

OHS construction nears completion

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After two years, construction at Opelika High School is nearing completion.

The approximately \$40 million project started just after the Class of 2012 graduated and includes a two-phase renovation of the existing school, along with improvements to the stadium and athletic facilities.

Construction is expected to be complete by August.

"We're winding down pretty quickly," said Josh Farr, field engineer for Robins and Morton.

The most recent round of construction resulted in four new sets of student restrooms, six computer labs and 55 new classrooms, in addition to the 42 classrooms built during the first phase of construction.

The new construction also features a school green space, which the landscape and horticulture students will help design. The construction also includes several courtyards.

"The reason for all the courtyards is to allow windows in each classroom," Farr explained, adding the abundance of natural light is one of the biggest differences between the new facility and the old OHS.

Another focus of the new

construction is collaboration. A prominent office space connects the main office, guidance and administrative offices. Classrooms offering similar subjects are also arranged on the same hallway, and freshmen will complete their core classes in a specific hallway.

"Collaboration will be enhanced greatly," said OHS Principal Farrell Seymore, Ph.D. "All ninth-grade students will gather, at some point, for their academic core classes in that hallway. It's much more student-friendly."

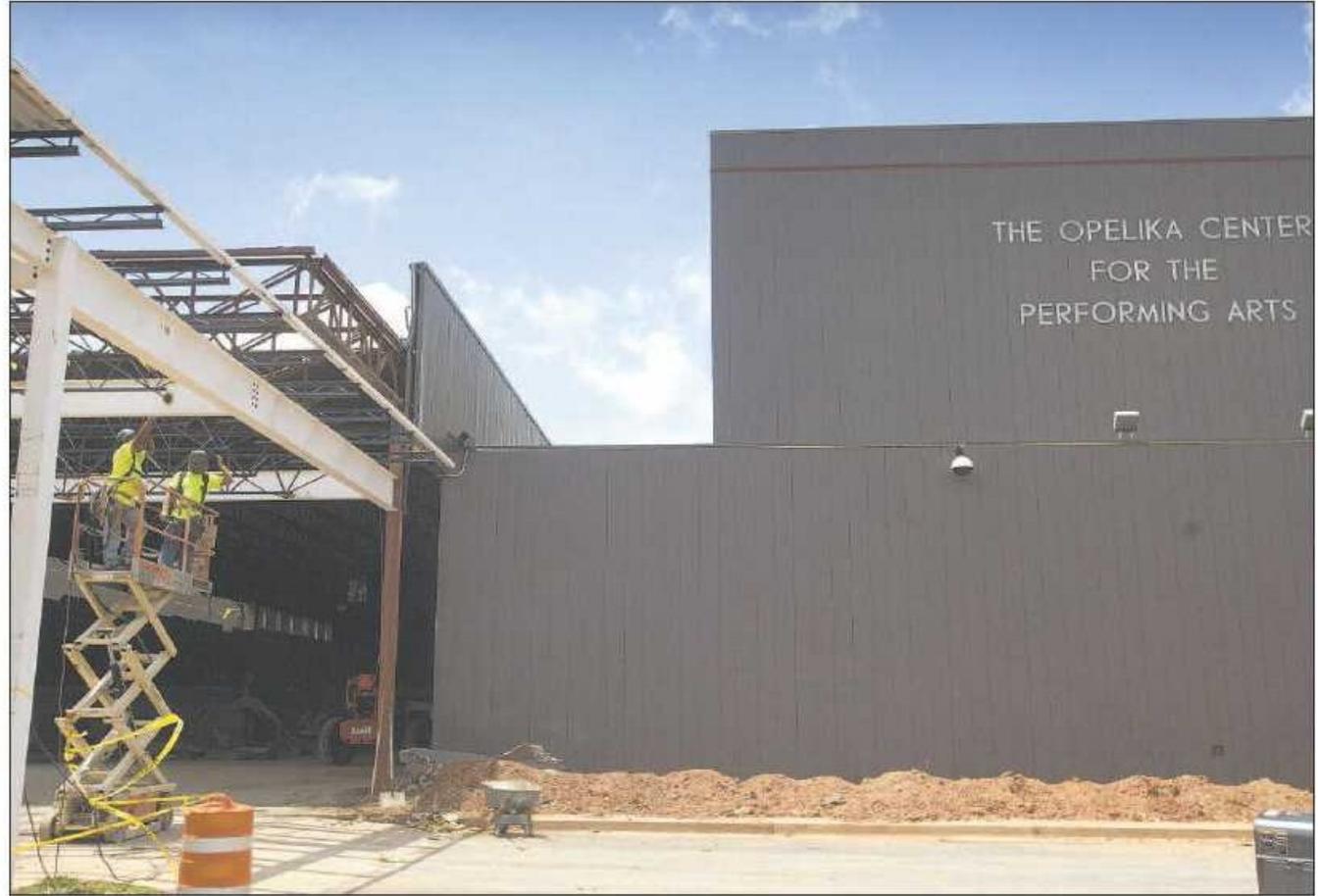
Seymore recently took a group of current and retired teachers on a tour of the renovations.

But Seymore added the most exciting part of construction coming to a close is "just having everybody together again as a whole school community. ... It puts all students under one roof here at one time."

During construction, some classes were moved to "Bulldog Village" mobile classrooms near the OHS track. Seymore thanked students, teachers and parents for their patience during the construction.

"It's been an awesome experience," he said. "We've had no real issues with student movement."

While the renovated facility boasts changes like



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Terry Skinner holds a support beam as Dan Barnes welds it into place while working on construction of the front of Opelika High School in this file photo.

"Main Street has always been kind of the main thoroughfare. We felt it was important to maintain."

Becky Brown,

public relations coordinator for the Opelika City Schools

smartboards in every classroom and in-classroom heating/air and lighting control, Main Street, the

school's primary artery, has remained intact.

"Main Street has always been kind of the main

thoroughfare," said Becky Brown, public relations coordinator for the Opelika City Schools. "We felt it was important to maintain."

Brown added the construction was necessary because the facility had "outlived its use," and some parts could not be replaced because they

were no longer manufactured.

Seymore agreed and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to offer students a state-of-the-art school.

"We are very grateful to our city leaders to be doing this project," he said. "It's taken a community to pull this off."