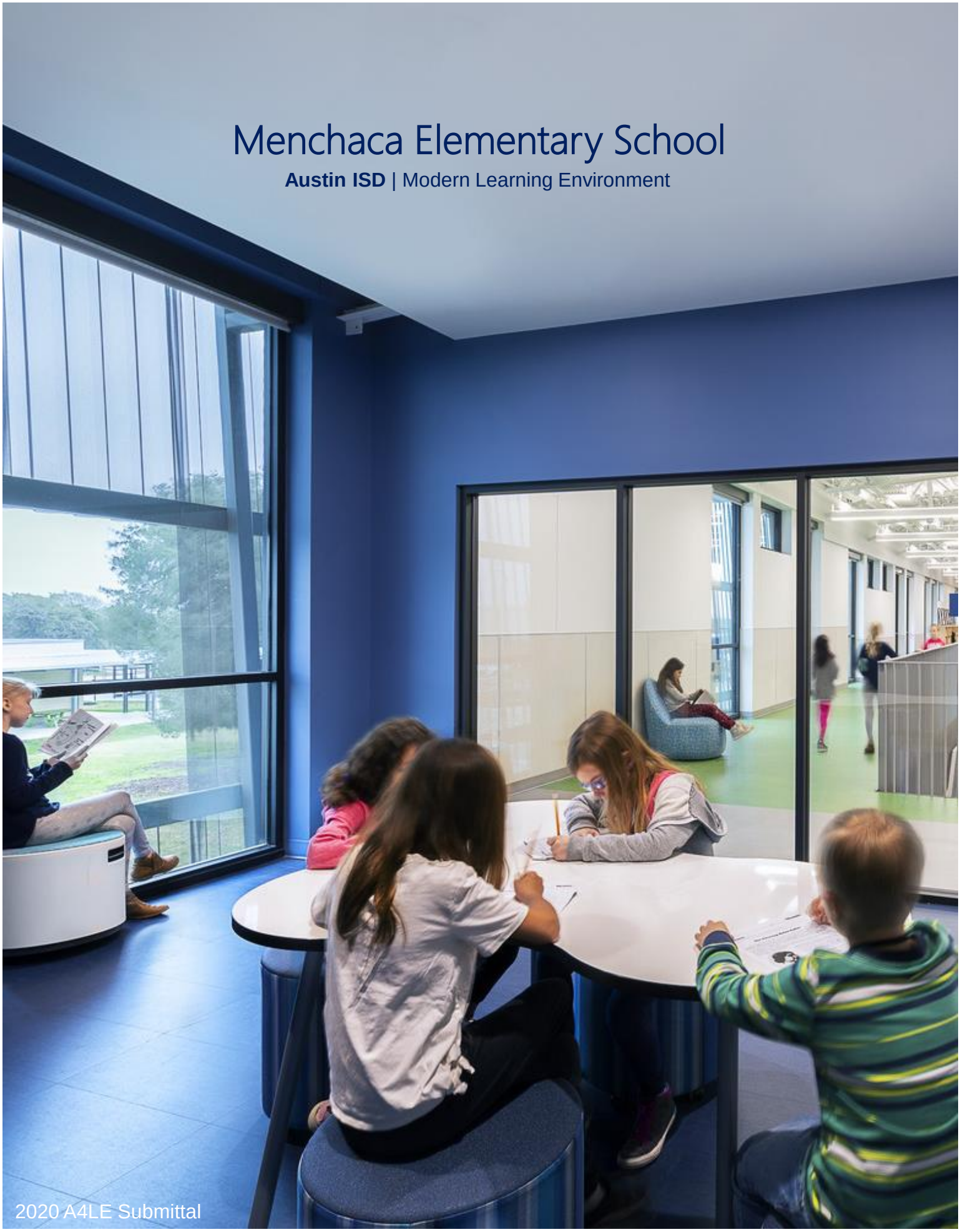
Menchaca Elementary School

Austin ISD | Modern Learning Environment



2020 A4LE Submittal

Executive Summary

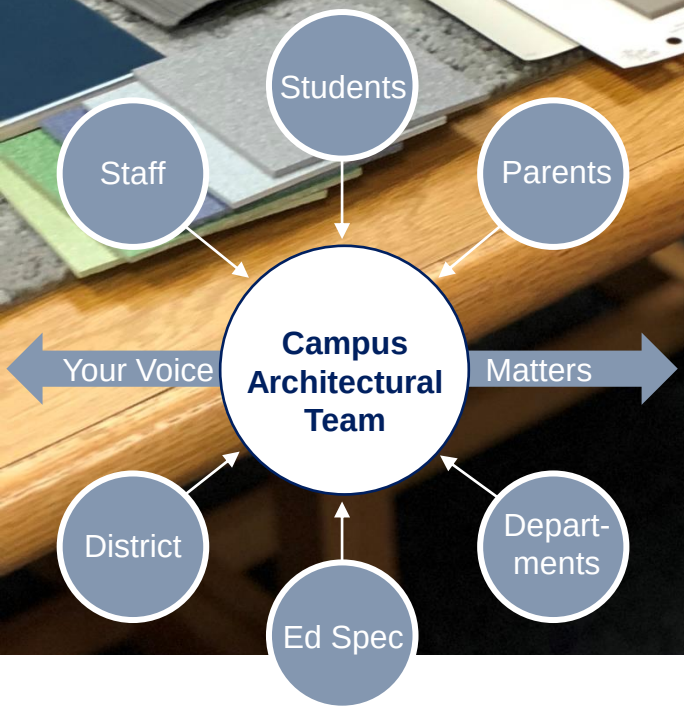
Menchaca Elementary School is a new 98,600 sf replacement campus built on the same site as the active existing elementary school. The project utilized a design-build delivery method with a GMP of $28,060,000. The campus consists of 3 buildings which have been carefully placed among heritage oak trees.

The buildings form two courtyards and are linked by a second-story “bridge” that houses the innovative Library Media Center and the Makerspaces. The new campus opened in January of 2020 with a build out capacity of 870 students, accounting for the growth of this diverse city and the evolution of the District’s Strategic Plan.

The facility is Austin Energy Green Building-certified and incorporates collaborative and exploratory learning spaces with a focus on inclusivity and mindfulness.

Scope of Work

SF	98,600 SF
Budget	$28M
Capacity	870 Students
Opened	January 2020

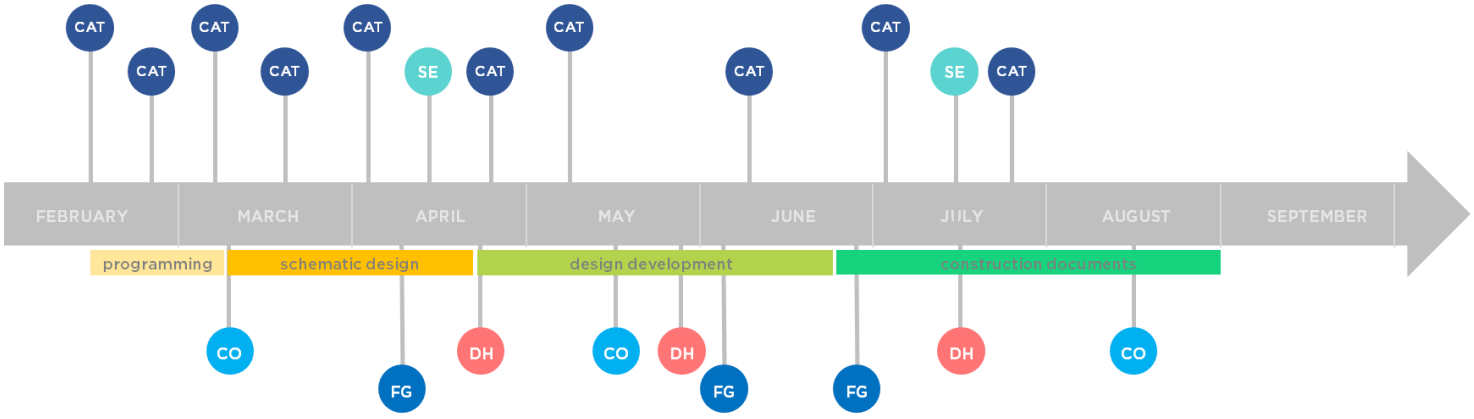


Engagement Process

- Pre-Design Project Tours
- Programming & Ed Spec Alignment
- Sustainability Charrettes
- (10) Campus Architectural Team Meetings
- (4) Community Wide Meetings
- (16) Focus Group Sessions
- (3) Student Workshops
- (2) Teacher & Staff Workshops
- Multiple Virtual Reality Days & Locations

School and Community Engagement

The grassland site is on the edge of the Hill Country in a growing area of South Austin. The design evolved through an extensive process that engaged teachers, parents, students, and neighbors. Through this process the design focused on preserving the natural beauty on campus to maximize a connection with nature while reimagining the urban learning experience. A 15-member committee participated in visioning exercises, site and campus tours and 20+ design meetings. Activities included “design your own campus” where common strategies between groups included maximizing the site’s natural assets, controlling scale from the street, and clustering studios into learning hubs. The common appreciation for native landscape and desire for connectivity and diversity drove the design.



CAT Campus Architectural Team

02/19 CAT Meeting 1 / Introduction
02/26 CAT Meeting 2 / Program Verification
03/05 CAT Meeting 3 / Design Analysis
03/19 CAT Meeting 4 / Preliminary Stacking
04/02 CAT Meeting 5 / Schematic Development
04/23 CAT Meeting 6 / Design Presentation
05/07 CAT Meeting 7 / Refined Site and Architecture
06/19 CAT Meeting 8 / Interior Development & VR
07/02 CAT Meeting 9 / Site and Interior Development
07/30 CAT Meeting 10 /Final Design Presentation

CO Community Outreach

03/06 Teacher & Parent Outreach Meeting
05/15 Community Schematic Update
08/15 Design Presentation to Community
08/30 Groundbreaking Ceremony

SE Student Engagement

04/16 4th + 5th Grade Outdoor Learning
04/16 4th + 5th Grade Media Resource Center
07/02 Small Group Virtual Reality & Materials

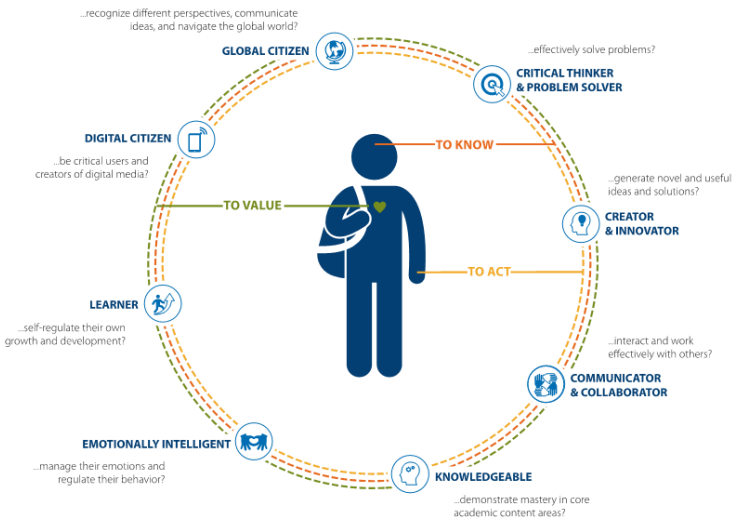
DH AISD Department Head Meeting

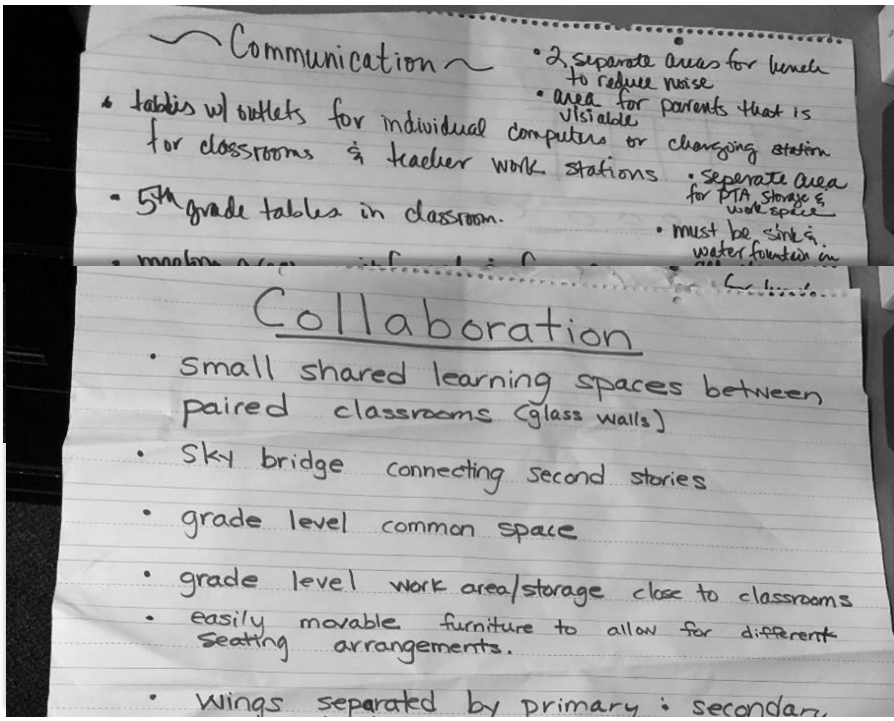
04/24 Programming Review
05/24 Schematic Design Review
07/12 Design Development Review

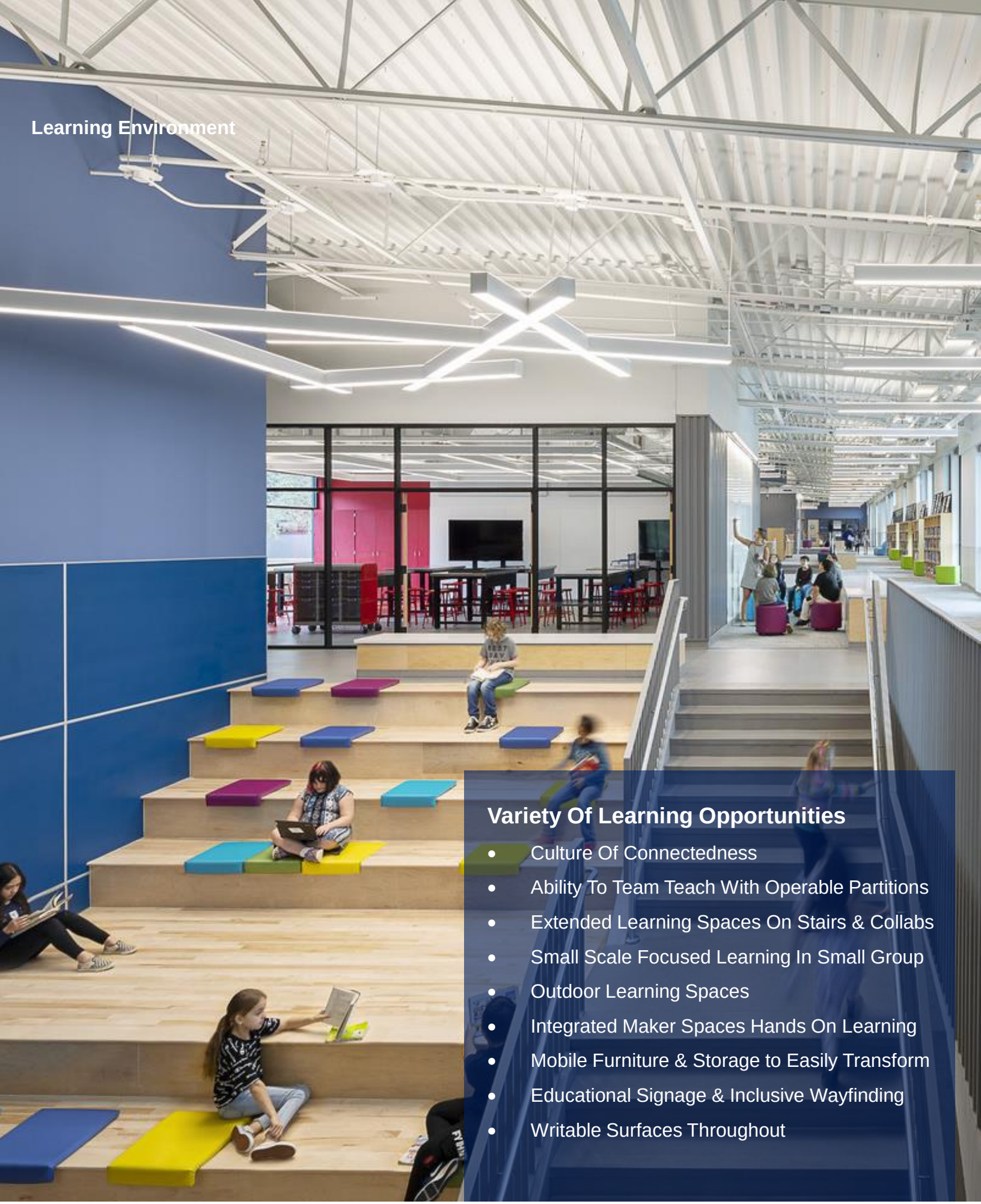
FG Focus Group Meeting

Administration
Visual Arts
Food Service
Performing Arts
Physical Education
Special Education
Early Childhood
Teacher Workshop

School and Community Engagement





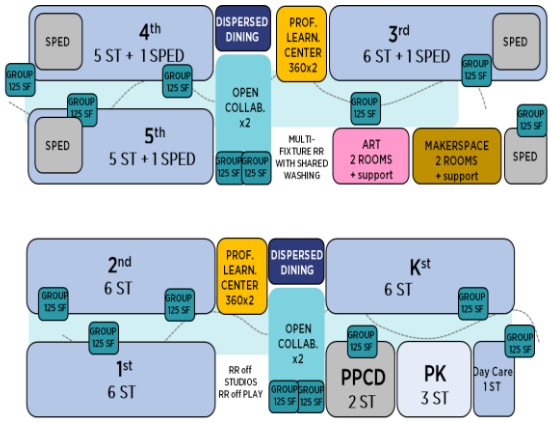


Variety Of Learning Opportunities

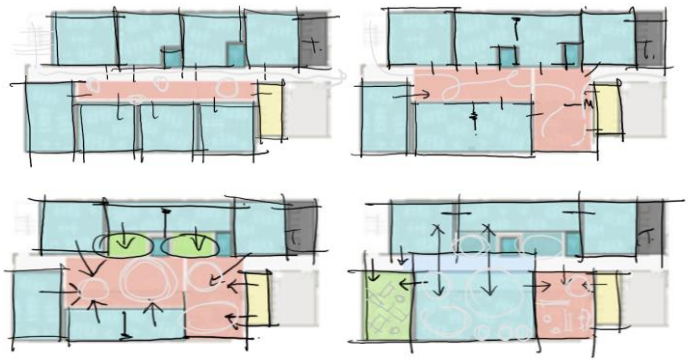
- Culture Of Connectedness
- Ability To Team Teach With Operable Partitions
- Extended Learning Spaces On Stairs & Collabs
- Small Scale Focused Learning In Small Group
- Outdoor Learning Spaces
- Integrated Maker Spaces Hands On Learning
- Mobile Furniture & Storage to Easily Transform
- Educational Signage & Inclusive Wayfinding
- Writable Surfaces Throughout

Learning Environment

The campus is organized into Learning Villages bridged on the second level by an open Library. Maker Spaces cantilever towards the tree canopy while Art Workshops spill onto the courtyard below. The four Learning Villages are named after native trees on campus. Wood grain representing these trees is used as a pattern on glazing. Student health and wellness is improved with views to the outdoors and the incorporation of mindful moments to support social and emotional learning opportunities (a mindful labyrinth, quiet rooms, and restorative spaces). Within each Learning Village are scaled environments that support flexible and adaptable learning methods and multiple modalities for teaching. In addition to the Collab, Learning Studios and Spall Group Rooms – each Learning Village includes a Professional Learning Center and a gender-neutral restroom. The campus design promotes a connected campus culture.



Programming Adjacencies



Learning Opportunities

Collaborative Learning Space

Learning Studio

Small Group Room

Learning Environment

MakerSpace

Spaces to Make are spread throughout the campus, however there are two dedicated makerspaces adjacent to the Library Media Center that offer a balance between embracing nature and nurturing innovation.

Community Room

A Community Room doubles for Professional Learning. Welcoming all learners of all ages & stages.

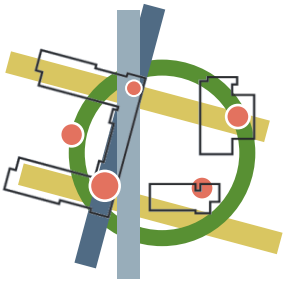
Variety Of Learning Opportunities

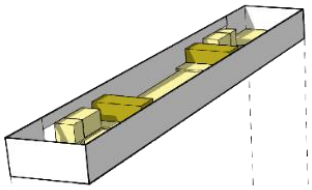
- Contextual materials to South Austin area
- Campus nestled around the heritage trees
- Natural setting has views from interior to trees
- Daylighting and student-height windows
- Sustainable Learning Lessons throughout
- Environmentally responsible materials – EPDs
- Healthy Building Design

Physical Environment

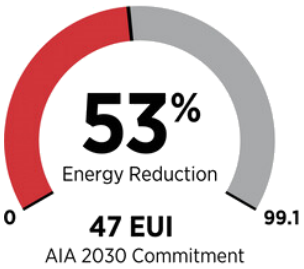
The school is located in an area of the site studded with large live oak trees. The material palette is inspired by locally specific culture and nearby historic landmarks. The Campus is nestled into the existing Oak Trees and welcomes the community with a transparent and open porch, speaking to the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

The new buildings take advantage of natural daylight and views throughout. Heat gain and glare are managed through deep overhangs, shade porches, and a large cor-ten screen at the “bridge” to protect from east and west sunlight. Two large courtyards are connected by covered outdoor learning spaces, one for passive outdoor learning and the other for active & imaginary play. Across the central courtyard from the learning villages a dining and fitness center can be combined to house the entire campus. The third building houses a Community Center, Professional Learning Lab and the Welcome Center. The multi-building campus intentionally encourages outdoor experiences. A goal for the CAT was that students move and learn outdoors!





Physical Environment



Passive and Active Outdoors

The outdoor spaces include multiple zones within two larger courtyard areas. The backdrop to the Welcome Garden is a perforated shade screen that reduces heat gain and energy loads.

Welcoming Entry

The campus entry on FM1626 is inspiring for learners and the community.

Physical Environment

- Healthy and Sustainable School
- Site and Building as a Learning Experience
- Culturally and Community Inclusive
- Durable and Local Materials
- Garden and Chicken Coup on Campus
- Site Trees Incorporated into Interiors
- Seamless Connection between Inside and Out

Project Results

By engaging stakeholders at the district, campus, and community level the design team successfully built a school around the community's collective vision in an extremely short timeline. The school's design provides educational flexibility, allowing new methods of instruction and collaboration across classes and grade levels.

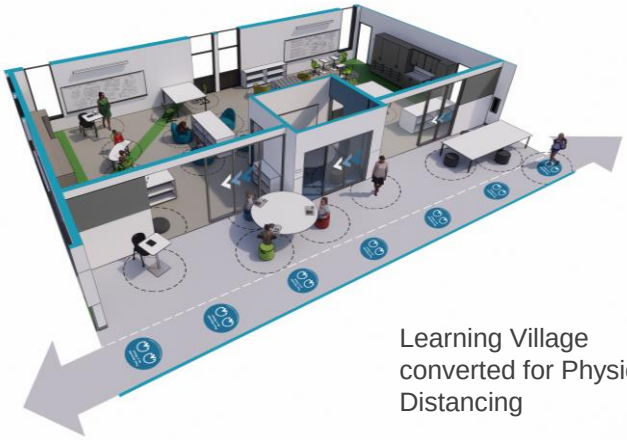
The project's design-build delivery method provided continuous cost feedback, allowing the campus team and the district team to make informed decisions as the design evolved. Priorities that emerged enhance student learning with connections to nature and healthy indoor environments. The project's energy use celebrates a 53% reduction using efficient systems with an enhanced thermal envelope. The project cost ran approximately $15-20 less per SF than other current design projects in the district.

The transition to the new campus has resulted in increased collaboration between teachers. Increased visibility and connectivity allowed new flexibility in innovations among educators. The teaching space expands with operable partitions and transparency with access to collaboration spaces provide flexibility in group size and instructional delivery.

Project Results

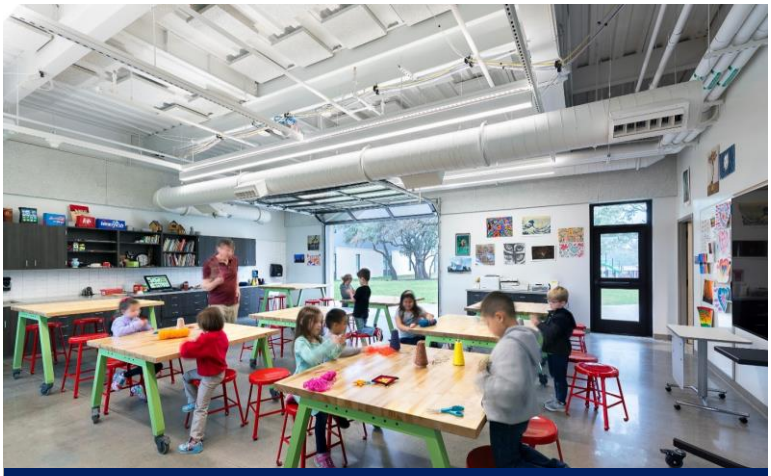
Just a few months after moving in, school facilities across the region shut down in March of 2020. The campus is greatly missed by the students and teachers who are waiting to safely return to school. Fortunately, the flexibility of the campus is creating new ways for students to engage and utilize expanded learning environments while safely physical distancing. The campus students and staff will participate in a Post Occupancy Evaluation in December of 2020.

Dining Commons Conversion to Learning Center



Learning Village converted for Physical Distancing

Flexibility Connects Students to their Learning



Learning Spaces Connect to Outdoors

Fitness Space Connects to Dining Commons


“Where we learn as teachers is just as important as where our students learn!”
- Menchaca Principal
Menchaca Elementary School