Kern High School District  
Liberty High School Commissioning

The Kern High School District, like many other districts in California, has been constructing new schools to satisfy its increasing student population. On many of its new construction projects, equipment did not function properly at turnover, resulting in numerous contractor callbacks. Projects with 100 or more callbacks were the rule, rather than the exception.

In 1994, as it began the planning for the construction of the new 200,000 square-foot Liberty High School campus, the school district decided to incorporate commissioning as a quality assurance process. The commissioning goal was to improve the outcome of this project, and to reduce or eliminate this callback problem.

The commissioning budget was set at $40,000 of the total construction budget of $28 Million. The district wrote their own request for proposal for commissioning services and hired a commissioning provider to conduct construction phase commissioning on the mechanical systems and verify proper electrical phasing. After the provider was selected and hired, he began development of the commissioning plan.

As construction commenced, regular meetings were held between the commissioning provider and the construction team. When construction was completed, the district maintenance staff worked with the commissioning provider and contractors to functionally test each system and verify proper operation. Although no “major” deficiencies were found, numerous minor adjustments and system integration issues were identified and rectified as part of this commissioning process. The net result was a 75% reduction in contractor callbacks after the turnover of the new facility. This reduction also resulted in significant labor and maintenance budget savings for the district. Resources normally used to address these turnover problems were now being redirected elsewhere.

The district learned many lessons on its first commissioning project. They now recognize that if budget will allow for it on their next commissioning project, they would like to include analysis of the systems, specification review, and possibly design review, as part of the commissioning provider's scope of work.