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[Front Page](#) [Calendar & Events](#) [Classifieds](#) [News](#) [Obituaries](#) [Opinion/Letters](#) [Sports](#)

Breaking News

Elcho's big school project moving ahead on schedule

From Highway 45, the Elcho school doesn't look any different than it has for decades,

But drive around the back side, and it is a beehive of activities.

Since the April groundbreaking, work has been proceeding at a breakneck pace on the \$18 million project, which will transform the educational complex over the next two years.

We're moving along very well, Earl Doc Smith of EDS Builders, the general contractor for the project, said. Considering the amount of rain we've had, we're right on schedule.

The extensive project was approved by voters in a November, 2016 referendum by a 57 to 43 percent margin.

The project will move the main office and entrance from the south to the north end of the school complex with secure doors; add an additional gymnasium with a seating capacity of 1,200; and revamp existing locker rooms and music and band areas. The existing library will be downsized, with a portion turned over to an early childhood center.

New construction will also include a community fitness center, commons/cafeteria with seating for 300 to 350 and an adjoining kitchen; technology education and a mix of classrooms.



WALLS ARE RISING—Work is proceeding at a breakneck pace on the Elcho school addition. In the top photo, a crane sets one of the huge concrete precasts that make up the new gymnasium walls into place. In the lower photo, Earl Doc Smith of EDS Builders consults with one of the contractors on site as the walls advance in the new administrative and academic area of the complex.

The 1938 elementary structure will remain in use for the upcoming school year. Once it is removed, the area will be redeveloped into a playground for youngsters up to grade two.

The goal is to complete the construction with the least disruption educationally. Occupancy is slated for the start of the 2018-19 term.

Smith, who was also in charge of the White Lake school construction project, said Elcho presents some complexities.

In November, school bonds totaling half-a-billion-dollars were passed within a 100 mile radius of Wausau, creating an abundance of work and tight schedules for contractors.

We have to meet their deadlines, Smith said, if we get behind, we'll lose those guys until September.

Precast concrete walls are being installed now, and the concrete planks that make up the second level floor will be going in next week. That will allow work to continue in the first floor areas under cover while crews wait for the structural steel, which will arrive in about a month.

We will be working in the office areas and kitchen while waiting for that steel, Smith said. That prevents us from having any delays.

Perhaps an anthill would be a better analogy than a beehive, with seven different companies on site. Boldt and Miron Construction, Musson Brothers, E-con and August Winter & Sons are all completing various pieces of the complex puzzle.

We're seeing very good coordination between all the trades, Smith said. We're watching out and making sure everyone is on the same page.

The coordination is working, Joe Smith, the assistant on the project, said.

If the schedule holds, the new portion of the building will be under cover in September, when interior work will begin.

We've got to give lots of credit to the workers and the contractors, Smith said. It's a team effort. When a job is positive, everyone jumps in and works together and makes a difference.