To transform a vacant storefront next to the Prospect Park subway station into a 2,800 sq. ft. parent-run cooperative day care center, perhaps the only day care center in a subway station in the country, Pratt Planning and Architecture Collaborative (PPAC) had to overcome a variety of challenges. They had to gain approval for their plans through a rigorous review by the formidable MTA bureaucracy. After being abandoned for five years, the entire roof structure and north masonry wall had to be rebuilt and the mezzanine expanded. They had to research appropriate materials and develop construction details for encapsulating a toxic residue left behind by the previous tenant, a dry cleaner, on a bridge structure constantly vibrating from subway and bus traffic. Finally, just getting new water service pipes into the building around the bridge structure necessitated employing extensive technology.

The result, though, is one floor plus mezzanine of sunny play and learning space for 50 children located 75 yards from Prospect Park and five steps from the entry to the subway station, thereby addressing two primary concerns of urban parents: day care and transportation. Complying with the requests of the school building committee, PPAC maximized the use of environmentally benign or “green” materials to the extent possible. The school committee was also very adept in obtaining a combination of private and public funding to cover the eventual budget of $850,000. The school moved into the new spaces, its third location in its twenty-five year history, in September 2001, and the children are not learning above their station. The project received an Honorable Mention from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce at their “Building Brooklyn Awards 2002” reception.