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Students at Downers Grove North and South high schools will beat the heat when they return to classes in August thanks to newly installed air-conditioning systems.

Air conditioning to greet D-99 students

By BOB RAKOW
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DOWNERS GROVE – Students at Downers Grove North and South high schools will beat the heat when they return to classes in August thanks to newly installed air-conditioning systems.

Air-conditioning equipment is being installed at both schools, and the next step is to balance the systems, Superintendent Hank Thiele said at the July 16 meeting of the Community High School District 99 Board of Education.

"Right now we're sticking to our timeline that the system will come online somewhere between Aug. 10 and 13," Thiele said. "And then, once there's bodies in the building, we kind of balance the system out."

The status of the air conditioning was part of an update on the district's capital improvement plan, which voters approved in April.

One of the outdoor improvements includes increasing the size of the outdoor bleachers at both schools to 3,000 seats, a 500-seat expansion.

The expansion also includes adding spaces for wheelchairs and companion seats, Thiele said.

Additionally, plans call for an additional 750 seats to be added to the visitors' bleachers at both schools and storage space to be created underneath the bleachers.

Bleachers and new field turf were low priorities among those surveyed about district needs, but storage is a concern, Thiele said.

"We may need that space under the bleachers for usable space, and we know we will need the water retention space under the artificial turf at South to make up for the increased footprint at South," he said.

The district expects to have prototype classrooms developed at both schools before the school year starts. The prototype rooms are designed to garner feedback from students and faculty, he said.

The prototype classrooms will feature the flooring, lighting, ceilings and paint that will be included in new rooms throughout the schools. Later in the school year, the district will add writable/magnetic surfaces and new furniture.

"That will show up over the course of the fall and be here by winter break," Thiele said.

Preliminary design concepts and phasing are in the works and will be presented to the community at the end of August, he said. Additionally, the district will provide a project schedule at that time.

"That helps us get better budgeting numbers in place," Thiele said.

District teams overseeing the various capital improvement projects will tour area schools in August, a construction manager will be hired, and a community meeting will be held Aug. 28. The board also will vote on an architect contract in August, Thiele said.

In September, the district will present building designs and recommend a construction manager to the board. Meetings with residents who live near both schools and will be impacted by construction also will be held, he said.

The first phase of the work will begin in spring 2019, and bids will be solicited later this year.

Board President Nancy Kupka said the school improvements will be more than aesthetically pleasing.

"How students learn is changing, and how teachers teach is changing, and it just all goes along," Kupka said. "I mean it looks great, but it's going to be such a boon to our students."

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