

THE HERALD'S OPINION

Congrats on a plan seen through to the end

It's been 17 years since a Clinton School District's Facilities Committee attended a Clinton School Board Committee of the Whole meeting to present its recommendation to upgrade district schools.

The plan to downsize the number of elementary schools — taking the number from seven buildings to four as the first step in the then-estimated 10-year plan — upgrade the two middle schools and make improvements to the high school would begin with a referendum put in front of voters.

That first step was taken in the fall of 1997 when a \$9 million referendum to remodel Whittier and remodel and reopen the former Gateway Junior High School and turn it into Bluff Elementary was approved by those voters. That led to the demolition of Longfellow Elementary and closure of Henry Sabin Elementary. Kirkwood, which also was closed, was sold to the Head Start program.

Then the local option sales tax was approved in 2001, bringing with it funds to construct a new Jefferson Elementary School and Eagle Heights Elementary — and the closure of Horace Mann and Elijah Buell elementary schools. In 2003, Harding Elementary was closed; that facility now houses district administrative offices. Work has been done along the way at Clinton High School as well, with new athletic facilities, including a new swimming pool, constructed. A lot of work also has been done on athletic facilities through the assistance of Restoring Royalty.

On Sunday, the school district celebrated one of the final steps of that plan from long ago — one that addresses the Lyons and Washington middle schools through consolidation into one new building on 13th Avenue North. A large open house brought residents through the building Sunday, just weeks before staff members and students will start to move into the new structure.

Getting to that point was a long road. Discussions throughout the years centered on whether both buildings should be upgraded or whether it would be better to build one new school.

The latter option was selected and now all middle school students will be part of one shared student body who will go on to be Clinton River Kings and Queens in the years to come.

This was a plan seen through by many over several years, and was borne out of hard work and dedication to the education of future students, who at the time the original plans were proposed had not yet been born.

We congratulate those who made it happen, knowing that the education offered to students underscores a community's commitment to its future generations.