



Now that school is out for the summer, the hallway and classrooms of the old wing at DYS have been cleaned out and emptied. Students returning to school in the fall will be able to make use of the new wing's upgraded classrooms, accessibility features, and expanded playground behind it.

Construction of new wing at DYS nearing completion

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The new section of Donald Young School in Emo is getting closer to completion.

As of last week, in fact, the move from the old section had begun.

Teachers, custodians, and other staff worked together on the Friday after school was out (June 23) to clear desks, tables, chairs, books, and other supplies out of the old classrooms.

"It was remarkable," said Travis Enge, manager of Plant Operations and Maintenance for the Rainy River District School Board.

"Everyone was working as a chain and they did it in a few hours," he noted.

The furniture and supplies now fill up the gymnasium and the hallways waiting to be moved into the new section.

Enge gave a small tour Friday morning of DYS, which was deemed "prohibitive to repair" back in 2003.

Construction of the new wing, located in front of the existing wing of classrooms, began last year.

The renovation will gain the school about 4,500 square feet, which Enge said comes from increased administration space and a larger library.

He began the tour by showing off the large, open library space, with tall windows letting in as much natural light as possible.

He especially was excited about the wood ceiling that would be put in there.

"It's hard to describe," Enge admitted. "It's sort of like tongue-and-groove cedar strips but with gaps between."

"It's going to look beautiful."

The library sits next to the administration area, which is coming with a few improvements of its own.

First off, the area is larger than the old one and features two offices, a meeting room, and a secure room for storage and student records.

The reception desk in the administration area also has a clear view of the main entrance, as well as new controls to lock or unlock all of the school doors at once—something Enge hopes to get into other district schools in the future.

"Then the secretary can

come in the morning and unlock all of the doors from one place, instead of the janitors having to go around and open them," he explained.

Down the hall and on the west side of the building are resource rooms, the staff room, a special education room with a universally-accessible wash-room, student washrooms, and the mechanical room.

Across the hall from those, and closer to the playground area, are the new classrooms.

The first two, as visitors enter the school, are the impressive kindergarten rooms, with a cubby area sitting between them.

"They used to have cubby areas in the classrooms but that caused too much mess," Enge said.

"This way, the mess stays outside of the classroom."

The kindergarten students also will have their own entrance/exit to the playground once the older classroom wing is demolished.

Five other classrooms fill the rest of the hallway and although they are empty now, they will be filled with desks, supplies, and students this fall.

One feature pointed out were the large storage spaces in each class, complete with cupboards, drawers, and counters.

There even is a special cupboard in each room for the teacher to store their personal belongings—something one teacher apparently was very excited about because she had never had a proper place to hang her own coat before.

Enge noted each classroom also has its own temperature control and heating/cooling unit.

"It will be a very comfortable school," he noted.

There is no computer lab in the school because, as Enge pointed out, they are "one-to-one" on technology now—meaning every student has their own device.

"Computer labs are slowly going away," Enge said.

"There isn't one in [J.W.] Walker anymore and they took out at least one in Robert Moore School."

Enge said the new wing was built very close to the old section because they are not allowed to be closer than 14 metres to the road, which the building now sits at.

He added building in front of the existing school will have a benefit as it will leave the students a large playground space in behind it once the old wing is demolished.

The board also is holding onto \$1.5 million—money each school received a few years ago for playground improvements—that will be used once the building construction and demolition is finished.

Demolition will begin next week after some preparations are made, including taking out the power, gathering anything that can be recycled, and recovering anything else that could be of value.

The Internet tower south of the building, and the transformers sitting by the road, also will be removed as they no longer are needed.

For the new wing, Enge said the brick will be going on the exterior in the next week or so, and they will continue finishing things up inside.

Parts of the old school will be kept, including the gym, two classrooms, and the old library, which will be converted into a classroom.

The current principal's office also will be changed to create a wheelchair-accessible entrance onto the stage.

As well, the kitchen will be fixed up for community events (including removing the need to go through bathrooms to get to it) while the old classrooms will be renovated to match the new ones.

"You won't know if you're in the old school or the new [wing]," Enge assured.

He noted teachers will go into the building a week before school starts to prepare—as they always do.

But he added some also may be in throughout the summer to set things up in their new classrooms.



The large, bright windows on the south side of the building will offer a great view and plenty of natural light for students in Donald Young School's new library.



The gym at Donald Young School (above) currently is being used as storage for items waiting to be placed in the new wing. The gym will be one of the few parts of the old school remaining, with two classrooms and the former library also being kept for future renovations and use. Meanwhile, below, the classrooms in the old wing have been cleaned out and now are awaiting demolition. Crews will remove wiring and salvage any recyclable materials this week before that work can take place.

—Nicholas Donaldson photos



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