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**WORLD-RENOWNED EDUCATIONAL ARCHITECTURE FIRM  
RELOCATES TO OPEN-CONCEPT, GREEN OFFICE IN PLANO, TEXAS**

*Open concept transforms SHW Group's culture; "living lab" demonstrates future school design*

**PLANO, Texas, April 15, 2008** – SHW Group, one of the world's largest educational architecture and design firms, has officially moved and is operating its North Texas regional office and corporate headquarters in the multi-use Legacy Town Center in Plano, Texas. Set to be certified LEED®-CI (commercial interiors), SHW Group's North Texas architectural team designed this space to be a revolutionary place to work, transforming the culture and creating an entirely new way of conducting business.

"We design learning environments that effectively contribute to the way educators teach and enhance how students learn. We took the same approach as we designed our new working environment, further enabling our people to take collaboration and innovative design to a new level," explains Mark Gerner, managing principal.

The most distinctive element of the new office is its openness – it measures a football field in length. Employees can see from one end to the other as there are no internal walls and the workstations have no obstructions to block views. This offers employees the ability to see the various stages of design taking place – from planning, architecture and engineering to the corporate operations of finance, communications, IT and HR.

SHW Group replaced departmental and seniority-based segregation with what they call "neighborhoods." These groups, currently 14 of them, are comprised of eight people with various backgrounds and specialties, who look to each other for collaboration, connection and support. A winding cork-covered pathway connects the open neighborhoods, journeying through spaces covered by carpet tiles made from recycled materials. The trail provides "wayfinding," a concept that designers use in schools that aids orientation and helps users experience the entire space. The path also offers opportunity for open communication, sporadic meetings and the overall enhancement of teamwork. The physical arrangement of the space furthers the "flat" hierarchy concept by removing enclosed offices and cubicles. Work station location no longer indicates rank, refusing preferential treatment to the managing principal or even, the firm's CEO.

In addition to serving as SHW Group's work space, the new office serves as a "living laboratory." Designers can test the latest innovations in interiors products - such as daylighting, furniture, acoustics and technology - to really understand how they can enhance a learning environment. For example, the space includes a white noise system, displacement ventilation,

indirect lighting, light-shelves at windows for daylight distribution, and the combination of formal and semi-formal furniture to help create flexible private meeting spaces without putting up walls.

With Green principles in mind, SHW Group incorporated eco-friendly features into the space. Adhering to the firm's philosophy that good design is sustainable design, all appliances are Energy Star-certified, and the floors and cabinetry are covered in rapidly-renewable cork and bamboo. Daylight and window visibility reaches 90 percent of team members throughout the workday. Additionally, showers and bike racks encourage non-motorized commuting, while the location within an urban mixed-use area allows employees to walk to destinations for dining, shopping, banking, entertainment and other services.

The focal point of the space is The Cube, a suspended, glass-enclosed conference room that features displacement ventilation and the latest video conferencing technology. Like other conference areas in the office, its transparency offers a visual connection to the rest of the workplace, and the floating room frames a gallery space below.

Turner Construction of Dallas served as the general contractor for the project.

### **About SHW Group**

Specializing in both K-12 and higher educational projects, SHW Group is one of the world's largest educational architecture and design firms. More than just an architecture firm, the company is known for its comprehensive collaboration with educators, cognitive researchers and strategic planners to design innovative facilities that support the learning process. Founded in 1945, SHW Group has grown to nearly 400 employees and seven studios nationwide. For more information, please visit [www.shwgroup.com](http://www.shwgroup.com).

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