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Detroit Science Center Revs Up Educational Mission by Partnering With Charter School



Inspiring kids to dream about science, technology and engineering careers during their visits has always been the mission of the **Detroit Science Center**. Starting next year, it plans to give hundreds of kids the chance to experience all the center has to offer on a full-time basis.

The science center Wednesday broke ground on an 80,000 square-foot addition that will house the **University Prep Science & Math Middle School** – a public charter school that will serve

486 students – as well as a new museum lobby, café, gift shop and group welcome center.

The partnership between the Detroit Science Center and **University Prep Science & Math** provides an opportunity for students and teachers to combine classroom learning with hands-on exhibits, theater shows and museum programs on a daily basis.

According to science center officials, pairing the museum with the school is a logical extension of the overall educational objectives of the institution.

“Our goal at the Detroit Science Center is to inspire children to get excited about engineering, technology and science and to encourage them to pursue careers in those fields. It’s a natural step in the evolution of the Detroit Science Center to be affiliated with a school where we can not only inspire these children but see them apply that inspiration back in the classroom,” said Kevin F. Prihod, president and CEO of the Detroit Science Center said.

The Thompson Educational Foundation is funding the \$15 million middle school construction project and will lease the building to UPSM for \$1 per year. The terms of the agreement require the charter school system to graduate no fewer than 90 percent of its students and send no fewer than 90 percent on to college. UPSM plans to open a high school at another location in 2010.

UPSM is a public charter school affiliated with the highly successful University Prep Academy system of schools. University Prep schools are small and focused on providing rigor, relevance and strong relationships through personalized learning, small classes and community partnerships.

Construction on the new addition is starting this month with a spring 2009 opening. It will be located on the north side of the Science Center building in an area formerly utilized for parking. The architect is Gunn Levine. The general contractor is DeMaria. Both companies are based in Detroit.

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