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Warner Robins school's groundbreaking held a little late

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Houston County school Superintendent Robin Hines, center, and other officials break ground on the future C.B. Watson Primary school in Warner Robins. Construction of the school actually started in June.

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By JENNIFER BURK — jb Burk@macon.com

WARNER ROBINS -- Houston County school and government officials ceremoniously tossed shovels of red clay at the site of the new C.B. Watson Primary School on Thursday as Parrish Construction Group workers built cinder block walls in the background.

They were a little behind on the groundbreaking, school board Chairman Tom Walmer admitted.

“If we hadn’t had it soon, Parrish might have had the building done,” he joked during his opening remarks.

Construction actually started on the school, located at 61 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., in June. Ultimately, it will house pre-kindergarten through second-grade students from the combined school zones of Pearl Stephens and Linwood elementaries, which includes Robins Air Force Base.

But first it will set in motion a chain of other construction and renovation projects in the district, all to be funded by part of the \$125 million education special purpose local option sales tax voters approved in November. C.B. Watson Primary will cost \$11.7 million.

The new school is expected to open its doors to students in August 2013. At that time, current Linwood Elementary students will move to C.B. Watson while the old Linwood is renovated, Superintendent Robin Hines said.

Then in August 2014, the Pearl Stephens and Linwood school zones will be combined. C.B. Watson Primary will house pre-kindergarten through second-grade students, and a renovated Linwood Elementary (to be renamed Pearl Stephens Elementary) will house students in grades three through five.

The former Pearl Stephens Elementary then will be renovated and renamed to house alternative school students. Those students, who had been housed at the site of the new C.B. Watson Primary, are temporarily being taught at the former Rumble Academy at Warner Robins High School. Warner Robins High has absorbed the students in that ninth-grade academy.

When the alternative students move out of the Rumble building, part of it will be torn down for green space and other projects.

Descendants of C.B. (or Boss) Watson and Pearl Stephens attended the ceremonial groundbreaking. Watson, the first mayor of Warner Robins, donated the land where the school that bears his name will be located. Pearl Stephens donated land in 1949 for a school for black children.

The 81,498-square-foot C.B. Watson Primary will have 39 classrooms and a capacity of 600 students. Robertson Loia Roof-Architects and Engineers of Atlanta designed the building.

“We’re excited about what this is going to do for the kids in this area and certainly our base,” Hines said.

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