Barkley Elementary School is one of the first schools designed under the Department of Defense Education Activity’s new 21st-century education charter, an initiative seeking to create modern learning environments that facilitate a wide range of educational and instructional techniques. Designed by Woolpert, this forward-thinking project earned LEED™ Silver certification in 2017. The new learning center encapsulates multiple 21st-century school design principles in both form and function.

Woolpert’s design includes nine “learning neighborhoods,” each with four flexible learning studios connected to a shared learning hub, and separate one-to-one and small group rooms. Barkley replaced its 1955 predecessor with more sustainable construction materials and higher-performing mechanical systems. Tactics such as natural lighting, geothermal HVAC, thermal envelopes and solar water heating make the building eco-friendly while supporting 21st-century education design philosophies. Not only innovative and energy efficient, Barkley inspires safe yet dynamic learning with an energy dashboard, photovoltaic array, tubular daylighting, LEED signage, visible mechanical room and green roof area.

Woolpert designers executed the school’s nature-centered theme with carefully selected materials, colors and daylight. From very literal to highly abstract, Woolpert’s design evokes the feeling of a forest canopy while generating a stimulating, secure and exciting educational experience.