

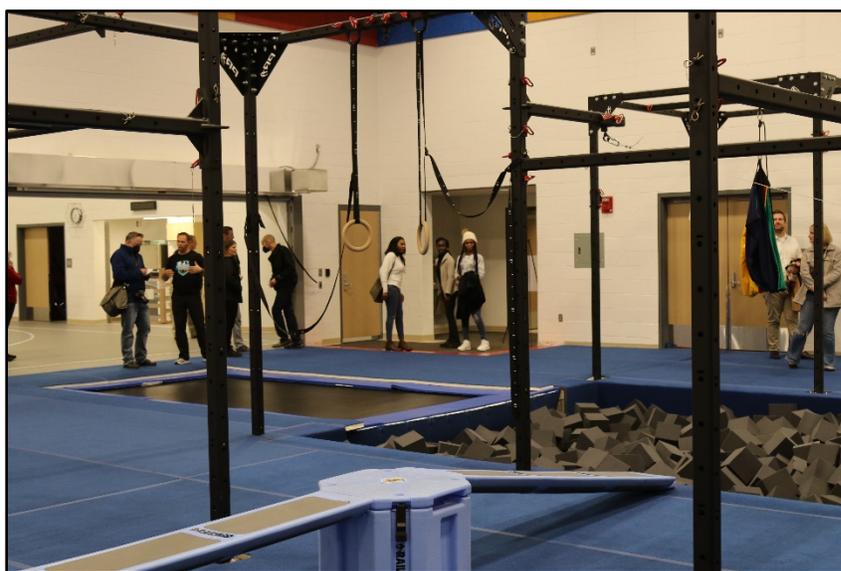
Explorer Academy

Explorer Academy Open House and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On Tuesday, November 16, Fargo Public Schools (FPS) held an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony for its newest facility and program, the Explorer Academy, which opened this school year.

Explorer Academy Principal Dr. Justin Lien, FPS Superintendent Dr. Rupak Gandhi, TNT Kids Fitness & Gymnastics Executive Director Kim Pladson, and North Dakota Center for Distance Education Assistant Director Dr. Tonya Greywind shared remarks. The Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo Chamber of Commerce was there for the ribbon cutting.

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Explorer Academy, continued



“In Fargo Public Schools, our mission has always been to educate and empower all students to succeed,” Dr. Gandhi said. “This academy is the example of the term ‘all students’ because it is a unique environment. But it is not a unique environment to call out certain students or point to students for their disabilities. It is a unique environment to show that we have the opportunity to remove the triggers, or the things that could cause behaviors, or cause a distraction from you being able to access what is your right, which is your grade-level curriculum and an opportunity to succeed.”

The FPS Explorer Academy is North Dakota’s first K-8 special education day public school with integrated project-based STEAM and gross motor program opportunities. It strives to support the whole child by embedding social-emotional learning in all facets of their educational

experience. The Explorer Academy staff strive to build relationships with every student to guide and engage them in self-regulation skills to enhance their academic and social-emotional growth.

“Here at Explorer Academy we strive to support the whole child by embedding social-emotional learning into every facet of the day,” Dr. Lien said. “Staff build relationships with every student to guide and engage them in self-regulation skills to enhance their academics. We utilize every area of this space to learn with intentionality and care.”

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Explorer Academy, continued

After the ceremony, guests were invited on a tour of the facility.

“Everything has been intentional here,” Dr. Lien said. “Every nook, every cranny, every little curve in the wall – which are unique to us – all have a story.”

The Explorer Academy environment was designed to meet students at their level of need rather than having them fit into traditional settings. Through the design of secured learning pod environments to sensory rooms, a SmartLab, small group rooms, classroom respite spaces, calming areas, soft gradient lighting, curved walls, soft paint palettes, visual announcements, state-of-the-art sensory gym, the Explorer Academy building offers a learning environment at a unique, individualized level for its learners.

“This school has been a labor of love,” Dr. Lien said. “Much of that has been shared by so many different stakeholders either here in the room tonight or beyond. It took an entire village and sometimes neighboring villages to bring this all together to make this possible.”

