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Topeka Collegiate was founded in 1982 to offer high-quality education in small classrooms to children from preschool to eighth grade.

TOPEKA COLLEGIATE

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

At a school that values resourcefulness, it makes sense that the same students who attended middle school classrooms in trailers went on to join a group that produced 25% of the state's National Merit finalists. That extraordinary drive to learn is what makes Topeka Collegiate students special.

Topeka Collegiate is an accredited independent school for children in preschool through eighth grade that stands firmly on its tagline "Limitless. Learning. Potential." But in the years leading up the largest expansion in the school's 42-year history, certain limitations were becoming more apparent.

The school's four trailers, creatively dubbed "learning cottages," were used as middle school classrooms for more than 25 years. Not only that, but the school's

roof and HVAC system were long overdue for an update.

"We decided it was time to bring the school up to par and provide a campus where everyone can learn, be safe and grow," said Dr. Lyn Rantz, head of Topeka Collegiate.

The \$7.3 million construction project concluded last April, bringing the campus a new building with music and art classes, collaborative spaces and four middle school classrooms. The original building underwent extensive renovation, including new windows, new roofing, a new HVAC system, a storm shelter, a campus-wide security system and a modern, reimagined entryway.

"The way that you encounter the school is transformed," said Bridget Elmer, vice president of the board of trustees, who is also a Topeka Collegiate

graduate and the mother of two current students. "We had a lot of pride in our resourcefulness. But there is something really inspiring about increasing that sense of pride."

One of the highlights of the renovation is the Center for Curiosity, Awe and Wonder, a central space that students and staff can use for group work, performances and presentations. The space is outfitted with flexible seating, marker boards, reading nooks, a loaning library, a gathering table and several booths for small conversations.

"It's so multivariant in its potential uses," Bridget said, describing what she observed while visiting the space to attend a student performance with a small choir. "That community feeling is so much more present."

The state-of-the-art space has already welcomed prestigious speakers, including Nancy Perry, former president and CEO of the United Way of Topeka, and a children's book author who talked about her writing and creative processes.

When they're not hosting speakers and performances, the space will serve as a collaborative work hub that will be central to Topeka Collegiate's curriculum.

Topeka Collegiate's \$7.3 million construction project funded new collaborative spaces, middle school classrooms and spaces for music and art.



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A construction worker gives a high five to a student during the school's recent renovations.

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"We believe that learning is a social construct," Lyn said. "One of our values is that these students will grow up to be leaders. We believe that to become a strong leader, you have to be able to work with all types of people."

AN EASIER SELL

Topeka Collegiate's administrative body hopes the new facilities will boost enrollment.

It has served more than 3,000 students since it opened in 1982. Small class sizes remain sacred, the school said, but their middle school roster still has room to grow.

Prior to the renovation, it had been challenging to get families to see past the aging facilities.

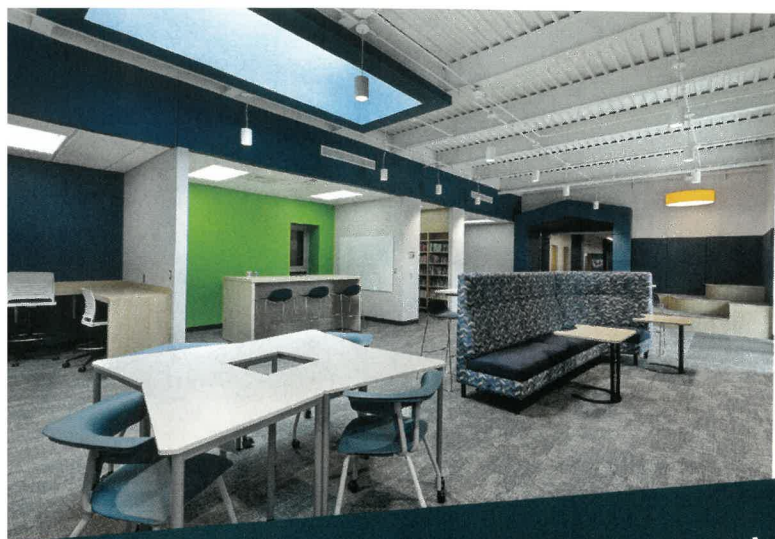
"It was hard for people to get past that front door," Bridget said. "I think

everyone realized we needed to think about that perception and how people understood our mission."

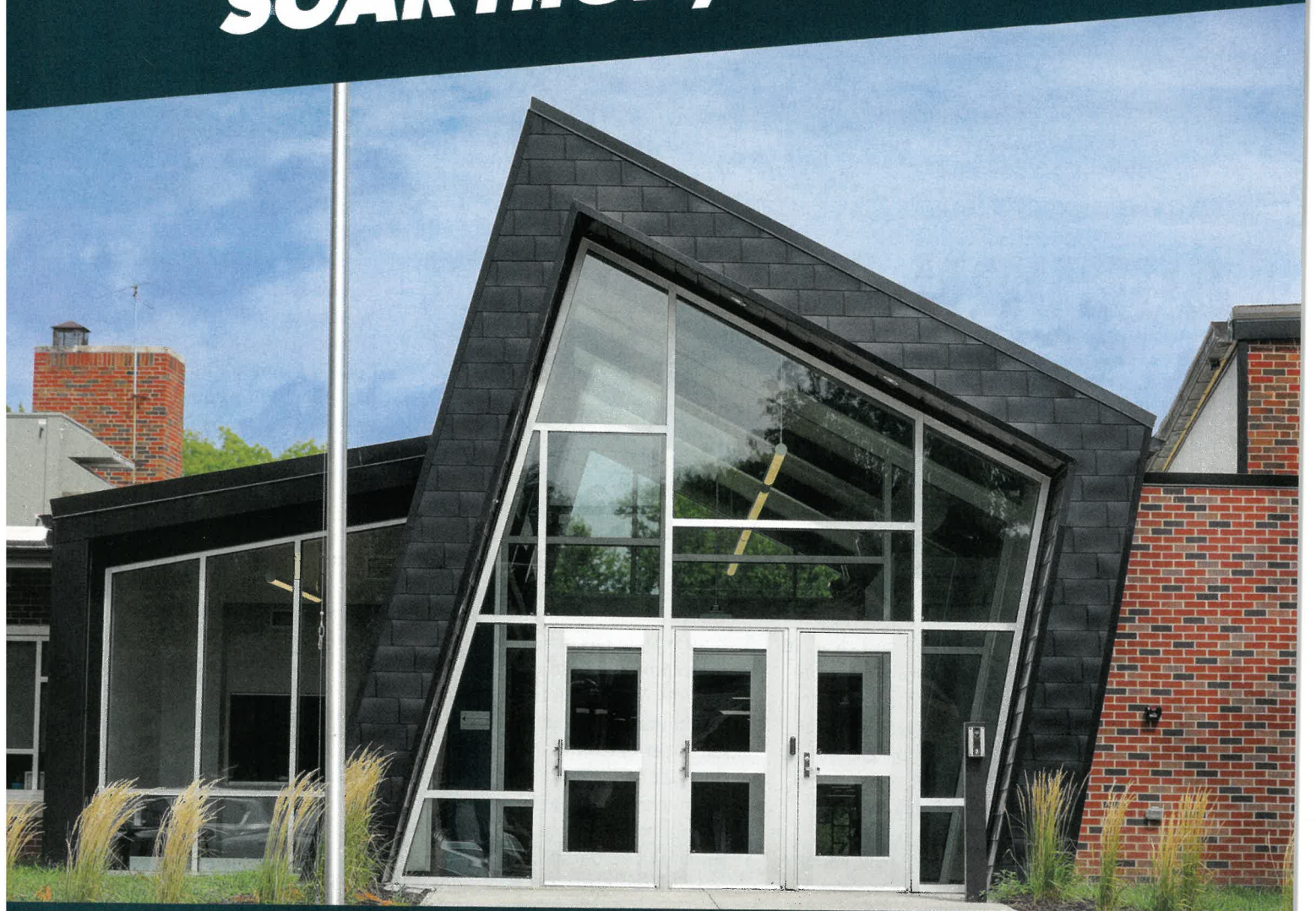
Starting from the front door, new families will see the building in a new light, helping them understand why parents like Bridget and Lyn sent their own children to the school.

"It's been a joy to watch my kids experience Topeka Collegiate," said Bridget, who credits the teachers for helping her son thrive. "They were so excited to go back at the end of the summer."

"When students are well known, well supported and encouraged to be themselves, teachers are able to best teach to them," Lyn said. "My children were able to be seen, have fun and grow up in a caring environment. They didn't get lost."



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