

# *Around* ACWORTH

AN AROUNDABOUT LOCAL MEDIA PUBLICATION

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## Building for the Future

MOUNT PARAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



**Black History Month  
A Local Tribute to Heroes**

*Celebrate the  
Season of Love*

YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR MAGAZINE.

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February 2021

## Mount Paran Christian School

### On the Cover

First-graders Jack Cline and Ella Johnson are accompanied by Head of High School and Assistant Head of School Tawanna Rusk, as she shows them the plans for their future place of learning.

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Cover photo by Jordan Mason



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# Breaking Ground on Innovative Space for Future Learners

Mount Paran Christian School (MPCS) is set to break ground this month on its new high school expansion. The Murray Innovation Center has been designed thoughtfully, to be a purposeful educational facility, housing radical spaces to learn, test, collaborate, grow and “think outside the box.” With technology and STEAM-related industries booming, students need to be equipped to tackle real-world problems. Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication will be nurtured within the new center and are the required skill sets to ensure future success for this generation upon graduation.

Since MPCS moved to its current campus 16 years ago, the high school has experienced tremendous growth in enrollment. There were 138 high school students in 2003, compared with 436 students in 2020 — all while housed primarily in Dozier Hall, which was built to accommodate 250 students. According to school officials, the space demands created by increased enrollment and a shifting curricular emphasis urgently required a state-of-the-art addition, providing needed facilities for bright, committed and God-honoring students.

Through the architectural design process, MPCS thoughtfully has evaluated the current buildings on campus, as well as the needs for future learners, resulting in a final construction plan that includes innovations for enhanced programming and instruction. The plan provides for a two-story addition to the current Dozier Hall high school building, adding 23,551 square feet of innovative space that almost will double the size of the current facility. The plan also includes renovations to an existing 5,669 square feet in Dozier Hall and an existing 2,547 square feet in the Murray Arts Center. With the arts center’s lower-level renovation, the visual arts classes will join the rest of the award-winning MPCS arts department under one roof.

In a student-led design process, the final architectural plans for the Murray Innovation Center kept MPCS’s four core values in mind.

## 1. Christ-Centered

The building’s site plan captures the beauty of God’s creation by maximizing the picturesque vistas across campus, from views of neighboring Kennesaw



*An exterior rendering of the Murray Innovation Center.*



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Mountain to outdoor classroom locations along the waterfront of the six-acre Lake McDonald. The plan also includes spaces for quiet reflection, prayer and discipleship.

## 2. Learning Focused

The new innovation center offers improved layouts for student experiences in every discipline, with features to enrich education, including a dedicated space for a robotics field for the state-championship-winning Eagle Robotics teams, additional classroom spaces, new science labs, a digital lab, a makerspace and a fabrication lab. The center also offers collaborative teacher offices, four additional academic classrooms that will be available for use by all content areas and a collegiate-style, technology-rich classroom available for all teachers. Notably, the commons area of the new building will include a permanent home for the Roost Cafe, a coffee shop that is operated entirely by the high school entrepreneurship class. The Roost will be open daily and managed by students, providing real-world, hands-on learning experience in product development, vendor-relationships, inventory, e-commerce, production, customer service and sales.

## 3. Community Oriented

The school's 68-acre campus has a collegiate feel, which makes sense for the college-preparatory school that teaches students in grades preschool age 3 through high school. The collegiate feel will continue with the new center's commons area, coffee shop and outdoor quad. These new areas were designed with a clear goal of providing spaces for community gatherings

and school-wide events. The building also will include meeting spaces with modern, mobile furniture for high school clubs, as well as informal areas for the organic connections opportunities that arise at a school such as MPCS, which is well-known for its sense of community, according to school families.

## 4. Pursuers of Excellence

Every stakeholder was consulted during the years-long design process, from students and parents to board members, faculty and staff, and industry experts. No stone was left unturned in imagining the possibilities of these truly ingenious spaces for learning, said MPCS administration. The result is a final design plan that provides robust labs and inventive spaces to inspire high school students to continue in their pursuit of excellence in all areas.

According to MPCS officials, the final design of the new innovation center is a culmination of answered prayers, unique creativity and collective ideas birthed from visionary thought. Head of High School Tawanna Rusk said, "This new learning and collaborative space will afford our students the opportunity to discover new passions, solve problems for our community, and impact the world as Christian leaders. The abundance of blessings that will flow from this space is limitless, as is our children's potential."

The school looks forward to welcoming students to the new space in the spring semester of 2022. Through the Murray Innovation Center, MPCS will be able to expand its ability to create meaningful learning experiences, supporting their core values while defining what true academic excellence embodies in the future.

*A rendering of the commons area inside the Murray Innovation Center.*

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