

2013 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Falcon Virtual Academy
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Falcon Virtual Academy



The existing structure was an abandoned, pre-engineered warehouse in a light industrial neighborhood.

Learning Environment Transformation



Community Environment: Leaders of the Falcon Virtual Academy know that learning best occurs when students feel valued and engaged in learning process. Therefore the unique design and customized space of the Virtual Academy allows the utmost in flexibility and adaptive learning for all students to be successful. Fun spaces abound throughout the design, like the banquette seating on either end of Quiet Zones 1 and 2 which allow students to lounge and learn, and the bright, graphic and vibrant colors engage students visually. The incorporation of Marker Board Paint in key spaces allows the space to be constantly changing while the moveable furniture can be rearranged daily.

Variety of Learning Spaces



Community Environment: Design concepts like huddle areas for small groups, with AppleTV's and interactive technology, allow students to receive small group instruction while concurrently other students can work independently using the banquette seating or movable furniture.

Open Concept Connects Students to the Space



Learning Environment: Falcon Virtual Academy's mission is to engage student's in an innovative, rigorous digital learning environment that prepares them for the 21st century and beyond by encouraging critical thinking and comprehensive learning. The design team faced a challenge in creating a physical environment that supports this mission in a small space with a limited budget. The design meets this challenge by creating a space that encompasses one-on-one spaces, small and large group meeting areas and both quiet and noisy spaces. The facility demanded an open, vibrant feel to allow students and staff to visually monitor the whole space and feel connected to all of the learning taking place.

Bright Colors Excite the Senses



Learning Environment: While many facilities across the country have tried to achieve this type of blended facility, most have struggled to create an entire educational space around the concept. From the bright colors, flexible furnishings, and high-tech connectivity to the science lab and planned art room, students at Falcon Virtual Academy can work both online, as well as directly hands-on, at all ages.

Banquettes Create Lounge Spaces and Quiet Environments



Learning Environment: Large seating 'banquettes' give students an area to lounge and to gather, create visual interest and also provide a more quiet area for study. The noisy zones allow students to express themselves more outwardly and also give flexibility with furniture so that groups may gather to talk, to experiment or to receive instruction. All of these features make this school facility one of the most unique in the District and in the State of Colorado.

Commitment to Community



Physical Environment - The District leveraged funds responsibly to obtain a long-term lease on the building, transforming an aging manufacturing warehouse into a state-of-the-art educational academy. This gave new life to an un-used structure and provided critical in-fill in a struggling area of the city, showing the District's commitment to the community. The character of the area is warehouses, light-manufacturing and industrial tenants coupled with older residential and commercial neighborhoods. The original pre-engineered metal building fits with the style of surrounding buildings.

Environmentally Friendly Materials and Systems



Physical Environment – Close attention was paid to using materials and systems that were environmentally responsive and sustainable. The building envelope was improved for efficiency, including increased insulation. Energy-efficient lighting was included, as well as HVAC upgrades to increase the efficiency of the system. Materials were chosen for their recycled content and low VOC properties as much as for their aesthetics. The district re-used existing casework, shelving and furnishings that were removed for use in other offices and schools.

Academy Creates a Blended Learning Environment



Planning Process: The planning process started with trying to embody ideas from the “iConnect Zone” leaders and students. The initial planning meetings were a venue to hear thoughts, ideas and design concepts; which resulted in this vision statement: ***The new Falcon Virtual Academy will be a flexible and innovative educational facility that will foster creativity, blended learning and pride for the students, faculty and staff that are a part of the school.***

Virtual Learning Meets Hands-on Learning



Planning Process: Falcon Virtual Academy is a showpiece for the new focus of Virtual Learning; where students get both virtual and hands-on learning opportunities taught by certified teachers in a creative, engaging space.

Floor plan



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Project Data

Submitting Firm :	DLR Group
Project Role	Design, Educational Planner
Project Contact	Bob Binder
Title	Principal
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Joint Partner Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
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Other Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
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Construction Firm:	Elder Construction
Project Role	Construction Manager / General Contractor
Project Contact	Eric Swanson
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Address	3431 N. Prospect
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Phone	719-471-2708

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Project Details

Project Name	Falcon Virtual Academy
City	Colorado Springs
State	CO
District Name	Falcon School District 49
Supt/President	Don Begler, Acting Chief Education Officer
Occupancy Date	September 2012
Grades Housed	K-12
Capacity(Students)	400
Site Size (acres)	6 acres
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	20,000 SF
Per Occupant(pupil)	50 SF / student
gross/net please indicate	GSF
Design and Build?	
If yes, Total Cost:	
Includes:	
If no,	
Site Development:	
Building Construction:	\$1,200,000
Fixed Equipment:	\$55,000
Other:	\$20,000
Total:	\$1,275,000