

New school excites teachers, students

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Excitement was reflected on the faces of students and teachers as the doors opened Tuesday morning on Sand Springs newest elementary school.

Northwoods Fine Arts Academy, the \$14 million facility at 1691 E. Old North Road, has been touted for its innovative design and construction.

School officials said the first day of school was generally smooth.

“As the kids ran out the doors this afternoon, they were saying, ‘we love our new school,’” NFAA Principal Jenny Chambers said.

Susan Goodman, a reading specialist, was on staff when Angus Valley Elementary opened.

“This is my second new school to open,” she said.

“Everyone is very excited, but it is a little bitter-sweet,” she said. “Central was our home for some long. But this will seem like home after awhile.”

Goodman described the new school as “inviting. When the kids toured the building before the move, their eyes were so excited.”

Jack Plumlee, the district’s transportation and maintenance director, said bus drivers held a trial run of the new routes before the start of school, but there were “some hitches as far as timing and route questions from parents.”

Plumlee said the amount of traffic from parents picking up their children was greater than expected.

“If parents would just put their kids on the bus, it would relieve a lot of frustration,” Chambers said.

The new facility will replace Central Fine Arts Academy downtown at 114 W. 4th St. The multi-level CFAA school was built in the early 1950s and steep stairways were a challenge especially for the younger students, school officials said.

Like CFAA, Northwoods will handle all kindergarten through second grade students north of the river.

Third grade through fifth grade students north of the river will continue to attend Garfield Elementary.

Since Northwoods will continue the fine arts focus of Central, the “Fine Arts Academy” designation was incorporated into the name, district officials say.

The new school is built on a 40-acre site at the northwest corner of 81st W. Avenue and Old North Road. Twenty-five acres were purchased from the City of Sand Springs and 15 acres were donated.

The school was the flagship project for the district’s 2009 bond measure.

Flintco Construction won the contract, with a \$11,053,000 bid. The budget for the project was \$13.6 million, including land, construction, and professional fees.

The district has spend approximately \$3 million for enhanced electronic and technical systems, including 52-inch video display screens in the lobby hallway, interior decorative rock work, and enhancements in the library and the entryways into each classroom pod area.

Each classroom will have a new Smart Board (interactive electronic display screen).

“The school was definitely designed with the student in mind,” Chambers said.