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# A SCHOOL MODERNIZATION PROGRAM THAT REINVIGORATED AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY 2017 MACCONNELL AWARD SUBMITTAL

After a complete overhaul of its middle school, Jordan School District now experiences significantly higher engagement and a marked change in community attitude toward the importance of 21st century learning environments.



The Minnesota River, its tributaries, and native hunting trails were the only routes of transportation for nearly two decades after the real settlement of Scott County began in the mid-1800s. River travel gave way to railroad through an almost exclusively agricultural region. Most settlers became farmers and small towns sprang up to support them. Today, urban sprawl and suburbanization are changing this primarily rural county. Industry has taken hold, and transportation issues play a primary factor in recent development. As the fastestgrowing county in Minnesota, increasing 55% between 1990 and 2010, municipalities struggle with responsible growth management, expanding infrastructure, and the preservation of open spaces.

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WELCOME

TO

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The City of Jordan was platted in 1854 and incorporated in 1891. By the late 1850s Jordan had a hotel, churches, school, tavern, post office, two mills, and a number of new homes. Twenty years later general stores, breweries, hardware stores and more churches sprang up. By 1880 the village consisted of about 640 acres and 915 residents. Today the City is a relatively young and rapidly growing community with a population of 6,500. It is a part of the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area, located 35 miles southwest of the Minneapolis central core. Like Scott County, Jordan is also experiencing strong growth with a population increase of 44% between 2000 and 2010. City staff expect the population to increase over 100 people annually.

The effects of growth and urban sprawl are felt in Jordan, as in many exurban communities, contributing to a polarization in the community between the newly arrived residents and young parents, and those who have lived in the rural community for generations. Any plan for school facilities would have to be supported by both groups in order to be successful. Finding common ground and a shared sense of ownership between these constituencies was an essential step for the project to move forward.



<sup>66</sup> The building was difficult to navigate and it wasn't warm or inviting.

WELCOME

JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

TO

JORDAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

<sup>66</sup> It was formerly a high school with four or five hallways and lots of isolated classrooms. Many of the classrooms were completely internal with no windows and no daylight. Nothing functioned in a modern, collaborative sense.<sup>99</sup> Superintendent Matt Helgerson Jordan Middle School was constructed in 1964. A major addition doubled the building's size in 1969; however the school's interior components, including classrooms and instructional areas, remained in their original condition. Year after year for nearly half a century students filled the halls and classrooms of a facility that was rapidly aging before the community's eyes. Generations of families attended the beloved school, but its core could not support the demands of 21st century learners.



In nearly every area of the middle school there were deficiencies and areas requiring repair. The building was still workable, with no major health risks for students. But the maintenance issues had accumulated until they were simply out of reach. Teachers were still educating students who did well on state tests, and lots of positive things were still happening in the school. But the learning environment was sorely lacking. **"Our space just needs updating,"** said Tammy Randolph, a teacher at the middle school, while leading a tour through the most problematic areas of the building. **"All of the spaces need to be updated and need to** *fit with the needs of students today.*"



The classrooms and their configuration were limiting the ability to support current educational needs and would be insufficient to deliver the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) program that the District sought to provide. Mechanical and electrical systems had outlived their useful lives and were in need of replacement. Improving the building's energy efficiency would necessitate replacing insulation, installing new windows and doors, and tightening the building's envelope. The design team initially discerned that the building was structurally sound. However, in order to meet the needs of today's students, the facility needed a complete overhaul.



This is the Vision set by the Jordan Middle School project team early in the process. That vision is rooted in the district's Mission Statement, "Inspire a caring community to ignite learning, innovation, and success for all." This vision served as a touchstone through the discovery, consensus-building, design, and refinement stages of the project. To **accommodate a variety of student learning styles**, team leaders looked to focus on a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) program while **incorporating 21st century learning environments – allowing students to learn in new ways**. By using the entire building as a learning environment, Jordan Public Schools changed the their middle school curriculum is being delivered in a new adaptable facility.



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# the proposed solution...



Assures a safe environment educationally rich for students and





Leads the district into the future with a modern plan for education





Maximizes use of the existing facility



Provides the best opportunities for students and education



Creates a central school-community gathering area, at the heart of the school



Creates flexible and technologyrich environments

# The design team was faced with three options for the middle school:

address deferred maintenance and code issues re-use the existing "bones" of the building but overhaul the interior to create an entirely new educational environment with updated systems build an entirely new middle school

Within the community, two opinions presented themselves: "use what we have" and "build new." To work with the community, the design team saw a middle ground in the second option. The major renovation of the existing building would honor the history of the school, maintain the district's single academic campus of all district schools, and support a true middle school concept. It would be possible to make the old middle school look, feel, act, and behave like a brand new facility.

While the base envelope of the existing middle school building had "good bones," the mechanical and electrical systems needed to be updated. The existing space no longer functioned as an optimal educational facility. The plan essentially provided a "new" building that reused the steel and concrete structure of the current building. With a budget of \$35 million the district and taxpayers saved nearly \$12 million – the estimated differential of building a new middle school – by reusing the structural components which were in good condition and were only a fraction of the way through their approximate 150-year lifespan as opposed to paying a significant cost for their removal and replacement.



Together, the District and the architect created a plan encompassing strategic additions and renovations to maximize the usability of the existing building, while creating a wide array of flexible NextGen learning spaces. The Jordan Middle School design provides a balance of space types, between open and closed, large and small, with permanent and flexible wall configurations. The building allows for a variety of student-teacher ratios, supporting inquiry-based lessons, making and creating, and collaborative activities.



A 13,500 SF addition provides classrooms, labs, flexible learning areas and support spaces to the academic pods. The new configuration also creates a new public entry with improved security and direct sight lines from the administrative suite. A creative adaptation of the building's core, using existing structural columns and raising the roof an additional 15 feet, houses an expanded mechanical system and brings natural light deep into the central commons area through a series of clerestory windows. Significant renovation of approximately 75,000 square feet created flexible and reconfigurable classroom and lab spaces in each of two Academic Clusters, the Commons, Media Center, Administrative Suite, and locker rooms. Moderate remodeling of approximately 31,000 square feet provided upgrades to the Food Service, Industrial Technology, and Stage areas. Minor updates to 18,000 square feet touched music and other support spaces.

The building's energy efficiency and thermal comfort were enhanced by a new roof and tightened building envelope. The school's exterior skin and insulation were replaced, including an exchange of all leaky and deteriorated windows and doors for new energy-efficient openings. Both mechanical and electrical systems were updated, along with expanded phone, data, and CCTV systems. SCOPE

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The design team worked with the district to develop a strategic master plan -are-assessment of all District facilities.

A community-based process addressed the guestion, "What do we want to become and where do we want to be?" Board members sought a design to keep maintenance costs low, increase efficiency, improve security, and develop a maintenance plan. An HVAC improvement plan, identified as the most impactful upgrades with the greatest return on investment, was implemented in three phases and completed in 2010.

The District decided a more comprehensive facilities master plan was needed to holistically address all building needs.

> Through the analysis of district facilities, the middle school was far and away the most in need of attention, scoring the lowest on both Physical and Educational Adeguacy assessments. The community input sessions reflected the polarization within the community and the Board was concerned about lukewarm voter support.

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Engaging stakeholders in a participatory planning process, the design team led the facilities group through a six-phase process to assess facilities, develop options, engage the larger community in evaluating options, refining solutions, and building community support for a building referendum.

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With strong community preference for a fiscally conservative solution, options focused on addressing deferred maintenance needs and addressing educational adequacy needs with minor additions at the middle school. While this solution found acceptance by some, young families (the district's primary stakeholders) were not enthusiastic.

A new superintendent, Matt Helgerson, arrived in May with big ideas about transforming middle school education delivery. He began his career as a teacher in the Jordan School District and knew the building and community well. The school board saw Mr. Helgerson as a bridge builder in his previous position, a consolidated district that knit together two communities. Those skills would serve him well as he worked to build support for a new vision.

*"I knew the middle school needed attention, but I wanted the project to focus more than on a building. I called a Facilities Committee to tour other sites and see what has possible," said Helgerson. "By building consensus between the 'build new' and 'use what we have' camps, we were able to envision a way to appease both constituencies and really make a difference."* 

**Kick Start** 

The Facilities Committee included members representing district administration, principals, the Board of Education, teachers, the community, and the architectural design team. Comparing construction costs for new versus renovation, the Committee chose to honor the existing community asset while integrating 21st century learning

environments. By December the vision encompassed a complete re-imagining of education spaces with grade-focused pods, break-out spaces, a central commons and media center area. The Facilities Committee supported this vision wholeheartedly, it was time to convince the community.

Superintendent Helgerson knew the new middle school program would be eagerly accepted by families throughout the district, many of whom are professionals who expect the integration of technology and a wide range of course options. But this new way of teaching had to be embraced by the teaching staff for it to be successful. District administrators began a focused Professional Development program to learn how to use a flexible building. Teachers were encouraged to explore new ideas about middle school programs, to be more creative with lesson design, and think about ways of creating an interdisciplinary hands-on approach to instruction. As they became more excited about the possibilities a re-imagined school might offer, the staff became some of the strongest supporters of the planned renovation.





Project stakeholders carried out a multi-media communication plan in support of the referendum questions:

#### District website had a section devoted to the middle school plan including:

- Short videos with sketches of the proposed renovations.
- FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) Section.

#### Engagement of Superintendent Helgerson with the Community through:

- Nearly 50 meetings with numerous civic organizations, social clubs, senior groups, and neighborhood groups to describe the vision and build support throughout the community. Roughly 1,000 people were reached during this process.
- Seeking out members of the older generation to build relationships and trust.
- Open listening sessions with the community.

#### Physical Materials including:

- Series of letters to the editor in the local paper from Supt. Helgerson, parents, and key stakeholders.
- Series of 5 focused fliers were mailed to all residents within the district's boundaries.





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The design team began user group meetings with the staff in August 2014. Two different groups contributed to the project design. Two different groups contributed to the project design, the community-based pre-referendum team and a representative staff committee. These groups met throughout the six-month design process. Their initial work focused on tours of other area middle schools and evaluation of future middle-grade education programs.

It was imperative that the project design work in concert with the District's evaluation of curriculum and pedagogy; all decisions were based on the District's vision for a student-focused educational experience. Three conceptual options were developed and prioritized before seeking approval from the School Board. After a series of discussions, refinements, and more discussions, a final concept was selected and the design team began its work of flushing out the details. Multiple bid packages allowed construction to begin in August.

gether. By the end of the process, the community was an integrated and inter-connected team.



### Watershed Moment

Many of the components of the Building Committee's renovation plan, originally proposed before Superintendent Helgerson's arrival, were re-configured in response to his vision for a modern middle school model. in addition to a variety of stakeholder conversations happening throughout the community. Grade-level classroom clusters evolved into two pods of integrated classroom, lab, and break-out spaces that supported flexible scheduling options and personal connections. After reviewing with the Design Team numerous options, the Board felt strongly that relocating the main entry and administration area to the east provided the best balance of "front door" visibility, site traffic safety and connection to other District facilities. This was not the first choice of the Design Team as they prepared for that particular design review meeting and somewhat reluctantly heeded the Board's decision.

This could have marked the beginning of a combative and stressful relationship, but instead became a watershed moment of the community of Jordan's active engagement in the design. As the School Board took ownership of this particular decision, they sparked community constituents to embrace this project and to dream about the

building's possibilities. As the design evolved and developed over time, the design team fully recognized and capitalized on the originally hidden gems of the selected option. Numerous ideas and concepts began popping as the staff were empowered to take ownership of the project and its success.

Decentralizing the Media Center, creating "service windows" for tech support, staffed by both students and teachers, developing an Art Gallery showcasing student and staff work, creating a student supplied and managed Snack Counter, and integrating Professional Learning Community space in each of the two academic clusters to encourage a team approach to interdisciplinary collaboration are some of the ideas that came out of the process.

In September, the Board decided to present two questions to voters. The first asked for \$29.345 million to completely renovate the existing middle school, modernizing and reconfiguring the floor plan and adding a second gym. The second question asked for \$5.245 million to build a community center with two more gyms (for a total of three when combined with the gym in Question 1), an elevated indoor track, and additional multipurpose spaces. Including the Community Education and Recreation Center, or CERC, in the building plans gave residents who didn't or no longer had school-aged children a reason to support the bond referendum. It responded to community voices calling for affordable recreation and community space close to home.

By providing community-use facilities as a component of the middle school renovation plan, the district saw an opportunity to provide some of the desired spaces that align with both their Physical Education and Community Outreach objectives.



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Program DetailsBUDGET School Addition and Renovation \$13,000,000 CERC Addition \$5,400,000 Total Project BudgetCERC Addition\$5,400,000 \$34,590,000
Academic Addition 13,466 SF Classrooms (6) Labs Flexible Learning Areas Support Spaces
Major Remodel of Existing Building 75,000 SF Classrooms Lab Support Spaces Media Center Cafeteria Office Areas Entry Locker Room
Moderate Remodel of Existing Building 31,000 SF Food Service Industrial Art Office Areas Stage
Minor Remodel of Existing Building 18,000 SF Gymnasium Music Support Spaces
Exterior Envelope - New Features eligible for rebates Exterior Wall System with Improved Insulation New Windows Doors Roof
Mechanical Upgrades - New Features replaces 49-year-old system Hot Water Boilers Fin Tub Radiation Air Handling Units Chilled Water Piping Digital Controls and Wiring Automated Sprinkler System Water Heaters Domestic Water Piping Hydronic Heating Water Piping Plumbing Features (as required)
Electrical Upgrades - New Features replaces 49-year-old system Lighting Features Power Supply with Associated Wiring and Accessories
<b>Special Systems - New &amp; Renovated Features</b> replaces 49-year-old system New Firm Alarm and Intercom System Expanded Phone, Data, and CCTV Systems Site Upgrades Renovated Tennis Courts Renovated Fields Resurfaced Parking and Drives

"My advice to others who consider renovating older buildings is to hire teams you trust then trust your team. Do not micromanage construction, but clearly identify needs and priorities. Involve students in decision-making whenever possible."

Superintendent Matt Helgerson



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The design team and district administrators worked closely with the construction management team to develop a construction schedule that allowed the building to be completed in phases. During these phases, students continued to go to school in the current middle school in safe environments conducive to learning while construction occurred in other sections of the building. The goal was to create the new academic spaces first to allow for classrooms to shift during the construction process.

Continuing its efforts to knit the various constituencies together into a stronger community, the district augmented its communication efforts while sharing the vision and progress of work at the middle school. A new "design central" section of the district's website featured processes and progress of the new facilities. It was a multi-media site with static design concept images, short videos, construction schedules, progress pictures, web cam with construction progress, design team member names, FAQs, and a virtual tour of the new building. QR codes linking to this section were published in district materials, mounted on the fencing surrounding the construction site, and published in the local newspaper.



Welcome Design Timeline and Comm Structure Design Renderings Progress Photos Video Design Tours Ask a Question RSchool Login

Search



Where is Tech Support! "Since this design process started we've been doing a lot of **professional development**, it's been an interesting journey. I **dream** of what I'd like to do and **the building** will let me do any of those things I've dreamed about." Middle School Teacher





### **Furnishings**

As construction progressed, the design team turned its focus to decisions about the building's interior. Over a period of three months, designers led a team of forwardthinking, hand-selected teachers ranging in experience and disciplines, to finalize furniture and equipment selection. The group agreed that the furniture types should vary, offering options from soft seating groups, stools, mobile tables with height adjustments, to large meeting tables which

incorporate technology elements and durability. Similarly as to when they visited other middle schools, the team toured local showrooms to gain an insight to the types of furniture and manufactures they might consider.

During the selection process, teachers and students tested two full classroom arrangements and various furniture groupings. An on-line tool allowed students and teachers to provide feedback about the furniture.

Teachers saw different forms of interactions begin to take place within the classroom as students were free to move about freely. New room configurations transformed within seconds from rows to groups. Chairs that swivel and move with casters catered to the students as they worked together on assignments. By taking into consideration the varied ways students learn, the use of built-in marker boards allowed the sharing of information easily and quickly between learners.

Valuable feedback was received from both students and staff. Teachers particularly liked how the new furniture moved with the students and supported a personalized learning environment, while some students preferred the more static furniture. The team found a compromise solution, one that featured both flexible pieces alongside two non-rolling student desk chairs within every classroom. Standing desks were utilized by the taller students who previously had not been offered a comfortable option for their body size.







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"Our first priority is improving the education of our children. Our ultimate goal is to expand middle school elective and exploratory options as well as our technology and curriculum over the next several years in order to meet the needs of all our students."

Letter to the Editor from Superintendent Matt Helgerson





### Learning to use the building

In the months preceding the start of the 2015-16 school year, the design team engaged teachers in a Learning Space Activation process. In a series of workshop-like discussions, leadership members demonstrated several spatial opportunities supported by flexible spaces throughout the school. *Together, teachers learned how to leverage the building's flexible character and better use the dynamic, seamless canvas that it offers. The superintendent emphasized a spirit of experimentation and permission, encouraging staff to try things out and learn from their experiences.* Interdisciplinary teams form and reform as hands-on projects are developed. Learning how to use the flexible spaces is an ongoing process of discovery, one that continues today and into the future.

<sup>66</sup>The adults had to learn how to maximize use of the space, which requires a change in culture and a new mindset. The kids already get it.

We provided training opportunities to the staff so they could explore how they might experiment within their professional learning communities. What was done in the past may have been good, but it can be better."

Superintendent Matt Helgerson



# next steps.



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November 2016



The Master Plan generated in 2011 didn't focus solely on the middle school, it also included planned improvements at the elementary school and high school. In November, the design team initiated conversations about plans for the high school, addressing questions of education delivery that never would have happened 5 years ago. Students have had full use of the renovated middle school for just a year and their experience has had positive reverberations throughout the district. Many residents had no idea how transformative an internal remodel could be. Not only has the building been transformed, but the students and teachers as well. Their excitement is infectious and other district educators want to join them.



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# concepts

Jordan Middle School offers rigorous standards-based curriculum, delivered within 21st century environments where students learn the skills needed to contribute and lead for generations to come. Instructional staff plan and deliver curriculum resulting in learning opportunities where students will critically and creatively problem solve while developing strong collaboration and communication skills.



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#### **STEAM Curriculum**

With the revised middle school, there is an enhanced ability for educational opportunities for all students, including environments that promote STEAM instruction. Maker space labs, flexible learning studios, interdisciplinary spaces and intentional integration of the school's Chromebook technology throughout all spaces encourage students to explore and develop skills in STEAM subject areas.

#### Learner-Focused Personalization

Rather than convey subject matter through lectures, teachers generate project-based assignments that allow students to explore in ways that they learn best. Large-group, small-group, and individual work are all supported and explored throughout the school day.



#### **Environmental Learning**

The entire school, including its natural surroundings, serve as opportunities for learning. Students and teachers maintain the school's rain gardens, learn about native plant species in the gardens and prairie grass surrounding the campus.



#### **Flexible Learning Space**

Modern teaching and learning practices reflect an increased understanding of how people learn best – hands-on, social, and interactive work – supported by new digital media tools. Jordan Middle Schools aims to prepare students for a changing world, accommodating changes for the next 50 years.



#### Multi-Use Spaces (layering of uses and ideas)

Flexible spaces with a variety of formal and casual furniture enable more self-directed learning by students throughout the facility. These spaces can be used individually for smallgroup work or combined for larger scale projects. The furniture choices focused on functionality, sharing, and collaboration.





#### **Spatial Variety**

A mix of learning spaces in each academic pod (large group instructional space, small group instruction spaces, flexible commons and media space, lab space, and breakout learning spaces) allows teaching teams to engage different spaces as students work on projects, and allows students to explore the kinds of space in which they learn best.

#### The Community Use

The Community Education and Recreation Center, or CERC, provides fitness, activity and exercise space to all residents. The Commons area includes a raised stage with acoustical ceiling, allowing after-school public musical performances. The FACS lab and adjacent snack bar allows students to sell their concessions to performances in the Commons and those who are using the CERC.



#### **Community Engagement**

As programming shifts to meeting the changing needs of the community, the new CERC supports life-long education opportunities for multi-generational user groups. The district's continuing efforts at engaging the larger community in conversations has resulting in increased awareness of and interest in what happens at all three district facilities.



#### **Natural Light**

The roof was raised 15 feet over the Commons and main circulation spine, allowing natural light to fill the space. The interior classrooms receive natural light coming from the building's core through clerestory windows. Natural light floods the fitness center and community room through floor-to-ceiling windows. From the gym, a two-story window faces to the fields and trees beyond, bringing the natural world into the enclosed space. Narrow elongated openings, reminiscent of a birch tree forest, are etched into the precast concrete exterior bringing daylight into the gym.

#### **The Commons - Functional Variety**

The centrally-located commons serves as the primary community gathering area where students eat lunch, and can be used throughout the school day including an ad hoc "mountain top" teaching environment, or a formal performance area. High table nooks built into the perimeter are available to both students in small-group work or teachers in individual or team prep. Collaboration stations with LCD monitors ring the commons and allow students to plug in and share presentations with each other. The building features several Wired Stations, raised countertops with multiple plug-ins for laptop use so that students can focus on individual work or share in small groups. The commons is both an extension of the media center and the art studio, providing gallery space and a physical manifestation of arts integration into everything the school does. One service window, staffed by teachers and students, provides tech support while another serves snacks during lunch and after-school activities.

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#### The CERC (Community Education and Recreation Center)

With 6,500 residents, Jordan's population has nearly doubled over the last 15 years. Before the CERC addition there was no community center or large-scale fitness facility in town. During community meetings in 2012, facility committee meetings in spring and summer 2013, and explorations between the city and school partnership group, a clear message from the community was the desire for affordable recreation and community space that was close to home. While the school district was not in a position to build and operate a full-fledged Community Center, it could provide some of the desired spaces that aligned with the district's Physical Education and Community Outreach objectives.

To operate the facility, the District expanded an existing joint powers agreement with the City of Jordan to include shared use of a facility that responded to both the middle school's need for additional physical education space and the community's desire for recreation space. The District insures and maintains the facility, which it owns, and has priority for scheduling classes, events, or rentals. The fitness area and one of the three new gym stations is reserved for student use during the school day. An indoor track, multipurpose community room, and two additional gym stations are available to community members throughout the school day as well as during expanded operating hours.

In addition to athletics and recreation, the facility is designed for the senior citizens, young children, and families to enjoy and benefit from for years to come. The multi-purpose room can be used for a wide variety of events and activities including fitness classes, birthday parties, or meetings. Adjacent catering and serving areas are provided to those who use the community room.

An additional parking lot for those who use the CERC is located on the south side of the building, apart from the staff parking lot and bus loop. It has a separate public entrance and monitored, secure doorways between the CERC and the school itself. Video monitors provide additional security to on-site staff who are present during all service hours.

The community has embraced the CERC in a way that far exceeds expectations. When projecting usage rates and user fees, members of the joint powers board hoped that 150 families and individuals would purchase daily, monthly, or annual memberships. Now, after less than a year of operation, the CERC has more than 700 active memberships serving 1,100 people.



# "I knew you were going to remodel the school, but I had no idea you meant this! It's like there's a whole new school here!" Open House Attendee

The open house held in December 2015 gave residents an up-close and personal look at the designs that had been developed on paper for nearly four years. Across the board, reactions were positive, energetic, and delighted. As teachers continue to learn how to use their new space there is a deeper, richer engagement than first envisioned in the original vision statement. Engaging and challenging all students in new and different ways continues to drive the teaching staff, as they explore, experiment, play, and dream of new ways to incite the passions of their students.





## Security

The design facilitates improved site circulation by creating separate car drop-off and bus loop pathways, increasing safety for both pedestrians and riders. A new double door entry creates a vestibule with locked inner doors once the students have arrived. During the school day visitors enter the office through the vestibule and receive passes to enter the building. The CERC features a separate public entrance and monitored, secure doorways are located between the CERC and the school itself for additional security. In addition to staff presence at both school entry points, video monitors provide another component of the school's security system. Interior transparency enhances the relationships between students and staff.



# Collaboration

Stations created in centralized areas for planned or "incidental" meetings, quiet spaces available for small meetings or individualized work designed for brief periods and focused work, are sprinkled throughout the buildings. Students and staff can find a number of places to work together, appropriate to the project and technology support needed for each assignment or project.

### Genius hour

jordan school district

The Middle School and High School staff implemented a Genius Hour starting in the 2016/2017 school year. Using the half day school release time, teachers are encouraged to explore their passions by digging into a topic – alone or with partners – that might enhance classroom learning. Over the school year teachers use early release or staff development time to develop their ideas, present to the staff, and share their classroom successes and observations. Staff are now taking more risks, engaging at a higher level with colleagues and students, and working more diligently on tasks when compared with tasks that are driven by administration. Students are also being given the opportunity to work on "genius hour" projects and MS and HS course development now includes genius hour courses.

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# Intra-district envy

With the completion of the middle school project, the facilities team is assessing the district's elementary and high school buildings for educational adequacy and overall building health. Teaching staff at both of these schools have seen what is happening with the learning environment at the middle school and are looking for opportunities to integrate several of those 21st century learning environments into their own schools. Enthusiasm is contagious.

# **Program Development**

The design of the building and the subsequent energy around the possibilities it offers has launched numerous new educational programs that were not considered previously. Many of those programmatic evolutions are centered on interdisciplinary projects as well as multi-disciplinary learning activities. The staff have commented on the ability for the flexible design to meet those varied needs and can imagine further evolution of educational programming that can occur throughout the building.

## Space sharing

Teachers are not assigned to a specific room. Rather, they work with their colleagues to determine an allotment of rooms that best support the instruction model and tasks at hand. The overall space allocation and room configuration can be changed over time in response to increased enrollment or redesigned curriculum.

# **Project-based learning**

"This design allows a true middle school concept to grow and gives us flexibility to try new things," said Helgerson. "Students have the opportunity to work with others to solve problems. Staff have the ability to be more creative with lesson design, creating an interdisciplinary approach with two or three classes working together."

# **Strengthened PBIS**

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) is the system the district uses to manage behavioral issues within the district. The district has noticed a significantly lower number of incidents within the school since the building opened. The interior transparency and improved sense of collaboration throughout the building have contributed to the improved behavior of the students.

# "Casual Collisions"

This school is a place where each student can choose their "right work" environment, where purposeful or casual conversation "collisions" happen, where walls become worlds, where open spaces are never wasted.

