BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR

Impacting Student Learning

School Districts go through many critical decision making processes during school construction and renovation projects. These include: identifying needs, posing solutions, defining funding sources and establishing implementation plans for the project. More often than not, implementation plans become focused solely on the actual construction process and not on the long term goal of how the project will impact student learning over the long term, which is the ultimate goal of all school capital projects.

EI Associates prides itself on going “above and beyond” to assist our school clients in achieving long term educational goals as a result of renovated or new facilities. Led by our Educational Specialist, Joe Donnelly and Michael Wozny, Director of EI’s Educational Design Studio, the firm recently assisted the Neptune Township Board of Education’s District Curriculum Committee establish a sequential K-12 Green Schools Curriculum. This will help District staff use the award winning LEED Gold Summerfield Elementary School as a “Living Textbook” to assist students achieve the District’s Environmental Literacy Goals.

After several planning meetings with District administration, curriculum coordinators and key members of the District Environment Education Committee, EI Associates coordinated a District Staff Development Workshop which was held on May 23, 2008. The workshop goals included:

- Identify Ways to Use Summerfield School as Live Teaching Tool
- Explore Design Options for the Proposed Green School’s Curriculum
- Select Materials and Resources to Establish Grade Level Standards and Age Appropriate Learning Activities.

EI also arranged for the services of guest consultants to assist in this staff workshop. John Henry, Program Coordinator from EIRC and Chairperson of the LEED for Schools Committee for the NJ Chapter of USGBC, Tanya Oznovich from DEP and Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education, Dan Smith, Program Coordinator for Liberty Science Center and Don Frangipane, Facilities Engineer for the District provided great insight to the workshop participants.

Since this initial training program, Joe and Michael have worked closely with Mr. Joe Woerner, Environmental Education Teacher for the District on various educational activities and have actually taught lessons to various grade levels using instructional boards produced by our Design Team.

EI is currently working with other Districts such as Exeter Township in Pennsylvania on a similar project involving a LEED Silver school that is being used as a Live Teaching Tool.

EI’s continued commitment to ensure that our educational facility designs impact student learning is paramount in our entire planning process. Throughout the entire design phase, our Educational Design Team works very closely with District stakeholders to ensure that long term educational program goals including student achievement, use of technology, staffing implications and future planning are not lost in the implementation process.