

Shovels turned for Cane Bay Elementary School

Berkeley County continues effort to handle overcrowding

BY DAVE MUNDAY ([CONTACT](#))

The Post and Courier

Friday, May 16, 2008

GOOSE CREEK — Berkeley County school officials gathered Thursday to kick off construction of an elementary school and check the progress of a new high school.

Both schools are in Cane Bay Plantation, a new development on U.S. Highway 176.

Cane Bay Elementary School is scheduled to open in August 2009 with 700 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. It's pegged at \$19.8 million for 98,000 square feet.

Cane Bay High School is scheduled to open in August with 700 to 800 ninth- and 10th-graders. Enrollment will expand a grade level per year to 1,500 students, with the possibility of expansion. The school cost about \$70 million for 365,000 square feet.

A middle school is also being designed on the site, although no money has been allocated. Cane Bay developer Ben Gramling III donated about 150 acres for the three schools.

"We consider these schools to be the cornerstone of this community," Gramling said at Thursday's groundbreaking ceremony for the elementary school.

The Cane Bay schools mark a new direction for the county, schools Superintendent Chester Floyd said. Rather than simply building enough to handle overcrowding, officials are looking ahead, he said.

"We are in fact building for the future," Floyd said, pointing to the Whitesville Elementary Chorus sitting near the stage after a performance. "It was a tough decision but well worth it when we look into their eyes."

The schools are needed because the county is poised for a major growth

spurt. Cane Bay Plantation is slated for 5,000 houses. The schools are almost across the road from Parks of Berkeley, another

residential development where 5,700 houses are planned.

After watching officials turn the traditional shovels at the elementary school site, most of the School Board members joined other officials and project managers for a tour of the massive new high school.

The main building is shaped like an X, with each of the legs containing a corridor that's about 270 feet long. Several board members on the tour joked that students will get all the exercise they need just walking between classes.

Board member Terry Hardesty said he was especially impressed by all the technology (a wing is devoted to career and technical classes, such as health sciences, landscape technology, welding and pre-engineering). But he said he was a bit concerned about all the work that still needs to be done in less than three months.

Jeff Holstein with the Southern Management Group, which is overseeing the project, said that's par for course and assured everybody that everything is on schedule. Ken Coffey, the district's assistant superintendent of operations and facilities, also said he's confident that everything will be ready on opening day.

*Reach **Dave Munday** at 745-5862 or dmunday@postandcourier.com.*