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Solar-powered Sandy Grove Middle School singled out as 'Best of the Best' in current issue of Engineering News & Record

LUMBER BRIDGE – Solar-powered Sandy Grove Middle School was the best K-12 education project built in the United States last year, according to a national construction industry magazine.

The Hoke County school is one of 20 widely varying projects singled out in the current issue of Engineering News & Record as “Best of the Best” in 2013.

The magazine said months of painstaking judging went into selecting the best examples of design and construction excellence among U.S. projects completed between July 2012 and July 2013.

Winners first were selected in each category in 10 regions. A different set of industry judges studied those winners to determine the national winners based on teamwork, innovation, quality and success in overcoming challenges.

Sandy Grove’s energy efficiency caught the eye of ENR’s judges

Built with more than 2,300 solar panels, the school produces 30-40 percent more energy than it uses.

Surplus energy is returned to the power grid. As such, ENR said, Hoke County is expected to save about \$16 million on its energy bills over the next 40 years. That’s about the cost of the school’s construction.

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The 74,000-square-foot school, which opened in August, has numerous other “green” features, including a geothermal system, which uses ground temperature as a heating and cooling source.

High-performance LED lighting is installed throughout the building as are large windows, which permit more natural lighting. Classroom furniture is made from recycled products.

The project is designed to achieve a platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating – the highest LEED level awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The school was built through a unique public-private partnership

Firstfloor K-12 Solutions, the project’s developer, leases the land from the county while owning the building. It then leases the building and the land to Hoke County schools. The involvement of a private firm allows for tax credits the school system could not use under traditional school construction financing.

Other businesses involved in the school’s construction included SFL+a Architects of Raleigh; general contractor Metcon Inc. of Pembroke; Crawford Design Co. of Fayetteville, which did civil engineering; LHC Structural Engineers of Raleigh; and Optima of Charlotte, the mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer.

For more information, check enr.construction.com.

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The N.C. Clean Energy Technology Center, at N.C. State University, advances a sustainable energy economy by educating, demonstrating and providing support for clean energy technologies, practices, and policies. It also administers the Database of Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE), a resource providing financial incentives and policies.

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