

WILLIAM F. COOKE, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOCKESSIN, DELAWARE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The design intent for the new William F. Cooke, Jr. Elementary School was to create a welcoming and vibrant community school that would inspire students and community alike and create opportunities to learn both inside and outside the classroom. Located on a sloping site alongside a number of residential developments, the building nestles into the contours of the site using multiple levels which distinguish grade clusters and fit the school to the scale of the adjacent community. The Main entry's cross-axial circulation provides for bus and vehicular separation while creating a central entry point highlighted with the "Bus Tank" aquarium and a Lego wall with the centrally located Administration, Media Center, and Community Room functions directly adjacent. The main stairwell is designed to be open and vibrant and act as a beacon of activity and light. The K-1 wing is separated from the two story academic wing housing grades 2-3 on the lower level and grades 4-5 on the second floor. Each wing has centrally located break out learning spaces and teacher support areas. Bright color accents on the exterior and interior serve as both a wayfinding device and enliven the student experience. The design was the result of a deeply collaborative effort between architects, administration, teachers, and students, with student artwork incorporated into multiple design elements. The school was developed to be highly energy efficient through its site orientation combined with LED lighting throughout and a VRF mechanical system. A combination of environmentally friendly and sturdy materials such as brick, stone, and metal panels make up the material palette.

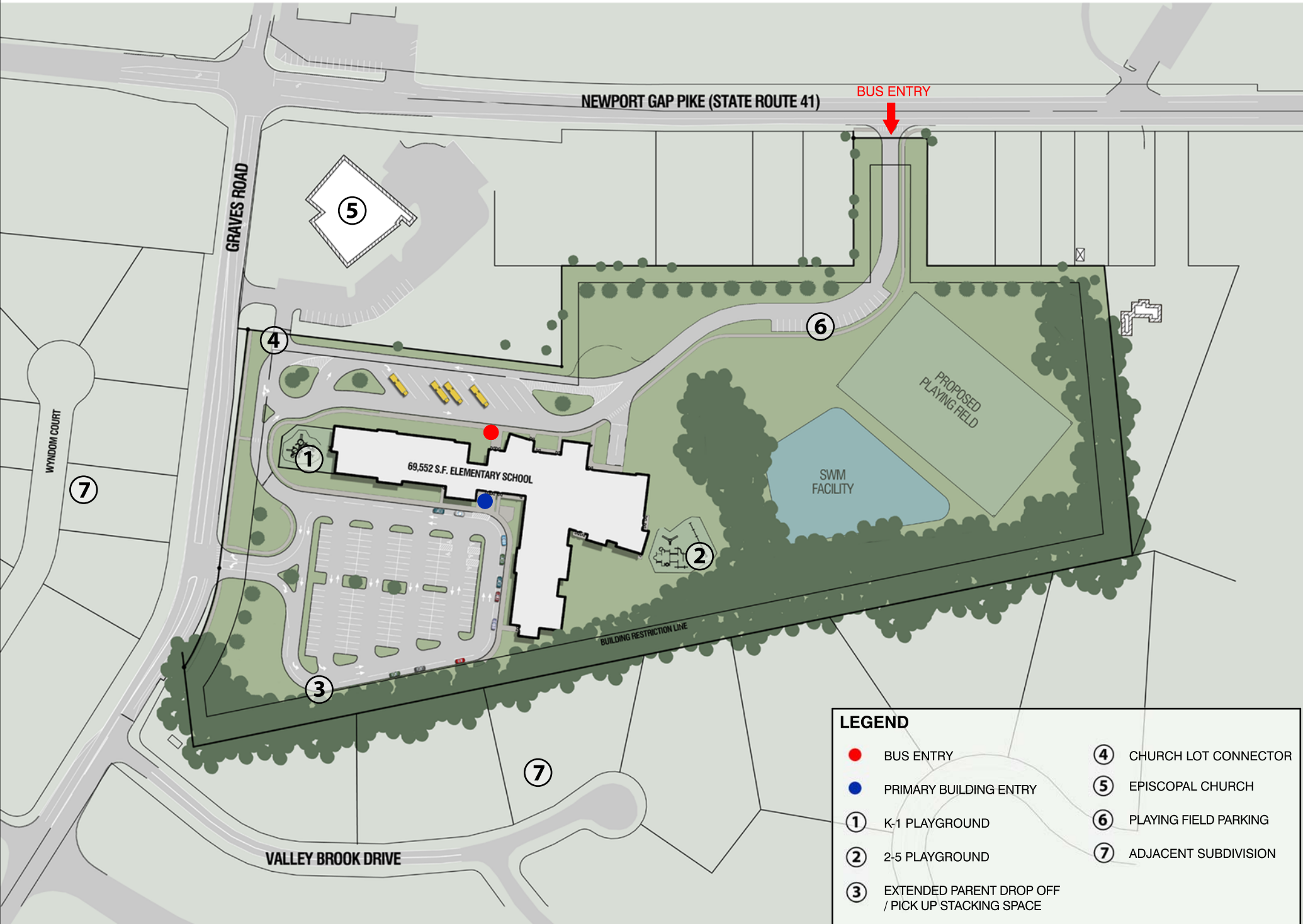
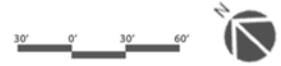











William F. Cooke, Jr. Elementary School was the first new school built in the Red Clay Consolidated School District in the last ten years. The school is designed to enhance a love of learning and provide partnership opportunities for the enrichment of both community and education. Interior and exterior public amenities have been strategically designed to invite community participation in the educational process. The eastern portion of the site is designed to provide community sports activities while the school anchors the western portion with shared circulation and joint use parking with the adjacent church.

CLIENT: RED CLAY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SIZE: 71,186 SQUARE FEET
ACRES: 16.6
CAPACITY: 600 STUDENTS
COMPLETED: JUNE 2015

TOTAL COST: \$20,491,501
SITE DEVELOPMENT: \$1,831,864
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION: \$15,145,687
FIXED EQUIPMENT: \$678,201
OTHER: \$2,679,734





LEGEND	
	BUS ENTRY
	PRIMARY BUILDING ENTRY
	K-1 PLAYGROUND
	2-5 PLAYGROUND
	EXTENDED PARENT DROP OFF / PICK UP STACKING SPACE
	CHURCH LOT CONNECTOR
	EPISCOPAL CHURCH
	PLAYING FIELD PARKING
	ADJACENT SUBDIVISION

William F. Cooke, Jr. Elementary



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The school's placement on its site was driven by topography and its relationship to the adjacent community. The building is tucked into the sloping site with ramps, minimizing the building's scale and its impact on the adjacent residential neighborhoods while still pronouncing itself to be a neighborhood school through the use of color and placement of play areas.

"We once wondered what the architect was doing standing in the middle of our vacant field looking at surrounding properties – we learned the architect was absorbing the environment around our project so as to ensure that the design fit with the surrounding environment - and it did!"

- Assistant Superintendent



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The William F. Cooke Jr. Elementary school site is located in Hockessin, Delaware, a bedroom community of New Castle County, adjacent to a number of suburban subdivisions. The area is highly educated and affluent with a mean family income exceeding \$100k. While attendance boundaries were changed with the new school construction, the challenge was to attract those already attending other schools to switch to this new school in the first year of operation. The School District undertook a series of information and open house sessions while construction was being completed to encourage students to consider the school. The school was named as the result of a District wide input process which sought nominations for consideration. The school's namesake, William "Buzzy" Cooke, Jr. was a beloved teacher and principal in the District for 45 years. Another District principal stated:

"There are people who come into our lives who have an overwhelming impact and change our lives forever. Mr. William 'Buzzy' Cooke is one of those people. During his tenure as an educator, he cultivated a caring, respectful and service oriented culture that many would love to emulate. He was always willing to listen to his staff, students and his community. He did all of this while never losing sight of the most important clients- 'his students'. Mr. Cooke never viewed his role as a school leader as a job, children were and still continue to be his passion. He is our living legend."

It was a memorable opportunity having the school's namesake be an active participant in the design and dedication of the school which he equated to a vessel for learning. This role model of educational excellence was invaluable in helping the community process as the design moved forward, encouraging attendance and input at public sessions.

A centrally located Multipurpose Room off the Main Lobby is designed to be parent centric, encouraging parental involvement in their children's education while also allowing space for parenting classes and community use within the facility. The room is designed to allow use independent of the school as necessary while also functioning as an integral part of the school.



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The "Learning anytime, anywhere" philosophy was supported throughout the design. The learning environments are organized by grade level groupings; this separates younger (K-1) from older students (2-5). Breakout areas are provided within each classroom. Adequately sized classrooms, resource rooms, and small group rooms were programmed to accommodate individual, small group, and project-based learning. Teacher planning rooms were also provided to support collaboration and a team approach to instruction. Computer labs were added in the 2-5 wing for primary use by those students and for testing. Extensive use of natural light in the classrooms and support spaces was integral to the learning environment.

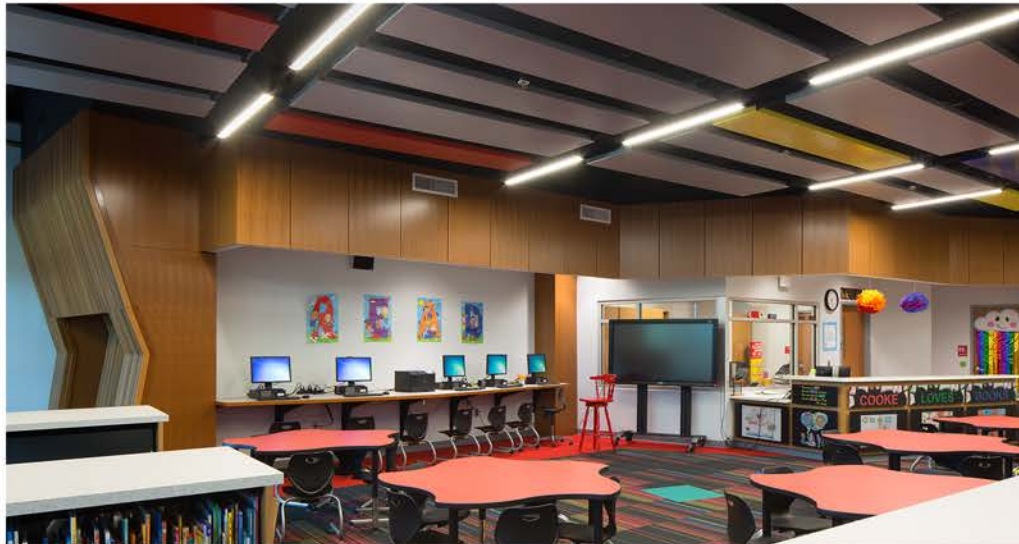


CLASSROOM

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In developing the learning communities of the new school, there was a desire to provide a sense of progress and advancement both physically and mentally. The academic classrooms were divided into three distinct areas with the K-1 group having its own wing and playground area, while grades 2-5 occupy floors of the two-story wing with the older children getting to “climb the stairs”. Each grade cluster has a centrally located breakout space allowing for inclusion and delivery of special needs content to students without impact to their day or location. These spaces are celebrated both architecturally through their location but also in their design and coloration to make them special and desirable to the students who utilize them.

The modern stair mobile is used in geometry class juxtaposed by the stone stair wall tying in the exterior environment. The school is open and airy continuing the connection to the natural environment with views out to the surrounding area at nearly every turn.





EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Beyond the academic spaces, the school and its features were seen as learning opportunities. The bus tank feature becomes a lesson in adaptive reuse while also becoming a platform for science classes who utilize the fish tank, and for community activism as students designate causes for the money they save in the gas tank piggy bank. The LEGO wall was built from a portion of a world record tower the school district undertook prior to construction of the school. These elements further support the "Learning anytime, anywhere" philosophy.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

As a neighborhood school with a growing suburban population, contextual sensitivity and adaptability were major design priorities. The school is open to the environment and ties the students to their site with multiple vistas to the surrounding landscape while the siting acknowledges the impact of the car to suburban life by providing extra stacking space for the plethora of car riding students. The contemporary design speaks to a forward looking educational environment in lieu of mimicking the past. The materials speak to the site, with stone and brick tying the sites rock underlayment, on which the building sits, to the base of the building, then changing to metal to provide an environmentally friendly, recyclable material to the aesthetic.



MAIN STAIRWELL



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Student artwork contests were held during the design process to provide a sense of ownership to the students and community, and encourage creative expression within the school. The Artwork is incorporated into 3-Form panels that face the casework at the Media Center and the Reception Area. Handprint art is also located within the corridors on mounted canvases that become interchangeable.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The gym and cafeteria work harmoniously to serve their daily activities with the ability for reconfiguration into a space for performances. The abundant use of natural light in these spaces enliven the spaces and connect the children to the outdoors. Acoustical considerations make these areas, which are often overwhelmingly loud, easily occupied by multiple groups while acoustical panels provide color and graphic excitement to the spaces. The graphic acoustical panels in both areas promote healthy lifestyles and learning.



GYMNASIUM



HALLWAY



CAFETORIUM

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The main entry is adjacent to the main stairwell which is enclosed in a glazed volume and serves as a beacon for evening activities.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The exterior of the building uses a palette of metal panels and masonry elements to provide a solid, low maintenance environment which is economical and eco friendly. Bright colors serve as a wayfinding device and enliven the student experience both inside and outside the school. These same bright colors occur at the shared spaces within each academic wing at areas of circulation.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

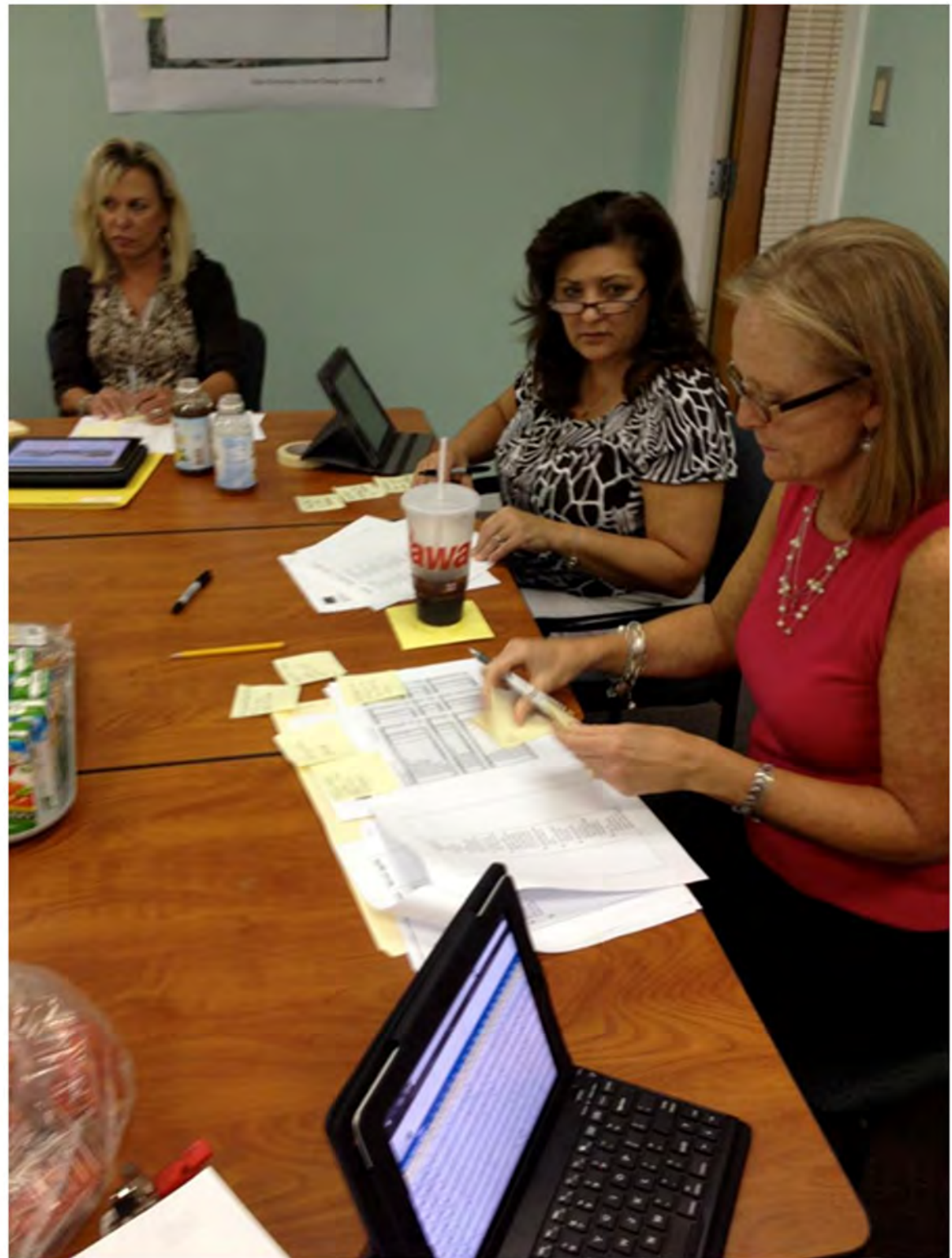
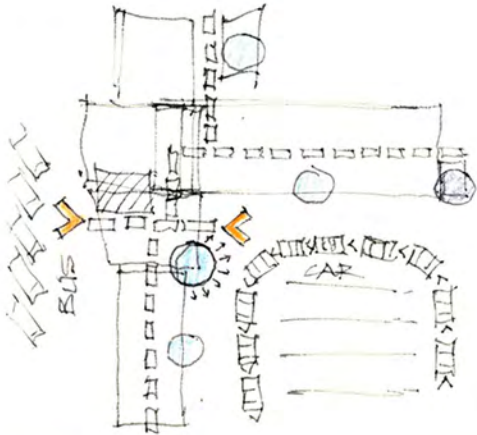
The art and music rooms are designed to provide views to the natural areas behind the school. The Art room features a large glazed opening for natural light while the Music room windows mimic notes on a staff.





PLANNING PROCESS

The project was designed through an intensely collaborative effort where life long learning was key and the results show the positive outcome of this approach. The planning process was the initial part of a 3 year process to promote interest in the new Elementary School in an age of Choice and Charter enrollments. A series of project planning meetings were held to incorporate and involve students, staff, and the local community. Local community meetings were held in the evenings on site at the adjacent church which allowed the project to overcome a series of obstacles and opposition to the potential increase in traffic along the adjacent thoroughfares. These began with public input sessions and ended with presentations tailored to address the concerns raised in the initial meetings. The importance of building and maintaining community interest and support in the project was always at the forefront of the Design team and School District.



PLANNING PROCESS

A series of design charrettes were held with students to get their ideas of what an ideal school should be. Responses ranged from having a McDonalds in the cafeteria to a zipline in the Media Center, but strategies had been developed to solicit legitimate, actionable design recommendations from the students which made the process both fun for the students but beneficial to the design team. The school's mascot was ultimately chosen through a student-centered collaboration as well. The project has been exceptionally well received by the School District, as well as the community, and most importantly by the students. Photos of students in front of the Bus Tank and the Lego wall have become a fixture on social media and all reviews have been stellar to date.

"Our design team was also open to input from the beginning – taking input not just from district employees but from a broad based stakeholder group including community members and our ultimate customers – students. This input was internalized and reconciled with budgetary and construction related constraints to ensure that the District received an outstanding design that exceeded our expectations in every way. Most importantly, the design team adopted our goals and vision so completely that as decision points came up, the design professionals often proposed options that we accepted immediately; but were willing to revisit as often as necessary when we didn't."

- Assistant Superintendent





PRELIMINARY SKETCH



LASER SCAN OF BUS

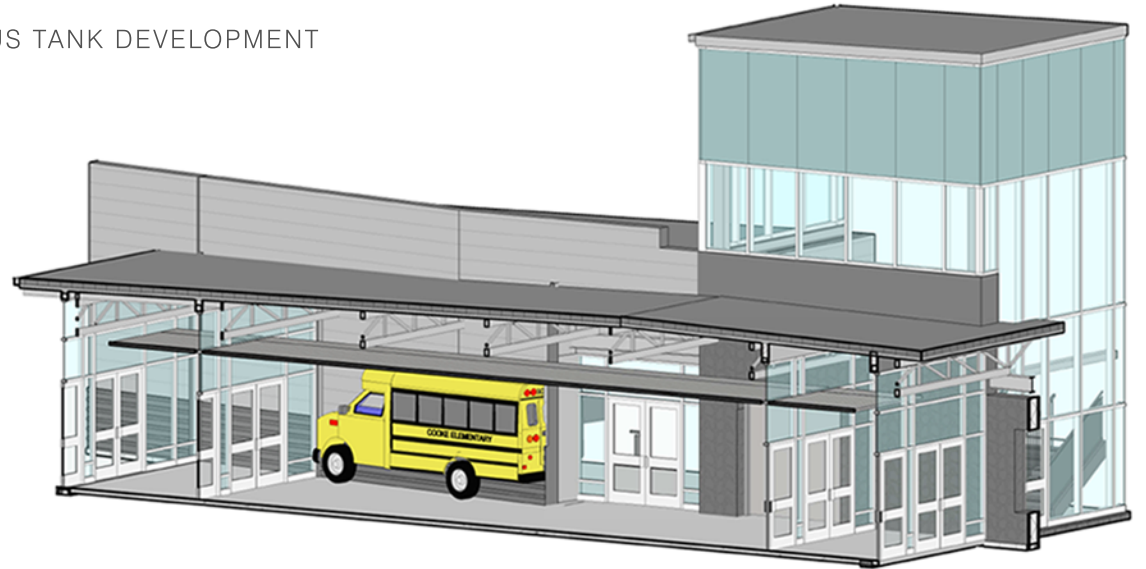


CONSTRUCTION PHOTO

PLANNING PROCESS

The bus tank feature began as a suggestion for a lobby feature with “pizazz” and developed further upon finding an economical solution by using a bus that was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy which was repurposed into a fish tank. Laser scans of the bus by the design team allowed for detailed planning and integration of this aspect of the design. The resulting element has become the school’s trademark feature

BUS TANK DEVELOPMENT



RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

The school's impact on the local community was evident at the ribbon cutting where hundreds came out to visit and enjoy an evening of fellowship and celebration. The school's namesake is known for his dedication to children and the community. At the event he spoke of the school serving as a vessel from which learning can flow and instilling a sense of community and purpose to its inhabitants. His hand written note was incorporated into the reception desk to greet all that enter the school.



I want to welcome all who enter this school! My hope is that you will find a nurturing environment that makes every child and adult feel valued and respected. I have faith that the atmosphere within this building will foster a sense of community and a love of learning. In so doing, may it also encourage a deep desire to use your talents to serve the greater good.

Buzzy Cooke



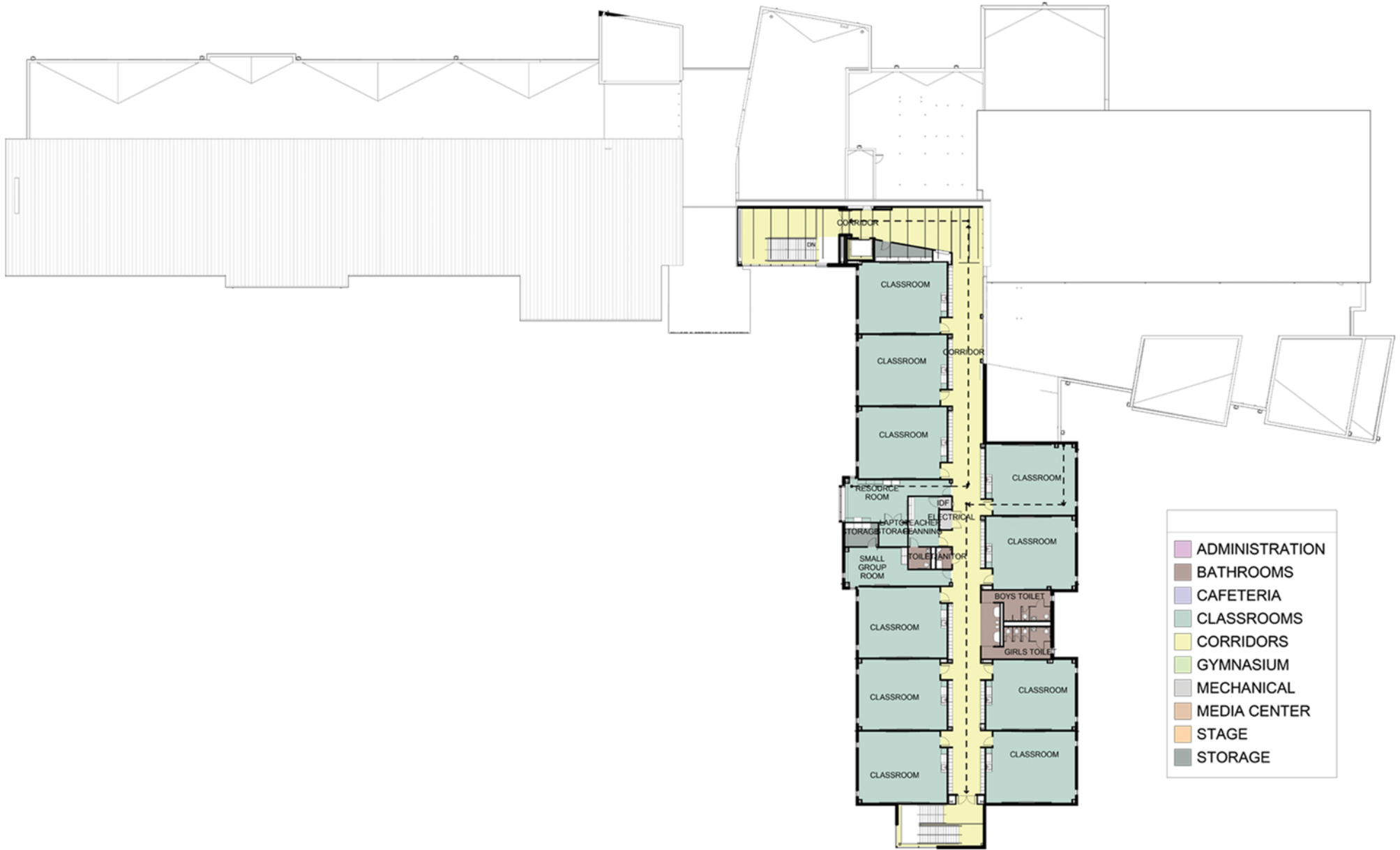
FIRST FLOOR

15' 0' 15' 30'



- ADMINISTRATION
- BATHROOMS
- CAFETERIA
- CLASSROOMS
- CORRIDORS
- GYMNASIUM
- MECHANICAL
- MEDIA CENTER
- STAGE
- STORAGE

SECOND FLOOR



- ADMINISTRATION
- BATHROOMS
- CAFETERIA
- CLASSROOMS
- CORRIDORS
- GYMNASIUM
- MECHANICAL
- MEDIA CENTER
- STAGE
- STORAGE