

I.J. Holton school shaping up on schedule

Heather Rule
hrule@postbulletin.com

Everything is right on track for the construction of the new I.J. Holton intermediate school. No snags, according to Mat Miller, director of facility services for Austin Public Schools.

"All phases are progressing," Miller said. "We're almost to the 50 percent point. There's still a lot of stuff that has to happen.

"It's becoming more and more reality. The clock's ticking."

Sixty-six workers from all trades were at the site on Tuesday to keep the project moving along. It's located just east of Ellis Middle School.

I.J. Holton school principal Jean McDermott has seen blue prints and various images of what the building will look like. But that doesn't compare to what she's seeing at the construction site.

"There's some spaces in there that are very unique to this school," McDermott said. "To see it on paper is one thing. To see it in real, live space is another."

The exciting part for Superintendent David Krenz is to actually envision students in that building.

"It's always neat to see the ideas that people have brought forth coming to fruition," Krenz said.

Voters passed a \$28.9 million bond issue in November 2011, which is where construction dollars for the new school project came from. Ground was broken May 15 and work has progressed ever since. The Austin School Board just officially approved the name of the school, I.J. Holton, at its December meeting.

Fifth- and sixth-graders will be able to start their 2013-14 school year in the new building, with its STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) focus. The move-in process should be able to start in early to mid-July of 2013, according to Miller.

The building is split up into four construction areas A (classrooms), B (offices), C (music/cafeteria) and D (gymnasium). The main hallway in the middle of the building divides it, in a sense. General education classroom houses will be on the south side (on both floors one and two), technology education rooms (including an outdoor tech court for demonstrations), offices and computer labs will be on the north side of the hallway.

There will be three classroom "houses, I'll call them," Miller said, on each floor, with a large, flexible team learning area in the middle of each house, "with classrooms flanking around it." One grade level will be on each floor. Generally, each house will have five classrooms.

Something that's unique will be pivot walls within a three-classroom suite, so the walls can open up into team learning areas or into one large classroom.

The building will have a lot of glass, a lot of windows.

"We're trying to bring in as much daylight as possible," Miller said. "Nearly every space in the building will

have some sort of natural light."