



CetraRuddy selected to design 800-student K-12 school campus on Staten Island for Integration Charter Schools

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Staten Island, NY The architecture and interior design firm CetraRuddy has been selected to design a new, 800-student K-12 school campus for the group Integration Charter Schools, a leader in independent education focusing on students with emotional challenges and other special needs.

Occupying three full levels of the eight-story Corporate Commons Three mixed-use complex, also designed by CetraRuddy, the new Integration Charter School (ICS) facilities expand the organization's ability to serve its growing student body. This project will also bring three ICS communities — the John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School (grades K–12), Nicotra Early College Charter School (grades 8–12), and New Ventures Charter School (grades 10–12) — together into a single campus for the first time.

According to CetraRuddy principal Theresa Genovese, AIA, LEED AP, a leading designer of educational and cultural projects, the new work for ICS reflects a growing trend of incorporating urban schools within mixed-use communities. It also exemplifies a number of emerging best practices for contemporary K-12 learning environments. Key project elements include:

Sensitive integration within the larger mixed-use complex through a separate ground-floor student entry lobby and elevator bank, as well as the location of gyms, cafeterias, and other social spaces on the middle school floor to reduce noise impacts for other building tenants.

Facilities that support diverse learning styles, including a range of spaces for group and individual musical instruction, as well as a full commercial teaching kitchen and working rooftop farm for food-based educational programs. These uses also support student job training and internship opportunities at Corporate Commons Three's onsite, not-for-profit restaurant.

A design approach emphasizing wellness for students and teaching staff alike.

Highlights include durable finishes in a calming neutral color palette; open corridors and classrooms oriented around the building's perimeter for maximum natural daylight exposure; dedicated counseling "Clusters" for each grade comprising a meeting room, counseling room and teacher workroom adjacent to classrooms; large central common spaces for each grade to encourage a sense of community and belonging; a yoga center and meditation areas specifically for teachers;

and the accessible green roof for nutrition-focused, skills-based education.

“Our goal for the design of the new Integration Charter School was to create an expanded campus which inspires the students and faculty to succeed together as a community,” said Genovese. “The architecture and interior design evolve from our firm’s guiding principles, creating a welcoming, flexible, and highly functional environment that nurtures and supports a range of diverse learning styles and educational needs, and that also enables teachers to do their best work.”

This project builds on CetraRuddy’s increasingly high-profile educational and cultural portfolio. Other new and upcoming institutional projects by the firm include three school campuses in southern India for the Choice Schools organization, new projects for Columbia University and New York University, and the recent completion of the award-winning Fotografiska New York museum.

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