

School construction will prompt some inconveniences

For the first weeks of the 1998-99 school year, Longacre Elementary School pupils will learn art from a cart instead of in a classroom and eat lunch in the media center. Their parents will have to park on neighborhood streets and walk to the building.

But what are a few minor hardships when there is a gleaming payoff awaiting, according to Longacre parents such as Andrea Ferriss, whose daughter Elizabeth will attend fifth grade at Longacre this year.

Although Ferriss wonders if students will be distracted by the continuing construction the first month or two, she is keeping her eye on the big picture.

"I think it's worth the fact we'll have a better school in the long run," said Ferriss, who like others in the Longacre attendance area heard rumors all summer long that bond issue-funded construction there might delay the start of classes. "I'm willing to work through it. In order to get the nice building we want here we have to put up with construction."

Ferriss and other parents especially are looking forward to the elimination of parking lot portable classrooms, where Elizabeth attended Girl Scout troop meetings. By the time the dust settles, those will be gone.

"There are a lot of parents who say patience is a virtue," she said.

Longacre principal Bill Smith, and other district officials, remain confident

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Bill Smith
—Longacre principal

that the project won't throw a jackhammer in front of the wheel of education.

"Our contractors have told us to expect the full approval of (state) health and safety officials and we are looking forward to opening school on (Monday) August 31st," Smith said. "We will need to make some accommodations early on, but the daily program will remain largely intact."

And, contrary to other rumors floating around during the summer, Longacre pupils will be able to eat hot lunch at school.

It won't be served in the old cafeteria, however. According to Smith, the new cafeteria and kitchen will open on Monday, Sept. 28. Until then, hot lunches will be transported and warmed on site, with pupils eating in the media center, large group instruction area and other classrooms.

Around that time, the new parking lot will be completed, with buses again being able to drop kids off and pick them up in front of the school — instead

of at the temporary bus staging area on Drake Heights Street, the principal continued.

Smith listed other components of the back-to-school plan:

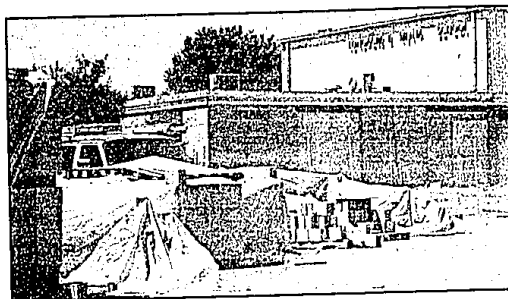
■ On Monday, Sept. 14, one of two new classroom wings will open. It will be comprised of three classrooms and an art room. During the first two weeks of school, students will attend temporary classrooms and participate in "art on a cart."

■ On Monday, Sept. 21, the renovated media center will be ready for use. The first three weeks, media sessions will take place in regular classrooms.

■ On Monday, Oct. 19, the second new wing, with a gym and music room, will open.

Meanwhile, the playground will remain relatively unchanged. During construction, however, a safety fence will stay in place.

Former school administrator Don Cowan, who now is working as a private consultant to the district on bond issue



Under way: Work is continuing on Longacre Elementary School.

construction, also said there shouldn't be anything to worry about for parents at Longacre — or at the other five schools where work has taken place.

Besides Longacre, renovations and additions are being made at Kenbrook and Gill elementarys, O.E. Dunckel Middle School, Farmington and North high schools. The work was approved in September 1997, when voters approved a two-part \$93.1 million bond issue.

"We feel pretty comfortable" about the

Longacre project, said Cowan, adding that school will start as scheduled throughout the district. He emphasized that all state safety requirements will be adequately met.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield said the district is committed to projects being done in a timely manner, because those that are not will impede subsequent improvements. "We know we have to get certain things done."

Longacre 4th-graders give construction poetic justice

Last spring, when the bond issue construction project began at Longacre Elementary School, fourth graders penned poems

about the disruption to their learning world.

When the 1998-99 school year opens on Monday, Aug. 31, those

students will start fifth grade. But the project will still continue, albeit in the final stages.

Following are several of those

students' poems:

Elizabeth Ferriss:
Pardon our rubble
We're having some trouble
Our teacher is saying
"Oh geez! Look at the trees!"
They're laying around
All over the ground
And oh what a sound
That there is around!
Out the window are big
machines we can't bare
So at math time there's nothing
but stares
We can't believe what's going
about
It just makes us want to shout!

Katie Mitchell:
There is something different
about school
That makes me quite surprised
Our elementary school is going
to arise

Men at work are changing our
beloved school

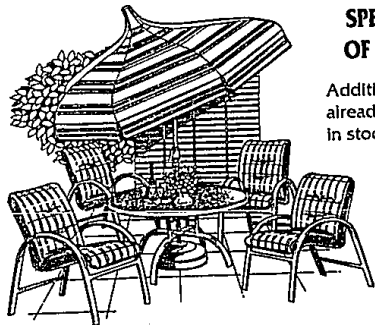
Into a place where learning is
bigger than a pool
Longacre is being fixed up for a
new year and will be very big
Except all the workers have to
move all the rocks and twigs

Lauren Heath:
Boom! Boom! Boom!
Did you hear that noise?
Our school is under construction
and it is quite a surprise
I can hear bang! bang! bang!
when I'm trying to write
I can hear boom! boom! boom!
and it gives me quite a fright
But in the end our school will
be great
Even the teachers will think it's
fate
It will be much bigger for more
children to fit

And the gym will be bigger for
more children to sit

Chelsie Hennick:
Construction is noisy, construction
is loud
But when it's through you're
really proud
Noisy classrooms through the
month of May
Hammering nails all through
the day
Trying to listen, study and
think
I wish this commotion would
be through in a blink
But when we go back to school
in the fall
I will realize the cost was
worth it all.

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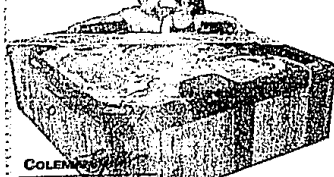
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