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Christian Academy plans expansion

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Christian Heritage Academy in Northfield wants to make room for high-school-age students, so it's expanding its facilities.

The school hopes to have the Christian Heritage Academy Upper School up and running by next fall. The new 15-acre campus will include new classrooms, a cafeteria, a theater and two gymnasiums.

The school will phase in grades nine through 12, one grade per year. Construction of the school will be during the current school year.

So far, news of the new school has been a welcome surprise for longtime families at Christian Heritage, said Damon Frahler, a spokesman for the school.

"It's already a tight-knit community here at Christian Heritage," he said. "There are definitely going to be current eighth-graders who will make the transition right on up."

In July, the school hired David Roth as principal of the new school. Roth was principal at Wheaton Christian Grammar School and was headmaster at Lexington Christian Academy in Massachusetts.

"We're pretty excited about having him kind of lead this charge into new territory for us, in terms of opening an upper school," Frahler said. "It's an exciting time for us."

Roth, the new principal, said expanding the school reflects well on the existing facility.

"I feel that it's expanding on the good reputation that it has of the good Pre-K through (eighth grade), and it gives parents an option of sending their children after eighth grade to public school or to a Christian high school," Roth said.

The school, which will be college preparatory, will emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving skills and research skills, he said. It will also include a sports program for individual and team sports.

But the overall focus will remain the same, Roth said.

"It's Christ-centered," he said. "It has a Christian worldview, which in a public school setting would not be possible, so it's really an extension of the Christian home and the church -- the idea of home, church and school working together."

Christian Heritage Academy was established in 1984. The founders, five couples, were ambitious, and plans lined up with what is currently happening with the school, Roth said.



Spanish teacher Dan MacKinney speaks to students during class on Monday at Christian Heritage Academy in Northfield Aug. 25. MacKinney is a veteran North Shore teacher who spent 34 years at New Trier High School in Winnetka.

(Allison Williams/Staff Photographer)



Eighth-grader Lauren Butz listens to her Spanish teacher Dan MacKinney during class at Christian Heritage Academy in Northfield. CHA is expanding its school to other communities and adding a high school to its current location.

(Allison Williams/Staff Photographer)

"As I dig a little bit deeper, I find out that there has been an interest in a Christian high school among this constituency for years," he said.

He referred to a newsletter written by the founders that called for the school to include all grades, starting with kindergarten through sixth grade and moving up.

In addition to the new Northfield campus, Christian Heritage Academy hopes to grow outwardly.

"It's kind of a double expansion going on here," Frahler said.

Christian Heritage will open campuses in other communities during the next few years. This fall, it opened a Pre-K school in Arlington Heights, and next fall, the school will partner with a Chicago church to open an elementary school on the north side of the city.

A year later, Christian Heritage hopes to open a fourth campus in Libertyville, which will be for Pre-K children.