

Local News

Avon Grove Charter School's The Collaboratory earns honor for outstanding design

The Collaboratory, Avon Grove Charter School's new 21st Century flexible instructional space, has been named one of American School & University's 2021 Outstanding Designs as part of their Educational Interiors Showcase.

Since its original 1928 construction, Avon Grove Charter School's State Road Campus has experienced ongoing space constraints resulting in no dedicated library or common space to serve its high school's needs. The Collaboratory design, by Heckendorn Shiles Architects of Wayne, Pa., envisioned a large, functional, dynamic space—part library, part media center, part presentation zone, part group work pods, and part bistro—to address these existing limitations for current and future enrollment.

Existing site and building

constraints were addressed with a roof extension, clerestory windows, and communicating stairway, creating one long contiguous expanse. The amphitheatre was conceived as a versatile design solution to marry the existing structure and new bistro to the flexible instructional area. The existing outdoor courtyard was upgraded and incorporated into the flexible space by means of an operable exterior glass partition.

The Collaboratory is showcased off the main entry to the school, demonstrating to visitors the priority of collaboration and exploration over instruction. Students learn and work together utilizing ample whiteboard surfaces, flexible furniture arrangements, accessible library resources, and varying spaces and acoustics. The space also includes a central

administrative conference room and IT workroom.

Construction of the 3,800-square-foot new space began in spring 2019 and opened fully in October 2019. Heckendorn Shiles Architects served as the project manager and architect, BSS Contractors of West Grove served as general contractor, while Cooks Services Company of Avondale, Schiller and Hersh Associates of Blue Bell, Pa., and Orndorf and Associates of Upper Darby, Pa., were also part of the project team.

Heckendorn Shiles Architects is an award-winning, open-studio architecture/interior design/planning firm. Since the firm's founding in 1989, they have purposefully diversified the portfolio and skills, offering design solutions for workplace, schools, adaptive re-use, cam-



Courtesy photos

The exterior of the Avon Grove Charter School's Collaboratory.

pus and master planning, athletic/recreational, community/municipal, public

art, residential, and more. The studio of 15 architects and interior designers collaborate on each proj-

ect, forming dynamic functional solutions while learning and growing as a team.



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The bistro was part of the designs.