

New kids on the block

De Zavala Fifth Grade Center begins district's move to incorporate more science, technology in schools

As students entered the new Lorenzo De Zavala Fifth Grade Center, they were wide-eyed with amazement with the size of the 89,935 square foot building and the restaurant-style cafeteria. And yes, they were excited about returning back to the books, too.

"This school is so big," said student Jesus Espinoza. "When I walked in, I could not believe the size of it."

The fifth grade center, which is the first of its kind in Texas, features five pods equipped with computer labs and science labs.

After a morning full of easing back into classwork, students head for lunch. Some said the new lunchroom is "just like McDonalds."

"The talk of the first day among the students centered mostly around the cafeteria," De Zavala Principal Lolene Smith said. "Many of the students told me that all the cafeteria was lacking was the Golden Arches."

More than 800 students from the Gardens, Kruse, Morales, Pomeroy, Richey, South Shaver and Sparks elementary school atten-



More than 800 students began this school year at the DeZavala Fifth Grade Center. The campus, which was built on the site of the old Jackson Intermediate school, is the first of its kind in Texas. The school features five pods equipped with computer and science labs.

dance areas are enrolled at the school. The campus was built to alleviate overcrowding at these schools and was approved by voters as part of a \$199.05 million bond issue in Feb. 2000.

The traditional fifth grade curriculum of math, reading and writing are stressed at the school, and a strong emphasis is placed on science, computer skills and fine arts to help

make the transition to the intermediate level easier for students.

"I like how all of the different classes have their own pod," said Lisette Gonzalez, who attended Pomeroy Elementary as a fourth grader. "The computers in the pods make doing work fun."

Student Stacy Fernandez said she is looking forward to her science classes at the school this year.

"I can't wait to see all of the things we are going to learn in science this year," she said. "It looks like we are going to get to study a lot of cool stuff. I think it's neat that we have special science labs in our pods."

Smith said specialized science instruction is just one of the unique things about the fifth grade center.

"The students will receive constant instruction in math and language arts,

but we wanted to give them a jump start on courses that they will see in intermediate school, such as science and computers," she said. "We want to give students every advantage they need to succeed. A strong knowledge of science will help students with the new accountability requirements, not just in intermediate school, but in high school as well." ★



De Zavala makes its home on the site of the old Jackson Intermediate, which was the main feeder school to Pasadena High School for 62 years.

Fond memories of old Jackson Intermediate linger during De Zavala's grand opening

There's quite a bit of history deeply rooted among the landscape of 100 East Jackson Street.

The Lorenzo De Zavala Fifth Grade Center opened its doors this fall, but some people's thoughts have drifted back to fond memories of the historic Jackson Intermediate campus that once stood on the grounds of where the new school now stands.

"There was a lot of attachment to the old campus and a lot of history there," said DeeAnn Waitena, principal of Jackson Intermediate. Waitena began her teaching career in the old building in 1991. After 62 years, and much wear and tear on the building, a new Jackson campus opened at 1020 East Thomas in 1999.

With many sections of the building
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