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Phillips set to undergo renovation

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The last of Edgecombe County Public Schools' 2004 bond money will be used to start renovations at Phillips Middle School in coming weeks.

The front building of the school, which was built in 1949, hasn't seen any major renovations in the last 59 years. Plans involve gutting the inside of the building, expanding the media center, adding a multipurpose room and making more storage and administrative space.

Principal William Etheridge said the renovations will be more conducive for the school's needs.

The staff and 200 students use the nonair-conditioned gymnasium for school events, but DKWA Architects' plans call for an air-conditioned multipurpose room. A nurse's office will be added and guidance counselors will receive a larger area.

"Hopefully, it will just update the building," said Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Management Services Dr. Lana Vanderlinden.

Construction on the building is expected to start in the next month. The Edgecombe County Board of Education approved a \$1.36 million contract with Rocky Mount's Turn-Key Contractors, and the school district will start renovations as soon as a building permit is secured from the county.

Edgecombe County Public Schools will fund the project through three sources. An estimated 55 percent of the project will be paid with bond money, 40 percent with lottery money and 5 percent will come from the district's capital outlay fund.

Upgrades to furniture likely will bring the renovations to about \$1.5 million, Vanderlinden said.

Only West Edgecombe School remains untouched from the original list of schools expected to be renovated with the \$12.8 million school bond referendum – \$3.5 million of which went to Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools for serving Edgecombe County students in the city. School officials cited rising gas and construction prices as the reason for costs getting ahead of them.


Vanderlinden said the school district and the board remain committed to the West Edgecombe project.

For seven months, however, administrators will be concentrated on Phillips, where space is tight because the school had to vacate the front building during the construction.

"We're very excited about this opportunity for this building to be renovated," Etheridge said. "Hopefully, this will just be phase one because our classrooms need renovating, too."

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