

FILE

School District of Oconee County officials said Wednesday construction of the new Walhalla High School remains ahead of schedule. The new school is scheduled for completion between late February and late March and will open in August.

New Walhalla High 'moving along'

Meanwhile, district officials say plans for current middle school uncertain

BY GREG OLIVER
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WALHALLA — Oconee County school officials said Wednesday they are pleased with construction progress at the new Walhalla High School on S.C. Highway 11.

"The Walhalla High School project continues to move along well," assistant superintendent for operational services Steve Hanvey said. "We're continuing to move toward the anticipated date of completion between the end of February to the end of March. We feel very confident it will be by the end of spring."

Hanvey said the district "is in good shape" regarding the $55 million project.

"We're a little below budget at this point," he said.

The new school, which will open in August 2015, will feature 12 science labs, just like Seneca and West-Oak, as well as four business labs, an auditorium, gymnasium and a completely enclosed courtyard area, similar to Seneca's, outside its lunchroom.

Officials say the new facility will house around 1,300 students, with room for growth.

Although the new school represents a physical improvement over the existing facility that opened nearly 50 years ago, district officials say there is understandably some emotion as faculty and staff realize this is the final year at their beloved school.

"Principal Steve Garrett is looking at ways to honor the existing school," Hanvey said.

While Walhalla faculty, staff and students returning next year prepare to move a few miles away, faculty, staff and students at Walhalla Middle will move a few hundred feet away — relocating to the existing high school.

District superintendent Michael Thorsland said it would immediately cost seven figures to replace the current school's mechanical system — a figure Hanvey added would be somewhere between $2 million and $2.5 million.

Another challenge facing the existing Walhalla Middle is its location.

"It's not centrally located, so that would make it difficult for most of the county to get to," Hanvey said. "(The future of the building) is something the board will discuss when we get to this process."

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