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EDUCATION

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Unveils Second U.S. SEED Classroom

The Pittsburgh site aims to host another Living Building Challenge–certified building with this modular facility.

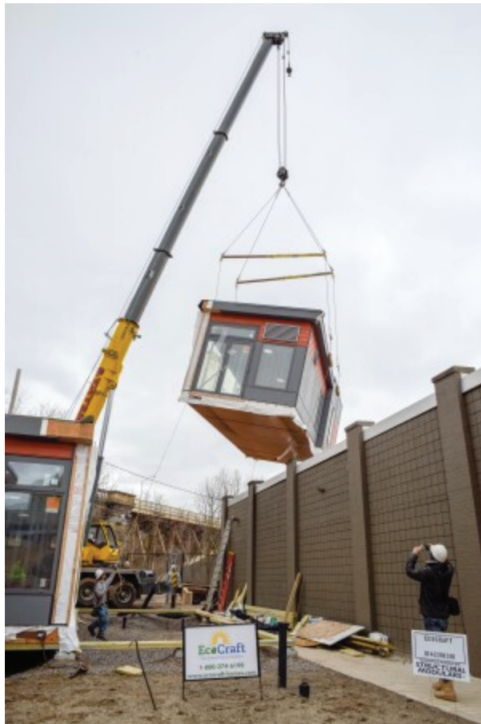
By [CAROLINE MASSIE](#)

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens executive director Richard Piacentini stands in front of the newly installed modular classroom.

Later this month, the [Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#), in Pittsburgh, is debuting a sustainable modular classroom designed to [Living Building Challenge](#) (LBC) standards. The classroom joins the site's [Center for](#)

[Sustainable Landscapes](#), which [received full LBC certification](#) last week. As the new home of Phipps' science education programs, [the classroom](#) is developed by [Sustainable Education Every Day \(SEED Collaborative\)](#), a Seattle-based organization that develops sustainably restorative learning spaces.



Paul G. Wiegman

The installation of the modular classroom.

The Phipps building is the second SEED classroom in the country, following [the Perkins School](#) in Seattle. The designs of the two spaces are similar, but SEED Collaborative executive director and designer of the Phipps space Stacy Smedley tweaked the overall plan for the Pittsburgh classroom, adding a vestibule and French doors that open onto a deck.

A [2013 report](#) from the Modular Building Institute estimates that the U.S. has approximately 260,000 modular classrooms in use. While often considered a convenient solution for schools to expand, modular classrooms can also pose potential health and environmental

risks, such as [poor indoor air quality](#) and [toxins](#).

To meet LBC requirements, the SEED classrooms feature materials that are free from the [International Living Future Institute's Red List](#), produce their own water and energy, treat and recycle all sanitary and stormwater on site, and have an [energy recovery ventilator](#) for optimum ventilation and indoor air quality. The spaces are built to last 100 years on a foundation system, reducing the environmental impact on its site and allowing the modular classroom to be moved or remain permanent.

"Phipps has demonstrated leadership by being the first on the East Coast to embrace a SEED Classroom," Smedley said in a press release. "We are excited to be a part of Phipps' continued commitment to educating children and adults on the important role that the built environment should play in restoring planetary and human health. This space will be a hands-on learning laboratory, informing how we think about a Living Building designed classroom as a tool for education and engagement."

The modular classroom arrived at the site on March 17 and will officially open on April 23.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Caroline Massie

Caroline Massie is a former assistant editor of business, products, and technology at ARCHITECT and *Architectural Lighting*. She received a bachelor's degree in American Studies and English from the University of Virginia. Her work has also appeared in *The Cavalier Daily*, *Catalyst*, *Flavor*, *The Piedmont Virginian*, and *Old Town Crier*. Follow her on Twitter at [@caroline_massie](#).