

DESOTO COUNTY

DeSoto County Schools adding classrooms to address continued growth

By [Toni Lepaska](#), Special to the Daily Memphian

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The footprint of DeSoto County Schools will grow again after officials voted this week to build 10 more classrooms and expand cafeteria capacity at DeSoto Central Middle School.



The work is part of other construction at a total of four schools designed to handle growth in enrollment across the school district.

The hottest spots have been among the DeSoto Central complex of five schools and in the Hernando and Lewisburg areas, Superintendent Cory Uselton said. That's despite the pandemic.

[Sleepy town of Walls poised for residential boom](#)

While enrollment slumped overall by about 500 students last year, those three areas continued to see a rise in enrollment, the superintendent said. This year, enrollment increased by about 400 students across the district to 34,442 students.

Officials also are seeing increased enrollment growth in the Southaven area. Six schools currently serve that area. Uselton said the district is seeing "the upward trend."

The DeSoto County Board of Education received six bids for more DeSoto Central Middle classrooms and cafeteria space. The school board unanimously approved hiring Fulwood Construction Co., which bid \$3,836,909. The new building will

connect to the existing building, Uselton said, with completion expected for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Landers Center to undergo \$35M expansion, adding convention center space

The school has grown by 175 students since the 2018-2019 school year when 1,345 were enrolled. According to Keith Williams, associate superintendent of operations, the new classrooms will provide space for an additional 250 students, and the cafeteria will accommodate feeding more students in each lunch period.

The school district also plans to have more space ready next school year at three other sites:

- DeSoto Central High will get additional cafeteria space.
- Southaven Intermediate School will add four classrooms.
- Hernando Hills Elementary will grow by eight classrooms.

The superintendent said each summer the school district builds classrooms in order to keep pace with the growth. In recent years, four of the five schools in the DeSoto Central complex have received additions to accommodate growth, Uselton said.

The county's population grew about 14% over 10 years, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, and the DeSoto school district reflects the addition of new families that bump up the population.

The school district opened a new school in Lewisburg, south of Olive Branch, in August. With the opening of Lewisburg Middle, officials shifted students and brought the area from two to three elementary schools.

The new Interstate 269 corridor with an exit at Lewisburg is apparently driving a lot of that growth. The school district constructed additional classrooms for a while to keep up with the annual bumps in enrollment, but finally a new school was in order. Five schools serve the area.

Olive Branch focuses on controlling blight

Hernando is scheduled to get a new high school in August 2025. The existing high school will continue to be utilized as grades are reconfigured across the schools in and around the city. The Hernando area currently hosts three elementary schools, a middle school and the high school.

In all, the school district has 39 schools plus two technical centers and two alternative learning centers.

TOPICS

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Toni Lepaska is a freelance reporter for The Daily Memphian. The 32-year veteran of newspaper journalism covers a diversity of topics, always seeking to reveal the human story behind the news. Toni, who grew up in Cayce, Mississippi, is a graduate of the University of Mississippi. To learn more, visit tonilepeska.com
