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Norfolk High band room, achievement center to get makeover

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How do you fit 180 marching band students into a classroom designed to hold 80?

You don't.

That's why an addition is in the works at Norfolk High School that is set to be completed before ninth-graders are moved in from the junior high next year, bringing an influx of new band students.

As it stands now, there are 105 students taking band at Norfolk High, and they already are crammed into the current band room.

The storage room fills up quickly as students squeeze through the single door to take instruments in and out. Some instruments don't even fit in the cramped storage closet and are kept outside the band room.

Principal Steve Morton said these issues, as well as a too-small achievement center — a resource room open to all students, not just those in special education — would be resolved when the new addition to Norfolk High is built onto the front of the school.

"Those are the two areas that are probably the most glaring that we're trying to take care of (with the new addition)," Morton said.

The planned addition of approximately 300 freshmen next fall — as a result of the reconfiguration of grades throughout the Norfolk school district — made the renovations a more pressing issue, but Marlene Uhing, superintendent of schools, said the addition would have been done regardless.

"It's pretty obvious that we don't have enough room for our current band. That's meeting a need whether we bring the ninth grade up here or not," Uhing said. "And we don't have enough facilities to work with the students who want to use the achievement center whether we bring in the ninth grade or not."

Besides creating more space for students, the addition will allow the achievement center to stay open throughout the school day instead of having to close for a couple of periods each day or turn away students when the usage is too heavy, Morton said.

The new band room also will benefit in more ways than just adding space, he said.

"The acoustics will be better. BVH (the architects for the project) on their own has brought in an acoustical specialist to kind of analyze how they're designing the room," Morton said. "We'll probably have a higher ceiling than we have now."



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The Norfolk High marching band practices inside the band room. There are 105 students using a classroom designed for 80.

Ground work on the new addition, being managed by Beckenhauer Construction of Norfolk, is set to begin soon. Morton said that once the footings and foundation are in, construction can take place over the winter.

The goal is to have all of the construction done by August 2010, in time for the beginning of the new school year, Morton said.

The construction taking place during the current school year shouldn't be a distraction to students, though.

"This (project) is all outside. . . . Beckenhauer, last time they did renovations, just did a great job; we were able to continue school, and we had very few interruptions," Morton said.

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