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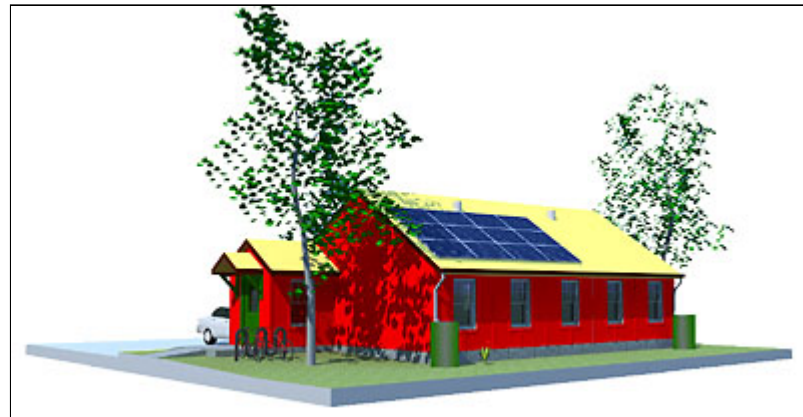
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'Green' classroom coming to Grant

Eco-friendly building 'rising from the ashes.'

By **JANESE HEAVIN** of the Tribune's staff

Published Tuesday, June 3, 2008



Courtesy of Peckham & Wright Architects

Peckham & Wright Architects is designing a "green" classroom at Grant Elementary School to replace a modular classroom destroyed by an arson fire in December.

An environmentally friendly permanent classroom will be built outside of Grant Elementary School this summer to replace a school trailer destroyed in a December fire.

The building will have solar panels, skylights, fireproof drywall and an energy-efficient heating and cooling system. It will sit near the parking lot facing Broadway and be built with "structural insulated panel" construction covered with hardy-board siding. Inside, the class will have a vaulted ceiling, built-in bookshelves and cabinet tops complete with a beeswax finish.

"This is probably going to be one of the greenest schools anywhere," said Nick Peckham of Peckham & Wright Architects.

Peckham & Wright is spearheading the project and has recruited dozens of local construction companies to donate materials and labor for the roughly \$250,000 building. Columbia Public Schools will contribute insurance proceeds from the burned trailer, which was valued at about

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\$30,000.

Peckham said the outpouring of support for the school has been "jaw-dropping."

"I think the reason so many people are willing to say 'yes' is it's not so much people think this is a contribution to the school, but more for the children," he said. "We've come to say to one another that everything you do for children counts double. As I've thought about this, it is absolutely true. It counts once when kids come to school in a setting that is a richer environment, then it counts second when children get older in high school, college and as adults and have somehow been influenced to have a more comprehensive or sustainable outlook on life."

Grant Principal Beverly Borduin said the environmental classroom - which will house Jennifer Hartz's second grade this coming year - will launch a schoolwide focus on sustainability.

"We're going green at Grant," she said. "We'll do our best to be environmentally friendly with whatever we do. It will be a schoolwide initiative."

Peckham, whose granddaughter is finishing fifth grade at Grant this year, has been considering this project for about a year to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Peckham & Wright this year. But the plan became more concrete after arson destroyed one of Grant's mobile classrooms.

Borduin said she couldn't have imagined that the fire would have turned into something so positive.

"I was concerned about that burned classroom," she said. "I didn't know what to do about it. I didn't want it renovated, which was one of the options. Then this opportunity came along like a phoenix rising from the ashes. What could be better from this tragedy than something as beautiful and learning-centered as an eco-friendly schoolhouse?"

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