



# City Hall Academy at the Tweed Courthouse



City Hall Academy at the Tweed Courthouse, New York, NY

**Location:** New York, NY  
**Description:** Seven-classroom education center serving 200 students daily  
**Architect:** Loffredo Brooks Architects, New York, NY  
**ECOsurfaces Representative:** Bob Krinick, Task Floors, Inc.  
**Flooring Choice:** ECOsurfaces Commercial Flooring  
**Honors and Awards:** Grand Prize, StarNet® Commercial Flooring Cooperative Design Awards

When you walk into the Architecture and Urban Planning classroom of City Hall Academy at the Tweed Courthouse, there's no question what the focus of this unique education establishment is. The entire floor is a waterjet-cut technicolor map of New York City. City Hall Academy was created to provide New York City school children with an interdisciplinary learning experience centered around the history and culture of the city. And just as each discipline is a unique way to learn about one

subject, the facility required multiple creative looks with one unifying element.

The challenge fell to New York's Loffredo Brooks Architects. Their goal was to design a space that not only supported the creative and educational goals of City Hall Academy, but also stood up to the practical demands placed on it by a crowd of 200 students every day.

Ultimately, the design integrated the historic beauty of the Tweed Courthouse with the bright colors and creative elements of a stimulating learning environment. At the foundation of this look was ECOsurfaces Flooring. Flooring is a key element in educational settings. Teachers are on their feet for long periods of time, and students often gather on the floor. Resilience becomes extremely important for the comfort of both. The architecture of the Tweed Courthouse included high ceilings of hard plaster, making sound reverberation a consideration as well. These issues quickly tipped the scales in favor of ECOsurfaces recycled rubber flooring. "ECOsurfaces is softer than VCT, making it easier on the body and quieter," Steven Brooks of Loffredo Brooks Architects points out. "It's also warmer to the touch."

In addition to comfort, educational flooring is judged on its durability and ease of maintenance. Again, ECOsurfaces stood out among resilient choices. Its natural resistance to scuffs, scratches, and indentations made it the right choice for a building full of children, and its exceptional stain resistance led Brooks to place it not only in classrooms, but in the cafeteria as well – the ultimate test of maintenance.

ECOsurfaces obviously met the practical considerations for an educational facility, but City Hall Academy was not an ordinary school, and Brooks wasn't about to settle for ordinary flooring. "We wanted to create floor designs that could be part of the learning process in the classroom," he explains. Plus, each room had a specific color scheme. This is where ECOsurfaces really stood above the competition. With more than 83 standard color choices, plus the ability to create custom colors, shapes, and patterns, ECOsurfaces allowed Senior Designer Marcy Newman to design patterns that would reflect classroom themes and act as tools to aid learning and classroom organization.

Brooks had one last standard for flooring in City Hall Academy: environmental responsibility. "This is important to us as a firm,



as well as to the city and the Department of Education," he explains. "The city and schools should be role models for change. Made from post-consumer SBR tire rubber and pre-consumer ColorMill® EPDM flecks, ECOsurfaces can potentially contribute up to 9 points toward LEED® certification of building projects.

City Hall Academy opened to its first class of students in March 2003. Brooks reports that the clients and the children love it, and in 2004, City Hall Academy was awarded the Grand Prize in the annual StarNet® Commercial Flooring Design Awards. The awards recognize those who are setting new standards of creativity in commercial interior design through the innovative use of floorcovering. Maurie Welsh O'Neil, an editor with Floor Focus Magazine and award judge noted, "The most remarkable thing about this project was that while each space has its own individual palette, theme, and personality, the designers were able to achieve all this using a single floorcovering material throughout. It's one of the most creative uses of a single flooring product we have ever seen."