

LOCAL & STATE

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THURSDAY
MAY 16, 2002

The Wichita Eagle

District trumpets new school



Brian Corn/The Wichita Eagle

Devin Emery, a senior at Heights High School, and the rest of the Heights Marching Falcons entertain guests at the groundbreaking of the new middle school Wednesday.

■ Wichita's first new middle school in 35 years, at 45th North between Hillside and Oliver, should be open by fall 2003.

BY JOSH FUNK
The Wichita Eagle

Forget the shovels spray-painted gold found at most groundbreakings.

When the Wichita school district marked the start of construction on its new middle school Wednesday, board member Lynn Rogers took the controls of a bulldozer for the cere-

monial plowing.

Rogers said it took awhile to figure out which buttons to push, but after a little back and forth action, he found the button to raise the blade and plowed ahead about 10 feet.

The middle school — the district's first new one in more than 35 years — will be on 45th Street North between Hillside and Oliver avenues. It is in Rogers' district and should open in fall 2003.

"It's not just a building. It's part of the foundation for the future of America," Truesdell Middle School student Alysha Jeans said.

Student representatives from all the district's middle schools attend-

ed, though Jeans was the only one to address the wind-blown group of about 40 people.

Heights High School's band, clad in red T-shirts, played for the event. The new middle school will feed into Heights.

District officials repeatedly thanked voters for approving the \$284.5 million bond issue that will pay for the school.

"I think we've done one heck of a job," superintendent Winston Brooks said after thanking voters for their confidence. "We're under budget and ahead of schedule."

Koch Industries donated 40 acres

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Brian Corn/The Wichita Eagle

Kathy Busch, middle, principal of Coleman Middle School, and Brittany Banks, a Coleman seventh-grader, look at drawings of the first new middle school to be built in Wichita since Coleman in 1966. The district's Pat Warren is holding down the drawings in the high wind.

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for the 600-student school in a mostly undeveloped area of north-central Wichita.

"It is also an opportunity for this community to grow around this area," said the Rev. Titus James of the North Heights Christian Church and a member of the school's site selection committee. "We are blessed as a people to see this happen in our lifetime."

The district is betting that the school will help spur development in the area, and Brooks joked that he was eyeing some nearby property.

Bel Aire City Council member B.J. Beem said having a middle school

in the area will be great. Beem's children attend Gammon Elementary and Coleman Middle schools.

Beem's younger son will attend the new middle school.

The new school will have an immediate effect on crowding at Coleman, which has had close to 1,000 students for the past decade. The district would like to have 800 students at Coleman, 1544 N. Gouverneur St.

The new school's classrooms are designed to hold 600 students, but the gyms, auditorium and media center are big enough to handle 800, allowing for expansion.

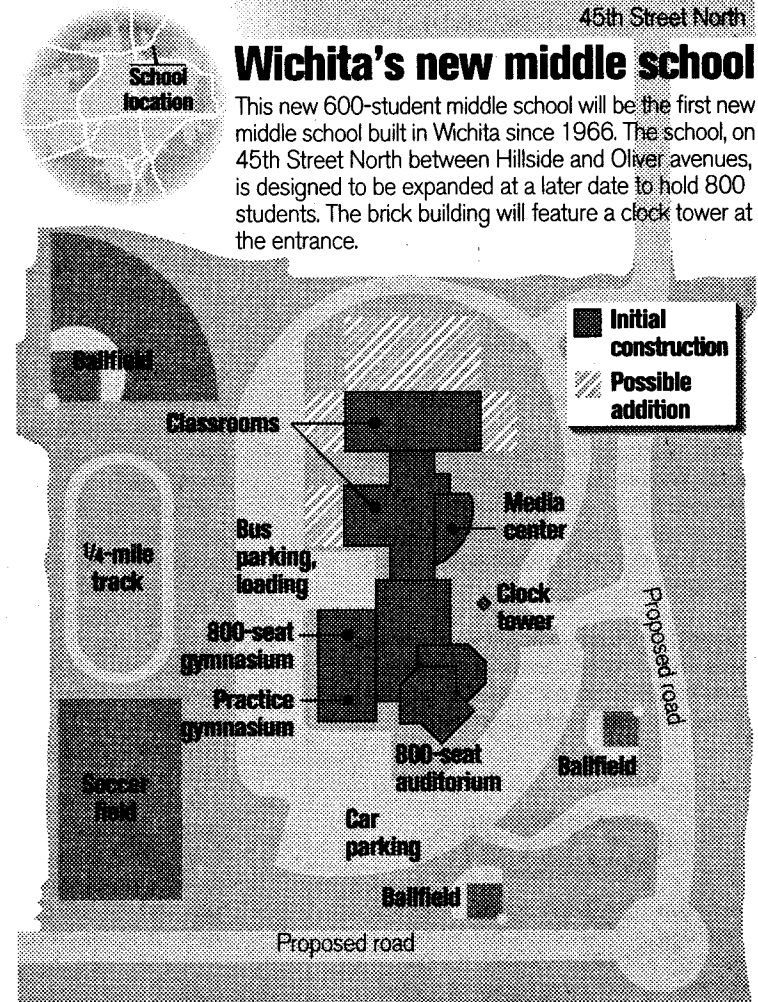
Coleman was the most recent middle school built in Wichita, and it opened in 1966.

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45th Street North

Wichita's new middle school

This new 600-student middle school will be the first new middle school built in Wichita since 1966. The school, on 45th Street North between Hillside and Oliver avenues, is designed to be expanded at a later date to hold 800 students. The brick building will feature a clock tower at the entrance.



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