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NEWS

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Severance Middle School

Severance, Colorado - With its only middle school having four modular buildings to accommodate students because it was over capacity, Weld Re-4 School District knew a second middle school was in order. Since the Severance area is the fastest growing area in the district's boundaries, it was the perfect choice for a new middle school to serve the district.

When looking for a site for the new building, the district worked with a developer to find a location that was the appropriate size and had proper access, resulting in the school being built inside a larger community development — the Hidden Valley subdivision. The school consists of a two-story building constructed on a load-bearing spread footing foundation system. The exterior of the building is exterior insulation finish system (EIFS)/masonry veneer with unique features such as patterned precast concrete and ribbed metal panels.

Teachers, administrators and community members were an instrumental part of the design advisory team, particularly regarding educational specifications for the school, according to Rebecca Spears, AIA, LEED AP, project architect for RB+B Architects, Inc., the project's architect/interior designer. For example, staff members can look down the main hallway and see the entire floor, which is great for supervision.

"Our original middle school has had space added on many times and simply doesn't flow well because of the many additions," said Stephanie Watson, assistant superintendent of business services for Weld Re-4 School District. "With Severance Middle School, we were able to design the building from the ground up." Each grade has its own pod of classrooms with lockers not in the main hallway, and each pod has a planning area for teachers to meet and collaborate. Additionally, there is an outside teaching area available to teachers. The school also includes a gymnasium, science labs, an industrial art shop, a greenhouse and music rooms, and parts of the school can be closed off from the rest of the school for after-hours use by the community residents. "The bottom line is that the entire building is amazing and designed to have the best learning environment," said Watson.

The most unique aspect of the design, Watson continued, is that RB+B Architects met with the middle school student council to gather ideas for the school. The student council members commented that they think of crop circles when flying over Colorado. Thus, the design of the school emphasizes relationships with the local farming community and includes references to the history of the area and the universe. Crop circle patterns were incorporated on the outside of the gym walls, and various crop plants, such as corn stocks, alfalfa and wheat, were integrated into the cement pillars in the main hallway of the school.



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areas during the flexed lift schedule. "Controlled work areas, flexible activity scheduling and coordinated activity pre-planning resulted in no production time lost," said Sanchez.

According to Watson, the biggest challenge on the project was the fact that the school was the first structure in the new subdivision. The team had to coordinate with the Town of Severance and the subdivision developer, in addition to the typical design/construction team members throughout the project. "This coordination and cooperation allowed the completion of utilities, drainage infrastructure, streets and sidewalks to take place simultaneously with the construction of the school and site improvements," she said.

The school's location is beneficial to the school while also adding a lot to the community. The school site is watered with non-potable water provided through the community development, resulting in savings to the district every year due to reduced water costs compared to the cost of using potable water. Before the new school was built, residents went to the Town of Windsor and other surrounding communities for their recreational and school functions. Because Severance Middle School was designed to accommodate after-hours use by the community, "this school now gives this town something to circle around," said Watson.



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FACTS & FIGURES

- Owner: Weld Re-4 School District
- Type of Project: A new middle school
- Size: 110,608 square feet
- Cost: \$17.3 million
- Construction Time: May 2008 - July 2009
- The Need: A new middle school to serve the fastest growing area in the school district
- The Challenge: Building the school as the first building in a new subdivision

The Building of America Network Team Members

- **RB+B Architects, Inc.**
Architect/Interior Designer
- **Roche Constructors, Inc.**
General Contractor

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