



by [Emily Petsko](#)

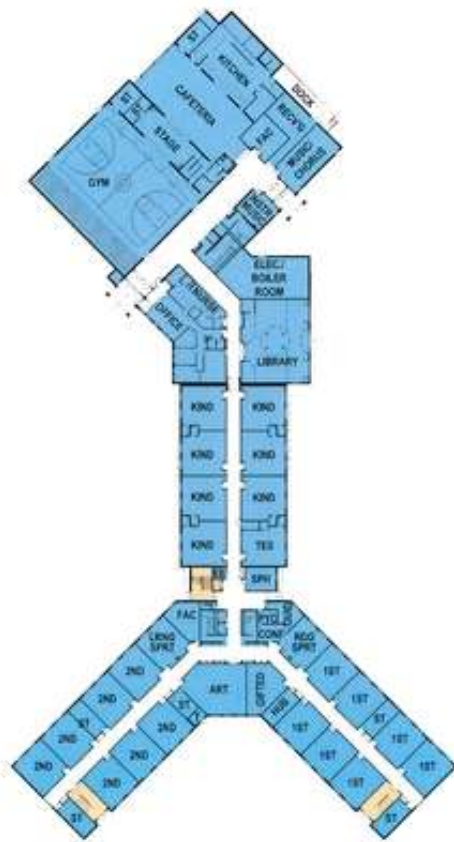
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The new [Muse Elementary School](#) will be a state-of-the-art facility with two-story classroom wings, full-day kindergarten classes and a “green” design to conserve energy.

Canon-McMillan School District officials held a public hearing Thursday to discuss the project, which is the district’s first endeavor in a larger plan to revamp the facilities, many of which are aging and in poor condition.

Muse, Cecil and First Street elementary schools will close, and students at all three schools will transfer to the new building, which will be constructed on property adjacent to the current Muse Elementary. All schools will remain open until the new building is constructed and ready to open for the 2017-18 school year.

The maximum cost of the project will be \$31,001,782, which includes costs associated with construction, furniture, technology, permits and engineering. The district plans to fund the project by issuing a 20-year general obligation bond and raising the district’s millage rate by 3.21 mills over the course of three years. One mill currently provides about \$375,000 in collected taxes to the district.

Business manager Joni Mansmann said the district is gradually “phasing in” the millage increase, starting with a 1-mill tax increase for the 2014-15 school year.

“That way we can minimize the impact of a tax increase in any one given year,” she said.

Mansmann estimated the district will be reimbursed about \$6.7 million from the Department of Education's Planning and Construction Workbook, but said those funds may be delayed because of a backlog in reimbursements.

The school will face some indirect costs, including an increase in electricity and personnel costs, and an increase in transportation costs because of the need to transport students who previously walked to the closing schools. But Mansmann said those costs will be offset by the cost savings of closing three schools.

J. Greer Hayden of HHSDR Architects, which is handling the design aspects of the project, said the layout of the student drop-off parking lot was reconfigured in response to parents' comments about a lack of parking at the current elementary school.

The layout includes 12 parking spots in the student drop-off loop, and parents also can park in a designated lot separate from the bus area that can hold about 100 cars. About 400 parking spaces will be provided altogether.

The new elementary school will have access points on School and Oak streets, which will keep bus and parent traffic segregated during arrival and dismissal times. The 108,000-square-foot building will be capable of holding up to 875 students – about 125 more than the population at the three schools that will close – but studies do not anticipate a large population boom in the district.

The public has until 1 p.m. Feb. 17 to submit any written comments on testimony regarding the Muse Elementary project to the superintendent's office.

In addition to the elementary school project, the district also plans to build an addition to the high school and construct a [new middle school](#) on Route 519 across from Sedeca Road.

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