The Project

Established in 1924, Cape Henry Collegiate (CHC) in Virginia Beach, VA provides Prekindergarten through Grade Twelve coeducational, college preparatory education for nearly 850 students. The academically challenging curriculum is responsive to each child’s needs and is supported by a strong honor code. There is a 10-to-1, student-to-teacher ratio, and the educational process is a cooperative endeavor among students, parents, and faculty.

The United States Department of Education report states: “There is a vitality about Cape Henry that is palpable. The students are very excited about their school and are committed to the positive environment that is created by all.”

The Perry Library at CHC is open and bright, designed and built in the 1980s, it represented the typical library of an era before the Internet and online learning. The school decided to address the functionality and furnishings within the original space and bring it into the digital age.

The Solution

“This is not our parent’s library,” says Mark Cunningham, Director of Instructional Technology at Cape Henry Collegiate. “First of all, there are very few books and most of them are for the first to 6th grade students. For the 600 older students, almost everything is available online. Of course we’ve made it very easy for them to use their digital devices.”

After field trips to other libraries the CHC team, led by Cunningham, developed the concept of an ‘open space collegial environment’ and a design for learning in the ‘most beautiful room on campus.’ “We wanted to use color and light, offer flexibility and make it easy for students to work, learn and collaborate in a space that is on the digital leading edge,” Cunningham said. First step: Remove the books and high shelving.

ibi worked closely with the CHC team to create three areas designated by carpet color. Desktop computers reside in quiet spaces within the teal-carpeted area; traditional study areas with tables and chairs are designated by dark gray carpet. A more relaxed ‘hang out’ area, designed for coffee and conversation adjacent to the floor-to-ceiling windows, has light gray carpet. Wireless access is available along with printers strategically placed throughout the library.

“We were in an inspired partnership with ibi. They grasped our concept immediately,” Cunningham noted. “They brought exceptional value because of their deep product knowledge and that helped our ideas to evolve. The installation was well done, on time and, in several cases they made on-the-fly modifications that greatly improved functionality.”

“No books were harmed during the project,” Cunningham was quick to point out. “They’re all catalogued, shelved on campus and ready when anyone needs them.”