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FACILITIES UPDATE

Asheville City Schools constructs new Asheville Middle School

By Ray Bendici — District Administration, September 2017

8/25/2017



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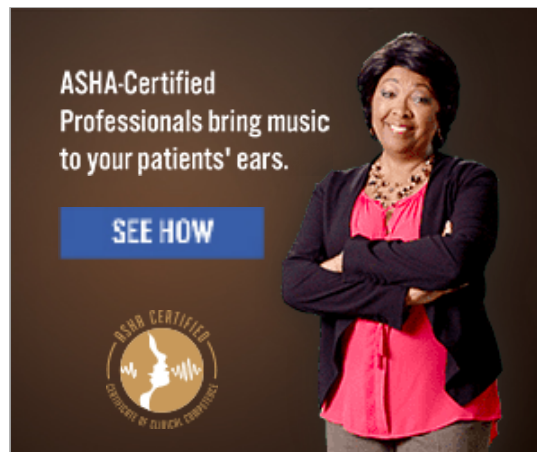
BRIGHTER SPACES—The new Asheville Middle School replaces a smaller, cramped building and provides open and flexible learning spaces. The school has no traditional teacher desks, opting instead for movable, lockable cabinets that can be arranged to facilitate different kinds of instruction.



The new state-of-the-art Asheville Middle School accommodates nearly 800 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders, with room to grow.

The main three-story building features open and flexible instruction spaces, while a two-story wing houses band and chorus rooms, tech and arts rooms, a cafeteria and gymnasium (a combination gymnasium and auditorium).

Challenge: After nearly a half century, Asheville Middle School had become too small for the district’s increasing student population. Classrooms were outdated, frequent repairs had become costly, and general **maintenance** was difficult.



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Plus, the building was originally designed as a small high school for African-American students, so modifications and additions over the years had made for a jumbled, cramped layout.

“We wanted a new building to be a space that is open and welcoming to all of our families,” says Principal April Dockery.

Solution: The new 160,000-square-foot school, built on the same site as the previous structure—which was razed— features bright colors, expansive windows, skylights and natural light. Each grade has its own floor with four pods—a cluster of three classrooms and a breakout room—to foster team teaching.



Classrooms have movable bookcases and furniture that easily can be configured to instruction needs, and access to both smartboards and whiteboards. A fully outfitted science lab is also on each floor.

A solar array on the main building is used to heat recycled water that is used in the building's systems and collected from the green roof, which is covered with plants. The [media center](#) includes a [makerspace](#).

One of the highlights of the school is the main entrance foyer through which all students enter each day.

"I can stand in the middle of the building and say 'good morning' to every single child who walks in the door—without feeling like I'm leaving someone out," says Dockery. "It's rare that any child doesn't see me in the morning or at least in the afternoon, which is a huge benefit in a school this big."

Completed: August 2016

Cost: \$41 million

Project team: Architecture and interiors: Clark Nexsen (Raleigh); civil engineering: Civil Design Concepts (Asheville); mechanical, electrical and plumbing design: Essential Systems Engineering (Asheville); structural engineering: Kloesel Engineering (Asheville); construction manager: Beverly-Grant/Barnhill (Asheville).

Ray Bendici is special projects editor.

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