

Star-Telegram

Hill School students have a new place to enjoy learning

By Katherine Cromer Brock

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* The new Grapevine school will add a sixth-grade class next year.

GRAPEVINE — Last year, Mandy Rhodes was worried about her third-grade son, Mitchell.

He has attention deficit disorder and a learning disability in math. He was receiving special services from the Lewisville school district, but he still needed to take medication for an anxiety disorder.

"They were teaching at a pace he couldn't keep up with," Rhodes said. "Even though they were helping, it wasn't enough. His self-esteem was very low."

Now when she talks about the progress Mitchell has made at the new Hill School of Grapevine, she fights back tears.

"He's excited about school," she said. "He doesn't feel like he's stupid anymore. He's shining here."

Hill School has served special-needs children in Fort Worth for more than 30 years.

The curriculum is designed for students with average or above-average cognitive abilities who also have learning disabilities, attention disorders, dyslexia or dysgraphia, a writing disorder. The school is not for students with significant emotional or behavior problems, said Principal Kathleen Edwards.

"My goal is for Hill School to be a place that children can't wait to get to," she said. "Every child comes to us with a story, and it's not a good one."

Hill School tried for several years to find a suitable place to serve Northeast Tarrant County.

Officials decided to renovate an existing building on Dooley Street in Grapevine after considering two other locations in Grapevine and Southlake.

The school spent last semester in First United Methodist Church of Grapevine and moved into its permanent location Sunday. The school has spent \$250,000 to finish, furnish and equip the building's 10 classrooms. There is also an art room, computer lab, music room and multipurpose room that doubles as a cafeteria.

"Every child is good at something," said second- and third-grade teacher Helen Owen, describing the school's philosophy. Owen has been teaching for 14 years. "Every child has strengths."

Rhodes said the school's goal of building a child's strengths has helped Mitchell.

"He is a transformed child," Rhodes said. "He's confident and excited to do his best."

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Online: www.hillschool.org

Hill School of Grapevine

Location: 204 N. Dooley St.

Size: 14,000 square feet

Enrollment: 38 children in grades one through five

Future: Adding sixth grade next year, and expanding to 65 students. The building can hold 110.

Tuition: \$14,000 a year

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