

STONE AGE

Ely's historic sign preserved
SEE PAGE 5

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Countdown to opening: Ely, Northwood and Hamilton

Amy Higgins

Communications director

If you've been out and about in Elyria in recent weeks, you've almost certainly noticed the progress of construction at Ely Elementary, Hamilton Elementary and Northwood Campus.

All three buildings are scheduled to open in fall 2020.

Ely Elementary School

At Ely, workers are nearly finished installing the brick exterior and they've already begun hanging windows.

The school is taking shape inside, too.

Steel columns and masonry walls are in place, floors have been poured and crews are now installing water pipes and electrical lines.

Doorframes are in place and workers will soon install the interior windows.

They're also installing drywall, which gives the interior of the building a "finished" look and helps visitors visualize what the building will look like once it's occupied.

Northwood Campus

The Northwood Campus, a much larger facility, is following on the heels of Ely, inside and outside.

Workers are finishing the shell of the building. They're expected to have it done before the end of the year.

"Some areas of the spine of the building aren't completed yet because (workers) have to



PHOTOS COURTESY AECOM/AGS

ABOVE: The new Ely Elementary School under construction on Gulf Road and Ohio Street.

BELOW: The new Northwood Campus under construction on North Abbe Road.

PIONEER TV

To watch video of the construction of Ely and Northwood, visit at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube.

move their big cranes in to get the roof on the second floor," explained Murtaza Abbas, project manager of Architectural Vision Group (AVG) of Westlake. "They're working from the middle of the building, but (the

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Safer schools for all

Amy Higgins

Communications director

New schools have inherent design features that "harden" schools for safety, yet still offer flexible spaces and a feeling of connectedness.

In the new designs, school perimeters and parking lots are well lit and directional signage clearly shows students and visitors the way to their destination when entering the complex.

Bus riders and car riders will have separate pickup and drop off areas to limit cross traffic.

Parents will have plenty of room to pull in off busy roadways. They can park and line up their cars on school property during arrival and dismissal.

"Each school will have designated areas and the proper signage that will make it very clear where parents and busses are supposed to go during pickup and drop off," said Murtaza Abbas, project manager of AVG in Westlake.

"What this allows is the ability to get off the main roads for the most part and be inside the actual campus of the building," Abbas said. "This also allows for separate spaces for parents, car rider pickup and drop off and bus rider pickup and drop off. That's a safety measure that was

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New embellishments at Pioneer field

Amy Higgins

Communications director

Pioneer fans have several new areas where they can enjoy sporting events at Mercy Health Field at Ely Stadium.

Next to the new tennis courts, the district's construction management firm, AECOM/AGS, built a 30-by-50-foot covered pavilion.

AECOM/AGS also built the new stadium. The company is the construction manager for the new schools project, too.

The company teamed up with several other vendors and donated the materials and labor for the pavilion, designating it as a donation to the district and community.

The pavilion has a concrete floor, electrical outlets and picnic table seating.

As visitors will come to see, it's a wonderful addition to the site.

"Elyria has been a very good client and a fun team to work with and we just wanted to give back," said Dave Stahl, president of AECOM. "It was something we knew they wanted when they built the facility and we were able to all pitch in and make it happen."

Other volunteers and sponsors on the project included C.T. Taylor Construction, of Hudson; GCS, of Cleveland; Sibley Inc., of Elyria; and South Shore Electric, of Elyria.

Smitty's Place, of Elyria, provided food to the pavilion workers throughout the duration of the project.

Pioneer Garden by RIDGID

Ridge Tool, of Elyria, has a long and storied history of generous giving to Elyria Schools.

It's a company that continues to show, again and again, a steadfast support for the Pioneer community.

Previously, Ridge provided funds for new technology and enhanced spaces in the schools.

The company is now doing the same at the stadium.

In 2018, Ridge Tool donated \$40,000 for improvements at the stadium complex.

This year, the district used the funds to build Pioneer Garden by RIDGID, a fun, eclectic new space at the stadium near the concession stand.

It offers patio seating and umbrellas for shade, overhead patio lighting and tables and countertops for resting drinks and food.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

ABOVE: Ridge Tool employees, including President and CEO Craig Sumner (fourth from left) and Chairman Fred Pond (first from right), attended the dedication ceremony of the new Pioneer Garden by RIDGID.

BELOW LEFT: Young Pioneer fans enjoy new patio seating in the Pioneer Garden by RIDGID.

BELOW RIGHT: School board member Jim Backs, a retired engineer from Ridge Tool, greets Ridge Tool Chairman Fred Pond.



The design has a "beer garden" feel — but without the foamy beverages, of course!

The space was completely designed and handcrafted by the Elyria Schools Maintenance Department, led by craftsman Eddie Manual and electrician Tim Benetto.

The Ridge Tool funds also paid for picnic tables in the new pavilion and high-top tables and chairs on the platform above the home grandstands, on both sides of the press box.

The track is open!

A promise is a promise.

When voters approved the bond issue for new schools and a new athletic complex in 2016, the district said the facilities would be community spaces.

This summer, the district opened the stadium's new track for public use.

The track is open every day from 7 a.m. until dusk. Walkers and runners can use the site at will. You can enter through a turnstile near the visitors' gate.

Given that the district must maintain the integrity of the track's surface and the surrounding facility grounds, there are

some important stipulations to consider when using the site.

Guests are asked to limit walking and running to the outside lanes only.

Also, wheeled vehicles or wheeled items are prohibited from use on the track — this means no roller skates, skateboards, scooters or anything of the sort.

Recreational use of the turf field is not permitted.

The stadium complex is under video surveillance. But as signage at the site indicates, use of the track is "At your own risk."

Visitors are advised to always be vigilant of their surroundings.

Should a guest have need of emergency services while at the stadium, they are asked to call 911 immediately. Consequently, it's also recommended that runners or walkers have their cell phones with them during their visits.

Additionally, it's also recommended to have a workout buddy attend with you, which is a good practice no matter what public park or public space you're visiting for a workout.

An education celebration

You've probably heard this a lot in the past dozen or so years — ever since voters first approved construction of a new Elyria High — but I have to say it once again: This is truly an exciting time to be an Elyria Pioneer.



ANN SCHLOSS

Three years ago, Elyria voters once again showed they hold public education in the highest esteem, as they approved a bond issue to build five new school sites and a new sports complex.

Look across the city and you can see that we're now deep into the finer workings of those projects — and it is nothing short of exhilarating to watch it unfold.

Northwood Campus is well underway.

Ely Elementary is moving along at an incredible pace.

Hamilton Elementary is taking shape.

Eastern Heights Campus is in early site work, with foundations being poured before the winter holidays.

Westwood Campus is in the final design stage, with ground-breaking slated for spring.

The new stadium, of course, has been up and running for the

past year. It's a spectacular site that continues to see new components added, including the Pioneer Garden by Ridgid, featured in this month's Pioneer Press.

It's quite an undertaking to manage these projects and see them through to completion, but Elyria Schools has teamed with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission and a top-notch architectural design team and construction firm to make it happen.

Part of the new schools project involves fine-tuning the attendance zones and boundaries for each new site, which essentially determines where students will attend school.

This process has already begun. Parents will receive more information about this in early 2020.

Each school is outfitted with



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Superintendent Ann Schloss signs the back of the historic date stone at Ely School during a stone signing ceremony Sept. 3.

state-of-the-art technology and modern features that ensure students throughout the district have access to facilities and amenities of the highest quality.

Most importantly, these new features are the same throughout the district. No matter where

your little Pioneer attends school, a first-rate education is guaranteed.

As each new school meets a milestone in the construction process, we've marked it with a celebration where students and staff have been involved: beam

signing, ground-breaking, stone signing. You name it, we've celebrated it.

And make no mistake, there's a lot to celebrate — with plenty more to come.

Ann Schloss is superintendent of Elyria Schools.



HOMECOMING ROYALTY

Seniors Trey Nolan and Audrey Schwochow were named Elyria High School's King and Queen during the Homecoming festivities Oct. 4 at Mercy Health Field at Ely Stadium.



Breaking ground: Eastern Heights Campus

Amy Higgins

Communications director

A balmy, late-summer day proved just perfect for a ground-breaking ceremony at the new Eastern Heights K-8 Campus.

On Sept. 18, dozens of students and staff from Prospect, McKinley and Franklin elementary schools and Eastern Heights Middle School gathered to celebrate the once-in-a-generation occasion.

The new campus will be located at Garford Avenue and Prospect Street, on the site of the existing Eastern Heights Middle School.

The ceremony took place on the old football field of Eastern Heights, which runs parallel to Prospect Street.

Scenes of progress served as a fitting backdrop: construction crews worked nearby, negotiating their way around felled trees. That same day, crews began the early site work.

Eastern Heights Campus will be the largest of the three new school campuses.

One of the ceremony's key speakers, Elyria Schools Board President Greg Elek, recalled the storied history of Eastern Heights Middle School. The building came together during a prosperous time in Elyria, in the late 1940s and '50s.

The school had been "cutting edge" in its day, Elek said, outfitted with a science room, a music room, an arts and crafts room and a book repair shop in the school library.

That era's insightful school board chose a design that would foster skills for lifelong learning in students, Elek said.

Fast forward to 2019.

That spirit lives on.

Those same types of discussions are now taking place among architects, builders, state partners, school administrators and board members.

The new school facilities in Elyria are designed as cutting edge centers of education in their own right, ensuring students will have access to the finest learning tools for generations to come.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS



PIONEER TV

To watch the entire Eastern Heights groundbreaking ceremony, visit us at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube.

Preserving history at Ely School

Amy Higgins

Communications director

The new Ely Elementary has all the trimmings of a new building, yet still preserves a bit of its historic character.

For nearly a century, the facade of the existing Ely School held a massive date stone that marked the year of the school's construction: 1921.

AVG of Westlake — the architectural firm Elyria Schools has hired for the new schools project — expertly managed to incorporate the huge block of sandstone into the design of the new school.

This team of architects is well versed in historic preservation.

As some may recall, it's the same group that designed Elyria High School, renovating the historic Washington Building and integrating the historic date stone from the original Lincoln Building into a beautiful archway on campus that faces West Avenue.

"Exterior elements like this are pretty much impossible to incorporate into new buildings, but with the help of contractors we were able to bring (the stone) down, secure it, clean it up and affix it to the new wall," AVG project manager Murtaza Abbas said.

Foti Contracting, of Wickliffe, Ohio, performed the intricate work of removing the stone from the existing school.

The stone measures 14 feet by 4 feet and weighs 3,000 pounds.

It now faces Ohio Street.

In September, before workers secured the stone into place, students, staff and contractors got the chance to become part of the stone's history.

The district held a stone-signing ceremony at the site.

"The idea came up when we were talking about having a topping-off ceremony, which traditionally happens with steel," said Melissa Lear, of AECOM, the construction management firm Elyria Schools has hired for the project.

During the construction of Ely Elementary, the placement of the steel beams was so far ahead of schedule that it was impossible to schedule a beam-signing ceremony.

As workers got ready to cut the stone out of the existing Ely

PIONEER TV

Watch video of the Ely Elementary stone-signing ceremony at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on Youtube.

School, Lear had an epiphany.

"I said, 'We're unveiling a time capsule of sorts,'" she said. "Once the stone came down successfully is when the idea came to fruition. I spoke to the district and we discussed having the students sign the stone."

Given concerns about safety, however, district officials and the construction crew opted for a creative approach: An off-site event.

What came to fruition was a signing ceremony in the gymnasium of Ely School, where students could autograph large poster papers.

The papers were then vacuum-sealed in bags, which contractors later placed behind the stone as they affixed it to the new building.

At the project site, meanwhile, Ely teachers, district staff and contractors were permitted to sign the back of the actual stone.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

Foreman Bob Norton of Foti Contracting led the team of masons who removed the nearly century-old stone from the front of Ely School.



LEFT: Ely students sign posters that were later vacuum-sealed and placed behind the stone as it was affixed to the new building.

RIGHT: School board member Jim Backs signs the back of the historic stone during the stone signing ceremony in September.



Ely and Windsor Elementary students were present at the Northwood Campus construction site to sign a prominent beam in the new school.

Beam me up!

Students, staff sign final beam in new Northwood's construction

Amy Higgins

Communications director

In the construction world, a topping off ceremony marks a major milestone: The raising of the last steel beam in a new construction project.

In October, the students and staff of the future Northwood Campus participated in a similar ceremony.

Just before a particularly prominent beam was raised and secured in place, they all signed their names in black and red sharpies.

The signatures will be visible

FOR MORE INFO

Watch for details on Facebook/elyriacityschoo, Twitter/elyriaschools and on the district's website, www.elyriaschools.org.

for generations to come, as the beam is a permanent structural component located in a highly visible area of the new school.

A beam signing ceremony will also take place at the Hamilton School site in November.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

ABOVE: A beam signing ceremony at Northwood Campus signified a major milestone in the school's construction.

LEFT: Northwood Principal Mike Basinski signs the beam. The beam and its signatures will be visible in the new school.



SAFETY

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obviously very important that we incorporated into the site design. It'll be much improved in terms of traffic."

Another feature of new schools is advanced technology that includes security cameras outside the building and moving inward.

The cameras are a component of a sophisticated security network at each site.

The main office personnel in each location will have tight control of access to the building. Double-vestibule entrances add multiple layers of security at the door and inside the schools.

Another key concept of new schools in the 21st Century model: High visibility to all areas inside and outside the buildings.

Administration offices within the schools will have clear lines of sight, allowing staff to see who's coming in and out of the building.

"The administration area has glass with direct views to the main entrances and windows into the main corridor," Abbas said. "One of the concepts of 21st Century schools is to incorporate lots of visibility, which means, 'glass inside walls.' Inside visibility is one way to deter bullying and prevent incidents from occurring."

21st Century schools

Teaching and learning in the 21st Century is all about flexibility.

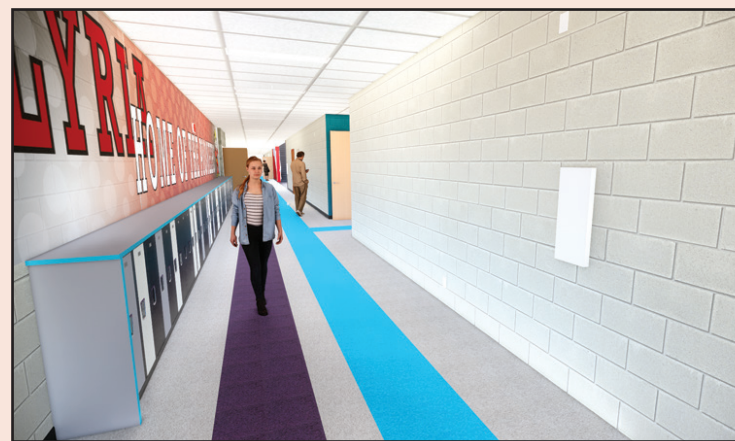
"We're designing schools for the next 50 years," Abbas said. "We have to be flexible. And there are a couple of ways we're doing that."

First: materials.

"The perimeter of the building is brick and block," Abbas said. "It's very durable and stands the test of time — but for the most part the interior is drywall that can be reconfigured. You get the best of both worlds: a secure building with brick and block that offers a great building envelope and an interior that's flexible."

New buildings also have collaborative spaces called extended learning areas, or ELAs.

"New schools are different than your 'bells and cells' style with typical straight runs of hallways," Abbas said. "The ELA is the central hub of flexibility and collaboration, but that's not to say you don't have traditional learning



WAYFINDING WHEREWITHAL

Color cues in the hallways and classroom areas of the grade-level wings in new schools will help students find their way. Fittingly, these design elements are what architects refer to as "wayfinding," and the clues are there to help students move about the building with ease.

"These are big, new schools and that can be intimidating, especially for the little kids, but one thing that we've incorporat-

ed is wayfinding," said Murtaza Abbas, project manager, AVG, Westlake. "What is means is each of our wings, whether it be kindergarten, first and second or third and fourth, and so on, all have a designated color that is campuswide (and districtwide.) If (students) are going to an elementary school and they are in kindergarten, that's the orange wing, and they are going to follow the orange line that's on the

floor from the main entrance, which will lead to their wing.

"Once inside, students will see orange on the ducts on the doors, and sometimes on the walls, so they'll know where they are and they'll be more comfortable and familiar with the space," Abbas said. "It's a little way to make students feel less intimidated and to help them understand the building."



GRAPHICS COURTESY AVG

PIONEER TV

To watch a video on safety in the schools, visit at Elyria Schools Pioneer TV on YouTube.

areas, too. Along the perimeter of each ELA are traditional classrooms for all grade levels.

"Each grade-level wing is like a mini school. They have their own bathrooms, storage rooms, classrooms, small-group rooms and special education spaces associated with the grade levels. They also have all the flexible furniture you could imagine for the 21st Century," Abbas said. "They're going to be pretty exciting 21st Century spaces."

The architects have designed each wing with the capability to be locked down separately from other wings. In an emergency event that required a lockdown, students and staff also can secure classroom doors as they would in a traditional setting.

Practicing peace

School safety extends beyond the structure of a building.

Elyria Schools has many programs in place to reinforce kindness, acceptance and compassion. These programs help build character, teach responsibility and reinforce in students respect for themselves and others.

This year, the district is implementing what's called the PAX program.

PAX is Latin for the word

peace. The goal of PAX is to equip teachers with classroom strategies that help students learn self-management skills.

The strategies are fun for students because they're typically taught through games and prizes.

But the ultimate goal is to get students to build skills that help them better control their emotions and behaviors. This ultimately leads to a more peaceful classroom experience for all.

The PAX program proved highly successful when it was piloted last year in the district.

With the data in place to support implementing the program districtwide, Elyria Schools Academic Services secured an award

of more than \$2 million over the next four years for PAX training, as part of the federal School Quality Improvement Grant.

In November and January more than 300 Elyria teachers will be trained in PAX.

Another 120 teachers who've been through the first level of training will go on to the next level of the program called, "Heroes," with even more strategies learned.

The district has plans to extend PAX training beyond the classroom to other operations within the school district, including transportation and foodservice. At some point, the PAX program will also be offered to parents.

Breaking new ground: Eastern Heights, Westwood

Amy Higgins

Communications director

Workers at the Ely, Northwood and Hamilton school construction projects are wrapping up the exterior brick-and-mortar processes and now moving to interior work.

Meanwhile, the district is also readying for Phase 2 of its voter-approved construction project, which will see new campus schools built on the east side of Elyria and in Elyria Township.

Here's a look at what's in the works:

Eastern Heights Campus

Work at the Eastern Heights site, between Garford Avenue and Prospect Street, is now underway.

In September, construction crews cleared the district-owned land that currently houses Eastern Heights Middle School.

This opened the area for heavy construction vehicles to maneuver the site, allowing workers to tackle early underground utility work such as installation of sewer and sani-

tary lines and gas and electrical lines.

Crews are now working on a large retention basin to drain and filter onsite water. The basin is visible from Prospect Street.

Drive by today and you'll likely see bulldozers moving dirt around the site in what's known as the cut/fill process.

This work is vital in leveling the land and preparing it for the foundations of the new building. The cut process involves scraping dirt from high spots and pushing it to fill low areas.

For any job to begin, this is the critical first step.

Foundation work will begin in early November.

Westwood Campus

With Elyria Township growing and thriving, Elyria Schools is reaping the benefits of this. The district has seen increased student enrollment at its west side locations: Crestwood Elementary and Westwood Middle.

Recent talk of new home construction on the west side could lead to a population boost and

even more growth at the future Westwood Campus.

When new developments are planned, homebuilders typically assume an average of 0.5 children per new household.

If this scenario holds true, a development of 50 new homes would amount to 25 additional students — essentially the size of a whole new classroom full of students!

These factors weren't at play before 2016, when cost estimates were made for the new schools.

Even so, there's no denying this is a great problem to have.

The district's west-side property is sizable. It currently houses Westwood Middle School, Crestwood Elementary School and the Elyria Early Childhood Village and Administration Center, as well as several sports fields that offer plenty of acreage.

The property's uniqueness presents an out-of-the-box opportunity for the district's team of architects from AVG of Westlake.

The plans begin with the existing Westwood Middle School.

Westwood, among the newest of the currently operating buildings in the district, was deemed the only building to remain when the district announced the new Master Plan of Facilities in 2016.

The Westwood facility has had major mechanical upgrades in recent years to the HVAC system and roof.

Given the rising number of students at the existing school and the telltale signs of future growth — and the sound condition of such a large building — the design team recognized Westwood Middle School as an ideal expansion site.

This led the team in the design process to locate the new Westwood Campus just steps away from the existing building, tailoring the design to accommodate more students by preserving some of the existing structure.

It's an innovative twist for architects: They get to retrofit and keep expansive amenities

that would otherwise have been much smaller in an all-new school.

"Westwood is a growing community and that has presented an exciting opportunity," said Murtaza Abbas, project manager of AVG. "With help from the state, we were able to incorporate extra classrooms in the new school while also using some existing spaces from Westwood Middle School, including the gymnasium, and middle school art and music (classrooms).

"This allows for the best of both worlds," Abbas said. "We're gaining space and students are able to use more facility and the district has opportunities for future growth."

The existing gym and fine arts spaces of Westwood Middle School are larger than the same spaces that would have been designed in the new facility, according to Abbas.

"It truly is the best of both worlds."

OPENINGS

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building) is on pace to be enclosed by winter. Once enclosed, they can work on the inside of the building.

It's a busy time at the Northwood Campus, Abbas said.

"Inside, it's a little similar to Ely," he said. "Almost all the floors are poured and metal stud walls are going up in each wing. As metal stud walls go up, frames go up for doors and windows. The electrical is running along and plumbing is happening now."

Contractors there also are working outside on the concrete aprons and curbs.

Hamilton Elementary

Hamilton Elementary involves the construction of a two-story portion, which is already visible from 13th Street.

Steel beams are going up and the roof is slated to follow.

Workers are also erecting the exterior walls, with interior work slated to follow shortly thereafter.

Crews have also installed the site's utilities and a base course of asphalt has been applied to the parking area off West Avenue.



The new Hamilton Elementary School under construction on Middle Avenue and 13th Street.

PHOTO COURTESY AECOM/AVG