



Pathfinder Project

Eden Park Elementary

CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Cranston, Rhode Island

More joy and more learning.



Executive Summary

Cranston Public Schools' showcase facility, Eden Park Elementary, was the first step in the District's plans to transform its aging building stock into modern, responsive learning environments to support all learners. Strategically designed (to be a "model home" of sorts), this Pathfinder Project showcases the new direction and educational innovation that the District's future facility projects will take in the years ahead, while setting the tone for shifting their pedagogy to a more Project-Based Learning and Student-Directed approach.

The original west wing consisted of a long corridor, flanked with classrooms on either side. By reconfiguring underutilized circulation space, learning is now able to extend to shared areas outside the classroom. The new space is designed to allow students and teachers the ability to flexibly shift between various modes of learning and increased collaboration.

Classrooms are now studios, and the new space offers an interconnected array of different spatial types to support a variety of learning modalities to support all students. The new learning community is a powerful ensemble of spaces. It contains a shared learning commons, a social heart, and a robust collection of discrete learning studios of varying sizes, small group rooms, and seminar spaces, which can respond to individual needs and personalized learning.

The new floor plan provides peer interaction and student enrichment. Flexible and multi-use spaces are now found everywhere. The adjacencies of these spaces from one to the other, and their visual connectedness, supports varied learning styles and student-centered activities. Students have agency to choose the right space type for their work and teachers are able to shift easily from one lesson to another and feel ownership over their shared learning community.

Furniture layouts support simultaneous student groups, presentations, teacher lectures, project-based learning, small group learning, individual research, and technology-based learning.

The result is a highly successful project based on a wholistic "learning community" model rather than the now outmoded "Cells and Bells" model. The makeover has enabled students and teachers to implement and experience a new kind of collaborative learning environment that follows the patterns of a learning community.



Learning Studios are equipped with interactive projectors, writable + magnetic walls, soft seating, and views outside.

The flexibility and multi-use nature of the spaces allows for more efficient use and better ability to adjust to inevitable shifts over time easily.



Scope of Work + Budget

Completion	September 2019
Cost	\$8.5 million
Size	18,000 SF

The Challenge

The District needed a plan to transform its aging building stock into modern, responsive learning environments to support all learners.

The Process

In preparation for a bond, Fielding International helped navigate the District in establishing a “Pathfinder” project that would set the standard for their educational spaces going forward. A small-scale, low-cost transformation was needed to showcase what the future of their educational spaces could and should look like. The west wing of Eden Park Elementary School was identified as a natural location for a design renovation to show the community what their 5-year plans were for the rest of the district.

The Result

A highly successful “Pathfinder” project based on a wholistic “Learning Community” model rather than the now outmoded “Cells and Bells” model.



“The Eden Park project proves that when a school is designed to support the whole student at every level, it will prepare them and their teachers for the twenty-first century and show them a new vision of the future through the joy of learning.”

School + Community Engagement

Eden Park Elementary is located on a tight 2.3 acre site in the densely populated Auburn neighborhood in Cranston, Rhode Island. The school was originally constructed in 1951 on a sloping hill, and had no major renovations since that time. Due to the slope of the site, the school steps down as you move from west to east, which separated the building into three wings: west, central, and east.

In 2018 Cranston Public Schools commissioned a district-wide master plan that set forward a vision to transform their aging building stock into modern, responsive learning environments. In preparation for a 2020 bond, Cranston wanted to establish a pathfinder project that would set the standard for their educational spaces going forward. They identified the west wing of Eden Park as a natural location to show the community what their future plans are for the rest of the district.

The existing structure was flexible enough to do a Pathfinder Makeover, meaning the entire was stripped so all that was left was the steel structure. The project transformed the entry in the central wing to be safe, welcoming and secure, and deeply renovated the entire west wing which housed the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students.

The schedule for design and construction was extremely fast-tracked. The entire project was designed and constructed in just nine months, with most of the construction taking place over the two months of summer.

The original west wing consisted of a long corridor, flanked with classrooms on either side. The new space is designed to allow students and teachers the ability to flexibly shift between various modes of learning and increased collaboration.


The remainder of the school is slated to be renovated in the coming years.



Students, teachers, staff, administration, families and community partners were involved in early planning discussions. The involvement of the community went further, as well, with students, teachers and staff playing a vital role in the process of designing the renovations.

That's a critical piece of this – the students, the teachers and the folks in the community helped to design the school, people who are in it every day.





Light monitors optimize daylight, which research says improves attention, focus, and recall.

Educational Environment Design

By reconfiguring underutilized circulation space, learning now extends to shared areas outside the classroom and allows students and teachers the ability to flexibly shift between various modes of learning and increased collaboration.

A powerful ensemble of spaces, the new learning community contains a shared learning commons, a social heart, a robust collection of discrete learning studios of varying sizes, small group rooms, and seminar spaces, which can respond to individual needs and personalized learning.

Furniture layouts support simultaneous student groups, presentations, teacher lecture, project-based learning, small group learning, individual research, and technology-based learning.

Flexible and multi-use spaces are everywhere throughout the new centralized Learning Commons.

The adjacencies of these spaces from one to the other, and their visual connectedness, supports varied learning styles and student-centered activities. Students have agency to choose the right space type for their work. Teachers are able to shift easily from one lesson to another and feel ownership over their shared Learning Community.

Educators work in cross-functional teams to support learners' growth collectively. Therefore, no one teacher owns a classroom. Teachers and children select appropriate spaces that best suit their learning or best elicit the types of thinking they are engaged in at the time. To support these spaces' planned use, teachers now have a collaborative workspace where real-time professional development can occur.



The old corridor was absorbed into the Learning Commons. Space now allows for more flexibility and variety in day-to-day learning activities. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate in a shared professional office space. Transparencies between Learning Studios allow interdisciplinary learning activities to take place easily.



Teacher Collaboration Space



Writable Surfaces Everywhere



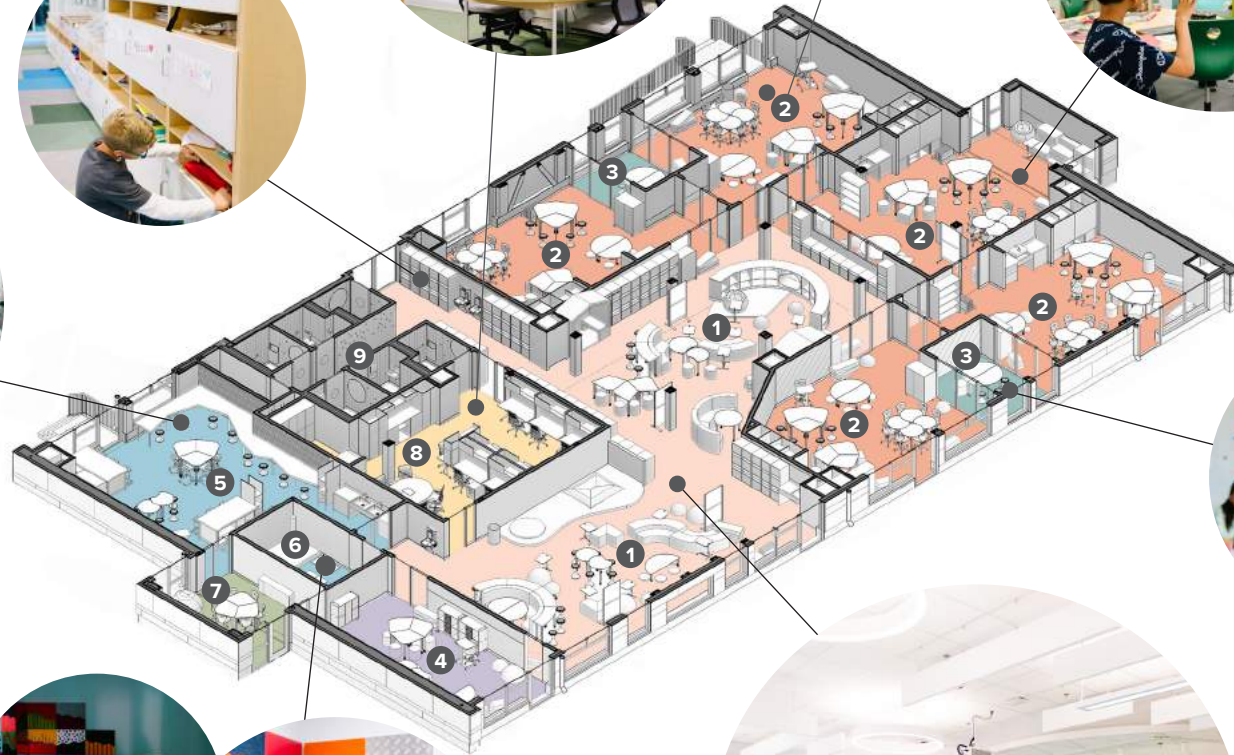
Stimulating Acoustic Ceiling Treatments



Customizable Cubbies



Natural Light + Views Outside



Small Group Room

Legend

- 1 Learning Commons
- 2 Learning Studio
- 3 Small Group Room
- 4 Specialist Room
- 5 Active Lab
- 6 Sensory Room
- 7 Seminar Room
- 8 Teacher Collaborative Room
- 9 WC



Fiber-optics Space



Tactile Walls



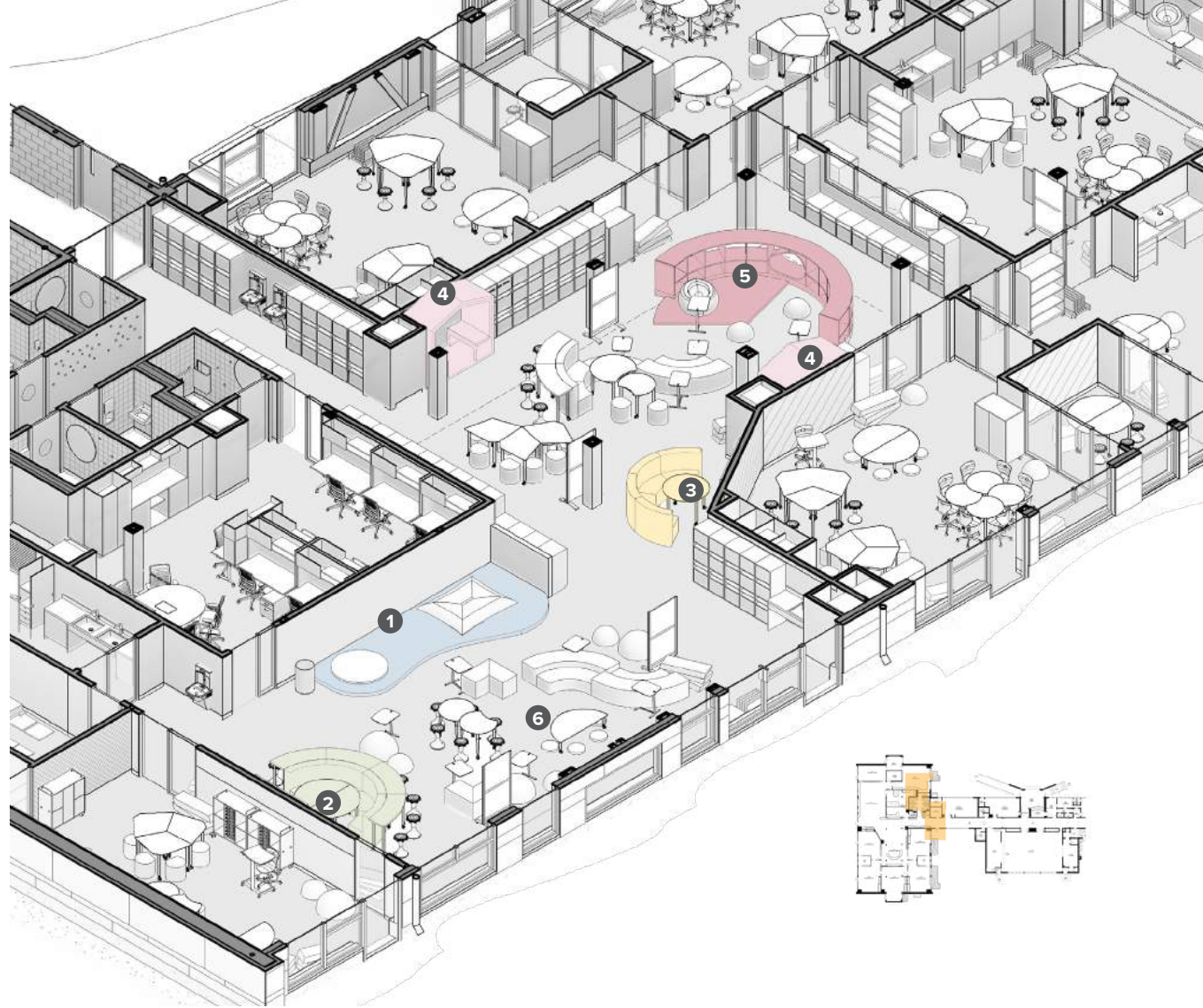
Flexible Gathering





Green Screen + Presentation Stage

Ceiling Design Differentiates Space



Traditional Areas have been Transformed to Inspire Learning

Legend

- 1 Stage
- 2 Campfire Space
- 3 Small Presentation Space
- 4 Cave Space
- 5 Reading Space
- 6 Responsive Flexible Zone

With all of the changes in place due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Eden Park's new learning community is one of the district's few facilities that can meet the demands of the standards deemed critical to mitigating the spread of disease. With larger classroom spaces, flexible classroom seating and new, efficient HVAC systems, the focus on such improvements in the five-year plan for Cranston's construction projects could not have come at a better time.



Physical Environment Design

Eden Park Elementary School is located on a tight 2.3 acre site in the densely populated Auburn neighborhood in Cranston next to Blackamore Pond. The school was originally constructed in 1951 on a sloping hill, and had no major renovations since that time. Due to the slope of the site, the school steps down as you move from west to east, which separated the building into three wings: west, central, and east.

The schedule for design and construction was extremely fast-tracked. The entire project was designed and constructed in just nine months, with most of the construction taking place over the two months of summer. Because of this, unanticipated building conditions had to be dealt with fluidly and creatively.

The original west wing consisted of a long corridor, flanked with classrooms on either side. The new space is designed to allow students and teachers the ability to flexibly shift between various modes of learning and increased collaboration. Special attention was placed on furniture and materials - everything needed to be kid-friendly, durable, and easy to clean.

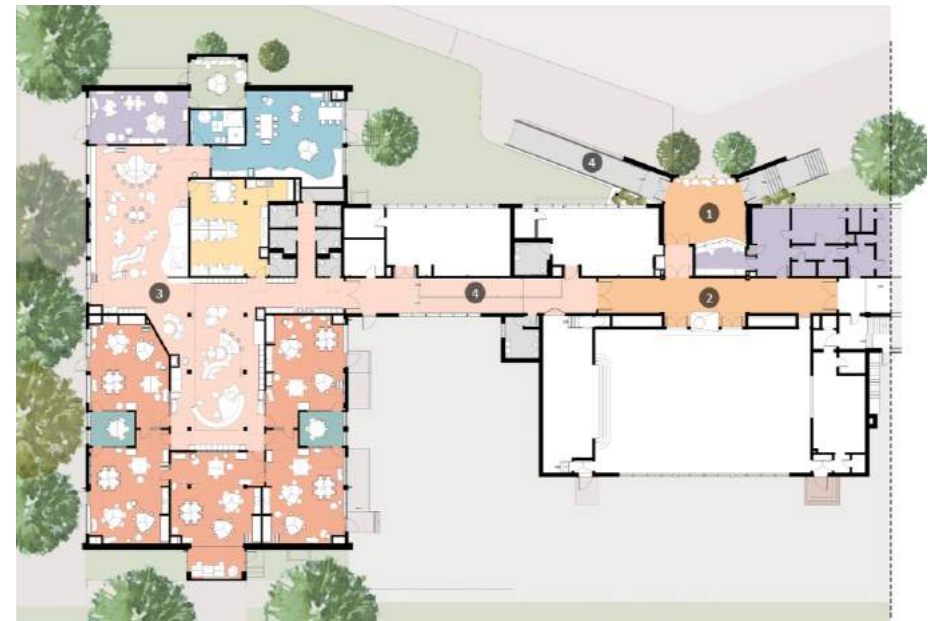
The original entry was dark and had poor visibility. There was a safety concern of people holding doors open for those behind them. The new entry is both welcoming and secure. The original lobby was effectively on the exterior of the building. The new entry encloses this space to protect guests and students from the elements.

A new Floor Plan provides peer interaction and student enrichment: The old corridor was absorbed into the Learning Commons. Space now allows for more flexibility and variety in day-to-day learning activities. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate in a shared professional office space. Transparencies between Learning Studios allow interdisciplinary learning activities to take place easily.

Classrooms to Studios: The new space offers an interconnected array of different spatial types to support a variety of learning modalities.

The Learning Commons is thought of as the main space, with Learning Studios as more of a breakout space. Once learning is able to break out of the classroom and into a more flexible environment, students become more engaged and self-directed.

The project transformed the entry in the central wing to be safe, welcoming and secure, and deeply renovated the entire west wing which housed the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students.



Legend

- ① Secure and Welcoming Entry
- ② Social Heart
- ③ Learning Community
- ④ ADA Accessibility

Before + After

The existing structure was flexible enough to do a Pathfinder Makeover, meaning the entire was stripped so all that was left was the steel structure.

Transformation of West Wing

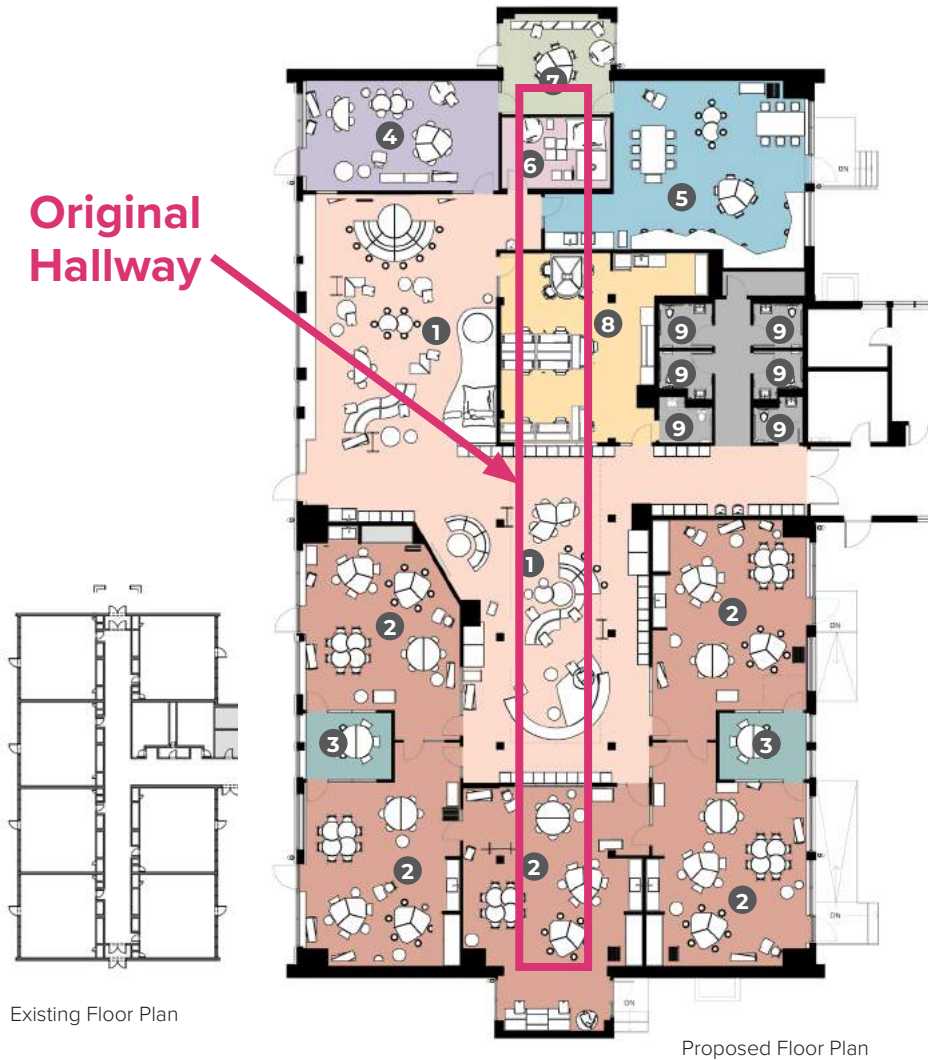


Transformation of Main Entry



A new floor plan provides peer interaction and student enrichment.

Original
Hallway



Legend

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Learning Commons | 5 Active Lab |
| 2 Learning Studio | 6 Sensory Room |
| 3 Small Group Room | 7 Seminar Room |
| 4 Specialist Room | 8 Teacher Collaborative Room |
| | 9 WC |



See Activity Within / Transparency



Movement + Play



Cave Space

Traditional areas have been transformed to energize and inspire learning. Behind, you can see activity within. Transparency of spaces peaks interest and





Results of the Process & Project

Immediately, the school community saw a marked increase in student attendance and engagement as students adjusted to and fell in love with the new 21st-century teaching and learning environment.

The level of engagement, personalization and physical comfort has reduced absences and the school has seen a huge drop in disciplinary issues and all but eliminated the need for specialized isolation and decompression rooms for students with special needs - instead, they are thriving within a suite of spaces shared by everyone in their learning community.

In March 2020, when schools shut down for Covid-19, Eden Park found that students who had been in these new learning spaces were more successful when setting up their at-home learning environments. Teachers found these students could work more independently than those who were not used to learning environments that provided freedom and agency.

“*When learning is no longer tied down by physical and imaginary walls, the opportunities are endless... What I see happening at Eden Park is nothing short of magic.*”

– Courtney Sevigny, Eden Park Principal



The adjacencies of these spaces from one to the other, and their visual connectedness, supports varied learning styles and student-centered activities. Students have agency to choose the right space type for their work. Teachers are able to shift easily from one lesson to another and feel ownership over their shared Learning Community.



The walls and furniture often feature an ability to be written on with dry-erase markers and the technology installed throughout the building allows for interactive teaching and learning.



Classrooms to Studios



Hallway to Learning Commons



Eden Park Pathfinder + Renovation Phase 2

This renovation was done as a prototype pilot project and model school for the rest of the Cranston Public Schools District.

Major interventions included significantly raising the roof structures over the main entry and west wing to become prominent architectural elements as students, teachers and visitors approach the school.

The remainder of the school is slated to be renovated during the next five years. This renovation, and the next phase, are part of an extensive district-wide master plan that was completed in 2018.



Exterior Visual Interest has been Created. Perspective View from Oakland Ave.



Main Lobby



Ceilings are highly reflective and allow increased light to reflect back into spaces.



Independent Study

Sustainability & Wellness

Eden Park broadens the perspective on what “sustainability” in school design really means. There is much more to the concept than just ecological sustainability.

Buildings should undoubtedly be energy efficient, well-insulated, and even approach net-zero status. True sustainability, however, has many facets. To create a supportive, nurturing environment where children can heal and thrive, we need to consider all aspects of sustainability in a tightly integrated educational ecosystem. This includes addressing both longstanding (e.g., classroom overcrowding, designing healthier learning environments) and emerging (e.g., greater technological and space flexibility) issues that have become critically important due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To do this effectively, we must embrace a whole school, whole student approach to sustainability in new school design.

Social/Emotional Sustainability: Eden Park is a place where students want to congregate and interact. More socially adept and nurturing learning spaces support the development of social and emotional intelligence. Examples of these spaces include small group rooms for quiet discussion, learning booths with access to the Internet, collaborative write-on walls, and “campfire” presentation spaces.

Educational Sustainability: The adjacencies of these spaces from one to the other, and their visual connectedness, support a wide range of learning styles and student-centered activities. Students have the agency to choose the right space for their work and learning style. Teachers can easily shift from one lesson to another, and both students and teachers should feel ownership over their shared Learning Community.

Technological Sustainability: The design was guided by an integrated approach to information and communication technology. This encompasses multi-modal lighting, multimedia presentation, acoustical design standards that promote speech intelligibility, audio-lift systems, and telecoil loops for the hard of hearing, all integrated into supportive and engaging interior design.

Physical Sustainability: Eden Park was built to last using a selection of institutional-grade materials and methods, with building materials coming from sustainable sources. It has been designed to function as living textbooks or teaching tools that educators can use to show students how various building design components and systems work and support their learning environment.

Professional Sustainability: A program of capacity building and professional support services for professionals and teachers who work in and use the school building was essential. The success of this kind of school transformation comes from integrating the “Hardware” (facility design) with the “Educational Software” (pedagogy reinforced by teacher training and coaching).



SEE THE RESULTS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGNolR1qYyq>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGkqLEOpPRI&t=4s>

The multi-sensory room is a space where children can unwind mentally and emotionally. It includes tactile walls and fiber-optics. The beauty of play and movement is that it gives children the chance to achieve the necessary levels of physical activity in a way that is motivated by the fun of it.





Re-imagining What a Green School Can Be

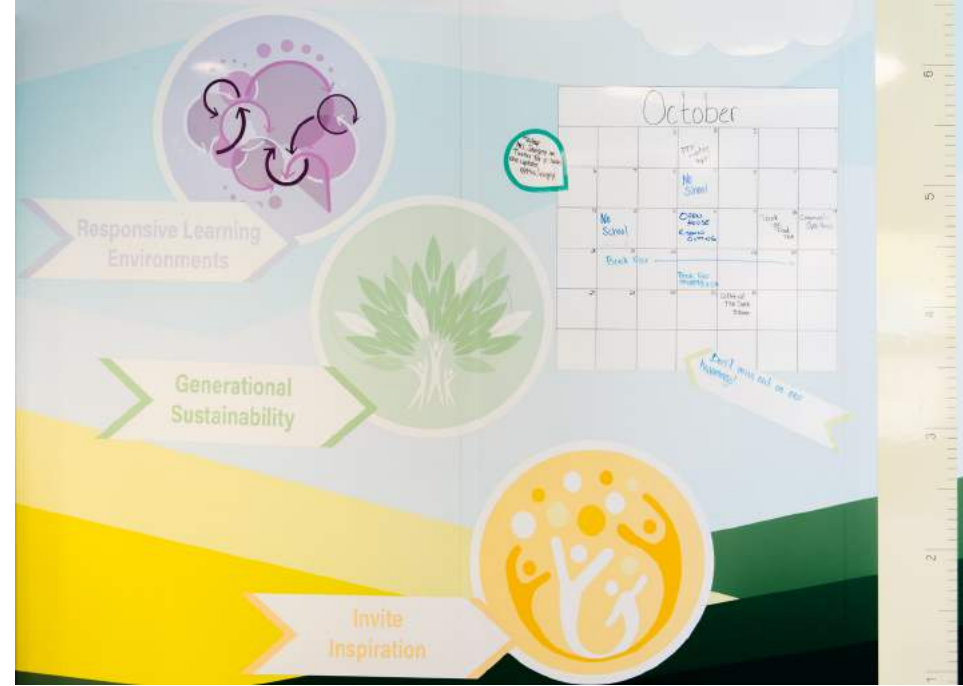
The future of education lies in returning to better designed physical schools. To that end, Eden Park re-imagines “school” as a physical place that is sustainable on multiple levels, promotes and supports sociological and technological equity, is a resilient and flexible place in which to learn, and is fully accessible to all.

Our team designed a new exterior envelope with a highly insulated rain screen system that uses a sustainable fiber cement panel cladding. All windows are triple glazed and operable. The mechanical systems are designed to deliver dedicated outdoor air to each space with a dedicated fan coil for each room. The HVAC system is controlled by a building management system that enables pre- and post-purge occupancy of indoor air. Many of these features are recommended by a joint U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/Energy Star task force on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

The adoption of the Learning Community model at Eden Park allows for more flexibility and variety in day-to-day learning activities. The old corridor was absorbed into the Learning Commons, an agile space that supports multiple ways of learning and multiple groups of learners. The Commons allows for a more diffuse distribution of students and collaborative work areas. Transparency between Learning Studios and the Commons facilitates interdisciplinary learning activities. Every learning space is outfitted with a state-of-the-art educational technology package with smart screens, high-quality sound amplification systems, including audio lift, and assistive technologies that support equity and access for all students and teachers.

Eden Park meets or exceeds the Northeast Collaborative for High Performance Schools standard for public schools built in New England and has become a prototype for re-imagining “green schools” in Rhode Island. There are valuable lessons to be learned from Eden Park, lessons that can be applied at schools across the U.S. to create school buildings that are not just sustainable, but flexible, accessible, equitable, and resilient.

We stand at a pivotal juncture in education. Going forward, the health, well-being, and design of learning spaces must play a foundational role in developing healthy learning environments that are guided by sustainable strategies that address the broad spectrum of ecological, energy, educational, health, and social issues we face. Eden Park supports sustainability at every level and exemplifies a new vision of the future.



Materials + Features

Studios are equipped with interactive projectors, writable + magnetic walls, soft seating, and views outside. The flexibility and multi-use nature of the spaces allows for more efficient use and better ability to adjust to inevitable shifts over time easily.

The 5 Learning Studios all have direct access to the adjacent Learning Commons, and to outside. Most of the Learning Studios also have direct access to a shared small group room. Teachers share all Studios, as opposed to individual ownership of one classroom. This allows teachers the ability to co-teach, engage students in interdisciplinary work, and shift lessons easily throughout the day. There are also teacher-private work areas for lesson planning and collaboration.



Legend

- Projectable Whiteboard with Magnetic Surface
- Standing Height Table with Writable Surface
- Desk Height Table with Writable Surface
- Desk Height Table
- Floor Height Table
- Writable Surface on Built-in Casework
- Tackable Wall

Soft Seating + Mobile Tables with Writable Surface

Built-In Storage with Mobile Cart Parking Space

Magnetic Writable Wall + Intuitive Interactive Projector



116C

**SMALL
GROUP
ROOM**

