

By Kim Underwood

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

SEPTEMBER 27, 2017 – Construction has begun on a building that will serve as a new home for both for Paisley IB Magnet School and Lowrance Middle School.

“I am beyond excited,” said Principal Peggy Dickey of Lowrance.

“It’s nice to see this coming to fruition.”

On Tuesday, a groundbreaking ceremony was held on the site of the new building, being built on the campus of the current Paisley building.

When Principal Gary Cone of Paisley got up to speak, he said that he and Dickey were the two most excited people present.

In the past, both have talked about how much they look forward to their new partnership.



Although the schools will share such areas as the cafeteria, auditorium, media center and courtyard space, they will continue to be two separate schools. While sharing a building where students can work together and get to know each other, each school will have its own classrooms and will retain its own identity

With that in mind, members of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education voted to retain the full individual names for each school. Lowrance’s full name is Annie L. Lowrance Middle School, and Paisley’s full name is John W. Paisley IB Magnet School.

Those present at the groundbreaking included current students and staff members from both schools, Paisley alumni, members of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education, Central Office staff members, representatives of the company doing the construction, and county officials, including county commissioner Don Martin.

The budget for the construction of the building is \$39,780,754. The total budget for the project – which also includes design, furniture, technology, land acquisition, testing services and more – is \$49,129,975.

The building is 224,196 square feet. It is designed to handle a total of 1,277 students.

Construction began in June and is scheduled to be finished in time for the schools to open in their new home for the 2019-20 school year.

The project is being paid for with bond money that voters approved in 2016. As school board chair Dana Caudill Jones pointed out when she spoke, the bonds received support throughout the county.

“This bond passed in every precinct in Forsyth County,” Jones said. “We are so blessed and so grateful to live in a community that puts students first.”

“I want to say how proud I am to be part of this,” said Superintendent Beverly Emory.

Emory and Jones took the opportunity to recognize Bill Powell, the school system’s Director of Construction Services. Powell is retiring this week. Since he joined the school system 21 years ago, he has seen to the planning, design, management and scheduling of more than \$560 million worth of construction.

“We wanted to recognize him for amazing service to the school system,” Jones said.

Turning to speak directly to Powell, she said, “You made a lot of magic behind the scenes.”

For Lowrance students and staff, the new building will mean finally having a contemporary home designed to fill the needs of the school’s special needs students.

“We have been working on this for 12 years,” said Sam Dempsey, the Chief Program Officer for the Exceptional Children Program.

“This is a great day for Lowrance,” said Val Raynor, who served as principal at Lowrance before retiring. She now teaches part-time at other schools.

It was a great day for Paisley as well.

Paisley has a rich history. Opened in 1960 as John W. Paisley Senior High School, it became known as one of the Big Four high schools serving African-American students. Since becoming a magnet school focusing on the International Baccalaureate Programme, it has drawn a diverse group of students from throughout the county.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, a number of members of the school’s alumni association were present.

“I have mixed emotions,” said Dothula Baron, the president of the alumni association and a 1966 graduate. “It makes me sad the old school won’t be there anymore. There are a lot of memories.”

At the same time, she said, she is delighted the school will have a new building to serve students in years to come.

“It will be such a nice facility from what I understand,” Baron said.

Lois Sloan, who graduated from Paisley in 1965, said she was glad to see a new building for Paisley.

“I think it’s a great idea, and I’m looking forward to seeing how it turns out,” said

Sloan and Baron were among the Paisley alumni who turned ceremonial shovels of dirt.

Former Paisley teacher Billie Matthews, who taught there from 1961 to 1968, was also there along with such current Paisley teachers as Tabettha Mabe and Erin Knapp.

Both Mabe and Knapp are looking forward to having a new building.

“The building is going to be amazing,” said Mabe, who teaches physical education and health as well as serving as a sponsor of the yearbook and journalism program



Mabe has enjoyed watching the progress of the project from her classroom window.

“It’s a good thing for the community,” said Knapp, who teaches history and sociology as well as sponsoring the yearbook and journalism program.

Brent Campbell, the Chief Program Officer for Marketing and Communications, served as master of ceremonies for the event. Folding chairs had been set up on a concrete slab that, Campbell said, will be the site of the Paisley gymnasium.

Under a nearby tent, members of the Paisley IB Advanced Orchestra were playing. As it happened, Campbell said, the spot where they were playing will be the school’s band room one day.

