

Graland Country Day School Corkins Center

The Corkins Center at Graland Country Day School [Photo 1] truly represents 21st Century Learning with its 3,500 SF Innovation Lab, 12,000 SF Learning Commons [Photo 2] with library and digital media studio, science classrooms, and public areas encouraging group collaboration. The 24,000 SF building addition was tied in to the existing middle school building, and due to the urban location, required City of Denver permits to use street parking areas for laydown, offices, and delivery access. The Hunt Family Learning Commons includes a library and digital media studio featuring a cyclorama wall (advanced green screen) [Photo 3], as well as the “Treehouse” – a loft style hang out area [Photo 4]. The space is amenable to both large and small group work [Photo 5], and the technology help desk was relocated to this area to be on hand to help the kids with any assistance necessary. The Gates Innovation Lab is 2,000 SF larger than the space it replaces, and provides a lab for students to invent the products and systems of tomorrow. A garage-style door opens to outside, allowing for more flexibility with design, testing, and production [Photo 6]. Innovation Centers, in and of themselves, are not a new idea. However, the unique manner in which this project was designed to bring all facets of inspiration and research together in one area does make it truly innovative. It combines multiple areas to stimulate students’ ideas and further their concepts in practical and thought-provoking ways – these kids actually apply for and receive patents! From an industrial arts area with various tools and equipment [Photo 7] to science labs to a digital media lab, the Corkins Center has everything Graland students need for the inventions of the future. The project also included renovating existing middle school classrooms.

A challenge that the design and construction team faced arose after the “amphitheater stairs” had been constructed in the new space. Upon seeing the completed featured (constructed of poured-in-place concrete), the school board decided it wasn’t quite what they had envisioned and they wished to go in a different direction. Essentially on the spot, the design team worked with Haselden to create a napkin sketch of possible ideas. We priced the “napkin concept” the board had approved in a 24-hour turn-around, and began construction to change the space. This involved tearing out concrete, adding another stair, adding a stair rail and guard rail, and building out over some of the other stairs we had already built. Incredibly, we were able to bring this

added scope in under the cost we had initially quoted for the change order, and were able to stay within their remaining budget. The solid relationship and cooperation between the architects, contractor, and subcontractor, as well as the strong rapport between the team and the owner, made the redesign and reconstruction of this major component possible on such short notice.

While the overall footprint of the addition is relatively small, the unique design allowed for adding over 23,000 SF. There are two “normal” stories to the structure, but five different levels [Photo 8]. This required an extraordinary amount of coordination between the design architect (Bowie Gridley), architect of record (Cunningham Group), and Haselden to communicate the elevations, changing points, etc.

Additionally, a portion of this project involved tying into the existing junior high and remodeling some of those rooms. Any time a renovation is involved, there are always unexpected developments. However, we were still able to bring the project in on time, and at the GMP, even with all the owner change orders (such as the changes to the lobby stairs mentioned above).

Student, faculty, and visitor safety is of the highest concern to Haselden. Background checks were conducted through the Colorado Bureau of Investigations on all construction personnel. This included reviewing the national sex offender registry, checking criminal history, performing drug screens, and examining driving records. We held our subcontractors to the same standards. We also insisted all safety regulations were written into our subcontracts to ensure complete compliance with Haselden’s site-specific safety procedures.

When awarded the project, Haselden developed a project and site-specific safety plan that addressed Graland’s specific needs and requirements. Our team met with the staff to establish requirements, expectations, reporting needs, and lines of communication. As superintendent, Scott McClain led the on-site team, conducting weekly site safety meetings in addition to weekly safety and environmental audits. Our site team raised awareness and championed positive attitudes regarding safety practices. All subcontractors were clearly informed during orientation, in the bidding documents, and in the project manual of the safety expectations and requirements of the project and were held responsible to comply with all project requirements.

As much as possible, heavy construction was scheduled for times when students were not on the premises. All construction personnel completed a site safety orientation before being allowed on site, after which they received a sticker which they were required to wear on their hard hats, enabling Haselden's team to quickly identify authorized personnel. This site orientation covered our site-specific safety program, emergency action plans, and owner policies. Additionally, weekly safety and health training meetings were conducted for all Haselden and subcontractor employees. Monthly site-wide meetings were also held to address safety and health concerns. As a further safety step, newly-hired employees wore red hardhats so field managers knew whom to closely mentor. Haselden logged 20,153 hours on this project with no lost time.

Graland Country Day School challenged the Corkins Center design and construction teams to meet three key design criteria: improve learning opportunities, particularly for the library and technology innovation programs; improve campus access and security; and design a contemporary building that aesthetically belonged at the nearly 100-year-old school. Sometimes these criteria seemed in conflict. How do you design a contemporary addition to 90s-era building across the quad from a late 60s modernist AIA award-winning building? How do open spaces encourage collaboration while also being secure?

These challenges were taken head on. Security was improved with new campus access with multiple control points. Once inside the airy, inviting lobby, the Gates Innovation Lab is showcased from above. Visitors can interact directly with students creating the latest technology to impact societal change and maybe earn a US patent. The lobby [Photo 9] also opens to the Learning Commons which supports collaborative education with various flexible furniture and sizes of learning environments. The commons is organized in five sections devoted to kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students' individual needs in addition to an AV technology lab and flexible classroom spaces. The Learning Commons houses books as well as a genius bar, green screen, and video editing stations. The Corkins Center fits into the existing campus with the use of familiar brick detailing and concrete tile roofs mixed with a contemporary use of curtain wall and daylighting technologies. The use of brick and some

familiar window patterns give the sense it has always been there, while the larger extents of glazing and an open interior signal a noteworthy shift to the contemporary use of space.

The Graland team called for a building that supports a new educational paradigm. The design and construction teams answered the challenge with the invigorating new Corkins Center [Photo 10]. The project was recently awarded ENR Mountain States' 2017 1st Place Best Projects Award in the K-12 Education category. Juan Botello, director of finance and operations at Graland, stated, "You came to work each day with a smile on your faces and a 'can-do, problem solver' attitude. From the beginning of this project, we understood that adult and student safety was your paramount concern, followed closely by your determination to create the highest quality, most functional and truly beautiful building. Throughout this entire process, your communication was clear and timely and you kept us well-informed, good news or bad. You made sure that the project was on-schedule and under-budget, despite our special requests for changes as we neared the completion dates. What more could we ask? If/when we do another campus construction project, we hope we can work with you all again." Haselden is currently completing a second project with Graland, a remodel of their Performing Arts department, and is preparing to start our third project with them, a remodel of their playground areas.



Photo 1 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 2 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 3 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 4 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 5 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 6 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 7 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 8 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 9 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center



Photo 10 – Haselden Construction – Graland Country Day School Corkins Center