



## Education

**Yes,** on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### *Pass Christian Excels in New "Center for Excellence"*

With grand columns gracing its entrance, an impressive amphitheatre and an artificial turf courtyard, the Pass Christian Center for Excellence resembles a miniature college campus more than the home of an elementary and middle school. But the \$32 million complex in Pass Christian, Mississippi is an educational haven for children from six weeks old through eighth grade, and the grandeur of the facility reflects the strength and hard work of the teachers, students and community.

The Pass Christian Center for Excellence houses Pass Christian Middle School, Pass Christian Elementary School, the Boys and Girls Club and a daycare center. Completed for the 2009/2010 school year, the innovative facility was conceptualized following Hurricane Katrina, when school leaders sought out to design a school for the future.

They attended an architectural seminar in Washington, D.C. on "Great Schools by Design." A national initiative of the American Architectural Foundation, "Great Schools by Design" seeks to improve the quality of America's schools and the communities they serve by promoting collaboration, excellence and innovation in school design. Following the seminar, in June 2006, school and community representatives traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with a team of experts to discuss specific school projects.

Dr. Sue Matheson, superintendent for Pass Christian Schools, enthusiastically says, "Our new campus, the Pass Christian Center for Excellence, is a unique concept that was developed in conjunction with the National School Design Institute in Washington, D.C. We may be the only campus in the U.S. that houses an elementary school, a middle school, a birth through four-year-old daycare center and a boys and girls club on the same property. We are extremely proud of this magnificent facility and look forward to educating our children inside the buildings, in the turf covered courtyard and under the beautiful old oak trees that survived in spite of Hurricanes Camille and Katrina."

Settled in their new facility, the teachers and students of Pass Christian continue to excel. Pass Christian School District has earned the distinction of being in the top one percent of the 152 school districts in the state's standardized testing program. In addition, the school district has earned the Department of Education's highest honor, a star rating, under its new accountability rating system. "The bar has been raised tremendously," Matheson said.

Dr. Matheson is excited for Pass Christian to continue its journey of excellence. She said, "I believe that this campus symbolizes the strength and resiliency of not only the Pass Christian School District, but the town and community as well. We are proud to be a part of the rebuilding process in our great town. We hope that this new campus will encourage past and future residents to move into our school district and become a part of our great tradition."



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