



Arlington Opens a Net Zero Energy Elementary School

By Rick Keller

On October 4th Arlington County Public Schools held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Discovery Elementary, a planned net zero school located off of Williamsburg Boulevard in North Arlington, on the Williamsburg Middle School campus. The school opened its doors to students on September 2.



Students curious about the school's 1,706 roof-mounted solar panels can learn more via a special solar energy exhibit; in addition to solar panels, Discovery has a geothermal well field, solar pre-heat of domestic water, 100% LED lighting, solar orientation, high thermal mass exterior walls and bioretention areas to clean runoff from the site. The school is all electric--no propane or natural gas is used.

Built to accommodate 630 PreK-5 students, each grade level occupies its own specially-themed area of the building and enjoys classroom spaces with a variety of flexible space configurations.

It will be a year before the school can earn official net zero designation, but Arlington Public Schools anticipates that at that time it will become one of only three full-size K-12 schools in the U.S. to achieve that credential. A typical APS school of the same size currently spends \$120,000 annually for energy.

More information about Discovery Elementary and other APS environmental building projects may be found at <http://www.apsva.us/Page/2334>.

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