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Band, orchestra students pleased with high school addition

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Just more than two months ago, a 10,000-square-foot addition was begun at Norfolk High School, and already students are making use of the finished space.

Because of an influx of about 300 extra students — freshmen moved into the high school as part of the districtwide grade reconfiguration that took place at the beginning of the current school year — new and expanded classrooms had to be built.

High school principal Steve Morton said the “overriding starting point” for the construction at the school was to accommodate the freshmen. The next priority was a bigger space for the school’s fine arts classes.

“It was a good time to do it,” he said.

The \$1.8 million addition includes a new band room, new orchestra room and a new achievement center, which provides a space for students to get extra help with their studies.

The new fine arts rooms were necessary to accommodate the incoming freshmen, as the previous band room could barely hold the existing number of students in the program.



DENNIS MEYER/DAILY NEWS

NHS SENIOR Natalie Hall practices her violin in the new orchestra room at the high school. The room was designed with the help of a sound expert who suggested special acoustic tiles for maximum sound quality.

“The band room was actually built on the premise of the Johnny Carson Theatre stage. We looked at how big the band room needed to be for the kids — and our kids will perform on the Carson stage — so we know how much space we’ll need,” Morton said.

The new band room boasts high ceilings for improved acoustics as well as several areas for instrument and band uniform storage. There is also a small practice room, as well as an ensemble room that is shared with the new orchestra room.

Students in one of instrumental music teacher John Furrow’s classes were enthusiastic about their new room. Asked what they thought of it, several shouted out answers.

“Awesome!”

“Amazing!”

“It smells clean!”

“It’s very big. Open.”

The new orchestra room is not as big as the band room, but it is high-tech. Morton said the room was designed with the help of a sound expert who suggested special acoustic tiles for maximum sound quality. These tiles are placed on the ceiling as well as around the room to help keep the sound coming back to the musicians, which is the opposite of what a band wants to happen acoustically, Morton said.

The orchestra room also features several small practice rooms where the young musicians can work individually or in small groups. Like the band room, the orchestra room also has extra storage space. Both rooms also have two sets of doors to keep the sound of music from interrupting classrooms across the hall, Morton said.

Also in the addition, 156 individual lockers are set up for the new freshman students. About half of the freshmen still have to share lockers, though, because budgeting wouldn’t allow for the purchase of all of the new lockers at once, Morton said.

So what happened to the old band room in another area of the high school building?

Morton said that room was divided into two separate classrooms — Spanish I and Spanish II. The orchestra pit that had been in the middle of the room has been filled in, he said.

“The work Beckenhauer Construction and their subcontractors did on the addition and the classrooms — I can’t say enough about it. They did a phenomenal job. I think the entire addition is really neat,” Morton said.