

Renovations begin at Greece schools

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Many students in the Greece Central School District can expect to see changes when they head back in the fall. This summer, Olympia High School, Odyssey Academy and Athena High School are all undergoing major renovations.

Olympia and Athena will see the most changes. According to the summer 2015 construction schedule, the main entrance canopy and front sidewalks at Olympia will be replaced, and new vinyl floor tile will be installed in 13 rooms. The track will be resurfaced; dugouts will be constructed for the varsity softball field.

In addition, said district architect Louis Bianchi, new doors with hardware that meets American Disabilities Association codes and increases safety in the event of an emergency will be installed.

"The new hardware (will) allow the teachers to lock down the doors from inside the classroom ... whereas, with current hardware, they had to go into the corridor to key-lock the doors," Bianchi said.

Greece Athena High School also will receive this new hardware along with new softball dugouts, office carpeting, girls' and boys' locker rooms, a gymnasium floor — and a new roof over the original building, penthouse, pool, third-floor cafeteria and gymnasiums.

Athena principal David Richardson said he thought the changes would be beneficial.

"I'm looking forward to the many upgrades and improvements at Athena, including those to our locker rooms, interior doors, office areas, roof and our ventilation system," Richardson said.

One change at Olympia will be impossible to miss: an entirely new front parking lot.

"We're creating a separate bus loop and a separate student drop-off (loop). So the traffic pattern at Olympia will be entirely different from when they left in June," Bianchi said. "We're making it much safer, getting rid of some conditions where we had people crossing in front of buses and traffic."

Many of the changes won't be visible, but they will be felt. Ventilation and air conditioning will be updated in both high schools, with new venting and air handling units to be installed in several rooms.

"We're renovating portions of buildings that are in excess of 50 years old," Bianchi said in reference to Olympia, whose ventilation systems have not been updated since the school was built 56 years ago.

"The new equipment will allow us to much more easily and economically provide code-required fresh air for students and staff," he added.

Odyssey Academy will receive a partial roof replacement.

Voters OK'd projects in 2011

The construction is part of a \$34.5 million capital improvement project named EXCEL II, which was approved by public vote in 2011. It will be completed next summer with the paving of Odyssey's parking lot and installation of security, ventilation and handicappedaccessibility upgrades at Brookside, Buckman Heights, Craig Hill, English Village, Holmes Road, Longridge and West Ridge elementary schools.

These will include the installation of new doors similar to those being put in Olympia and Athena this summer, installation of corridor night lighting, fire alarm upgrading, and partial flooring or roof updates.

Another project that passed in March will result in more changes, Bianchi said. This project, named the 2015 Capital Improvement Project, will be carried out during the summers of 2017, 2018 and 2019.

"You have to spread it out over a number of years," Bianchi said. "It's a continuation of a plan that the school board had laid out several years ago to upgrade all of the school facilities."

He added that the district is in the process of selecting the architect.

“Once we select the architect for this new project ... it’s kind of a collaborative effort between the architects and engineers and the school district facilities staff,” he said.

In the meantime, work is slated to begin soon on an entirely separate renovation project that has its roots in an early 2000s renovation mishandled by architecture company Tetra Tech. Bianchi said the design work for fixing the Athena Performing Arts Center will be completed by the end of the week. The tentative construction dates are Sept. 15 through May 1.

“The renovations at APAC ... are aimed at increasing handicap accessibility and increasing the space between rows. Ultimately the renovations should improve the performing arts center for the community members who use the facility,” Richardson said.

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Greece Olympia High School’s front parking lot is being revamped.

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