

GUNN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL FINE ARTS AND DUAL LANGUAGE ACADEMY

Arlington Independent School District
Arlington, TX



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Welcome to the Gunn Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy, a visionary project that marks the culmination of a journey that began in 2013 with the design of two Elementary School FADL Academies. The idea for the program began as a different way of engaging students by integrating the **fine arts and language** into everything through a purposeful, holistic, and strategically-designed curriculum. The district chose to place these programs in older buildings with low enrollment to help reinvest in those communities and drive neighborhood **renewal**.

At the Junior High, this architectural endeavor represents a **transformative** addition and renovation. By connecting two buildings and upgrading facilities, it redefines the learning environment and fosters innovative interactions between students and their educational surroundings. This project embodies a commitment to excellence in education, **cultural preservation, community enrichment**, and setting a new standard for educational facilities in the district.

“Our students are able to express their conceptual understanding through the integration of the arts through music, theater, dance, 2D art, 3D art and piano. Our ultimate goal is to provide opportunities to become bilingual, biliterate and culturally aware.”
– FADL Elementary Principal

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SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET



Scope of Work

Addition and renovation to an existing campus to prepare it for the Fine Arts and Dual Language Academy and expanding campus to accommodate 6th grade.

STEM Lab Space

Piano Lab

Dance Studio

Blackbox Theater

3D and 2D Art Studios

8th Grade Living Room

Athletic Track and Field Replacement

Concessions/Restroom Building

Project Details

Completion Date: June 2022

Grades Served: 6-8

Capacity: 1,390 Students

Total Building Area: 219,000 SF

Additions: 96,522 SF

Renovations: 122,478 SF

Site Area: 16.59 Acres

Final Cost of Construction: \$62,700,000

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SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

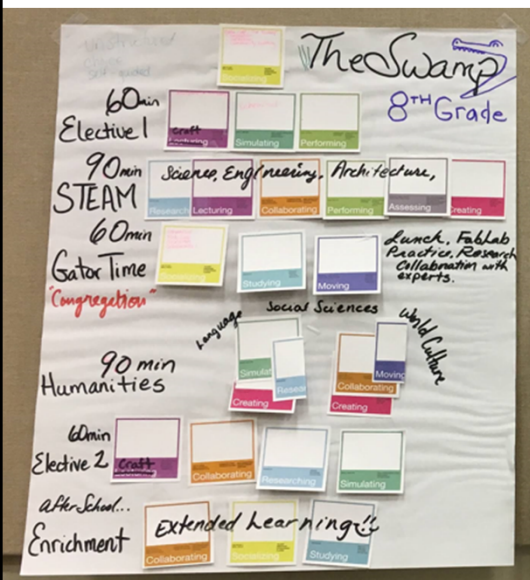




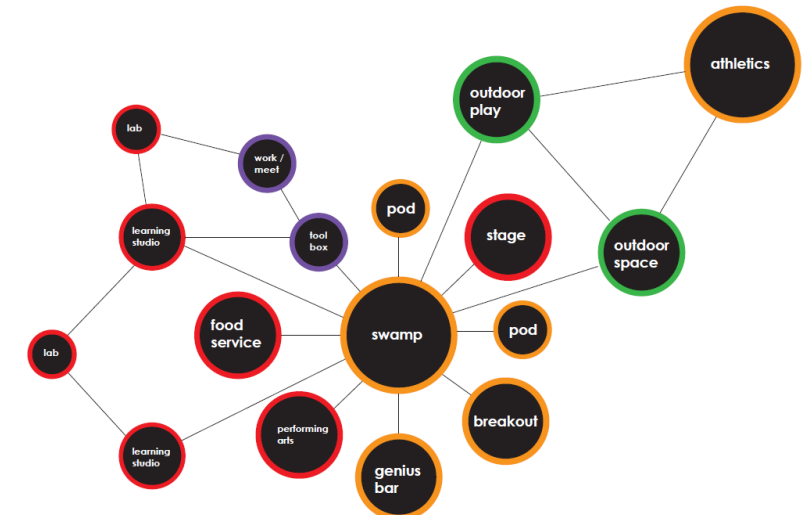
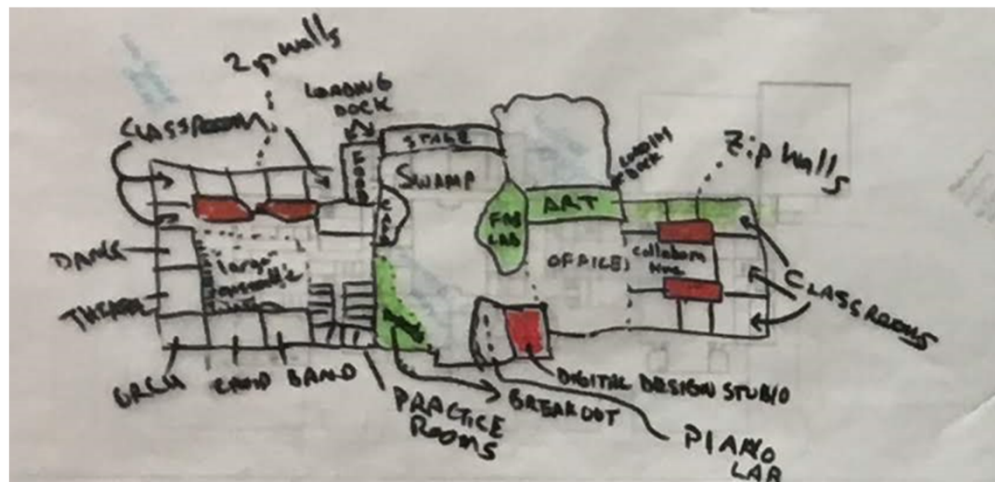
Identifying Stakeholders

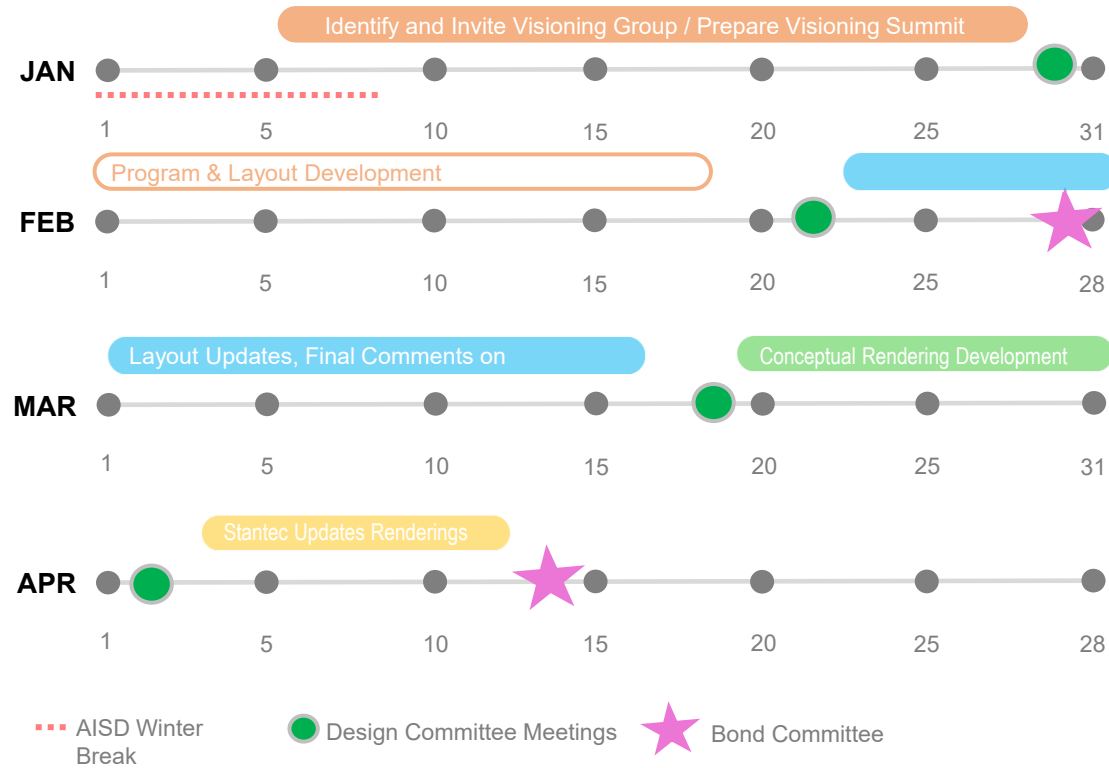
Key stakeholders encompass a wide range of individuals and groups, including educators, students, and parents within the district. Principals of the elementary school FADL programs, PTA members, students, faculty at the existing campus, former students-turned-district-administrators, and even school board members all participated.

These diverse groups represent a broad spectrum of interests, all invested in the project's success. Their active participation and support were crucial in ensuring the project meets diverse needs, fosters inclusive growth, and successfully integrates fine arts and dual language education into the traditional curriculum. Each stakeholder brought unique perspectives and historical context that contribute to the project's holistic development and communal impact, embodying the core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion by authentically engaging all voices and perspectives.



Community and stakeholder visioning meetings developed the school schedule and the 'Swamp'.





The visioning and programming schedule accounted for multiple check-ins with various committees before design began.

Visioning Process

The visioning process involved collaborative meetings with staff, students, and parents aiming to blend fine arts and dual language curriculum with traditional educational goals. Charrettes played a significant role in capturing the campus's essence and history, allowing stakeholders to define desired diverse learning opportunities. The process was characterized by inclusivity and creativity, ensuring that the final project reflected the community's diverse needs and aspirations. This collaborative approach fostered a sense of shared ownership and commitment, enabling stakeholders to contribute their unique perspectives and expertise. The visioning process not only shaped the project's direction but also built strong relationships and a unified vision among the community members, reflecting the core values of Collaboration, Collegiality, and Connection through the sharing of ideas, resources, and values.





Engagement Fostering DEI

Engagement efforts focused on blending the two curriculums and creating a unified student body through the house system. This system integrated students from various backgrounds and curricula, fostering cultural connections and offering equal opportunities for participation in athletics and fine arts. The inclusive approach ensured that all students felt represented and valued, promoting a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. By actively involving diverse groups in the planning and execution phases, the project created an environment that celebrated differences and encouraged mutual respect.

This expression was infused throughout the school intentionally to also help in wayfinding. The houses represent the four cast-in-place concrete stairs of the original building that represent the primary vertical circulation points. With the adjacent collaboration spaces, these stairs are now owned by the particular house.

"We had a big challenge as we approached this Academy model. How do we respect and honor the tradition of the past but still welcome the future. Our house system is how we intended to do that purposefully."

– School Principal



GATAMÃO | *Dreamer*
Creative
Risk Taker
Curious
Self-Expressive
Driven
Imaginative
Inquisitive

Walt Disney
Elon Musk
Da Vinci



NKERRA | *Advocate*
Collaboration
Communicator
Motivator
Sage
Empathetic
Relational
Respectful

Oprah Winfrey
Abraham Lincoln
Martin Luther
King Jr.



NOKBÚH | *Thinker*
Critical Thinker
Responsible
Organized
Hardworking
Intellectual
Diligent
Focused

Plato
Bill Gates
Stephen Hawking

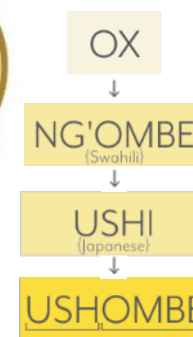


*The houses come together
to create the school
mascot, Floyd the Gator.*

About the Community

The community of both the locally zoned school and the students applying to the academy matriculating into Gunn represented an incredibly ethnically diverse group of students. Celebrating that diversity through the dual language program became a core goal for the design of the project.

Houses were created to unite the diverse student population. The design team developed each house to have a name that is derived from a mix of representative languages, a mascot/animal representative, a descriptor with key attributes, and notable representatives who follow the attributes of the house. The essence of each house were derived from the characteristics of a successful student. The specific words chosen were crowd-sourced from student and staff groups.



USHOMBE | *Doer*
Confident
Gritty
Resilient
Independent
Intrepid
Problem Solver
Goal Oriented

Teddy Roosevelt
Serena Williams
Harriet Tubman



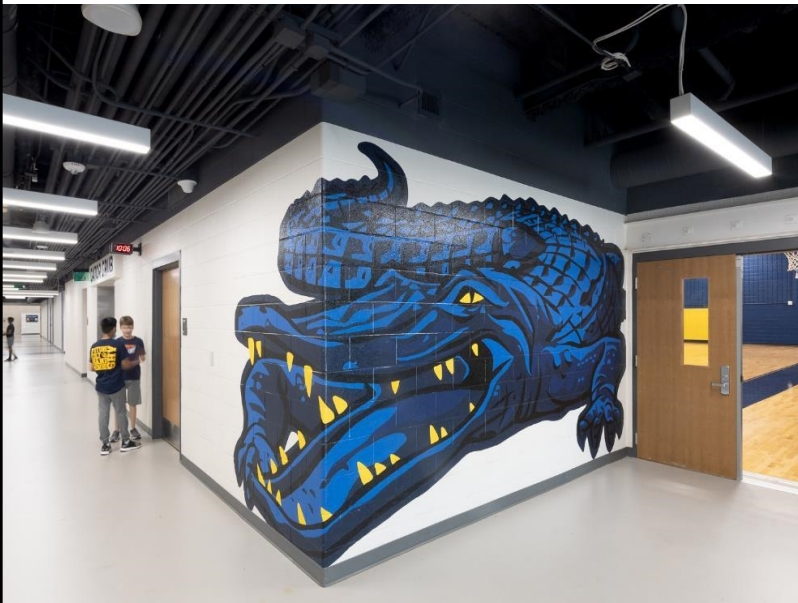
New performance stage in acoustically designed cafetorium.



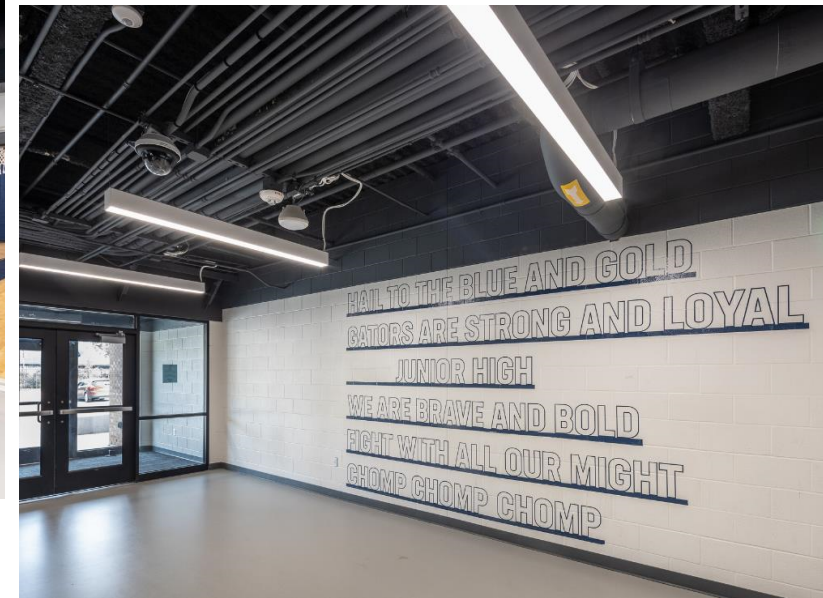
The heart of the 'Swamp'.

Value of Process & Project

The project reinvested in the community, strengthening neighborhood pride and enriching the educational environment. Multifunctional spaces like the cafetorium and gallery maximized efficiency, reduced costs, and enhanced campus life. By inviting visitors into these spaces more frequently, the project fostered community engagement, a sense of ownership, and cultural exchange—empowering residents to contribute to and benefit from rejuvenated campus. By revitalizing the neighborhood and creating shared spaces both inside and outside, it cultivated a more cohesive, vibrant community where learning and cultural heritage seamlessly intersect. These efforts reflect the core values of Learners First and Innovation, ensuring students remain the ultimate beneficiaries of forward-thinking design.



New athletics entry focused on improving the spectator experience.



Infusing the school with spirit.



Old athletics entry.

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Physical Attributes of the Environment

The Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy consists of a transformative addition and renovation, connecting two older buildings and upgrading facilities to reshape the learning environment. The site design repositions the main entry and traffic patterns to the interior of the site. Creating a prominent community face on what could be considered the back of the building was an important goal. The blending of old and new exterior materials signifies reinvestment in the community, and glazing around stairs softens the neighbors' views and enhances nighttime interest. The integration of fine arts facilities at the core of the building ensures every student is continuously exposed to the arts, embodying the principle of Learners First. Spaces like the library entry, designed to mimic a proscenium, enrich the learning environment and foster creativity, reflecting our value of innovation. The architectural design prioritizes accessibility and flow, ensuring respect for diverse needs and enhancing the educational experience.

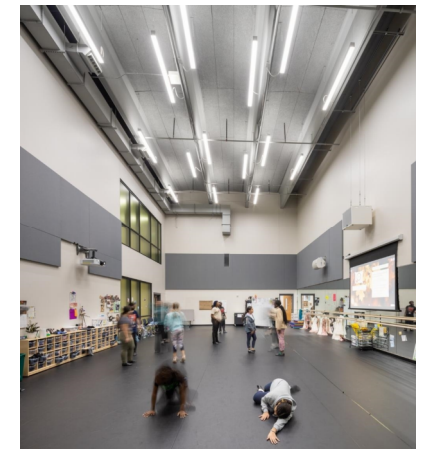
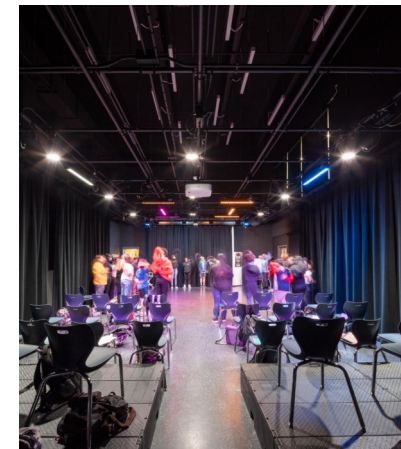


Main street façade, old v new.

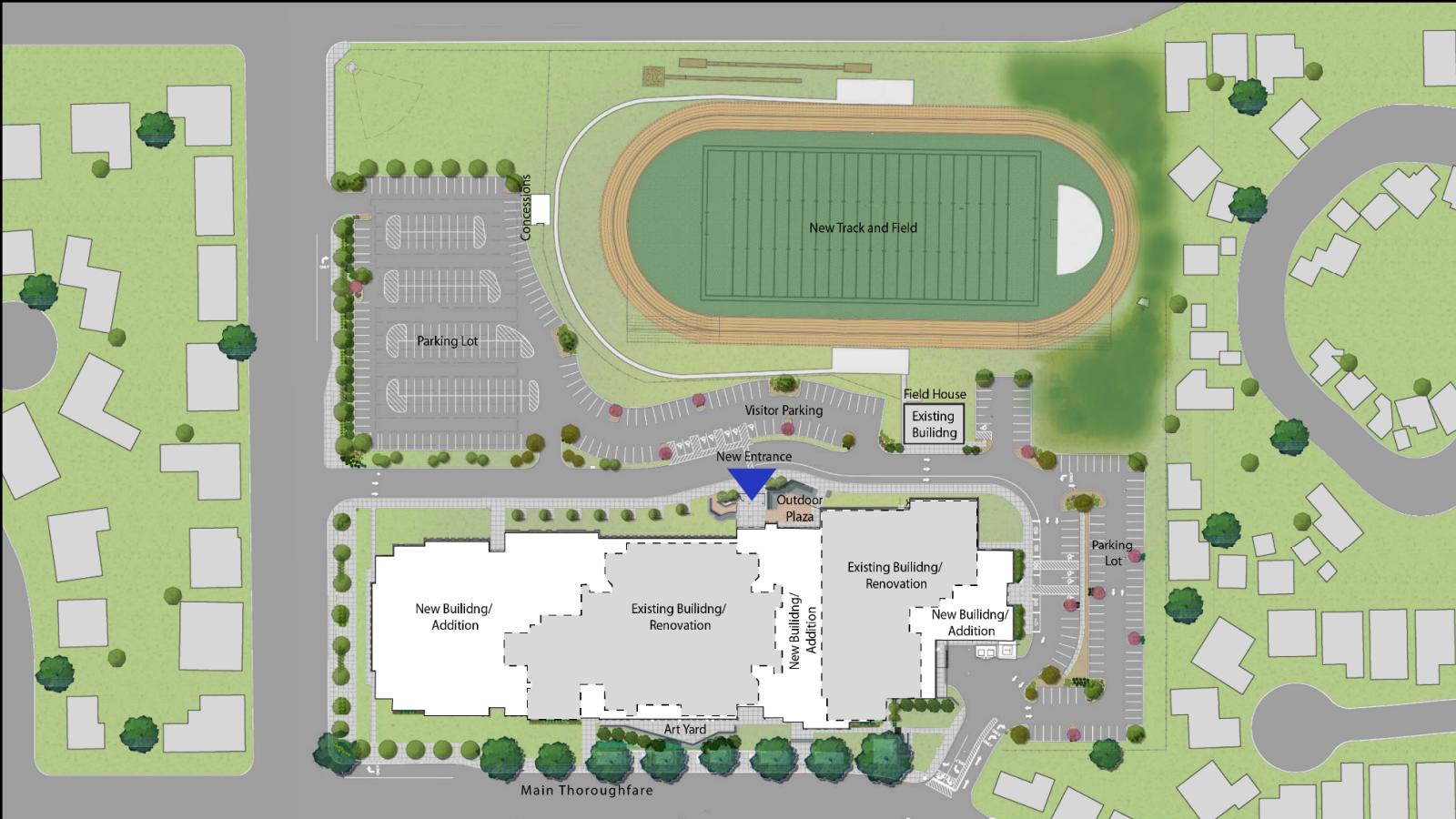


Inspiring and Motivating Project

The Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy inspires and motivates students through its innovative integration of fine arts and language into every aspect of the curriculum. The architectural design encourages creativity and cultural awareness by positioning fine arts facilities at the core of the building, embodying Learners First. Spaces like the performance cafetorium, outfitted with enhanced lighting, rigging, sound systems, and acoustic attenuation, provide elevated performance opportunities for students, demonstrating Innovation. The new main entry, featuring the Swamp, serves as a community-facing focal point, celebrating the school's rich history and showcasing student work. The inclusion of multifunctional spaces, such as the cafetorium and gallery, maximizes space efficiency and creates opportunities for community engagement, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment among students, reflecting Collaboration, Collegiality, and Connection.



Old library converted into dance studio and black box theater.



Fitting into the Larger Context

This project reinvests in an aging and diverse community, creating a sense of pride and identity in the neighborhood and student body. The redesigned site plan improves safety and traffic flow while revitalizing the campus. The new main entry, prominently featuring the Swamp—the symbolic heart of the school—strengthens community bonds and supports a modern, inclusive educational environment. The preservation of existing trees along the street and their incorporation into the new landscaping exemplifies the commitment to maintaining the community's natural and historical elements. The facility's ability to blend old and new materials, such as existing brick, showcases the integration of modern technologies and aesthetics, extending the life of the building while honoring its heritage. The compact nature of the site connects students to outdoor presentation spaces, athletics, and the art yard.



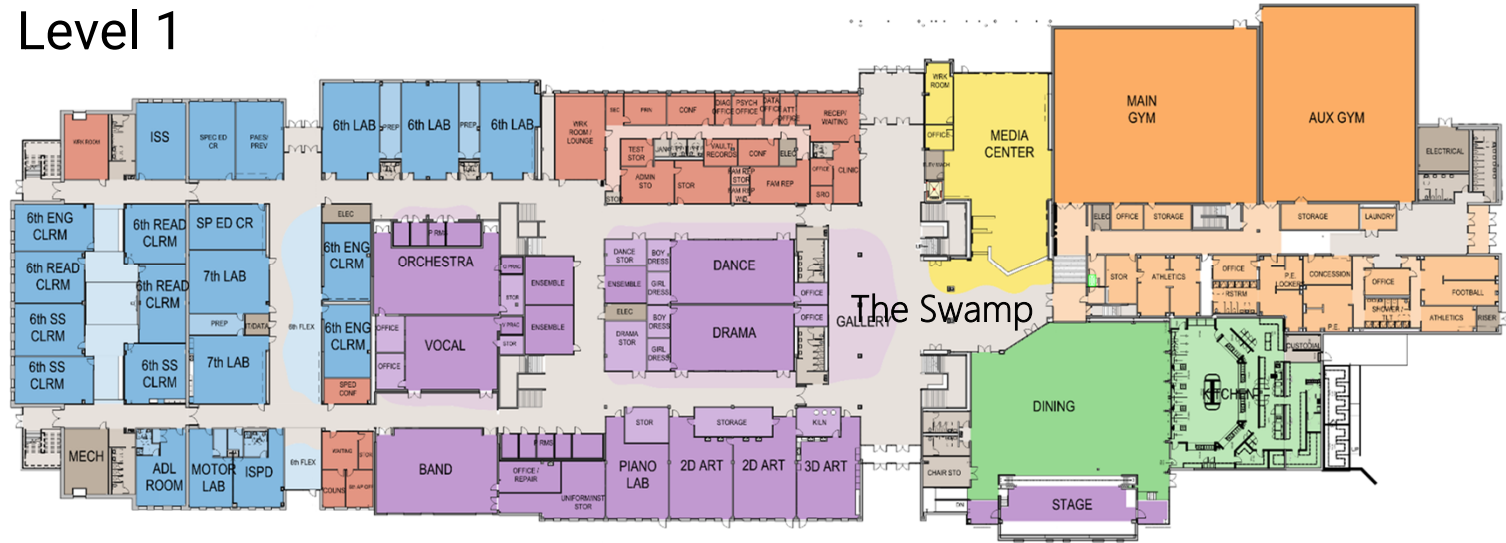
Prominent corner stairs softened with glazing.



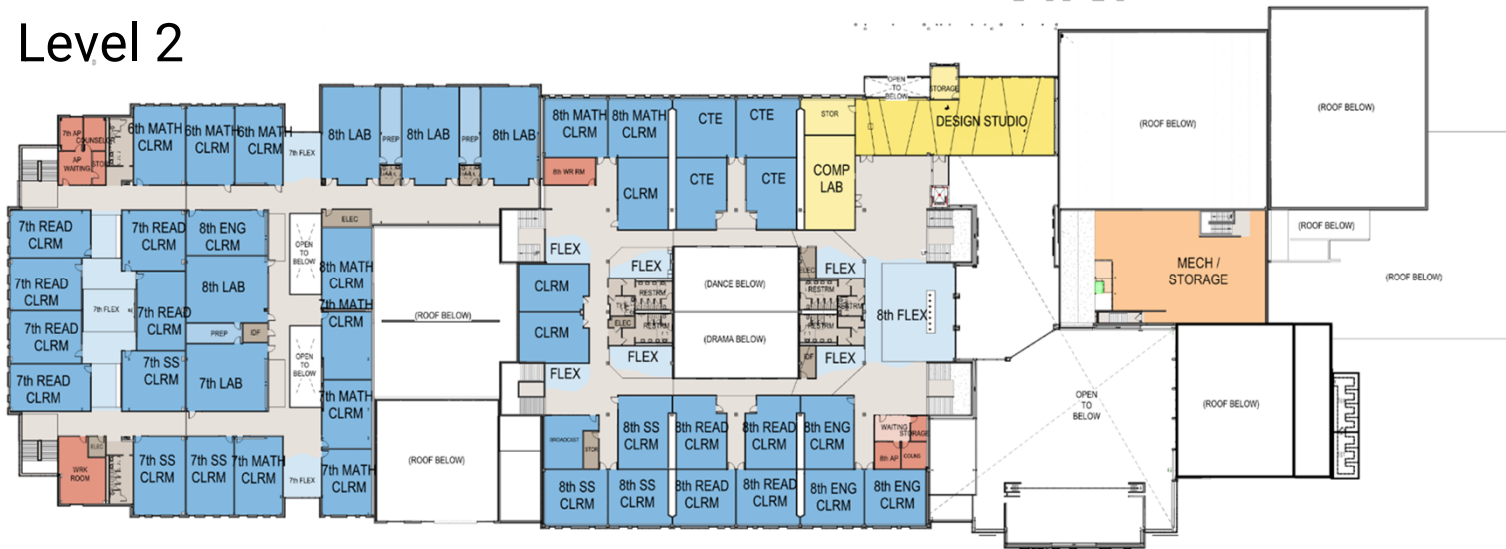
Main street façade, old v new.



Level 1

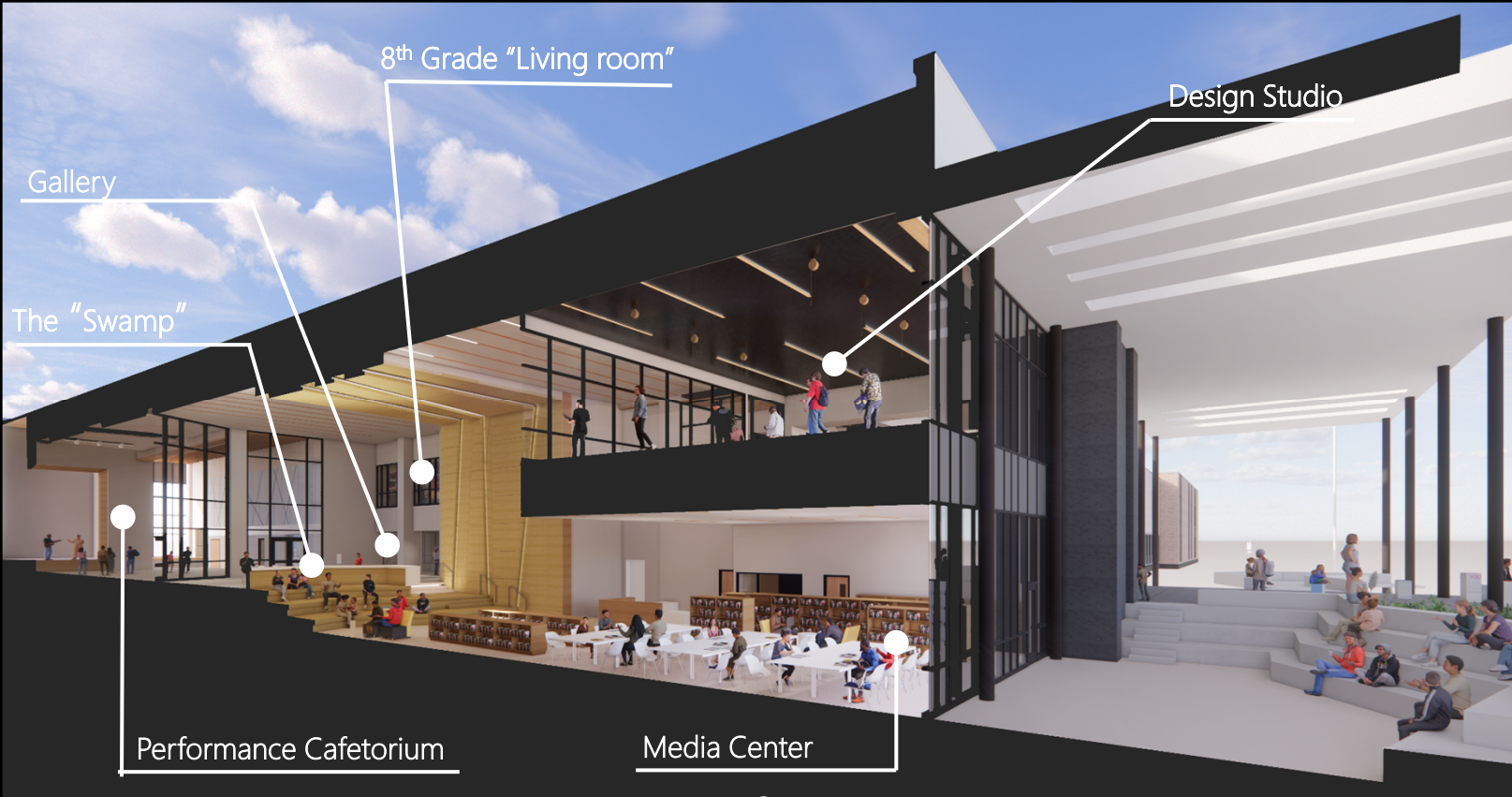


Level 2



Supporting the Curriculum

The architecture of the Junior High School FADL Academy is meticulously designed to support the curriculum's integration of fine arts and dual language, demonstrating the value of place in learning. The redesigned site plan enhances accessibility and flow, while fine arts are centralized and accessible to all students, showcasing student art. The dual language program is woven throughout the school, enabling students to connect with language and appreciate cultural diversity, authentically engaging all voices and perspectives. The library's entry design mimics a proscenium, enriching the learning environment and fostering creativity. This setup ensures that every student engages with music, theater, dance, 2D art, 3D art, and piano daily, which aligns seamlessly with the curriculum's goals.



Section/Elevation

The section describes how the various activities surrounding the Swamp integrate into the student's everyday experience of the school. The Design Studio overlooks main entry, athletics, library, and the Swamp. This draws students into the pre-CTE activities happening in the studio. The Swamp is a shared space between art gallery, library, cafetorium, and the student entry to athletics creating a strong hub for both student and visiting community members. The library takes advantage of great views to the exterior with direct access to an outdoor gathering space sunken down from the school's main drive.



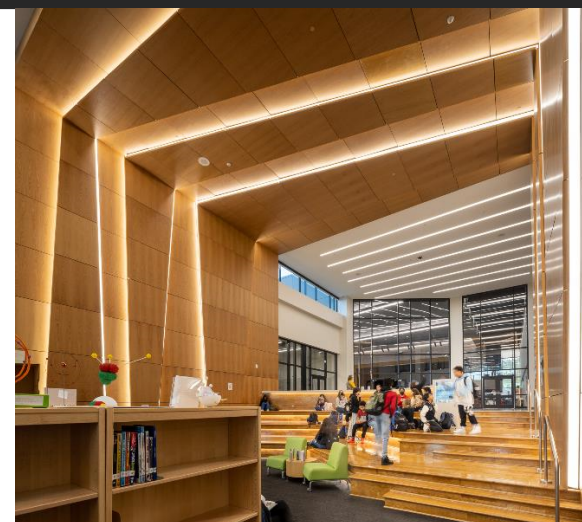
Cafetorium looking back at Swamp and Library.



Student Gallery in the Swamp.



The old Swamp.



Library looking to Swamp/Cafetorium.



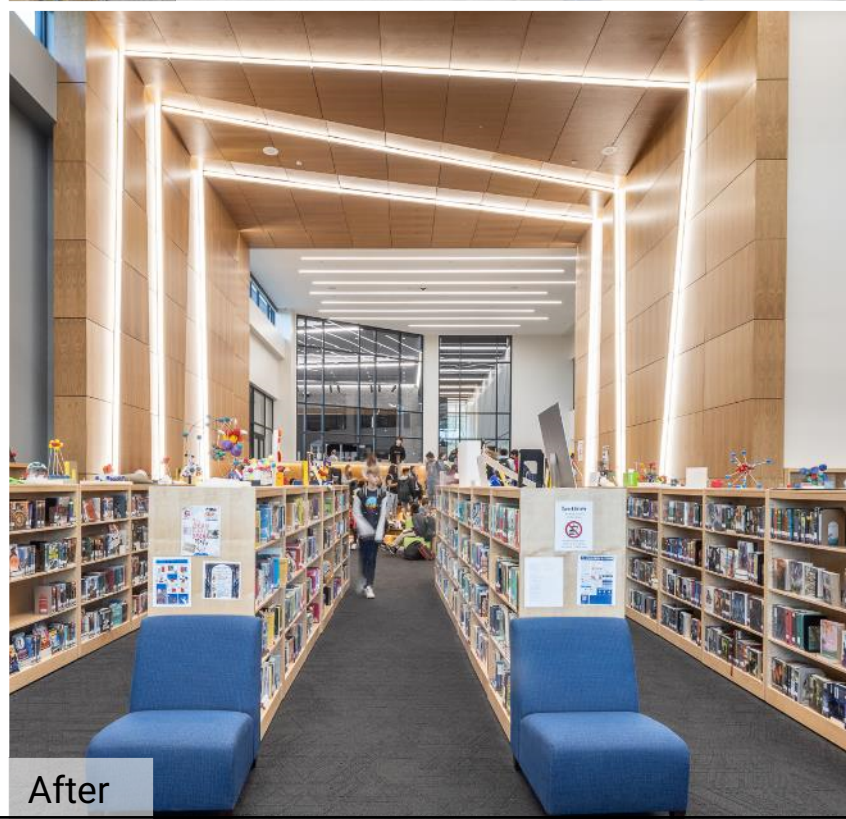
Before



Before



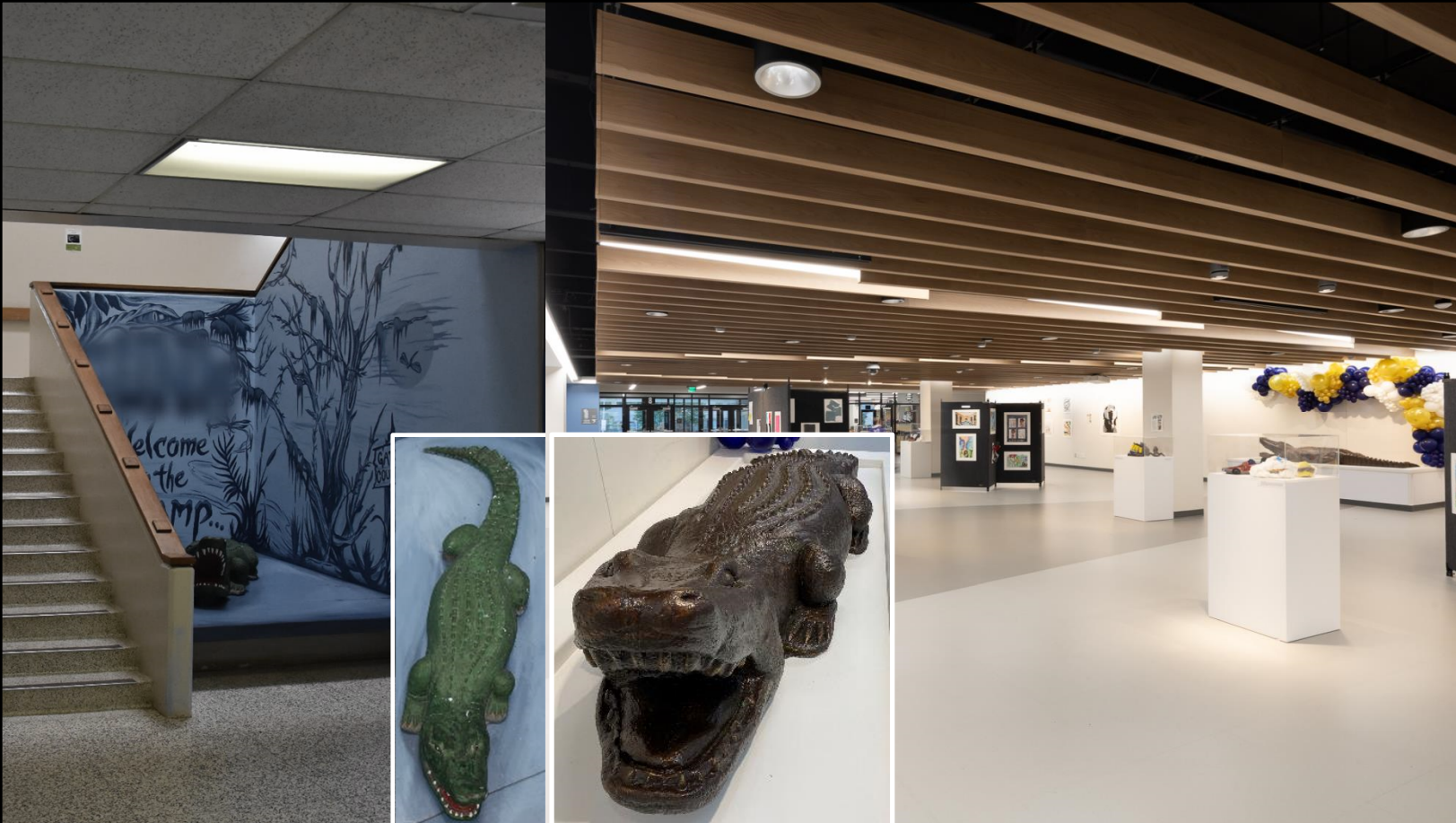
After



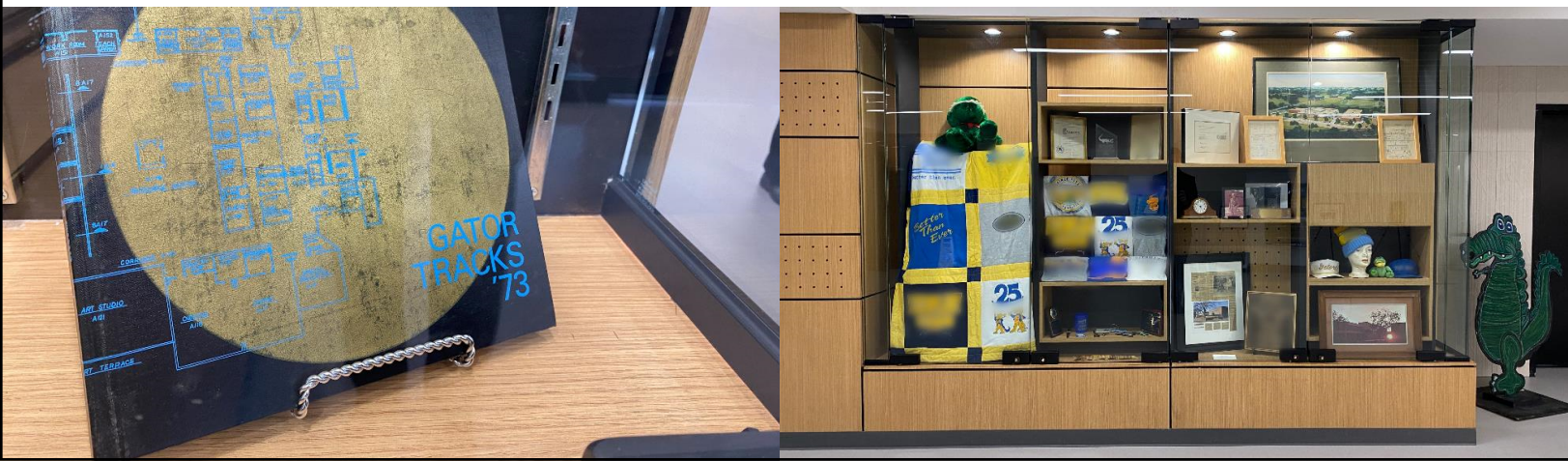
After

Innovative Aspects of the Environment

The Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy exemplifies innovation through its seamless integration of educational goals with site development and facility design. The redesigned site plan enhances flow and accessibility, creating a prominent community face. The centralization of fine arts facilities ensures that every student experiences the arts daily, embodying Learners First. The library entry, designed to mimic a proscenium, enriches the learning environment and fosters creativity, demonstrating innovation. The environmentally graphic design connects fine arts, dual language, and houses into every space in the school. The use of borrowed light from art and conference spaces allows natural light to permeate the heart of the building, enhancing the overall ambiance. These innovative aspects of the physical environment contribute to a dynamic and engaging educational experience, fostering respect for diverse learning styles and perspectives.



Floyd the Gator refinished and placed prominently in the newly imagined, student-centered Swamp.



Honoring History

The project reinvests in an aging and diverse community to ignite a sense of pride in the neighborhood and student body. Both inwardly and outwardly, it features various spaces to engage the public, fostering a civic-minded school spirit. Inside, distinct houses unite students with multilingual names and unique mascots, celebrating cultural diversity. The Swamp, an area centered around Floyd the Gator, symbolizes community spirit and school heritage. These elements enhance the school's role as a cultural hub, prioritizing community engagement and identity development through the spaces dedicated to the display and performance of students' work.

The unofficial heart of the school, the Swamp, was relocated to the community/student center of the school. The Swamp now borders the media center, gallery, and performance cafetorium. Visitors and students alike now pass by the newly restored Floyd the Gator every day.

"These changes are by far, greater and more beautiful than I could ever have imagined. I believe you will see amazing results from the alumni here for the next 50 years, that's a true community investment."

– Daughter of Namesake

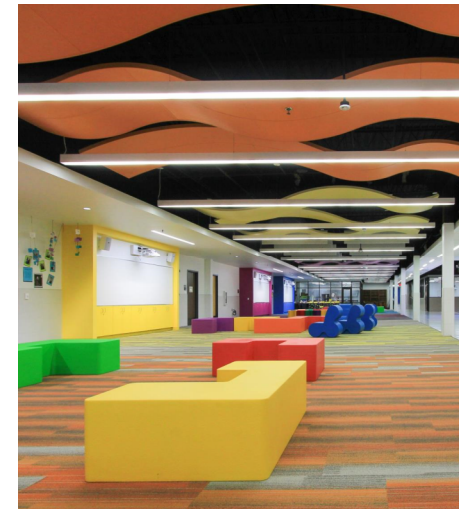
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EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Educational Vision and Goals

The Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy embodies a visionary project rooted in a holistic and innovative approach to education. The academy's educational vision is to put learners first by integrating fine arts and dual language into every aspect of the curriculum, fostering bilingualism, biliteracy, and cultural awareness among students. This transformative vision began in 2013 with the inception of the FADL curriculum at the elementary level, aiming to engage students through a strategic and purposeful integration of arts and language. The overarching goals include enhancing educational experiences, preserving cultural heritage, enriching the community, and recognizing students as the ultimate beneficiaries of this dedicated and innovative educational framework.



Jones and Corey Elementaries FADL Projects

Grade Level Pod Flex Space



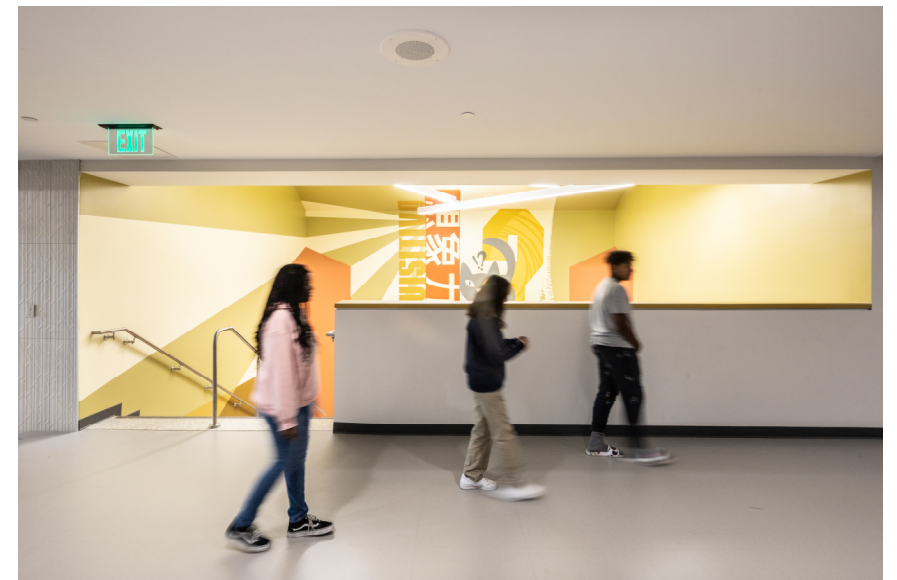
Nkerra Stair



Gatamao Stair

Supporting the Curriculum

The architecture of the Junior High School FADL Academy is meticulously designed to support the curriculum's integration of fine arts and dual language, demonstrating the value of place in learning. The redesigned site plan enhances accessibility and flow, while fine arts are centralized and accessible to all students, showcasing student art. The dual language program is woven throughout the school, enabling students to connect with language and appreciate cultural diversity, authentically engaging all voices and perspectives. The library's entry design mimics a proscenium, enriching the learning environment and fostering creativity. This setup ensures that every student engages with music, theater, dance, 2D art, 3D art, and piano daily, which aligns seamlessly with the curriculum's goals.



Stair graphics are key wayfinding visible down every major corridor.

Main entry graphic.



Variety of seating in the pod flex areas.



8th grade living room.



Supporting Various Learning and Teaching Styles

The academy's environment is designed to accommodate a variety of learning and teaching styles, promoting both traditional and innovative methods, thus placing learners first. The integration of fine arts into the core of the building ensures that all students experience the arts daily. Classrooms are positioned to allow natural light and showcase student works, fostering an inspiring and comfortable learning atmosphere. Flexible spaces like the performance cafeteria and gallery are multifunctional, supporting diverse instructional methods and activities. Additionally, the academy includes specialty spaces such as 2D art and 3D art studios, a piano lab, and a dance studio, providing varied learning and teaching environments. As a special nod to the outgoing 8th grade students, an 8th grade “living room” was planned as a special space for them to own. Located above the Swamp, the living room looks out over the library, cafeteria, and pathway to athletics.



Adaptability and Flexibility

The educational environment of the Junior High School FADL Academy is designed to be adaptable and flexible, meeting the evolving needs of students and educators. The existing pre-cast and cast-in-place concrete was re-used as much as possible. The existing cafeteria space was a low ceiling space inadequate to meet the needs of the special FADL program. The existing double-T's were taken off and a new steel structure designed to increase the height. The stage operates as a performance venue in the evenings and as an ensemble space during the day with the use of a high sound transmission class operable partition.

Spaces like the performance cafetorium are equipped with advanced lighting, rigging, and sound systems, allowing them to serve multiple functions. The adaptable design also includes the strategic positioning of fine arts spaces at the core of the building, ensuring that the environment can support a variety of activities and instructional goals over time.



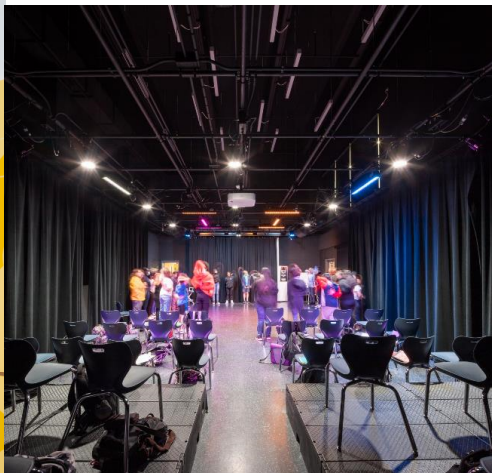
Cafeteria as ensemble space.



Cafeteria as showcase.



Art rooms connected to Art Yard.



Black box and dance on display.



Houses and Language printed on acoustical panels.

Innovative Aspects

The Junior High School FADL Academy incorporates several innovative aspects within its educational environment, achieved through exploration of opportunities at the intersection of learning and place. The house system designed to unify students from different curricula fosters community and social-emotional development. Outdoor spaces such as the Art Yard and Outdoor Performance spaces encourage creativity and provide controlled access to the outdoors. The incorporation of natural materials and biophilic graphics throughout the interior spaces enhances students' connection to nature. The library portal mimics a stage proscenium, promoting a theatrical and engaging atmosphere, demonstrating the value of place in learning. Additionally, the integration of fine arts and dual language into every space in the school through environmental graphic design illustrates the innovative approach to education that this academy embraces.



Band and vocal mural w/ fight song translated in multiple languages.

06

Results





Final Outcomes

The Junior High School Fine Arts and Dual Language (FADL) Academy integrates fine arts and dual language programs to create a dynamic learning environment. Its central fine arts facilities expose students to music, theater, dance, and visual arts daily, fostering creativity and cultural appreciation. The FADL projects support the district's goal of reinvesting in older buildings while modernizing learning spaces. Expanding to include 6th grade broadens access to fine arts and bilingual education, optimizing resources and enhancing academic excellence.

Community engagement is a priority, with renovated spaces fostering pride and inclusion. The relocation of the Swamp and the creation of themed student houses strengthen identity and connection.

The project exemplifies financial stewardship by repurposing structures and integrating sustainable elements, reducing costs while creating opportunities for unique student experiences. Interactive spaces encourage collaboration and creativity, reinforcing shared values among students and educators. Blending historical and modern design elements, the academy preserves its legacy while evolving to meet contemporary needs.

Ultimately, the FADL Academy demonstrates how thoughtful design enhances both education and community cohesion.

"It just feels amazing being a part of this monumental school." "And the fact that it's on its feet and still thriving after 50 years just means so much. You get so many opportunities ... this is where I fell in love with theater."

– 8th grade student tour guides