

EDUCATION GUIDE

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Private schools unveil new facilities this fall**Lance Traweek**
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Some students will be greeted by new facilities and upgrades to existing ones when they return to school this fall.

One private school in particular will have a brand new school for its students.

The Good Shepherd School, a private Catholic co-ed school (pre-K through 7th grade), was founded in 2001 with just 30 students through the vision and commitment of Father Harry Tompson, S.J., who died four months before the school opened.

The Good Shepherd School, currently located on Baronne Street in the Central Business District, serves students that are in the most need, according to the school's mission.

Parents pay a \$125 activity fee and the approximate \$14,000 cost to educate each student is provided through fundraising programs and the generosity of benefactors.

The school will move in August from downtown New Orleans to its new facility on Agriculture Street in Gentilly.

Thomas Moran Jr., president of The Good Shepherd School, said they are bringing their mission to help young people break the cycle of poverty through education to the historic A.P. Tureaud neighborhood.

"Our kids will have access to the latest technology, a dedicated art room and a large space to play at our new location and we are hoping to serve as a catalyst for development in the community," Moran said.

The new school was designed by Blich Knevel Architects and constructed by Ryan Gootee General Contractors. The facility, which is about 39,000 square feet, will contain 20 classrooms with an anticipated 2018-2019 enrollment of 275 students and has the capacity to grow to 350. The project cost more than \$10 million.

Highlights of the new building will include a two-story "Founder's Atrium," a library resource center and full cafeteria. According to Blich Knevel, bright, vibrant colors and furnishings are used throughout the building with artwork produced by current students and a photographic history of the Baronne campus and Tompson's legacy.



A group of seventh graders at Isidore Newman School collaborate on an original play in drama class. Photos courtesy Mike Palumbo



Newman eighth graders record data during an experiment in physical science class.

"This project has been especially exciting to be part of because of the great work started by Fr. Tompson and continued today by the school's leadership team and board," said Ron Blich, architect and president of Blich Knevel. "The bright colors and spaces are designed to stimulate the creativity of the students – most of whom move on to great local high schools and colleges across the U.S. because of the foundations provided by this school."

Other private schools have undergone facility changes and upgrades as well, as innovation and technology centers have been serving as educational hubs. Blich Knevel has designed three so far in elementary and secondary schools in the past few years in the New Orleans area: Martin's Episcopal School, St. Mary's Dominican High School and Academy of the Sacred Heart. All three cost over \$1 million.

Isidore Newman School's major project is a 30,000-square-foot Science and Technology Center at its Uptown campus. Eric Eagan, director of communications at Newman, said the finishing touches were being made on the building in late July and would be open to students when they return in mid-August.

The \$15 million project, overseen by Woodward Design + Build, is being funded through philanthropic efforts. Head of School Dale Smith called the center "transformational" for Newman. He said science instruction is enriched by the physical environment and equipment.

In other private school news, the Louisiana Scholarship Program, referred to as the voucher program, and the Tuition Donation Rebate program are showing signs of slowing down. The two programs were created by the Legislature in 2012.

Last school year, the programs added approximately 300 students each, increasing participation to more than 9,200 children. About 47 percent of families in Louisiana qualify for the programs.

But after quick growth in its first couple of years, the voucher program has stayed at around 7,000 children each year for the past three years.