

\$5.4 MILLION FACE-LIFT: PORTER RENOVATED



School and construction officials gather outside the renovated Porter Early Childhood Development Center during a tour last month.

Photos by MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World

School's glory restored



A worker walks through the gym at the renovated Porter Early Childhood Development Center recently.

New early childhood center to open

BY ANDREA EGER
World Staff Writer

A new chapter is about to begin for one of the city's most picturesque, historic schools.

Pleasant Porter Elementary School, 1740 W. 41st St., is set to reopen Monday as Tulsa Public Schools' newest early childhood development center after a \$5.4 million renovation.

Surrounded by a grove of huge, old trees that match those in the connected Reed Park, the school opened in 1929 and closed in 1980.

It has housed various programs since then, including GED classes, Head Start and Indian Education.

"This is the flagship for our bond projects," said Chris Bays, project superintendent for Manhattan Construction, which has been responsible for the remodeling.

Voter-approved bond funds from a 2010 issue paid for the removal and replacement of the old roof, many new windows, a small expansion to accommodate a new commercial kitchen and hallway

PORTER

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providing access to it, and the installation of an elevator.

All mechanical systems, including electrical, plumbing and heating and air, were replaced, along with most interior surfaces.

The new finish on the school's gymnasium floor gleams in the sunlight through all new energy-efficient windows.

"This looks 10 times better than it did," said Bob LaBass, executive director of bond projects for Tulsa Public Schools, during a recent tour.

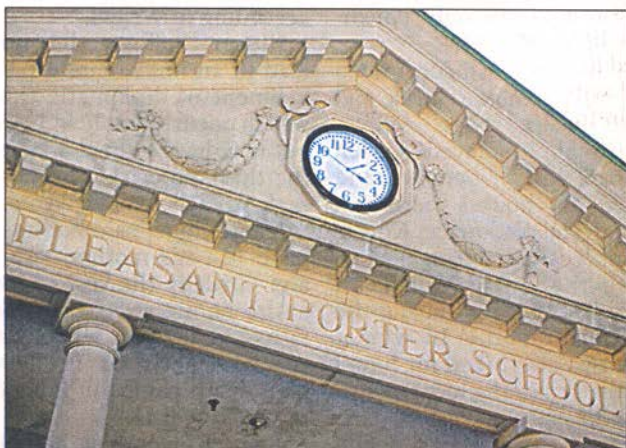
Officials believe the old gym windows were original, boasting inefficient single-pane glass and decades of rust on the frames to prove it.

The remodeling of the building's nine classrooms was tailored to the specific needs of 4- and 5-year-olds because Porter will house only prekindergarten and kindergarten classes.

Every room has its own bathroom, with an extra low toilet to eliminate whole class interruptions for bathroom breaks.

Each room has its own storage closet for teachers' instructional materials and built-in work tables along one wall for both teachers and students to free up as much floor space for developmentally appropriate activities and play.

Outside, the sidewalks,



A refurbished clock adorns the entrance at the renovated Porter Early Childhood Development Center. The timepiece was inoperable for years. MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World

parking lots and playground equipment are all new.

Principal Howard Wyble points out the restored clock that looks out proudly from atop the main entrance's stone columns.

Manhattan consulted a clock expert and had the original clock's porcelain face meticulously repainted.

Three classes from crowded west Tulsa schools will move in Monday, and the school will open at full capacity for the fall 2012 semester.

Wyble said he won't wait that long to schedule an open house.

"This school is the source of great pride and nostalgia for many in this community who attended here or whose children attended here," he said.

"We want the com-

munity to come back and see what we've done. I think they will all be really pleased. We took great care to maintain as much historical integrity as possible."

That work is evident in Porter's central hallway, which now has one original wall of bricks carefully preserved and exposed, and archways that were designed to mimic the unique archway in the foyer.

Because Porter will relieve some crowding at Park, Remington and Robertson elementary schools, LaBass said the remodel included a "bridge" for future expansion on the building's east end, where vacant land was left between the building and the parking lot.

Andrea Eger 918-581-8470
andrea.eger@tulsaworld.com