

Dallas ISD Students Move Into a New Library



Photo credit Alan Scaia

Students at Dallas ISD's Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy got their first look at a renovated library Friday. The nonprofit, Dwell with Dignity, surveyed students to learn their needs.

Dwell with Dignity says it received more than 400 replies with a focus on "the need for unique spaces that would inspire learning, growth and connection." The organization says it incorporated students' suggestions for spaces and colors into its final design.

"This is a welcoming environment for learning and a foundation for flourishing that will extend far beyond these walls," one student said.

"With this new library, we've been able to create a new place, a meeting place in which our brothers can engage in very important conversations, change their subjectivity through reading and engagement and truly put together a brotherhood that will always be close to each and every one of us," says Student Body President Leroy Tamfu.

Librarian Lawrence Stokes says the project includes a renovated library with space for kids to read and study but also additional space for students to work together and collaborate on projects, building social skills they will need when they enter the workforce.

"This is just awesome," he says. "It shows them the path, and I can feel the future coming."

The library also includes a podcast studio. Stokes says that can introduce kids to different types of evolving technology while also helping them tell their own stories and build connections with their neighborhoods.

"We've got a class that's going to have a podcast so they can start broadcasting and getting out to the community in other ways," he says.

Dwell With Dignity says the library will serve as a community hub where students can get uniforms, school supplies, toiletries and food provided by the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas.

College and career counselors will have space to meet with students about their plans after high school.

An art center, sponsored by the State Fair of Texas, will include historic pictures of Oak Cliff, student artwork and a picture of Big Tex provided by a local artist.

"Gems and Minerals Corner" will provide students interested in science and geology a chance to see items donated by Texas Counter Fitters.

"Our mission is to transform lives through design, and we're so grateful for the completion of this and for everyone to see this great reveal," says Dwell With Dignity Executive Director Teresa Charnock.

Charnock says Dwell With Dignity has now completed seven projects for Dallas ISD and 30 community spaces since its launch in 2009. In 2024, the organization says it helped 3,000 people through community and home projects. More information is available at <https://www.dwellwithdignity.org/> .

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