

New middle school design impresses officials in sneak peek

BY CONNIE HEIN • FOR THE BEACON • FEBRUARY 5, 2009

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Windsor School District officials, town officials from Windsor and Severance and members of the media got sneak peek Tuesday at what the new Severance Middle School is going to look like.

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The 105,000-square-foot school has been under construction for several months and will open for classes this fall. It is designed to house 600 students. It can be expanded with additional classroom pods to eventually accommodate 900 students.

Rebecca Spears, of Fort Collins-based RB and B Architects, Joe Revielle, site superintendant from Roche Constructors, and Dick Huwa, of RLH Engineering, directed officials on a tour of the facility.

Even though the building is still under construction, Spears was able to point out features incorporated in the design that will make the middle school as environmentally efficient as possible.

She pointed out that the building uses as much natural light as possible in both classrooms and common areas. That will have a significant effect on the school's electric bill.

Another energy saving feature is the yellow foam insulation being used. It is made from soybeans and is sprayed on the outside of the school after the sheathing is done and before bricks are laid.

"This is a much, more efficient way to insulate than the typical method of adding bats of insulation between the studs inside the walls," Spears said. "A thermal picture shows how much heat is lost with each stud. The foam keeps that heat in."

Besides the environmentally friendly features, Spears said the building design also includes things that make it unique to this area of the country.

She said that there are subtle, but beautiful, relief patterns in some of the cement columns. She also pointed out the 'crop circles' on the outside gymnasium wall that give tribute to the agricultural importance of the area.



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Jay Tapia, in red, the new middle school principal, guides a handful of school district and Severance officials through the construction on the new school. (Carol Hirata / Windsor Beacon)

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"The circles are made to represent crop circles in the eastern part of the state where they grow mostly wheat," Spears said. "The pillar patterns represent the barley, alfalfa, and corn that are crops often grown in this area."

The administration offices and the sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms are on the first floor. The eighth-grade classrooms are located on the second floor with loft areas for visual observation of students throughout the school.

Spears explained that the large rotunda near the front doors will have lots of natural light and will be the perfect gathering place for people coming in or out of performances in the auditorium and gymnasium areas.

The gymnasium and weight room are on the southwest side of the building with outside access to the athletic fields and running track.

Severance Middle School Principal Jay Tapia, who has followed the construction closely, admitted that the building is better than he envisioned it would be.

"It is more impressive than I ever imagined," Tapia said. "I can't wait to get all the excited middle school kids in to this beautiful building."