

Sunnyvale Independent School District Education

Case Study



CLIENT

Sunnyvale Independent School District

CHALLENGE

Find a way to bring daylight into the school library with a unique aesthetic.

RESULTS

One-of-a-kind chandelier design that illuminated the space.

PRODUCT

Solatube® SolaMaster 290DS and 750DS

SOLATUBE INSTALLER

Solatube Southwest Region

ARCHITECT

WRA Architects

BACKGROUND: Sunnyvale Independent School District was driven to create a new type of school design due to a shift in the way they were educating their students. The Intermediate school was their first new build under this change and was designed to align the built environment with the educational platform thus supporting the new style of interaction between the students and teachers.

The Sunnyvale Intermediate School is sub-divided into three learning communities or houses with each two-story house containing nine classrooms. In order to facilitate interaction and collaboration, breakout spaces and small group rooms are interspersed amongst the classrooms. The use of abundant walls of glass and an absence of corridors creates an open, transparent design that contributes to effective areas for learning.

Not all of the learning areas are indoors, however. Covered outdoor spaces on both the ground and second floor help to contribute to the unique and refreshing classroom setting.

“It is fun to hear them comment, at different times, when the library is darker or very light and they know that it is because of the amount of outside light. We love that we have a product that is also a learning tool!”

-Sara Staley, principal of Sunnyvale ISD



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All three communities overlook a large, shared commons area and media center to further support interaction between all students. In addition, dedicated spaces for art, science, music, and special education also open onto the commons.

The overall building can accommodate 600 students in grades 3-5. These students will stay together in the same house for three years of schooling with an equal number of students from each of the three grades in each house. Administration offices, a gymnasium (also designed to serve as a storm shelter), a light-filled cafeteria and library are located on the public side of the campus.

CHALLENGE: The state-of-the-art library is a focal point for the school which resulted in an award-winning space for Sunnyvale and WRA Architects. During the design phase, there were several challenges. The largest one was finding a way to bring daylight into the space with a unique aesthetic as lighting was to be one of the key elements in the overall design of the library.

SOLUTION: Solatube International worked closely with the architect to create a striking and high-performing solution which entailed dropping the tubular daylighting devices into the space and terminating them at different lengths. Custom cast, acrylic tubes were then hoisted up over the bottom of the tubes to create a one-of-a-kind chandelier effect where the broad spectrum daylight would perfectly illuminate the space and create a beautiful, even glow to the acrylic tubes. This dynamic design resulted in an extraordinary space that inspires students to read, study and learn. Additionally, the students and faculty benefit from the positive effects of daylight which have been shown in studies to improve student performance, help increase test scores and reduce the number of absentee days.

RESULTS: The lighting solution created by the architect and Solatube International provided an innovative and unique approach to daylighting in a modern and high-performing educational environment.

"One of my favorite moments is seeing our students light up when they enter the library! They look up at the Solatube tubular daylighting devices and comment how big they are and want to know how they light up. I tell them that the solar tubes light up from the sunshine we have outside," said Sara Staley, principal of Sunnyvale ISD. "It is fun to hear them comment, at different times, when the library is darker or very light and they know that it is because of the amount of outside light. We love that we have a product that is also a learning tool!"

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