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Allen & Hoshall to design three new schools

Memphis Business Journal - by [Michael Sheffield](#) Staff writer

Allen & Hoshall has been selected by DeSoto County to design three new schools to handle a growing student population.

The two middle schools and a high school are planned to be ready for the 2009-10 school year as a direct response to the county's increase from 26,000 to 30,000 students in the last four years. The school district is projected to reach 37,000 students in the next five years.

The schools are being financed by a \$60 million bond issue that passed in Mississippi three weeks ago. In 2004, the state issued bonds worth \$115 million to build 10 schools in DeSoto County, all of which were designed by Allen & Hoshall.

Ken Reid, assistant superintendent of finance and administration with **DeSoto County Schools**, says bids for the middle schools should go out at the beginning of August.

Lewisburg Middle School will be located in Lewisburg near Highway 305 in Olive Branch; **Center Hill Middle School** will be in the northeastern part of the county.

The high school bid will go out in October, with that school scheduled to be ready by December 2009. That school, to be called **Lake Cormorant High School**, will be located in Walls.

Reid says the growth of DeSoto County tapered off some this year, but its growth is not expected to slow down anytime soon.

"This year we only grew by 1,200, but that's nearly a whole high school," Reid says. "Even if you grow 800-1,000 kids a year, in four years you will have grown by over 3,000 kids."

DeSoto County has handled the enrollment increase using portable buildings the last few years, but that has not been a palatable solution, Reid says

"We've had to haul portable buildings all over the county," he says.

Stan Klenk, a principal with Allen & Hoshall and manager of the DeSoto County office, says work on the middle school sites has already started. The middle schools each will be about 100,000 square feet and house 1,000 students; the high school will be 120,000 square feet and house 1,200-1,500 students. Allen & Hoshall is working with **Bailey Architects** on the projects.

"We build them so we can add on later," Klenk says. "It can handle the growth and maintain the quality, teacher-to-pupil ratio and provide good facilities."

Reid says taxpayers in DeSoto County have displayed a commitment to education.

"It's somewhat unusual to have this kind of bond issue back-to-back within five years, and you'd think

citizens would be hesitant to vote for it because taxes could go up, but they're committed toward providing a quality education," he says. "Producing an educated work force for the jobs we hope to attract is important and property values are key to how good the school systems are."

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