

Plans for two new schools progressing

By Dillon Davis - January 28, 2026



With growth in the district showing no signs of slowing down, the Olentangy Local School District (OLSD) is progressing with its plans to construct two new buildings to address overcrowding at the elementary and high school levels.

Last November, voters in the district approved a \$235 million bond issue for the construction of two new schools. The bond issue, which included no new millage, was approved by 13,755 of the 24,496 total votes cast. The district had already established plans for an 18th elementary school in anticipation of the bond issue being passed, and a fifth high school will also be constructed.

OLSD currently has 24,409 students across all grades, and enrollment projections anticipate that total will grow to 28,337 by the 2035-36 school year as the district population surpasses 160,000 people. In the kindergarten through fifth grade range, OLSD currently has 10,377 students and expects that total to grow to 11,050 by the 2030-31 school year.

At the high school level, OLSD currently has 7,654 students across four buildings, and 8,700 high school students are projected for the 2030-31 school year.

Before the opening of Peachblow Crossing Elementary School last year, the district utilized modulars at Cheshire Elementary School to add classrooms. Currently, modulars are being considered for use at Indian Springs Elementary School, and Liberty Tree Elementary School is sharing classrooms with Hyatts Middle School to avoid using modulars.

"We're at the point where, had the bond issue not passed, we would have had a need to continue adding modular trailers at the buildings," OLSD Chief Operations Officer Jeff Gordon told The Gazette.

Now in his 21st year in the district, Gordon estimates he has contributed to the opening of upwards of 16 new buildings throughout OLSD. When he first joined OLSD, the district had a separate position dedicated to construction. During the five years of planning for the

construction of Olentangy Berlin High School, the position was eliminated, and Gordon assumed leadership of all construction planning.

The new elementary school will be constructed near the southwest corner of Bean Oller Road and Sawmill Parkway on land the district purchased in the early 2000s in anticipation of new construction. The high school will be located on the northwest corner of Bunty Station Road and Sawmill Parkway.

"We know the growth patterns," Gordon said of identifying the locations for the new buildings. "As the (residential) building continues and works its way towards the north, we know we're going to need locations up there. The Berlin High School site was bought, I believe, in 2003, knowing the growth was going up the center of the district. And the driver for where the growth goes is where the sanitary sewer and utilities are at."

Gordon said the Bean Oller Road site was originally anticipated to be the site of the district's next elementary school after Heritage Elementary School opened.

"When the market correction happened with the housing bust in 2008, the sanitary line...didn't get extended, which stalled the growth of housing north of Hyatts Road because the sanitary line couldn't accommodate it," he said. "Once they crossed that line somewhere around 2013/15, that's why housing growth north of Hyatts Road could start expanding. That's kind of why we delayed in building an elementary there up to this point, because it slowed down."

"The growth continued in the center of the district because the utilities were already there, so developers could build there much cheaper. That's what drove Shale Meadows Elementary School being the district's 16th elementary site. Elementary 16 was originally supposed to be on Bean Oller Road, and we ended up building two more elementary buildings in the center of the district before we had to go back to Bean Oller Road."

Ground is expected to be broken on the new elementary site in April, which would keep the district on schedule to open the building for the 2027-28 school year. The design work for the building had already been completed by the district prior to the bond issue passing, allowing the district to get the site work started in short order after the funds became available. Also working in the district's favor to facilitate more aggressive timelines is its approach of replicating the same designs as past buildings. Elementary 18 is designed to mirror the Shale Meadows and Peachblow Crossing builds, which were expanded footprints of the previous 11 elementary schools built in the district.

"We have a design that is very cost-efficient to build because of the way it is designed," Gordon said. "And when we did some analysis when we had that break between elementary 15 and 16, we met with principals who had been in those buildings when they were really full. We added some small group space, and that's the difference. There are about 10,000 square feet more in Shale Meadows and Peachblow Crossing than there were in the previous 11 buildings of a similar footprint. At this point, we're sticking with that footprint because it seems to have worked well now that we've been in Shale Meadows for four years and Peachblow Crossing for two years. It seems to be the right balance of where we have the space at, so we'll continue to use that prototype."

Gordon added that because the design is a prototype, the district sees significant savings on the design phases because they don't have to start from scratch with plans.

While Gordon said several new elementary schools have been in the district's plans for "quite a while," given the enrollment projections, the need for a new high school began to materialize over the last four to five years. Design work for the new high school is almost finished, Gordon said, and the district approved a contract with architecture firm Fanning Howey for the construction management services last month.

The district will begin taking bids for the project around late March and into April, with the hope that construction will begin in July for a projected opening in fall 2028.

As for the naming of both buildings, which is overseen by Chief Communications Officer Krista Davis, the selections will be made via a community survey. District policy outlines parameters for what can and can't be considered for building names. As a policy, the district won't consider naming buildings after a person.

For the high school, the community survey will also decide the colors and mascot, in addition to the name.

While a more pleasant process than redrawing district boundaries to address overcrowding, the new buildings have required OLSD to reconvene its Redistricting Committee to reassess which schools students will feed into as they progress through their education.

The committee, which includes former members and new stakeholders, gathered last month for its first meeting.

"We're gonna look at redistricting holistically because the committee is very thoughtful and intentional about how we draw these attendance boundaries with the feeder patterns from elementary to middle school to high school," OLSD Superintendent Todd Meyer told the OLSD Board of Education during its November meeting. "And obviously, now with the fifth high school, it adds some complexities there. We're gonna do our best to have representation from across the district because there will be some other impact across the district the next couple of years besides just going into these two schools, because it's going to be important for us to balance enrollment."

The board will receive an update from the committee on the redistricting efforts during next month's meeting.

Although the district is hard at work in bringing two new buildings online and alleviating the overcrowding in existing schools, OLSD knows it won't be long before the need arises once more. Gordon noted the "proactive" 2024 levy proposal, which failed decisively, would have paved the way for the district to construct five new buildings, including the 18th elementary and the fifth high school.

"We do know already that we still need those other three buildings that were on (the ballot) when we were on in 2024," Gordon said. "We just tried to break that up. We were trying to be proactive in getting it so we could then not have to come back to the voters. But we're going to have to come back again and ask for those three buildings."

The additional three schools on the horizon include another elementary school, which is already being designed for land next to Berkshire Middle School, as well as an additional elementary school and a new middle school.