

Red Clay Students Come Back to New Spaces

In addition to freshly designed classrooms all around the district, many Red Clay students will come back to school next week to a brand new library or cafeteria wrapped in bright, colorful themes.

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Warm and welcoming libraries are getting finishing touches at Highlands, Lewis, North Star, Richey and Richardson Park elementary schools. The latest cafeteria “wraps” will be completed at Warner, Shortlidge and Brandywine Springs.

In the libraries, a modern, student-friendly atmosphere is present with new brightly painted walls, carpet, lighting and wraps containing inspirational messages, quotes, logos and pictures of school mascots. Doors have been widened and circulation desks moved. Today, libraries invite students to spend time, collaborate and use their district-issued Chromebook computer as a learning and research tool.

These uniquely designed spaces promote creativity and inquiry and encourage communities of young learners to share information. At North Star, part of a wall between the computer section and library was taken down so the open space could be more flexible and user-friendly. At the Richardson Park library, the message written on the wall tells students, “This is your place to wander and wonder, place to seek and explore, a place to dream”.

Gone are the days where students were told to leave their voices at the door. Today the redesigned libraries have new boldly colored flexible furniture which can be moved and rearranged as needed. Conversation areas are available for students to collaborate or work together on their laptops. Future ready librarians have been specially trained to implement innovative learning opportunities for students.

Thanks in large part to major capital funding from the 2012 referendum, Red Clay’s elementary school libraries have improved their aesthetic and functional features. “We are very excited for these library renovations,” said Marcin Michalski, Red Clay Manager of Facilities and Maintenance. “As the learning environment changes, it was important to accommodate these needs in the available spaces. Inviting, inspirational and flexible was the mission and goal which was flawlessly achieved. A special thanks to those who collaborated on the design of these spaces.”

To enhance the atmosphere of Red Clay cafeterias, Nutrition Services has “wrapped” the walls in bright, colorful designs that highlight historical, nutritional or educational themes.

At Warner Elementary, the theme is “Farm to Table,” with bright red barn doors, animals and tractors. Brandywine Springs School has a Funland/Arcade theme and Shortlidge Academy has a Wilmington theme, with six scenes from the city, including the Brandywine River and Zoo, Rodney Square and the Riverfront.

Committed to providing its students with environments conducive to learning, the new wraps may also nudge students toward healthy food choices, said Jessica Terranova, manager of Nutrition Services. “Studies show that the environment in which meals are served and eaten does have a direct impact on how people perceive food, and will make the healthy food we serve every day more appealing to students,” she said. “Developing healthy eating habits is not just about the food we choose, but the overall experience of eating and really enjoying our

meal experience. We hope the environments we are creating in the cafeterias help create a healthier and more appreciated eating experience for the students”