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Pleasant Hill Academy reopens in new building

By Jennifer Mrozowski
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COLLEGE HILL - Students at the new Pleasant Hill Academy saw the difference that 40 years of technical advancements can make when they started school in their new building Monday.

The 662 students left behind their former school, which lacked air conditioning and relied on several trailer classrooms for instruction, in favor of a new 84,000-square-foot school built with 21st-century innovations next door.

Their older Pleasant Hill school will temporarily house students from Mount Airy School while Mount Airy is being built, then the school will be demolished. The final cost of the new school is expected to be \$13.2 million, which includes the amount needed to demolish the old building.

Pleasant Hill Academy is the fourth new school to open this year as part of Cincinnati Public Schools' \$1 billion construction project. Rockdale Academy in Avondale opened last school year.

But Pleasant Hill is the first to make the changeover in a weekend. Friday was like any other day in their 1966 building.

Ceiling fans whirred overhead to cool students from the hot sun.

Teachers fanned themselves and tried to project their voices over the noise of humming lawnmowers that wafted in from half-open windows.

In a musty 576-square-foot storage closet that was turned into a music room, students squeezed their chairs together and watched a video in the dark.

But next door, some students got their first glimpse of the new building during a tour with their Principal John Copenhaver.

Standing in front of the stage that faces the cafeteria on one side and the gymnasium on the other side, he addressed the students.

"This is your building," he told a group of fifth-graders. "Cincinnati Public Schools built this just for you. That should make you feel special. ... Starting Monday, this will be a brand new Pleasant Hill."

As he spoke, the students stood agape, looking at the new projector screen tucked away high above the stage and at the microphones hanging from the ceiling that would record future productions.

"It's just like a movie theater," said Miniko Hicks, 12.

The students also saw the new 1,397-square-foot music room, complete with carpeting, sound-resistant walls and lockers filled with instruments.

They saw television monitors in every classroom and a media center with an adjacent computer lab.



ZOOM Photos by Meggan Booker/The Enquirer
Pleasant Hill Elementary School kindergartners find their new seats before class starts in their new building: Angel Gazaway (from left), Jasmine Brooks and Enricque Smith.

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ZOOM
Pleasant Hill fifth-graders load their supplies in the new building: Sircaleb Abernathy (from left), Chareese Matthews, Tyler Johnson and Shawn Ransom.

As they walked around, light streamed in through the windows, unlike in their old building, which has frosted glass or blue fiberglass panes where windows had been replaced.

"I think it's perfect," 11-year-old Kaprice Paige said after walking through the new gymnasium, which has an electronic scoreboard. "This is way bigger than that other gym." The former school had a portable scoreboard.

"And it smells fresh," said Briana Lee, 10.

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