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Construction to begin to expand Detroit Science Center for school

By [Chad Halcom](#)

Within a month and without much fanfare, construction will begin on a \$15 million expansion to the **Detroit Science Center** to make room for the newest charter school backed by the **Thompson Educational Foundation**.

The foundation confirmed last week it has awarded the contract to build **University Preparatory Science-Math Middle School** to Detroit-based **DeMaria Building Co.**

The school has just reached its enrollment capacity of 162 students, 108 sixth-graders and 54 seventh-graders, for the first academic year this coming fall, and will operate at a temporary location until construction concludes at the science center on John R by May 2009, said Margaret Trimer-Hartley, superintendent of **University Preparatory Science-Math Schools**. "We haven't closed enrollment yet, but at this point we're continuing to take applications to develop a waiting list," Trimer-Hartley said.

The school hopes to grow to its full capacity of 162 students each in sixth, seventh and eighth grades by 2010 or so, she said.

Construction will likely begin late this month, since the **Detroit Building Department** approved a permit last week for DeMaria to build a new emergency exit and stairwell at the science center to replace an existing exit that will be covered by the new building, said Kelly Fulford, director of public relations and marketing for the science center.

Trimer-Hartley said the company hopes simply to move on to breaking up the science center parking lot in April in order to complete the full project by next spring.

The science center, currently occupying 110,000 square feet on four levels, will add nearly 80,000 square feet with the attached four-story structure to house 60,000 square feet for the school and more than 15,000 square feet for a new lobby, welcome area, cafeteria and gift shop.

DeMaria has completed two jobs on other Thompson charter schools totaling more than \$8 million. Those were for renovations and expansions to **University Preparatory Middle School** on St. Antoine and **University Preparatory Elementary School** on Holden, said Marketing Manager Amy Osebold.

The middle school will feature a full curriculum, but will integrate topics of math and science into the other areas of study as much as possible as part of the school focus, Trimer-Hartley said.

The foundation will lease the middle school space for **The Public School Academies of Detroit**, a nonprofit formed last year as the management company of the science-math schools and the applicant that obtained the charter in December from **Grand Valley State University**.

The management company is also in development on a high school near the Detroit riverfront, and is also weighing a possible elementary school, Trimer-Hartley said.

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