

What was the project vision?

As aging infrastructure continued to drastically increase, the Cape Henlopen School District teamed with Tetra Tech to develop a new 720-student elementary school. Through Tetra Tech's extensive involvement in preliminary task force meetings regarding this project's viability, our team had a unique understanding of critical project needs, which allowed the design team to fluently communicate with Cape Henlopen staff to design creative solutions. Information gathered from interactive design charrettes with parents, teachers, and administrators allowed Tetra Tech to provide a state-of-the-art design for this new elementary school, which includes modern and flexible learning environments. Love Creek Elementary was the first of the three new elementary schools in Cape Henlopen School District that we designed. This school set a strong foundation for its sister schools, both H.O. Brittingham and Rehoboth. We had the client-driven design request to repeat the overall shell of the building yet make each school's interior unique with standalone features that set one "sister" apart from the other, and allows the community the opportunity to rally around their unique learning environment. The fact that we were able to do this while serving our client and their students with an inspirational space, has been extraordinarily fulfilling for our team.

How did the project develop in terms of design from the initial concept?

Our design is conscientious of environmental requirements, sustainability issues, and surrounding community concerns. The design includes sustainable features such as daylight harvesting, large insulated windows in 90-percent of the spaces, as well as carbon footprint minimization by purchasing materials within 500 miles of the site. Understanding the child's need and want to learn and explore in "found" spaces, Tetra Tech's design has achieved this by creating special moments of exploration and imagination throughout the floor plan.

This includes a slightly elevated and charming Reading Nook near the Kindergarten wing, a "wandering brook" passing through the airy Lobby and Media Center, and a majestic, double height Stair Tower, complete with seating and a modern and minimalist twist on the "forest." Throughout the school, the design has embodied the intent of bringing the outdoors in, in a way that complements the learning environment.

As you approach the building, the large windows and an inviting translucent canopy and entryway provide shelter for students, teachers, and visitors. Neutral palates, warm wood tones, and pops of seasonal colors, and a unique graphics package, bring the whole school together, creating a seamless transition from the outdoors, in, and from pod to pod to promote growth, exploration, and connection.

Why did you specify Zaneen?

Furlow Associates has been a great collaborator to Tetra Tech, and has worked with us to meet both the client's criteria — LED requirements, safety requirements, lumen packages, etc. — and our design vision. As our lighting consultant, they first brought us the Zaneen fixtures as a versatile and extensive lighting package with as much customizability for the unique spaces as we needed. This allowed for the same quality of lighting throughout the school with different aesthetic features, and really made Zaneen stand out. As a result, we were able to use the same fixture often but change the finish, or lumen package to make it look like a whole new light for our different spaces.

What lighting challenges did you run into from the time of specification to installation?

Due to the given “minimalist” aesthetic goal, as well as the theme of “nature” we needed a light that could pull double duty aesthetically, as well as providing all the needs for the client’s LED requirements, safety requirements, lumen package addition, this was a public works project, we are required to have the opportunity to provide for “equals” during bid. We begin with a “basis of design” but the real challenge is that we’re never quite sure that we are going to receive the fixture we’ve selected through the construction process.

How did Zaneen contribute in solving these challenges?

Zaneen’s products and customizable lighting packages and finishes remain versatile and competitively priced, which has helped us immensely. As a result, what we specified, is what we have been able to install for our client.

This project is related to two other schools that were all executed as a single project. The leading project is the Love Creek Elementary School, with the secondary locations, H.O Brittinham and Rehoboth Elementary School.