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Colantonio completes 57,000 s/f DeCristofaro Learning Center - design by Wessling Architects

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Quincy, MA Construction manager Colantonio Inc. has completed the Dr. Rick DeCristofaro Learning Center. The 57,000 s/f building, which serves special needs children throughout the South Shore, was designed by Wessling Architects. PCA360 served as the owner's project manager. Located adjacent to Central Middle School and a daycare center, the new educational facility is housed within a renovated and expanded 1920s building that formerly served as a furniture warehouse, an ice cream and candy factory, and a college.

The DeCristofaro Learning Center features art, music, sensory, physical, and occupational therapy spaces, a life skills room designed as a mini-apartment with washer/dryer, stove, microwave, and oven; a small three-lane indoor track for motor skills development, and two multipurpose rooms. Each classroom houses an ADA-compliant bathroom, some with bidets.

Exterior murals by local resident Brandon Eames feature whales, dolphins, turtles and other sea life, while the interior offers a soothing color palette and place-making graphics depicting different natural settings, including a water world, a rainforest, and representations of the four seasons.

The scope of work included renovation of the existing 50,500 s/f two- and three-story masonry building, construction of a 6,500 s/f addition, mechanical and electrical upgrades, windows repairs, and replacements. A partial demolition of the existing building allowed for construction of two new elevators. The brick façade was repointed and reinstalled, and extensive sitework was accomplished, including underground utilities, earthwork, and landscaping. A playground, specifically designed to accommodate needs of autistic and disabled children, was also introduced.

Sustainability was a key focus for the team, with features including:

- Electric vehicle charging stations (capable of charging 4 vehicles);
- LED light fixtures;
- High-efficiency gas boilers;
- Water source heat pumps;
- Fluid cooler; and
- Waterside economizers on the fan coil units.

“It was a privilege to work on this project, which brings much needed services to the children of Quincy and the South Shore. The successful transformation of this century-old building into a modern and sustainable educational facility is a testament to the hard work and skill of the entire project team,” said Colantonio president George Willwerth.

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