in which administrators and teachers work together and communicate with staff.

Flexible, collaborative environments were designed at both Ignacio and Moffat schools. Downtime spaces are reserved for teachers to relax and decompress away from the din of student activity as well as collaborate with colleagues. Day lighting, fresh air and acoustics that minimize ambient noise contribute to a relaxed and healthy environment for occupants.

Although intangibles such as "pride in one's school" are not easy to quantify, keeping the problem of teacher attrition, recruiting and retention front-of-mind during the early planning stages of school design may help architects initiate design solutions that can have a positive impact on complex staffing issues. Engaging staff with open-ended questions early in the design process can lead to constructive idea-generation that may produce encouraging, if not surprising results.



"The allergens in the air are much less noticeable compared to the old school, which means no more headaches," said Moffat student Stephanie Rude.

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