

# THE HISTORY OF *PINE RUN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL*



Pine Run Elementary opened its doors for the first time in the fall of 1971. The architects called the facility "open space." The educators called their programming "open education." For many of the first years, the Pine Run faculty worked collaboratively with a group of British educators. Together they explored a philosophy based on children having the ability and the right to make responsible decisions concerning their own learning, including the selection of materials and activities. Subject areas were integrated and thematic units were a key element of instruction. The use of projects and manipulatives also became an integral part of the learning process. Believing that student self-confidence was essential to student success, this early program emphasized the student's role in making choices that affect his/her learning and life.

Today Pine Run continues to flourish based on many of the same ideals. In 2005 a committee of teachers, administrators and district facilities personnel met with architects to plan building renovations. When given the option of creating self-contained classrooms, the staff responded with an emphatic "No!" Instead they chose to retain open space, while integrating the wiring that would allow Pine Run to fully embrace new technologies and new opportunities for student learning. The renovations provided additional teacher storage areas and designated large group instructional areas, which allow for flexible teaching opportunities.

With an updated building, Pine Run operates under a modernized open-education philosophy. The school is defined by collaboration, creativity and cooperation. These three principles guide the thinking of the students and the staff. Behavioral expectations are based on the concepts of respect, responsibility and kindness. The behavior supports provided reflect and reinforce these merits. Educationally there remains a commitment to helping students become active participants in their own learning. Teachers incorporate self-selection opportunities, hands-on experiences, sharing and reflection sessions to enhance the rigor and relevance of every lesson. Additionally, the open classrooms and flexible learning spaces encourage team-teaching, cross grade-level instruction and classroom combining opportunities.

Currently Pine Run Elementary houses forty-five teachers, twenty-six staff members and four hundred seventy-five students, who occupy grades kindergarten through sixth. Pine Run also houses one of the district's two ESL classrooms. Pine Run's Home and School Association plays a major role in enhancing the school. Their contributions of both funds and services positively impact the learning and experiences of every student within the building. For the members of this school, open-space means open minds, open thinking and endless possibilities. As a community of learners, the Pine Run parents and staff approach every challenge together, and together they celebrate their many successes.

