

Maintaining cleaning standards at new, larger high school is no problem for custodial staff thanks to versatile equipment



ST. MICHAEL-ALBERTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Location	St. Michael, Minnesota, USA
Application	Floor cleaning in the new St. Michael-Albertville High School
Equipment used	Advance scrubber with the EcoFlex™ System
Cleaning challenge	Maintaining high floor-cleaning standards in a larger building on the same budget

When the new St. Michael-Albertville High School opened in 2009, it was more than 50 percent larger than its predecessor. The increase from 256,000 to 410,000 square feet allowed the school to accommodate more students and house new amenities, but the custodial staff also faced the challenge of cleaning the additional space. While they needed new floor-cleaning equipment, they didn't want to buy more than it took to clean the old school.

The district relied on Advance cleaning equipment to scrub hard floors in the old school, and it chose an Advance scrubber with the EcoFlex™ System to handle the larger facility. "Our cleaning standards are pretty high here," says T.J. Zerwas, the school's head custodian. "We try to scrub the floors everyday, even if they aren't obviously dirty." Zerwas says the EcoFlex System made it easy to adapt to a new, flexible cleaning routine in order to keep up with the extra traffic and cleaning challenges that threatened the "new" look of the floors.

Ability to adapt to new cleaning challenges is key

Zerwas was tasked with maintaining the school's floors before the new school was even finished. The additional dirt and dust that was tracked in as a result of the construction provided the opportunity to put his new Advenger® scrubber to the test.

"The floors were so dirty—it was just unbelievable some of the gunk that we sucked up during construction," he said. "We ran the Advenger scrubber across bare concrete floors, some of which had a rough finish. We worked the heck out of the machine and it did the job. After that, we knew it would be able to handle the extra work load."

Once the building was completed, keeping up with the extra foot traffic in the new school offered new challenges. There is more public use of the new school due to a new theater and fitness center, for example, and it can hold more students. Sometimes Zerwas needs a little extra cleaning power. That's when he uses the machine's "burst of power" button, a feature of the EcoFlex System that temporarily increases the detergent, flow rate and pad pressure for deeper scrubbing at the touch of a button.



"We really only use the 'burst of power' feature now when there is a pop spill that's been left on the floor, but it is convenient to have when we need it," Zerwas said. "We will definitely utilize it a lot more once we start getting more snow on the ground."

Bigger space, less waste

When cleaning the old school, Zerwas' staff usually mixed the detergent and water directly in the scrubber's solution tank. Diluting the detergent manually was an inexact science at best, a detergent- and time-waster at worst.

The school's scrubber with the EcoFlex System automatically measures and dispenses detergent at the desired ratio, eliminating the need to pre-mix water and detergent. As a result, a one-gallon jug lasts Zerwas a week to two weeks instead of the five gallon bucket the school used to buy every week.

"The onboard detergent system has saved us a ton of time and allows us to really stretch our detergent use a lot further," Zerwas said. "A lot of people tend to use more detergent than is necessary, thinking it will get the floors cleaner, faster. In my experience, you only need a small amount of detergent for most routine applications. Not only is the system saving us money on detergent costs, but it has helped us clean with less impact to the environment."

School reduces water use, too

In addition to cleaning in an environmentally preferable manner — by using a smaller amount of detergent — Zerwas also uses less water. That's despite the fact that the new school is 144,000 square feet larger than the old school and busier on a daily basis.

"At the old high school, the tank was always empty by the time we were done scrubbing," he said. "Now we don't have to fill the solution tank as often because we use quite a bit less water."

Balancing routine with unexpected challenges

The new facilities and larger size of the new St. Michael-Albertville High School provide an enhanced learning environment for both students and staff. The new space has also provided T.J. Zerwas and his custodial staff the opportunity to improve his staff's cleaning efficiency without making wholesale changes to what he knows works.

"With our Advance scrubber and its EcoFlex System, I think we've developed a good cleaning routine that works for our school," Zerwas said. "In everyday cleaning we save on detergent and water, but we also have the flexibility to handle sudden messes, trouble spots or seasonal cleaning challenges. It's helped make the transition to a much larger school easier than we imagined."

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The new Advance scrubber with the "EcoFlex" System easily keeps up with extra traffic while reducing cleaning costs at St. Michael-Albertville High School.

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T.J. Zerwas
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