



April 18, 2015

Reference: ABOVE AND BEYOND AWARD FOR EI ASSOCIATES

“Above & Beyond,” in the public arena of quality and fiscal responsibility means dealing with a quality vendor that demonstrates true sacrifice of personnel time, exceeding expectations and a constant display of effort to ensure community success of a project, purchase or service. This describes Michael Wozny, Joseph Donnelly, Ralph Nashed and the team at EI Associates – Cedar Knolls, NJ

The Summit School District has placed a great emphasis on creating useable space in all buildings equipped to meet the global demand for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and have partnered with EI Associates who shares our vision. EI has been innovative in creating a learning environment that goes beyond bricks and mortar and is educationally sound and impactful for the students in the Summit schools.

Dealing with an accomplished architectural/engineering firm like EI Associates ensures success through innovation, diligence, determination, pride and quality in the planning, design, construction administration and project oversight of various site and building projects. Their expertise and holistic approach in going the extra mile to ensure adequate and effective space utilization for student learning experiences allowed us to meet our overall goal of providing an educational environment where buildings and classrooms are safe, secure and conducive to learning.

This applied philosophy was instrumental in securing City bonding approval of over \$40M allowing the district to maximize RODS grants funding on eligible projects in excess of \$11M. The success of our five year Facilities Plan addressing nine schools was made possible through the planning, leadership, supervision and commitment to excellence in evaluating existing use of space and facilities conditions with the goal of maximizing that space effectively to provide optimal classroom areas for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. *This culminated in new state of the art science labs through renovation and relocation of classrooms at the LCJ Summit Middle School that allow students to be engaged and inspired in a team environment, and encourages imaginative, innovative, and critical thinking towards solving problems that goes beyond typical classroom lab design.* By design, the anticipated outcome of the project positioned us to maximize the new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics) initiative.

While innovative design is a clear expectation in working with any architect on a project; it is the way in which they work to solicit critical feedback and incorporate stakeholders in the planning process that integrates the creativity into a finished product that earns them consideration for the above and beyond distinction. This concept has permeated throughout the entire district at all schools allowing for needed additions at two of our elementary schools and reconfiguration of main offices to bolster safety and security at all buildings through creation of “man traps” as part of a holistic approach to security in the district. *More importantly it allowed for more district and community members to participate by receiving front line knowledge and by in.* Likewise, what stands out is the fact that the entire process was personally overseen by the firm’s director of educational program and design, Mr. Michael Wozny.

A clear example of going above and beyond in exceeding expectations was the personal time invested by project architect Ralph Nashed in hand painting of the proscenium (the part of a theater stage in front of the curtain) on the middle school auditorium project. While the project budget did not permit this option, it was Ralph’s creative idea in working with the building principal to tap into student activity funds raised for the overall project that culminated in securing a local painter to work within the confines of the limited funds available coupled with his own volunteered time to work after hours with the contractor to complete the project in short time frame. (Photo attached).

This creative problem solving went beyond the visible areas of the project to go below the space into the basement where the HVAC portion of the project was incorporated to deliver air conditioning with a design that improved indoor air quality (IAQ) at an estimated \$600k investment. Ralph took the lead in assisting the district in acquiring

additional labor and materials to waterproof and convert existing square footage of unused space into suitable storage that protected the substantial investment and gained much needed accessible storage. This again allowed for completion of the scope of work that would have otherwise been removed from the overall project due to lack of funds available. ***While not their responsibility, it became a viable option resulting in district lead projects that were accomplished as parallel projects in coordination with the overall prime. This is truly an exception and not the standard.***

Best of all, these individuals along with all members of their plan/design team have consistently exhibited professionalism and unmeasured support in assisting the district and myself as Business Administrator. Whenever we have a question, need or require specific advice, EI has always responded quickly and effectively to ensure our questions are answered correctly and, when needed, they make themselves available to include parent and Board of Education committee meetings as well as site visits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis J. Pepe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Louis J. Pepe, RSBA  
Assistant Superintendent for Business/Board Secretary