

Gilson Middle School Home of the Huskies



Success is the only option, the motto for Gilson Middle School, appears to be appropriate as they open the new highly anticipated state of the art school building for students in grades 6-8 on Tuesday, September 2, 2014.

School districts and governmental agencies realize that cooperation is needed, especially considering shrinking budgets and the diverse needs of the community. This allowed many students, staff and community members to take part in the design for the new school. Their participation was vital to the process of designing a new facility that will serve the community for years to come.

The new George H. Gilson Middle School will provide programs and access to resources for adults, businesses, and other community organizations. These partnerships provide students with expanded learning opportunities, professional development opportunities for staff, and a venue for various community activities. Community involvement in education can take a variety of forms before, during, and after the school day.

Many community interests were taken into consideration and the needs of activities such as wrestling, archery, rock climbing, community theatre, summer fun and camps, intramurals, and a city emergency shelter have all been included in the new school.

The new middle school gym has a beautiful wood floor, nice bleachers and a large screen and sound system for special events. There's a separate mat room for wrestlers that can also be used for other groups such as cheer stunt practice and gymnastics. They incorporated the largest rock wall in the state, sitting at 37 feet high, with several pathways from easy to more difficult. The wall will create increased opportunity for physical education classes and possibly a rock climbing club. The football field has been redone with Astroturf and the track with rubber, hoping to maximize athletes potential and help ward off injuries.

One special feature throughout the school is the drinking fountains. Students said they wanted to be able to fill their water bottles at the fountains; so new fountains with water bottle filling stations have been installed.

There is a new kitchen and lunch area, eliminating the need for middle school students to go to the high school for lunch each day. The lunch area also has a small kitchen space that will be available for feeding athletic teams and concessions

during sporting events.

The classrooms are all equipped with smart, interactive projectors for easy multimedia access and sound systems which will help teachers keep attention without having to raise their voice and will assist students with hearing impairments.

Learning has definitely gone beyond the classroom and the new school accommodates this practice with learning centers just outside the classroom where students can work on group projects together. Another fun addition is magnetic walls so teachers can feature student works with ease and without holes in the walls, sticky tape, or cork boards.

Students now have an updated science room, an expanded shop room, a business center where they can print and make copies without having to interrupt the office, and a small theatre stage adjacent to the lunch area.

One of the student favorites is likely to be the new lounge. It was created to foster the love of reading with a faux fireplace, comfy couches, and bistro tables and chairs.

A primary concern for the new middle school was energy efficiency through design and construction. The entire school is equipped with LED lights and uses occupancy sensors to turn lights on only when someone is using the space. Additionally, the school was built with a lot of large windows allowing the school to borrow daylight and save energy. Each classroom also has light controls for adjusting the amount of light needed; these can be adjusted for the natural light and when watching multimedia. The new boiler system is also energy efficient and uses monitors to allow for conserving energy.

The exterior of the building has a fresh new look, improved parking, circulation, and lighting. It also has a basketball court and playground equipment for students to use before school and during the lunch hour.

The new Gilson Middle School was completed ahead of schedule, allowing students to start the 2014-15 school year in the new *Home of the Huskies*, something everyone involved with the project should be proud of and excited about.

According to Principal Rod Morrison, "students have made several comments throughout the process that they will like the new school and are excited about starting the year in the new building. Many students have commented that they are not going to want to ever leave." ■



New logo; displayed in the gym; created and chosen by students



Front entry of the new Gilson Middle School building



The outdoor basketball court and playground equipment



Wrestling room with permanent mats and rock climbing wall



The Business Center for students



Grand entryway and lunch area displaying new artwork



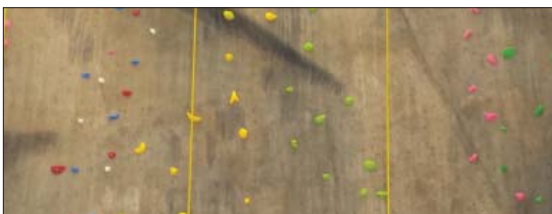
Learning Center outside of the classroom



The new lounge is sure to be a student favorite



Water bottle filling stations; as requested by students



37' rock climbing wall; largest in Alaska



Principal Rod Morrison demonstrating the lighting controls which help save energy