



North Hollywood, California

Oakwood Elementary School "PlaySpace"

In 1951, a small group of parents teamed up to have a school constructed that would provide a warm and welcoming learning environment for their children. Oakwood School, a kindergarten through eighth-grade co-educational independent day facility, was the result of this vision.

Separated into two buildings, an elementary school and a secondary school, Oakwood has provided a wide variety of quality educational programs to its students for the past 57 years. However, the school's board of trustees recently determined that while Oakwood Elementary School

continues to provide a reputable program for its kindergarten through sixth-grade students, constraints posed by the school's age and size have greatly limited its ability to deliver the highest quality educational experience.

Recognizing a need for a larger, updated facility, the trustees began working with architect Koning Eizenberg Architecture in 2012 to develop plans for a massive rebuild of the entire elementary school campus. The firm first assessed both the school's current features and its future needs, implementing teacher, parent and community workshops for valuable input and providing project illustrations outlining each step in the process. Together with the project's general contractor, Del Amo Construction, Inc., and the

project's developer/construction manager, The Freeman Group, Koning Eizenberg implemented its master plan, which called for a four-phased replacement of the campus without interrupting the school's current enrollment.

The first phase of this project involved the construction of the "PlaySpace," an approximately 12,000-square-foot building consisting of a gymnasium/basketball court area, and a multipurpose area designed for performing arts and various school assemblies. The "PlaySpace" replaced the building's original gymnasium and allows a wide variety of usages, according to Ron Northup, vice president for Del Amo Construction, while accommodating audiences both inside and outside.

Many green-friendly features were used in the construction, including carpets made from recycled tires, a recycled glass

floor, a natural rubber floor for the gymnasium and bio-fiber wheat board, which was used instead of plywood. Even the trees removed during construction were recycled into outdoor furniture, reaffirming the team's commitment to the environment.

Other unique features of the project include a geothermal water source heat pump system, which was installed for conditioning the building in the summer and winter, and polycarbonate panels, which maximize daylighting and allow for weight savings, glare reduction and flexibility. Acoustic ceiling panels were installed in the gymnasium for optimal sound control.

The unique construction of the "PlaySpace" presented the team with a few unforeseen challenges. "The building has a variety of difficult materials that attach and join together," said Northup. According to him, close coordination with the architect

continued on page 98



Photo courtesy of Rory Firestein

educational facilities

www.constructionweekmag.com

and engineers was required to accomplish the water-tight details and alleviate any possibility for water intrusion. "Coordination with the geothermal grid system and integration with the water source heat pumps in the basement was also challenging and required many custom-built mechanical fittings," he said.

Despite the challenges, however, the team members pulled together and successfully completed the project four months ahead of schedule in January 2007. Sam Anker, COO for Oakwood School said, "Overall, the team functioned quite well and easily overcame differences and challenges." ■

— Sara E. Teller

