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# Work on MacDonald Middle School's sixth-grade wing could begin this fall

## Sixth-grade wing to be ready by August 2014

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An artist's rendering of how a reconfigured MacDonald Middle School entryway would look. / Courtesy art



Written by  
**Dawn Parker**

**EAST LANSING** — The potential bill for transforming MacDonald Middle School is estimated to be about \$8 million, \$700,000 less than originally thought.

Bids for the project to redesign the building to accommodate sixth-graders in the fall of 2014 will be due Aug. 28, according to representatives of TowerPinkster and Clark Construction who presented at the Aug. 12 meeting.

The work includes converting the former pool area into a gym for sixth graders and the construction of eight new classrooms. The main entryway into the school is also planned to be made more secure.

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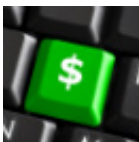
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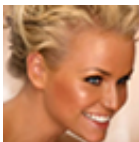
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Part of the reconfiguration of the front entryway, project manager Bill Zaske said, will involve giving office staff an unobstructed view of everyone entering the school. As it is now, someone could enter the school and ascend immediately to the second floor without being seen.

Bid award recommendations for the project, which the board approved March 11, will be in the board's hands at its Sept. 9 and Sept. 23 meetings, representatives said. There are 17 separate bid packages within the overall project, from roofing to electrical work.

If approved, work should be substantially complete by Aug. 15, 2014, in time for the start of the 2014-15 school year.

The school's grounds will also see changes, especially the closure of a curb cut off a dropoff loop to make it a pedestrian-only loop.

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Two new central project areas, Zaske said, are intended to be large enough to accommodate two classes at a time. In addition, the design of the new classrooms was planned to incorporate as much natural light as possible.

“The goal is to provide a new look,” Zaske said, “and (also) tie into the 2002 addition. The goal is to blend in.”

Enrollment forecasts predict nine sections of sixth graders in 2014-15, meaning one homeroom will be housed in a revamped science lab.

Ted Ryskamp of Clark Construction said the original estimate of \$8.7 million was trimmed first to \$8.4 million and then to \$8 million, and it’s hoped bids will come in under budget. The project is scheduled to be paid for with building and site sinking fund dollars.

Part of the cost reduction is attributable to being able to reuse portions of the existing heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

Board members have debated how best to conduct background checks of prospective construction employees, finally asking checks be done regarding crimes of a sexual nature. The district is already equipped to issue ID badges, technology director Christian Palasty said.

“Our intent is not to mingle students with workers,” Ryskamp said. “We take that very seriously.”

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