

Midway bond-funded athletic center on schedule for January completion

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Midway Independent School District officials expect construction to end on a new multipurpose center by January 2015 as the steel frame towering behind Midway High School shows rapid progress.

The student athletic center is being paid for with \$8.4 million of a \$34.5 million bond approved in May 2013 that also bought new school buses, classroom technology and an expansion at the high school for fine arts.

The athletic center and other features of the spending plan drew controversy and were criticized as unneeded by community members who promoted fiscal austerity in the run-up to the 2013 bond election.

The new fine arts wing of the high school should be completed in late spring 2015, but Midway ISD Superintendent George Kazanas said he isn't concerned about the construction interfering with the school year.

"They can still have classes and still (be) in their current spaces because we're adding on new facilities. So, they're somewhat inconvenienced. Some hallways may be closed, but we still have access to our classrooms," Kazanas said.

The fine arts wing will cost about \$6.5 million to complete.

Kazanas said the athletic center construction project by local builder Pearson Construction Inc. has gone extremely well so far.

"It's just fun to watch," he said.

The 74,000-square-foot athletic center will include a full-size football field that can be converted into a baseball diamond. There also will be nets so golfers can practice inside, and a 10,000-square-foot weight room.

The building won't be climate controlled, but it will have large doors for ventilation and a small office for the athletic director.

Midway's Athletic Director Randy Weisinger said the center will be most useful for the late fall and winter sports when the threat of inclement weather is greatest.

The facility will be large enough to house both of the district's soccer teams and its baseball and softball teams at once, he said.

Physical education classes also have grown and plan to use the facility when needed.

Kazanas said the multipurpose center will enable Midway to stay competitive as the only 6A school district in the Waco area. There won't be any breaks in workouts or practices during inclement weather.

"We can have true workouts," Kazanas said.

Students in dance, cheer, band and orchestra all will be able to use the center for rehearsal, along with the 900 students involved in the athletics program. About 50 percent of the district's 2,200 students are involved in extracurricular activities.

"Our student enrollment is growing and particularly our participation in the extracurriculars," he said.