

# Design Students Participate in School Makeover



Interior design students do not often get the chance to partake in real-life, full-scale projects. However, students at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga (UTC) had that rare opportunity in the summer of 2008 with the Bring It Together project.

Bring It Together was a community-wide project, joining volunteers in the renovation of a 80-year-old building, which opened as Normal Park Upper School this past fall. The entire project was made possible by volunteers and donations. To develop design plans for each classroom, teams comprised of a designer, a contractor, the classroom's teacher, and a child in the class collaborated. UTC students experienced working with everyone involved in the design process and led their teams in developing one-of-a-kind classrooms.

The programming process began in the spring when designers, contractors, teachers and Normal Park students met to learn all the details of Bring It Together. After this orientation, teams convened in their individual

classrooms to discuss classroom needs and brainstorm ideas. Over the following weeks, designers and contractors worked together to draw plans and gather resources. Students experienced working with a variety of professionals related to the design industry. They saw how plans had to adapt and change throughout the course of the project.

Once all the plans were approved, the renovation week began. After working as the designers, UTC students volunteered their labor. Teams overlapped and joined together to make the design plans a reality. Along with other volunteers, students prepped and painted walls, built shelving, moved furniture and completed any task that needed completing. Within one week, the dismal building was given new life.

On the reveal day, the entire community had the chance to see the results of Bring It Together. The devotion and hard work of everyone involved in the project produced a one-of-a-kind environment which promotes

creativity and learning. The outcome surpassed any expectations.

When UTC students reflect on the project, they are grateful they took advantage of the opportunity and signed up to participate. Little did they know how useful the skills they had learned in the classroom would be in designing their classrooms. Students made space plans, analyzed color psychology, drafted floor plans, collaborated with team members, created finish schedules, developed elevations, drew sections, presented ideas and ultimately carried out design plans. Bring It Together expanded students' design competence, which will help them in finishing college and in their careers. The volunteer work ended up not only benefiting Normal Park, but the student designers as well.