



Horace Mann

Horace Mann School

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TILLINGHAST HALL

**Celebrating
The Record's
First 100 Years**

**Tillinghast Reopens:
A New Era Begins**



A new look welcomed Lower Division students to school in September as the final phase of a four-part renovation was completed. But the construction work done over the summer was more than cosmetic.

The building of a new first grade suite creates a space to best serve the needs of the Division's youngest students. A state-of-the-art technology center expands technological resources and training for all students, and new art studios and a publishing center room, gallery and display area give art classrooms the physical focus to match art education's place in the curriculum.

"Last summer we did the renovation of the library. This past summer we built an arts center, a technology center and renovated the first grade classrooms," said Lower Division Head Dr. Steven Tobolsky.

Lower Division Gets a New Look

First Grade Suite,

Art Studios and

Technology

Center Are

Created

"The arts center sits on a floor directly above the library; the technology center is directly below. Now, with the art studios, technology center and library all in the central, original Barnard school building that was built in 1912, we truly have a physical design which brings all the grade levels into the central core of the campus from the perimeter where their classes are held," Tobolsky pointed out. "The new plan is effective because it finds a home for the first grade and because it finds a permanent home for arts and technology. Ever since the sixth grade vacated the Lower Division campus when the Middle Division was founded in 1999 arts and technology were held in temporary quarters."

"We haven't strayed from the philosophy of the 'big room' – that teacher collaboration is critical, and that big and small settings for teaching complement the differing developmental stages of young children," said Head of School Dr. Eileen Mullady. "We've modernized the concept, though, so the space works better for both teachers and students."



Dr. Steven Tobolsky reviews construction plans with architect Linda Yowell.

The technology center boasts the newest generation of iMac flat screen computers. It has two adjacent classrooms that can accommodate 24 or more people at a time, and a projection screen. A tech office behind a glass wall serves as a space where the teachers and technology advisors can work, while observing students at the same time. The room also includes conference space to enable teachers to work with technology advisors in planning technology-based study projects.

The art center features three light-splashed rooms for painting, drawing and publishing projects, with plenty of room for storage. An annex houses kilns for sculpture and ceramics. The wide hallway between the classrooms is covered with a "self-healing" surface for hanging artwork, without damaging the walls. A glass display case built into the



First grade teacher, Sarah McGinn enjoys her new classroom's rocking chair as she takes a break from setting up for school.



Dr. Eileen Mullady surveys the classrooms with Dr. Tobolsky.

wall completes this perpetual gallery. "The classrooms open to each other. This gives us the best possible collaboration among the art teachers," explained Tobolsky.

Perhaps it's the first-grade area that boasts the greatest change. With the cozy appointments of rocking chairs and window seats, mini-kitchens with sinks and microwaves, and drenched, as the rooms are, in natural light, the space is a comfortable home away from home for Horace Mann's first grade. Glass sliding doors with an opaqued pattern for privacy and concentration separate smaller auxiliary classrooms from the large main classroom. The classrooms surround a center gathering area that is also sky-lighted and comfortably carpeted. Teachers have a work and conference area for meeting with parents or getting work done in a quiet setting.

"The first grade was the only grade in the School where all four classrooms in a grade were not together in the same physical area. That was problematic in two ways. The classroom configurations were completely different causing potential confusion for families coming to the Riverdale campus for the first time. It was also problematic in that it handicapped collaboration among the first-grade teachers. That's why the first grade was a priority," said Dr. Tobolsky.

"We consulted with a group of teachers Steve organized for us in coming up with our master plan. They represented the needs of everyone in the school, from the students, to the teachers, to the administration," said architect Linda Yowell.

A veteran of school architecture Yowell said she and her colleague, architect James Wagman, focused on the particular needs of the faculty, and the particular way Horace Mann teaches in formulating their design. "For example, students here, especially in the younger grades, have a lot of access to teaching support and resources. We designed auxiliary classrooms for that. It was important to the teachers to have a reading circle. We designed classrooms with window seats that curve, and each classroom has a rocking chair for reading time." Each room also features storage space for art projects and materials, and a library area.

The lighting is a unique feature of each classroom. "We believe that natural light creates the best atmosphere for learning. By bringing daylight into the corridor we also bring the interior outside," said Yowell. "The lighting is indirect, for classroom learning, as well as direct, for work at the computer."

The nurse's office is also located on the first grade floor level, and has been moved to the end of the first grade hallway. "This gives it proximity to the youngest students, and makes it central to the building as a whole." ★