

Renovated Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy to Open for 2020-2021 School Year **by Maria Miller**

Woodland Hills School District students in grades 6, 7 and 8 will be greeted at the newly renovated Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy for the 2020-2021 school year. (The acronym STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math).

The building, located at 7301 Schoyer Avenue in Swissvale, was built in 1928. The full-building renovation includes: a new secure vestibule at the main lobby (complete with a security office, ballistic glass and bullet-proof walls), new classrooms and learning labs, a new music suite, a gym/auditorium hybrid facility, a STEAM center, rehabilitated and reinstalled lockers, a full health suite, a welcoming cafeteria that is overlooked by an enclosed mezzanine (and outdoor seating), a new full-service kitchen, a media center that includes studio space, gathering areas, technology features, and more.

In addition to dedicated space for special education and a resource room, there are also now rooms available for small group meetings, social workers and other needs. Classrooms are located on the second and third floors, and all have been updated.

With a, nearly, 100-year-old building, other needs were also addressed, including updates to HVAC and asbestos remediation, LED-lighting throughout and many other functional updates. Improvements were made outside as well. A parking lot was added that will ensure that there is adequate access, asphalt paving, a cafeteria patio for outdoor seating, a front plaza for outdoor educational use, and new sidewalks.

“The school is beautiful inside and out. I believe the greatest excitement will be in the area of STEAM,” says James Harris, Superintendent.

Jamie Glasser, School Board President, adds “We want students to feel like school is their second home, and a place that is where their curiosity is fed and nurtured. The newly renovated building will afford them all of those opportunities and more.”

“Students will be very excited. The building has great spaces that will allow them to explore new interests and facilities that will allow them to learn. This project is part of our ongoing efforts to make sure that our students have the best possible resources to create educational opportunities. Dickson will be a welcoming place for students and their families, and parents should feel welcome to visit the school as we host events so that they can see what resources their children will have,” adds Glasser.

Woodland Hills worked with Reynolds Construction and Core Architects on the project. Mike Arnold, Vice President of Reynolds Construction, says that Dickson is a beautiful building, a “classic piece,” and adds that the renovations work very well with it. Reynolds has worked with the district for six years, and conducted education sessions for students that were interested in architecture and construction.

“The District recognized the need for a state-of-the-art Intermediate School and evaluated options at Dickson, and at the current Intermediate Building (on Evans Street in Swissvale). Dickson was last renovated in the mid-1990s, while the current Intermediate had not been renovated at any point. The costs to renovate Dickson and position it to serve students for the next 30 or 40 years was less than to renovate the current building. In addition, Dickson’s location in the heart of Swissvale was a determining factor,” says Glasser.

She adds, “We’re committed to improving our facilities so that they are more sustainable, more efficient and up-to-date so that they can serve our children for decades to come. The effort and funds invested here will serve all of us well for many, many years to come.”

“This is a fantastic addition to the community with a beautiful building surrounded by athletic fields. It will make a great investment in the community,” says Harris.

He wants students to know that, “This building is theirs and everything in it is for them to learn and become great future leaders.”



