

Southeast meets far east

Feng Shui Influences Design at South Carolina School

The Chinese philosophy that natural forces, the flow of energy and the orientation of objects affect our lives was put into practice recently in South Carolina. Although Feng Shui has been used for thousands of years in other parts of the world to improve children’s education, the concept was a new one for the faculty and students at the Tigerville Elementary School, located in a rural setting in the mountains of Greenville County. Thirteen colors of Standard EXCELON® Imperial® Texture vinyl composition tile (VCT), each color family symbolic of a stage of learning and energy levels, are used throughout the facility. The floor designs are based on the Feng Shui practice of improving surroundings to influence concentration and attitude.

Elementary schools named “Tigerville” have served this community in South Carolina for over 100 years. The school’s motto, “We’re building for the future,” became a literal reality when the newest Tigerville Elementary School completed construction in January 2005. The school educates children from Kindergarten through Grade Five. Jeannine Rodgers, IIDA, director of interiors for Pazdan Smith Group Architects, says, “Some of these kids will attend this school for six straight years. Why make their classroom look exactly



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[Between us, ideas become reality.]®

the same every year?” With that timeframe in mind, Rodgers thought about ways to keep the learning environment stimulating for every age group. “I recently read about Feng Shui ideas and how they can influence interiors and the people who use the spaces we design. It made sense, and was a fun way to introduce color into this project without it looking like your typical elementary school with basic primary colors,” explains Rodgers.

Armstrong™ Imperial® Texture VCT was required by the county’s school district, based on cost and durability, for all areas except lavatories. The Pazdan Smith Group, a Greenville-based, full service firm with projects ranging from retail, industrial, healthcare, religious and corporate, was selected to work on this project knowing that the product choice was already determined. “But, no one ever told us we couldn’t use all the colors we wanted, or even how to use the colors,” says Rodgers. “I assigned each grade and each space a color, or set of colors.” Every area uses a field of Desert Beige to establish a sense of warmth, elevate mood and alleviate tiredness. Accent colors, including Classic Black, take into account the Feng Shui belief that color subliminally affects learning, well being and energy levels.

Rodgers explains the color choices for the grades. “Kindergarten uses green—Little Green Apple, Greenery, Granny Smith—symbolizing identity and self-acceptance. Green is soothing and brings harmony to little children who are exposed to academics and group dynamics for the first time. First Grade uses red, and Second Grade uses orange—Maraschino, Pumpkin Orange, Cantaloupe—symbolizing self-preservation and self-gratification. These colors invigorate and nourish. We want to keep kids excited about their school and learning. Third, Fourth and Fifth Grades use blue—Serene Blue, Lunar Blue, Marina Blue—symbolizing self-expression. These colors also bring a sense of peace and calm, because these kids developing hormones are causing chaos within. Blue also aids creativity,



so it acts as a subliminal learning color to help children express themselves.”

Various spaces are color-keyed to enhance focus and attitude. Rodgers explains, “The Media Center uses purples—Violet Bloom, Lavender Shadow—representing thought and self-knowledge. Purple is thought to bring higher understanding and calm, plus build a positive outlook. The Music Room is blue, the color of sound. The Gym is red, representing life energy, physical strength and vitality. The Art Room uses all colors in a large, random grid pattern. This encourages creativity. It also hides, or enhances, depending on your mindset, paint spills. The Cafeteria also uses all colors in stripes of varying colors and widths.”

Color stripes along corridor walls and floors correspond to the grade levels to help children navigate the

school’s wings to find their classrooms. At corridor intersections, colors mix together in random patterns to hide traffic patterns and to indicate life’s transitions. Common areas, such as the hallway in front of the Media Center, have random patterns using all colors to indicate spaces used by all grades. The patterns are active yet simple, so there was no need for custom cutting or installation. Rodgers adds, “We had fun pushing the design envelope, especially when challenged to use one product creatively!” The school’s bathrooms are the only areas that didn’t use VCT. In those spaces, Armstrong™ Connection CORLON® in Devon Beige and Crystal Blue completed the all-Armstrong-floored facility. Rodgers concludes, “I’ve always had great support from Armstrong. It helps to have good products and people to work with.”

Quick Facts

The Tigerville Elementary School Challenge:

- Creatively use products throughout the school
- Use colors and designs appropriate to different age groups and spaces
- Keep installations simple, to stay within installed-cost budget

The Armstrong Solution:

- Standard EXCELON® Imperial Texture color range has 70 color-integrated, in-stock colors
- Education-focused colors are appropriate for K-12 facilities
- VCT is an excellent value

Product Specs:

- Standard EXCELON Imperial Texture sets the industry standard for quality, durability, value and service
- Connection CORLON has classic design with the proven cost advantages of CORLON flooring
- Armstrong School Zone™ flooring enhances the learning environment with a broad selection of products and helpful services for specifiers and installers

