



# SUNSET RIDGE SCHOOL

Sunset Ridge School District 29 / Northfield, Illinois

2018 A4LE LESOLUTIONS PLANNING & DESIGN AWARDS / CATEGORY: JAMES D. MACCONNELL AWARD





Creating a school with a focus on the future and a connection to the past, for students with unique developmental needs spanning grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, was a challenge.

**Life can only be understood backwards;  
but it must be lived forwards.**

– Søren Kierkegaard, Danish Philosopher

This is the story of the new Sunset Ridge School, where people with diverse histories, shared aspirations, and open minds came together. Where people connected to a common vision, with a willingness to explore an unimagined result. The solution and its outcomes have strengthened an entire community, and will inspire learning for generations to come—**from me, to we, to community**—and beyond.







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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the community of Northfield made the difficult decision to replace its beloved original school—a 1930s two-room schoolhouse that had served its growing population through multiple building additions—a new vision for the future emerged. The new school would go beyond simply accommodating enrollment growth and replacing aging facilities.

**It would inspire each student to be a life-long learner, nurture meaningful connections among students and their peers, and truly highlight the community's rich history and commitment to education. In short, the vision and driving force for the design of the new school emphasized a crescendo of development from “me” to “we” to “community” and beyond.**

## Critical Decisions

Like many school districts throughout the country, Sunset Ridge School District 29 needed to address its aging school building—to renovate the existing school or to build anew. Arguments were valid on both fronts: multiple generations of families within the community had attended the school and the sentimental connections were very strong. On the other hand, the community's view of the importance of education and life-long learning meant they recognized that their educational programs deserved better facilities.

A preliminary design competition allowed for a comparison of both options. Ideas were presented and evaluated based on their ability to support current and future needs, as well as logistical considerations. This thorough approach cultivated unwavering support for the option that would best serve individual students (me), the 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade school (we), and the larger Northfield population (community).

## Meeting Diverse Student Needs

Sunset Ridge School's non-traditional combination of students spanning 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade posed unique challenges during the planning process. How could they most effectively address the needs of students with widely differing social/emotional levels and academic capabilities? They did so by designing grade-level neighborhoods aligned with the varied developmental needs of each student group, as well as “community” spaces to promote multi-grade level interaction. The results were predictable...and unexpected!

## Connecting Stakeholders

Through a collaborative, pre-design community-engagement process that incorporated the voices of residents, parents, administrators, teachers, and students, **goals for the project were developed:**

### LEARNING-FOCUSED

The school must be a welcoming, engaging place that encourages a love of learning, addresses the diverse needs of all students, supports creativity, grows collaborative communication skills, and promotes exploration and innovation.

### STUDENT-FOCUSED

The school's physical environment must link education and curriculum goals with each child's emotional, social, physical, and academic development as they evolve developmentally from “me,” to “we,” to “community,” and beyond.

### COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

The school must strengthen and expand connections between itself and the community. It must also honor the legacy of the original 1930s schoolhouse.

### ENVIRONMENTALLY-FOCUSED

The school must be a teaching tool that encourages local/global sustainability, environmental stewardship, and resource conservation.



## Making Connections a Reality

The result is a school that not only has connected with its community, but has also enabled teachers to engage with students in new ways, facilitated interaction among students within and across grade levels, linked the interior of the building with the outdoors, and connected students and teachers with the building itself.

**Teachers are collaborating in new and exciting ways,** inspired and supported by the options inherent in the new school. The community has embraced the school, attending performances and participating in activities in the new auditorium.

The school is **a showcase of environmental stewardship,** having been planned to achieve Net Zero energy performance and achieving LEED Platinum Certification.

Additionally, the school has made an **important connection with alumni** who treasured their former school building. Elements of the original 1930s two-room schoolhouse have been incorporated into the new school.

Most importantly, however, the school has **already had an impact on its students.** In the first year of occupancy, student academic growth and achievement was higher than the previous 10-year average, and the highest performance in any single year (based on NWEA MAP testing data).

**“It’s so much fun being at the edge of things. When you think of a typical school, it’s not up to date, but we are!”**

– 7th Grader



This is a **story** about **connectedness**—  
a school planned for **me, we, and community.**



# SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

The new 73,000-sf Sunset Ridge School, serves 300 students—a **culmination of community, staff, and student dreams** for an **engaging and innovative place for teaching and learning**. It was **conceived, developed, and built over 18 months**, while maintaining the operation of the existing school adjacent to the new construction. Upon demolition of the existing school, the open space has been restored to a community recreational field and walking paths for children of all ages.

## BY THE NUMBERS:

- 73,000 sf
- Serves 300 students
- Built over 18 months
- \$29.5M total project cost

## The Funding

Through intensive research and planning with the District's financial advisors, a unique financing structure was established. Twenty-five million dollars in capital lease certificates were issued, paired with a District commitment to use a portion of their fund balance for any additional costs. This was structured through a 3rd party (lessor) of the school facility on District-owned land.

The Sunset Ridge School District 29 Education Foundation was re-formed to raise an additional \$1.2 M, which contributed towards enhancements desired by the community. The total cost of the project was \$29.5 M.

## The Support

The budget for the project was adjusted several times to align with developing needs, most notably to include an auditorium to support the Northfield community's strong performing arts roots. Parents also donated time, treasure, and talent to add to the budget for various building enhancements, such as additional theater sound/lighting, audio/visual equipment, and a health classroom/flex room for rock-climbing, yoga, and fitness.

## The Directive

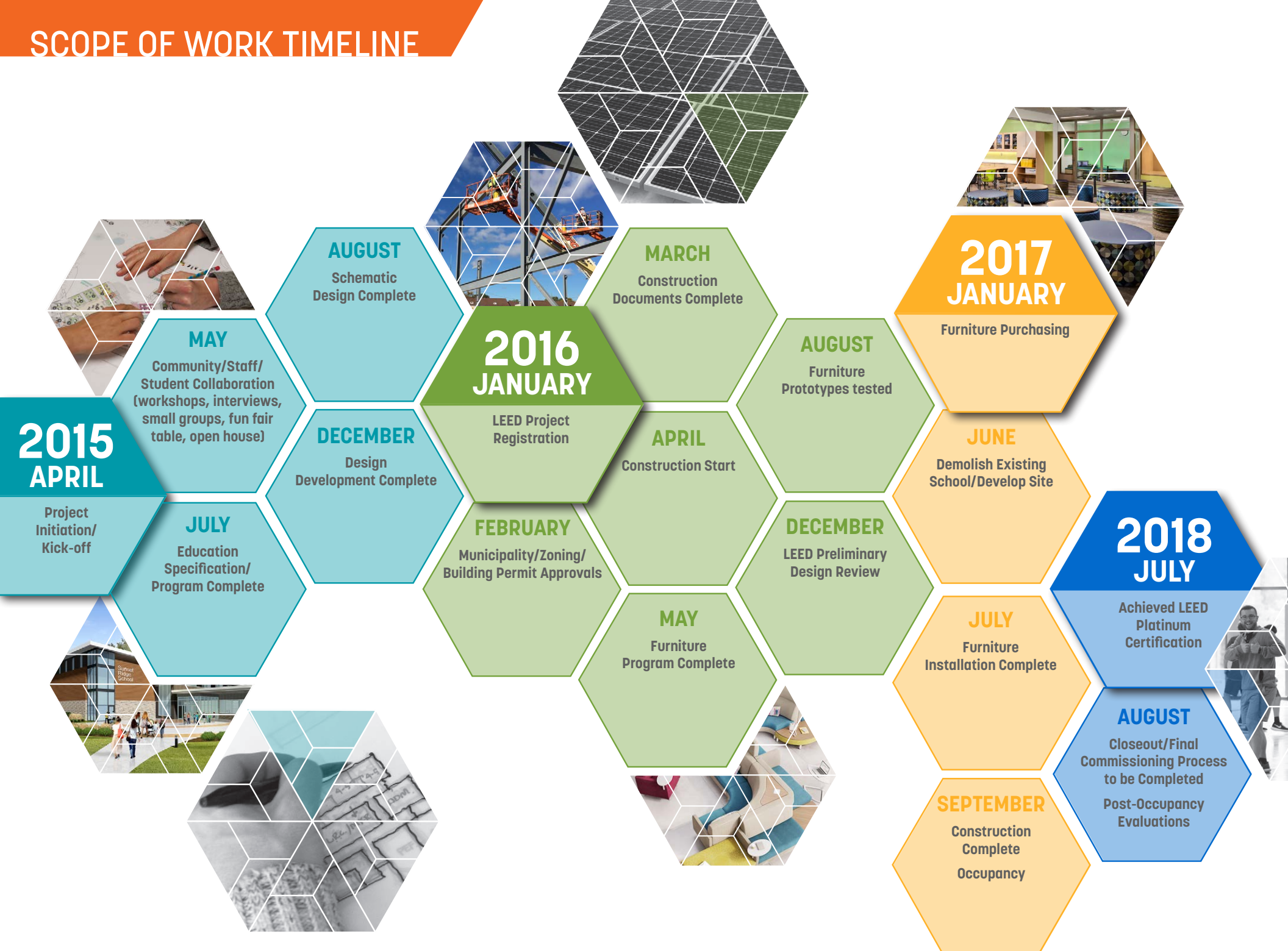
From the early community engagement and programming phases of the project, it was clear that budget constraints would need to be balanced with a "let's do this right" attitude, and the priority of meeting the needs of the community, staff, and students.

Early in the process, the Board of Education established a commitment to a capital project without asking residents to raise property taxes through a referendum. Once it became apparent that a replacement school would be the most prudent investment, significant investigation was needed to balance the commitment of "no additional taxes" to taxpayers.





# SCOPE OF WORK TIMELINE





# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Located in Northfield, Illinois, **Sunset Ridge School serves approximately 90% Northfield residents**, as well as a small portion of neighboring Northbrook.

Northfield has managed to maintain its small-town character in spite of its location within Chicago's affluent North Shore, and the reality that the school district's 476 students feed into nationally acclaimed New Trier High School.

## A Deep Community Connection

Part of the village's character is reflected in the school's strong alumni history; generation after generation from the same families have attended school at Sunset Ridge. Consequently, the decision to replace the original Sunset Ridge School was a difficult one for the community.

As a result, **two design concepts were prepared for community review during the pre-design phase**: The first solution renovated/expanded upon the existing school, and the second explored possibilities for an entirely new school building. The community was invited to view and comment on the solution options during Open House events, feedback sessions, and through an online community engagement platform.

Through the process, it became clear that a number of adjacency, circulation, and accessibility issues could not be adequately resolved in the renovation without tearing down and re-building large portions of the existing facility. Not only was this an expensive proposition, but the community felt that it was an inefficient use of resources. **And so the decision was made to build a new school building.**



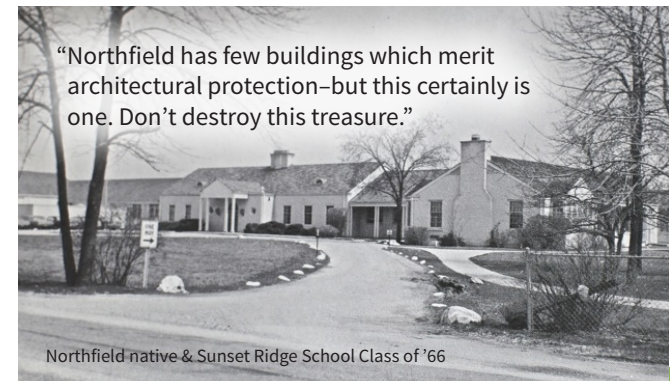
## A four-step approach to planning was employed:

1. Community open house
2. Town hall meetings
3. Student "mini charettes"
4. Staff workshops

## An Inclusive Planning Process

Given the community's connection to the school, engaging them in the planning process, along with teachers, students, and administrators, was imperative. Through a highly inclusive process, visions and goals were established and translated into actionable design parameters.

Throughout the process, many ideas were solicited and many opinions were heard. A series of town hall meetings was held to involve the community in the design process. The community helped to spur innovative approaches to addressing programmatic needs within the budget and time limitations of the project. Special effort was made to actively engage a small group who was still vocally reluctant to part with their old school building, including the original 1930s two-room schoolhouse.



"Northfield has few buildings which merit architectural protection—but this certainly is one. Don't destroy this treasure."

Northfield native & Sunset Ridge School Class of '66

## Sunset Ridge: Demolish Or Renovate?

An unexpected challenge arose from a small group within the community, including alums as far away as France. The daughter of the school house's original founder was opposed to replacing the building, and galvanized a small group of community members to oppose the project. Through personalized building tours, explanations regarding the benefits of a new facility, and a strategic plan to preserve highly historic elements of the original school rooms within the new school, this group was moved from opposition to support.



# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Students** were asked **“What do they want to see in their building?”**

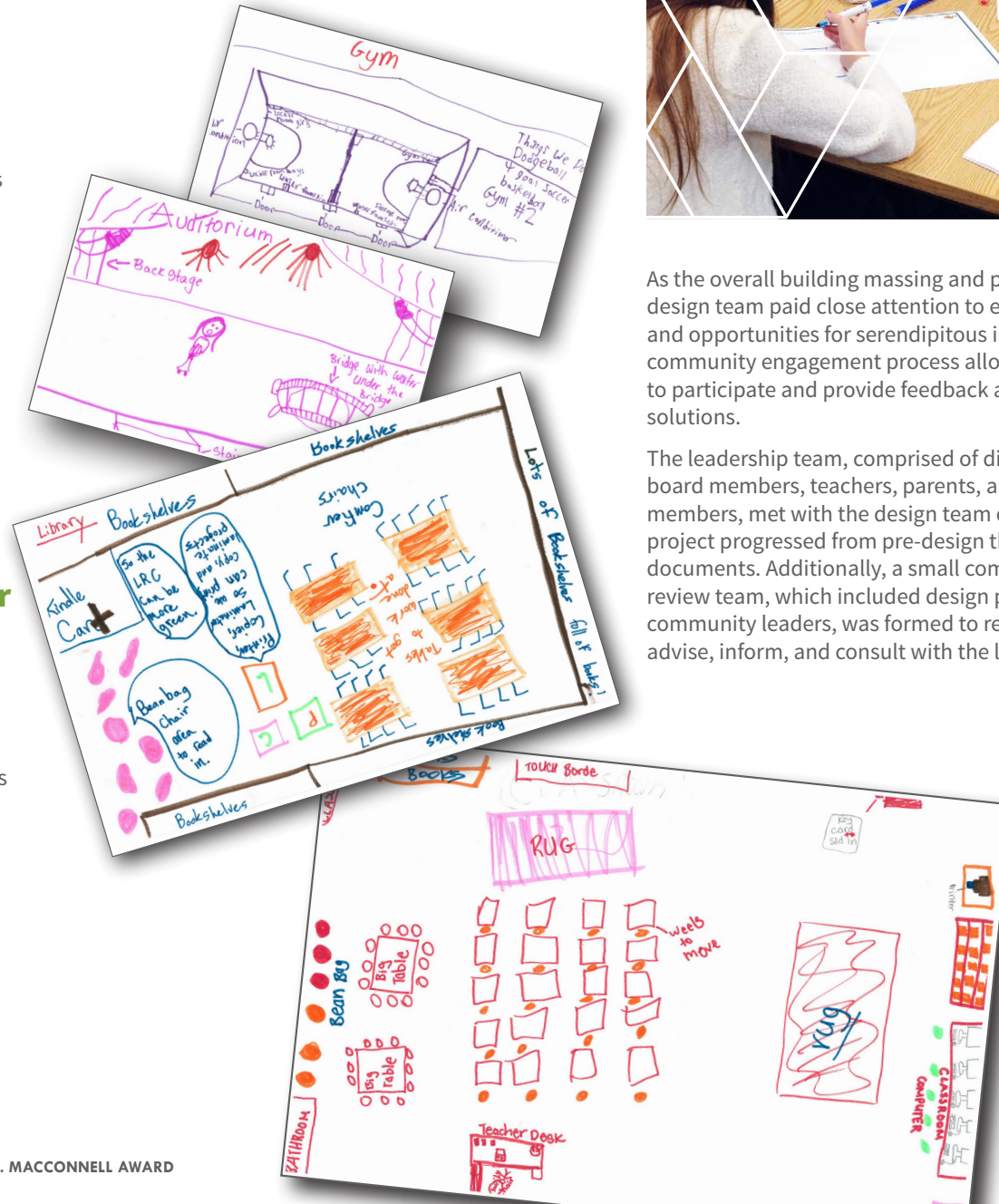
## Gaining Insight, First Hand

The new building was designed from the inside-out, based upon the belief that the key to a great school facility begins with understanding the needs of the individual learners, then designing spaces that help each child connect with and participate in the larger world.

Following the community town hall meetings, staff workshops were held to engage teachers in discussions about individual grade level needs, as well as exploring opportunities to facilitate intra-grade collaboration. The discovery period also included multiple faculty workshops at each grade level and department. These discussions focused on curricular activities as well as spaces.

Students were engaged in **hands-on “mini charettes,”** during which they responded both verbally and with drawings to answer questions such as **“What would make learning fun for you?”** and **“What would make you eager to go to school in the new building?”**

This step was informative in many ways. Feedback informed the team of the unique culture at Sunset Ridge as a result of its 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade age composition. The team also learned firsthand about the varying physical and developmental needs of students, which led to new insights into the importance of agility for small or large group work, while balancing the need for more private, focused activities.



As the overall building massing and plan developed, the design team paid close attention to embedding “moments” and opportunities for serendipitous interaction. A tailored community engagement process allowed stakeholders to participate and provide feedback about the possible solutions.

The leadership team, comprised of district administration, board members, teachers, parents, and community members, met with the design team on a regular basis as the project progressed from pre-design through construction documents. Additionally, a small community-based design review team, which included design professionals and community leaders, was formed to review progress and to advise, inform, and consult with the leadership team.

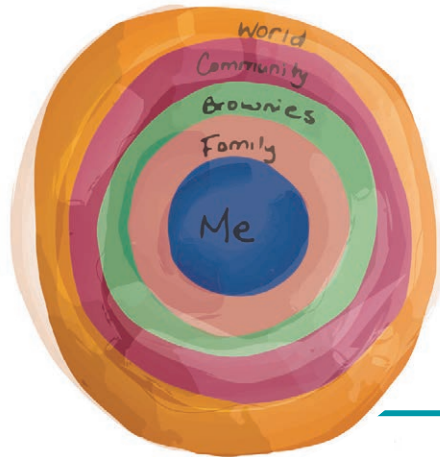


# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ME-WE-COMMUNITY, AND BEYOND

**Learning is personal, not one-size-fits-all**—that’s the view of Sunset Ridge School District 29. To ensure that this philosophy was reflected in their new school building, **a unique planning strategy**—which recognized that education, like growing up, is an evolution—**was employed throughout all phases of the project.**

## A Crescendo of Awareness

As children develop, their world expands. The new Sunset Ridge School is specifically designed to support children’s evolving developmental needs as they grow from self-awareness to global awareness within their communities. Designed around the concept of “connectedness,” grades are organized into three distinct academic neighborhoods based on children’s developmental needs.

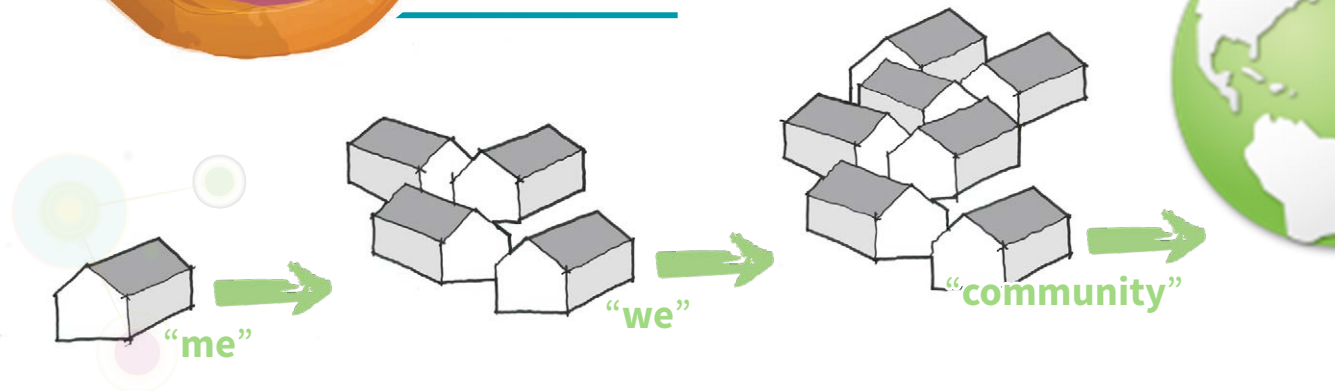


INSPIRED BY A  
CHILD’S ARTWORK SEEN  
DURING A TOUR OF  
MIDDLEFORK SCHOOL  
(K-3 SCHOOL IN  
SUNSET RIDGE SD 29)

As students transition into 4<sup>th</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> grades, homeroom-based academic **neighborhoods are internally focused**, allowing development of a **strong sense of self—or “me”**—while providing opportunities to observe and be part of the larger school.

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade neighborhood is positioned to open-up programmatic opportunities and provide structure around core disciplines. Socially, **academic spaces are positioned to allow students to express and be part of “we”** as they transition from the 4<sup>th</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> grade environment to the 7<sup>th</sup>– 8<sup>th</sup>.

As students advance to 7<sup>th</sup>– 8<sup>th</sup> grade, neighborhoods are configured to allow for greater synergy across disciplines, provide **a greater awareness of “community”** within the school, and **prepare students for a larger transition to high school and the world beyond.**



## Connecting Students

Creating a culture of learning, social/emotional growth, and awareness beyond school was core to the development of the new school. Spaces of varying sizes are designed to support **communities of learners**, providing options for working independently (“me”), in small groups (“we”), or in multi-grade groups (“community”). **Special services are embedded in each neighborhood, providing easy access for both enrichment and support.**

Larger spaces, such as the **Village Commons’** multi-purpose performance and dining space and the **Learning Commons’** media, technology, and hands-on design studio link the “ends” of the school to form a central corridor. **This corridor facilitates connections and has become a place where people of all ages come together.**

The **Village Commons** embraces a decades-long culture of community performance and visual arts, while supporting daily activities such as large group gatherings, dining, and social learning. The **Learning Commons** promotes discovery by providing students with learning opportunities through traditional media, digital technology, and hands-on maker spaces.

Elements adjacent to the public corridor connecting the Village Commons and the Learning Commons, such as the outdoor dining terrace, aquatic tank, living wall, and therapy room, help support students’ emotional wellbeing.



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ACTIVE LEARNING ON DISPLAY

The building is also designed to connect students to the larger world outside. Sustainable building features such as photovoltaics on the roof, energy usage displays, a living wall, and on-site water conservation practices are integrated into the curriculum, encouraging connection to the global community.

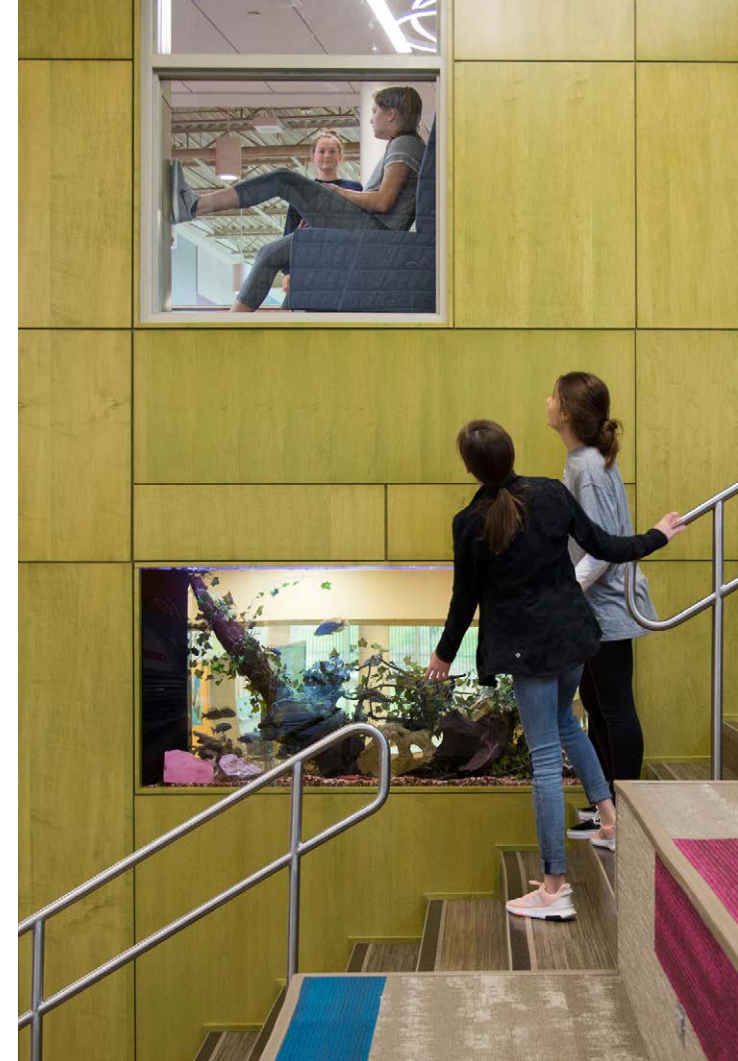
Features such as a second-floor outdoor classroom with roof rainwater collection, a green roof, an outdoor art patio, an observation deck, and a perimeter walking path connect students and the community to the outdoor environment.



**QR code stations** located throughout the school provide **“teaching moments,”** educating students about the functions of their building and **expanding** their **appreciation of sustainable practices.**



**Glass openings** in the walls offer a view into the **function of the build systems** and **construction.**





# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 1 VILLAGE COMMONS - DINING/PERFORMANCE
- 2 CAFE
- 3 LEARNING COMMONS
- 4 GYM
- 5 MUSIC SUITE
- 6 4th/5th GRADE LIVING ROOM
- 7 MAKER SPACE
- 8 ART STUDIO
- 9 ART PATIO
- 10 LEGACY CLASSROOM
- 11 DISTRICT OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUITE
- 12 OUTDOOR DINING



To **accommodate individual styles of learning** and “**maker**” activities, a variety of **age-specific furniture** supports student flexibility and activates the space. A **learning stair in the Village Commons** provides additional seating to accommodate larger groups in front of the performance stage.



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SECOND FLOOR PLAN



The **building features a wide variety of spaces and space types** designed to suit virtually every learning style...**spaces large and small, loud and quiet, active and pensive, exciting and soothing, structured and free-form, inside and outside, and future and past.**



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT 4<sup>TH</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TYPICAL CLASSROOM

Classrooms for 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade are designed to nurture the individual spirit of the child, while introducing opportunities for small group interaction.



## Security and Fewer Distractions

Shorter windows in the 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade academic neighborhood provide a buffer along the ground level for more protection and less distraction.

## Individual to Small Group Options

Ergonomically-shaped student desks provide flexibility for individual or small group space when reconfigured.

## Dedicated Student Services in the Room

Fixed work surfaces facilitate impromptu in-room support and enrichment for small groups of students.

## Visual Connection with Belongings

Student backpack/coat storage is contained inside the classroom for younger students, whose executive-level function skills are still developing.





# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TYPICAL CLASSROOM

Classrooms for 6<sup>th</sup> grade provide a transition to prepare children for increased collaboration and autonomy.



## Expanding the View

Full-height floor-to-ceiling windows increase connection with the surrounding community.



## Decreasing Fixed Furnishings

Fixed workspace is reduced to encourage multiple modes of student interaction.

## Increasing Options for Collaboration

Two-person team mobile tables can easily be reconfigured by students.

## Encouraging Student Choice

Tall tables provide an alternate seating option for students.



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT 7<sup>TH</sup> – 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TYPICAL CLASSROOM

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms provide additional opportunities for students to connect with each other and the broader school community.



## Freeing Floor Space for Learning

Fixed work surfaces are virtually eliminated to maximize reconfigurable learning space.



## Connecting Interior and Exterior Environments

Increased expanses of full-height floor-to-ceiling windows increase mature students' connection with the surrounding neighborhood.

## Accommodating Growing Students

The scale of furnishings, from desks to tall tables, increases to provide comfortable options for growing learners.

## Encouraging Movement

Chairs designed to be easily moved, combined with table on wheels, encourage student mobility and support “on the fly” reconfiguration of the learning space.



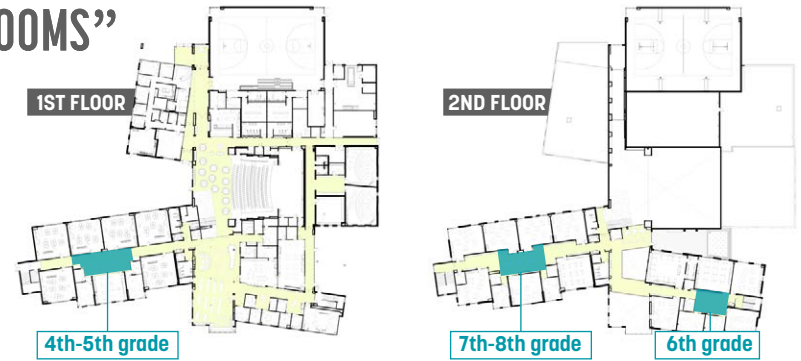
# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT NEIGHBORHOOD “LIVING ROOMS”

## Encouraging Different Forms of Interaction

Flexible, comfortable seating supports individual or group choices for activities.



7<sup>TH</sup> - 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



## Increased Autonomy, with Transparency

Private, transparent spaces accommodate small group collaboration, as well as student services coaching and enrichment.

## Support for Hands-on Projects

In-living room sinks offer access to water.



6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## Privacy with Transparency

Small rooms offer integrated grade-level opportunities for student services coaching and enrichment.



4<sup>TH</sup> - 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## From Cozy to Collaborative

A raised platform niche provides an area for reading or impromptu presentations.

## Grade-level Collaboration Options

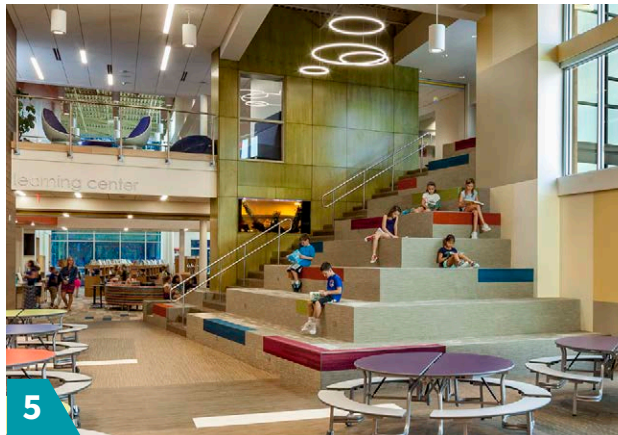
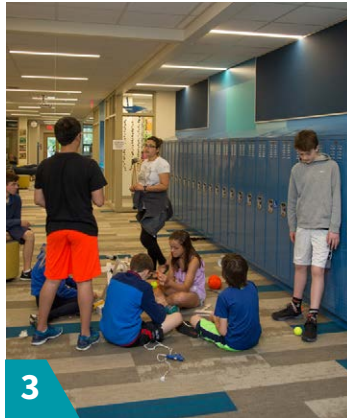
An operable wall, when open, connects the flex science/language room to the living room for grade-level gatherings or events.

## Integrated Student Services

Small rooms offer opportunities for student services coaching and enrichment.



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT COLLABORATION/SKILLS + SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL GROWTH



Spaces outside of the traditional classrooms or scheduled collaboration space encourage project work as well as causal conversation, before-school study time, games, and other forms of face-to-face interaction.

1. The reading loft is a special space in the Learning Commons for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
2. A raised-platform booth provides yet another seating option, with views into the school's aquarium.
3. Wider circulation areas outside of classrooms and living rooms offers impromptu project and group gathering space.
4. A variety of seating choices in the Learning Commons supports individual, learning as well as group interaction.
5. A learning stair connects the Village Commons and the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading loft, providing a causal setting for student learning and socialization.



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT BUILDING AS A LIVING TEACHING TOOL



The building was designed and built to capitalize on a wide-range of sustainable elements that not only benefit the environment, but provide unique learning opportunities and encourage social responsibility.

## 1. Rooftop Photovoltaic Arrays

Panels collect and send excess power back to the community, enabling the building to achieve Net Zero energy use status.

## 2. Building Learning Wall

Real-time energy and water use in the building is accessible to students in the Village Commons.

## 3. QR Code Stations

Many building elements are visible to students and linked via QR codes, which allow the building to serve as a living textbook for sustainable strategies and building systems.

## 4. Roof Garden/Outdoor Classroom

Students can experience the green roof, rain chains, and recycled decking material outside the second floor reading loft and science rooms.

## 5. Dynamic Glass

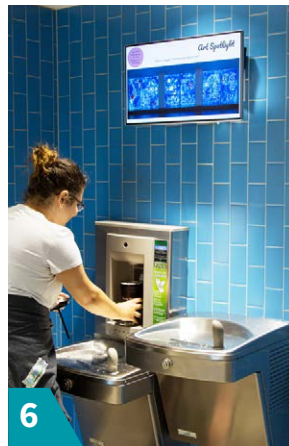
Glass along the two-story south façade of the Learning Commons and west side of the Village Commons darkens with increased sun exposure to reduce solar heat gain and glare.

## 6. Water Stations

Students and staff can refill bottles brought from home, reducing plastic refuse.

## 7. Living Wall

In the Village Commons, a highly visible living wall supports return air filtration and brings the outside environment in.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT THE SITE

## Open During Construction

It was critical to the community that the existing school be kept open and operational during construction. As a result, a key concern was ensuring the safety of the students, faculty, and staff at the existing school, which shared the site of the new building. Phased site logistics facilitated the isolation of construction from the existing school and its activities.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FITTING INTO THE COMMUNITY



The school site is located in close proximity to residences. As a result, the palette for the school's exterior reflects local Northfield homes, using natural colors and similar materials of wood, glass, and stone. The building is broken into smaller forms, and roof heights are varied to mirror a grouping of residential houses.

Glass is particularly emphasized in the most public-facing side of the site, to showcase education and provide a view into the Learning Commons. At night, light from the library literally “reaches out” to the community, serving as a beacon for learning.

**Dynamic glass** allows for solar control in the larger expanses of glass, while **allowing the community to see in**—rather than using solid window treatments that would have blocked views of learning in action.





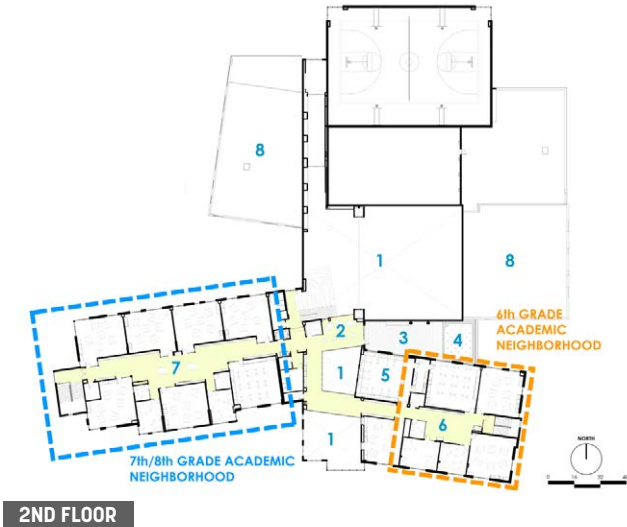
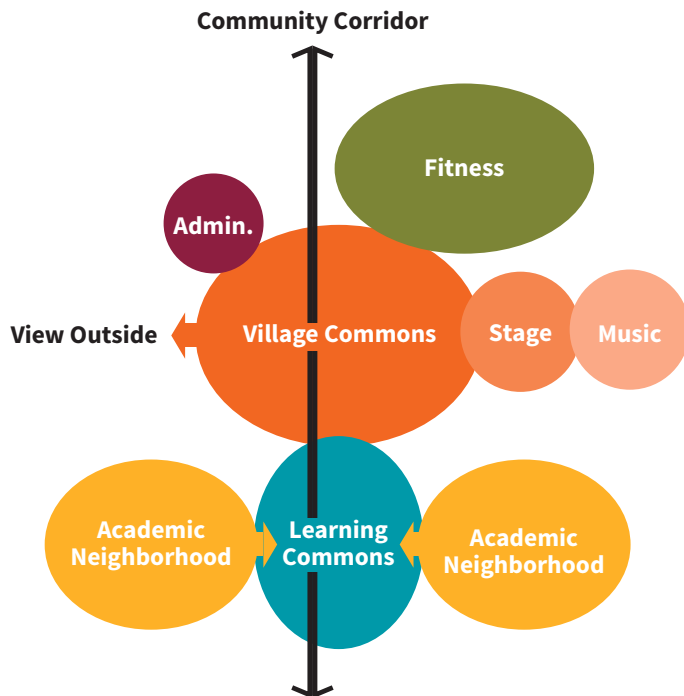
# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATION

## Inviting the Community In

To address its goal of strengthening community and school relationships, the new school was designed to welcome community members while providing separation from classroom spaces. The main community corridor extends from the entry past the activity gym, through the Village Commons, and culminates at the two-story Learning Commons, vertically connecting the academic neighborhoods while providing controlled public access.

Community dedication to the arts dictated the need for multiple music, art, and performance spaces. To accommodate the space requirements for the performing arts, the solution hinges on the Village Commons—a space located at the heart of the school that can transform to support dining, performances, exhibits, community gatherings, and all-school assemblies as needed.

The community is invited to experience learning in progress via views through large areas of glass at both ends of the public “path” connecting the Village Commons and Learning Commons.



The building’s color palette is a warm, neutral palette reminiscent of natural wood tones. Each academic area is made distinct through the use of a unique single color, expressed in multiple shades and layered with the building’s neutral tones. This use of a single accent color further supports the delineation of individual academic neighborhoods.

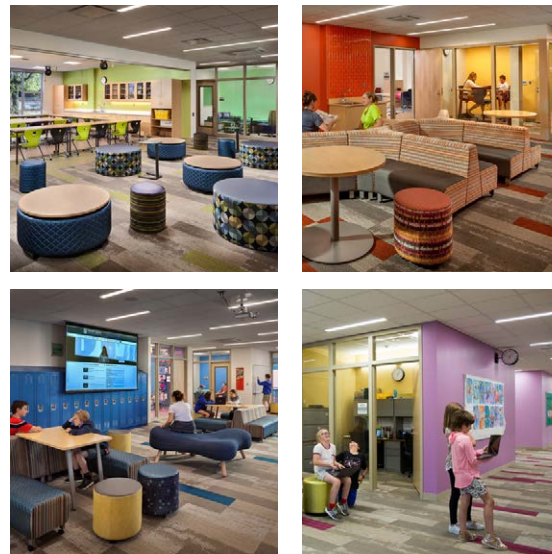
**Green / 4th-5th grade**

**Orange / 6th grade**

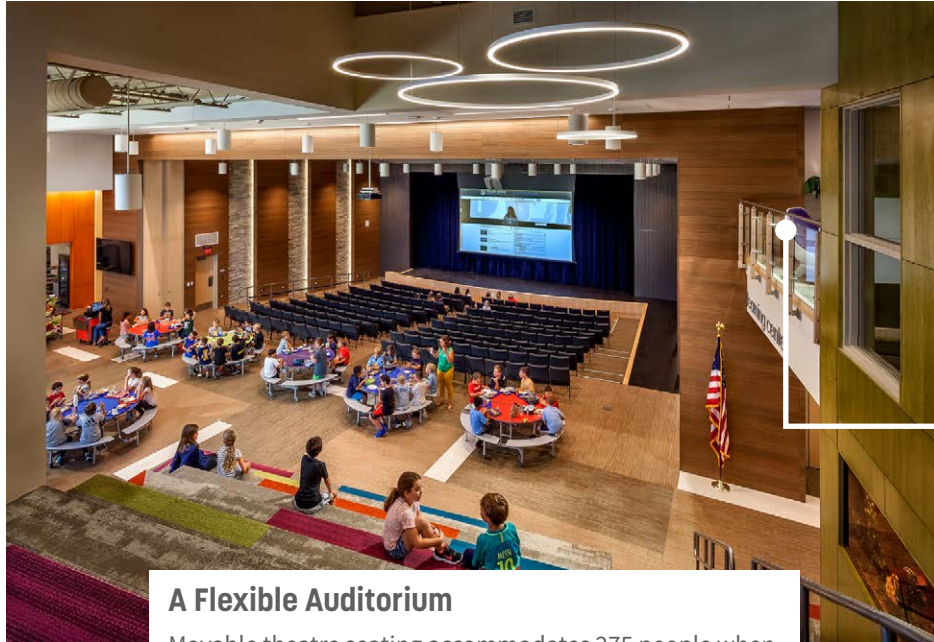
**Blue / 7th-8th grade**

**Purple / student services**

The accent colors are featured in both the wall paint and accent modular carpeting. In areas in which the entire school gathers, the palette changes to incorporate the building’s neutral wood tones and textures, along with all neighborhood accent colors.







## A Flexible Auditorium

Movable theatre seating accommodates 275 people when the wall is closed, and up to 400 with chairs/risers added in the dining area. Casual seating on the learning stair provides unobstructed viewing of the stage and offers 70 additional seats for performances or graduation.

## Reading Loft

The reading loft offers a cozy nook for reading, while providing views to and from the Village Commons below.



## Multi-purpose Space

Deep tier levels can accommodate tables to allow for group projects and teacher professional development.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## LEARNING COMMONS

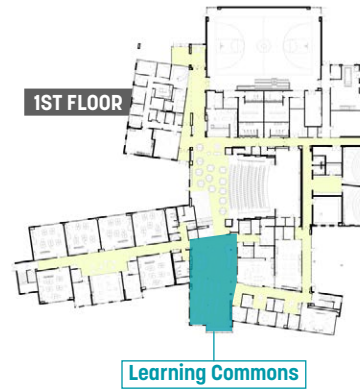
### The Heart of the School

The two-story Learning Commons links the academic neighborhoods together on both floors.



### Information/Help Desk

Interactive student space is staffed for technology/research coaching throughout the day.



### Seating Options

A variety of flexible student seating options support individual or group activities.

### Reading Loft

The second level reading loft provides a special place for increasing autonomous students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## MAKER SPACE

### Learning Commons

The maker space in the Learning Commons can be assessed anytime during the day.



### Infrastructure Support

Power, water, and technology are readily available to support STEAM activities.

### Flexible Furniture

Mobile furniture for “messy,” hands-on projects supports artistic creativity.

### Learning on Display

See-through glass shelving allows projects and work in the studio to be seen from the Learning Commons and the student corridor.

### Daylighting

Daylight filters into the art room through clerestory windows above the project pin-up surface.





## Living Wall

A living plant material wall is part of the mechanical air filtration system. A scannable QR code on the wall explains this to students and visitors.

## Secure Vestibule



## Coffee Bar/Recycling Center Station

A welcoming beverage bar is open to both the community and parents. The recycling center teaches students about recycling separation.

## Café

Showcasing the food service area in the daylight-filled Village Commons has encouraged more students to eat lunch together. The café also serves larger community events.

## Graphic Wall

A movable divider wall can be used to separate the dining area from the 275-seat auditorium activities. When open, the entire Village Commons can be used for community events or as a larger dining area.



## Flex Room

An additional activity room supports yoga and floor fitness, as well as health classes.



## Acoustics

Slotted block walls and acoustic deck contain sound absorption insulation.

## Dynamic Glass

Daylight is controlled with dynamic glass that automatically darkens with increased sunlight to prevent solar gain and glare.



## Gymnasium

A high-school-sized gym accommodates two teaching stations when the curtain is down, and is large enough to host IHSA competitions.



# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Sunset Ridge School has **achieved LEED Platinum Certification**.  
It is also **the first public school in Illinois designed to be Net Zero Energy**.

Sustainability is very important to the community. Sustainable elements of the building include the following:

- The school incorporates power generation from a 420kW photovoltaic array, which is designed to offset the building's total annual electricity use.
- Priority was given to products with high recycled content, local sourcing, and low emissions.
- A detention basin with native plantings mitigates downstream flooding issues. Low-impact design practices such as permeable pavers, a porous asphalt walking trail, rain gardens, bioswales, and infiltration trenches reduce site runoff by promoting infiltration on site.
- The mechanical system includes heat recovery variable refrigerant flow cooling and a heating system that enables the indoor units to switch independently between cooling to heating.
- Dedicated outside air units include energy recovery ventilators and can operate with an economizer, providing free cooling during moderate outside temperatures using 100% outside air intakes.
- The LED lighting system reduced the lighting power density from 1.2W/SF to 0.71W/SF.
- Occupancy sensors, dual-level switching, daylight harvesting, and timers help further reduce energy consumption.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT CELEBRATING HISTORY

The **community's strong emotional tie** to the **original school building** was the **catalyst for a number of unique elements.**

## Inspiring the Next Generation

Not only is the new school visually arresting—a tangible illustration of the community's commitment to education—but it has provided an opportunity for students to see their ideas made a reality, in a facility that inspires them to learn.

## Connections Wall Artwork

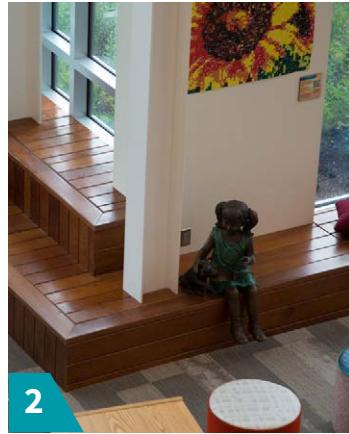
The folding partition in the Village Commons showcases archived photos of the former schoolhouse interspersed with photos of current students







1



2



2

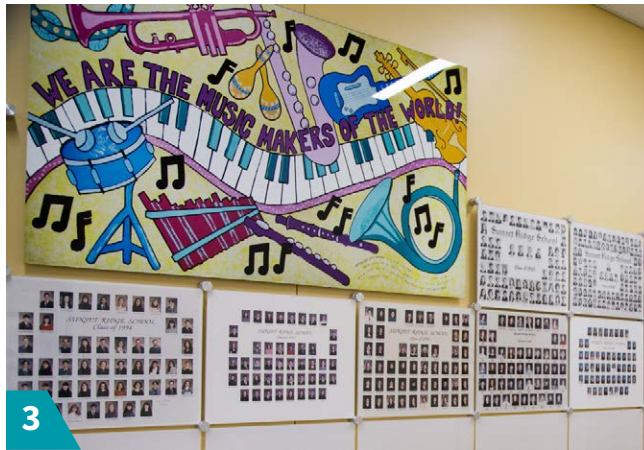
Elements of the original schoolhouse have been cleverly integrated into the new school building.

## 1. The “Legacy Room”

The “Legacy Room” preserves the design of a classroom in the original school to link future generations of students with former generations, while serving as a group meeting space.

## 2. A Gym Ceiling Becomes Benches + Doors

Structural wood decking from the gym ceiling of the former school is re-purposed in the Learning Commons as window seating and doors at the secure entry vestibule.



3



4

## 3. Digitally Preserved Murals + Graduation Class Composites

Murals painted on the block walls of the former school were photographed prior to demolition and digitally reproduced so that they could be showcased in the new school along the “hall of fame.”

## 4. Connections Wall

The folding partition in the Village Commons connects the school’s past to its future by featuring archived 1930s images of original school classrooms and the surrounding community, combined with photos of today’s students.



5



6

## 5. Stained Glass

Salvaged art glass, a class gift from the 1960s, was removed from the previous school prior to demolition and re-purposed in the Learning Commons.

## 6. Fireplace

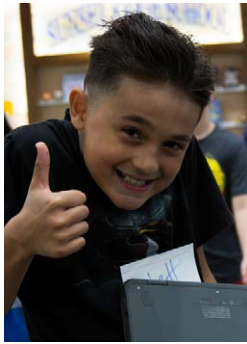
An original fireplace now has a new home in the Learning Commons, blending legacy with modern, technology-savvy group seating.



# RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

In its inaugural year of 2017-18, the **new Sunset Ridge School** as already made a **measurable impact on its students and the community**.

Students have chosen to spend more time in the Learning Commons due to its central location and welcoming atmosphere. As a result, twice as many books were checked out during the 2017-18 school year (8,621) than in the previous year in the former building (4,205).



This increase in reading has had a measurable impact on learning. In the **first year** of occupancy, **student academic growth and achievement was higher than the previous 10-year average**, and the **highest performance in any single year** (based on NWEA MAP testing data).



Additional results of the project, several unanticipated, include the following:

- Participation by the community in events hosted in the new auditorium, as well as positive feedback about their experience, has been significant.
- Transparency between the teaching spaces and student support areas has enhanced teacher collaboration and teaming.
- More children are opting to come early to school to study in the Village Commons.
- The school can accommodate the music, STEAM, and sports programs that the former school building could not, and as a result has become a magnet for collaboration and connection with other organizations. For example, Sunset Ridge was asked to host the Northern Illinois Choir Master Class for multiple school districts, as well as the Illinois High School Associations (IHSA) girls' basketball and boys' volleyball tournaments.

Facts and figures cannot adequately capture the full impact of the new Sunset Ridge School on students, teachers, administrators, and the community at-large.

Community members have commented that the **quality of the new school now mirrors the quality of the teaching program**.

