JAMES MADISON STEAM ACADEMY

A4LE PROJECT AWARDS 2026 | NEW CONSTRUCTION





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

James Madison STEAM Academy is an on-site replacement of the former Madison Elementary School in Greeley, Colorado. The new school building is nearly twice the size and capacity of the former school. The building's placement on the site strengthens its connection to the immediate neighborhood. The entry faces a neighborhood street for pedestrian connection. Vehicular traffic is kept to the perimeter, allowing a pedestrian flow from within the school common spaces, to outdoor learning and play areas, and on to adjacent neighborhood resources such as Houston Botanic Gardens, the Boys & Girls club and adjacent walking trails.

Finding common ground between the S.T.E.A.M. curriculum and the majority hispanic student population, the design team built upon a concept of "weaving". Programatically, S.T.E.A.M. can be defined as the intentional weaving of science and art in academics. At the same time , the woven textures and colors of the traditional sarape is representative of the long-established culture within the school. This concept is not only carried through in the spatial weaving of science, math, art and design, but also in customizing the school for its community. Durable materials and generous filtered natural light support a mission of sustainability. The design of the school also recognizes the importance this academic and civic institution has for the community. Visitors and community users of the building are greeted with an open and spacious entry that connects all of the public amenities at the heart of the school and campus.



SCOPE AND DETAILS

- Location: 500 24th St Greeley CO
- Specific Use: Public PK-8 STEAM Academy
- Project Scope: On-Site Replacement School (Elementary replaced by PK-8)
- Owner: Weld County District 6
- Project Delivery Method: Design-Build
- Occupancy Date: August 2023
- Student Body: Designed for 782 students grades PK-8
- Project size:
    - Site Size: 9.2 acres
    - Gross Area: 111,923 GSF
    - Area per student: 143 GSF per student at capacity
- Project Costs:
    - New Construction and Site: $49,400,000
    - Cost/sf: $441 / sf
- Project Team:
    - Design-Build GC: **Adolfson and Peterson Construction**
    - Architecture, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture: **HCM**

HCM



STAKEHOLDER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

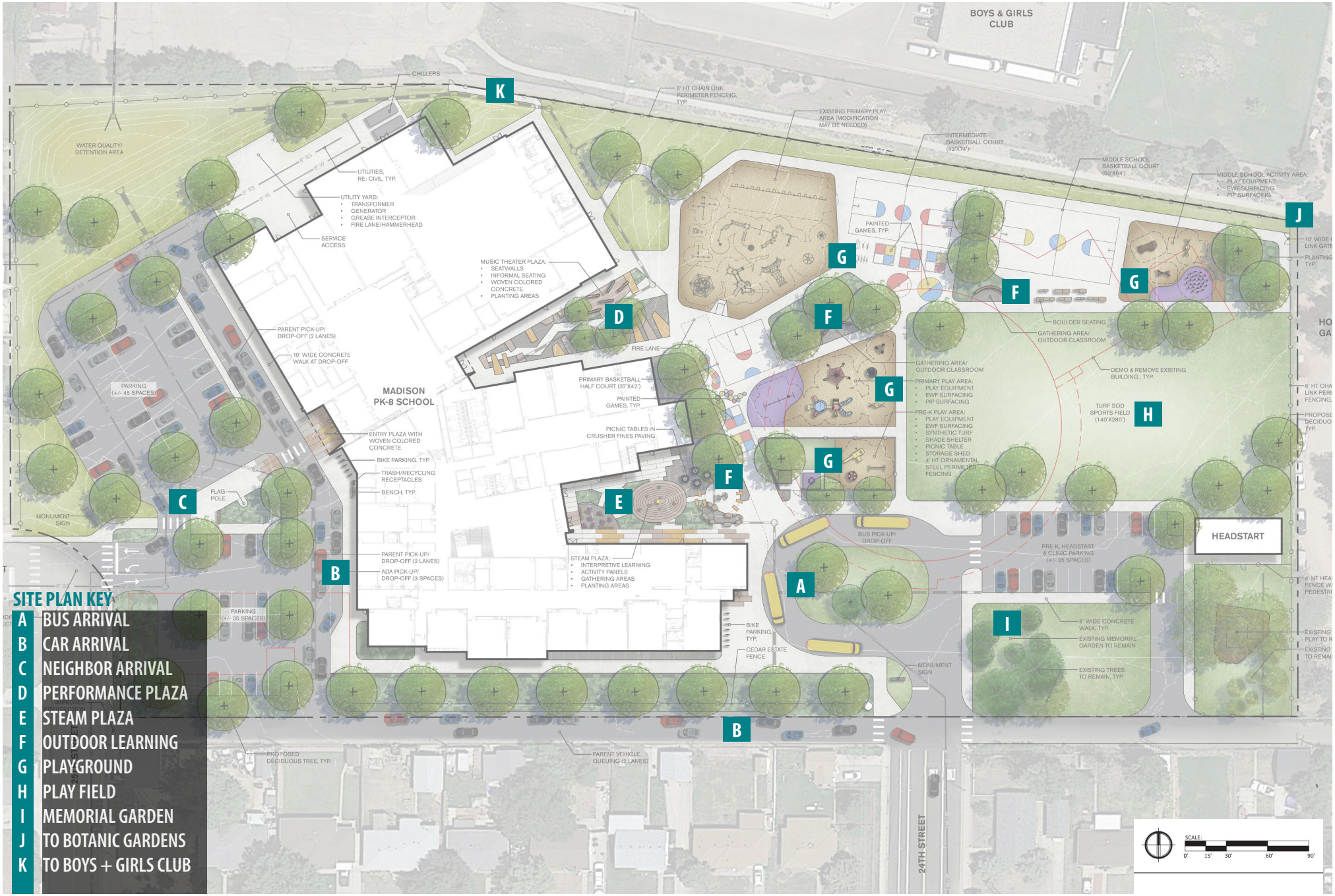
- Create a timeless, sustainable building for future students – a school that is multi-generational, flexible, and relevant.
- Crear un edificio intemporal y sostenible para los futuros estudiantes - una escuela multigeneracional, flexible y pertinente.

- Support hands-on, project-based and outdoor learning, integrated with the daily curriculum.
- Apoyar el aprendizaje práctico basado en proyectos y al aire libre y que sea integrado en el plan de estudios diario.

- Focus on opportunities for all scholars, through inclusion, universal design, and a family atmosphere.
- Centrarse en las oportunidades para todos los alumnos, mediante la inclusión, el diseño universal y un ambiente familiar.

- Design an inviting place that people will be proud of, that reflects the attending community, and connects to the surrounding neighborhood.
- Diseñar un lugar que invite a la gente a sentirse orgullosa, que refleje la comunidad a la que sirve y que se conecte con el vecindario cercano.

SITE PLAN



SITE PLAN KEY

A	BUS ARRIVAL
B	CAR ARRIVAL
C	NEIGHBOR ARRIVAL
D	PERFORMANCE PLAZA
E	STEAM PLAZA
F	OUTDOOR LEARNING
G	PLAYGROUND
H	PLAY FIELD
I	MEMORIAL GARDEN
J	TO BOTANIC GARDENS
K	TO BOYS + GIRLS CLUB

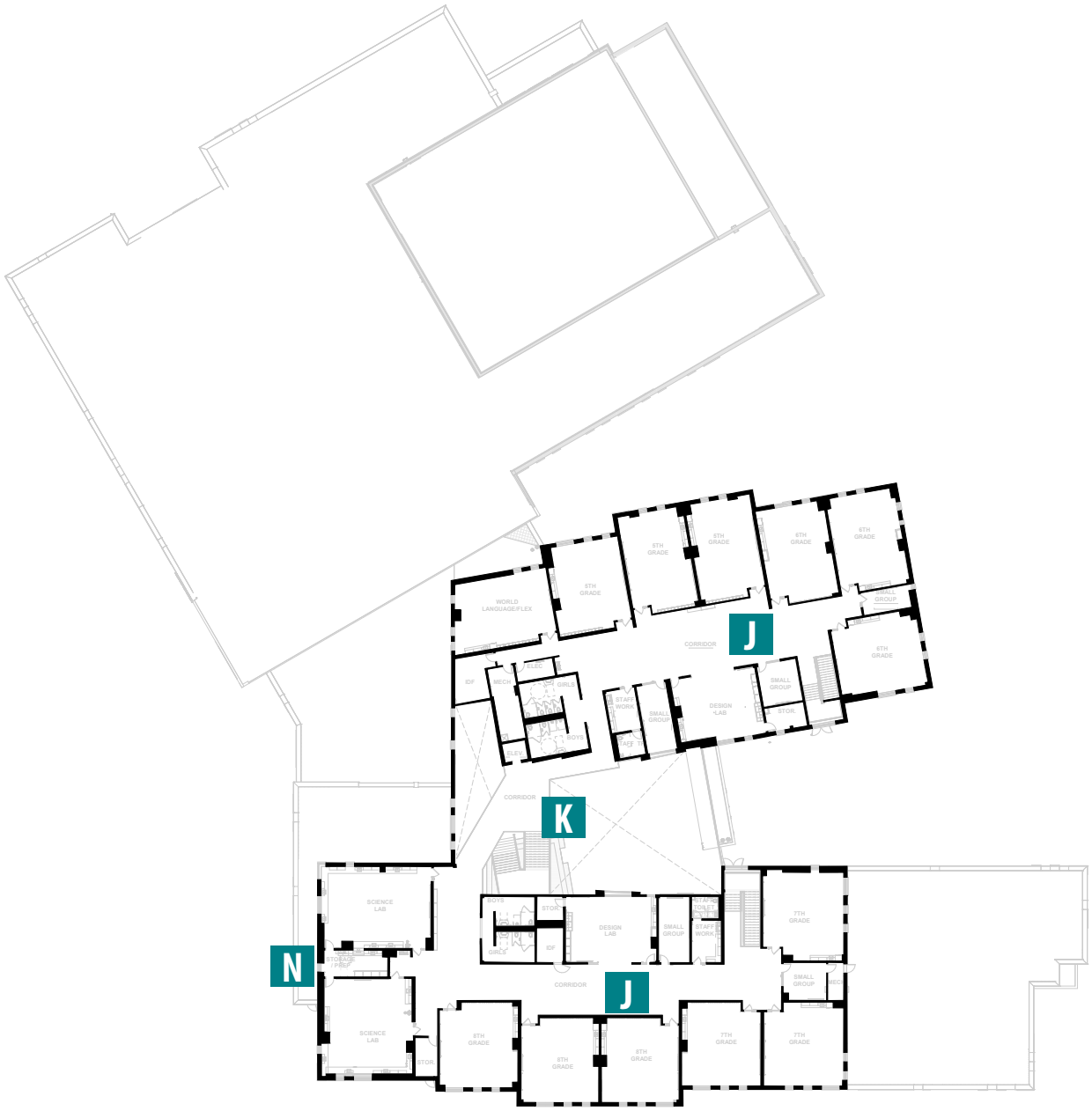
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



MAIN ENTRY + DINING COMMONS	A
ATHLETICS	B
ART SUITE	C
DRAMA / PERFORMANCE	D
MUSIC	E
PERFORMANCE PLAZA	E.1
ADMIN	F
COUNSELING	G
SPECIAL ED SUITE	H
LEARNING COMMUNITY	J
LEARNING COMMONS	K
STEAM PLAZA	K.1
PK/K COMMUNITY	L
COMMUNITY CLINIC	M
SCIENCE SUITE	N



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

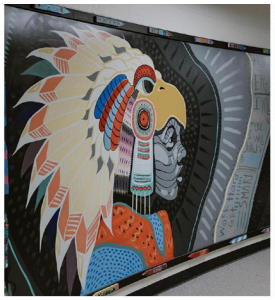


MAIN ENTRY + DINING COMMONS	A
ATHLETICS	B
ART SUITE	C
DRAMA / PERFORMANCE	D
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SCIENCE SUITE	N



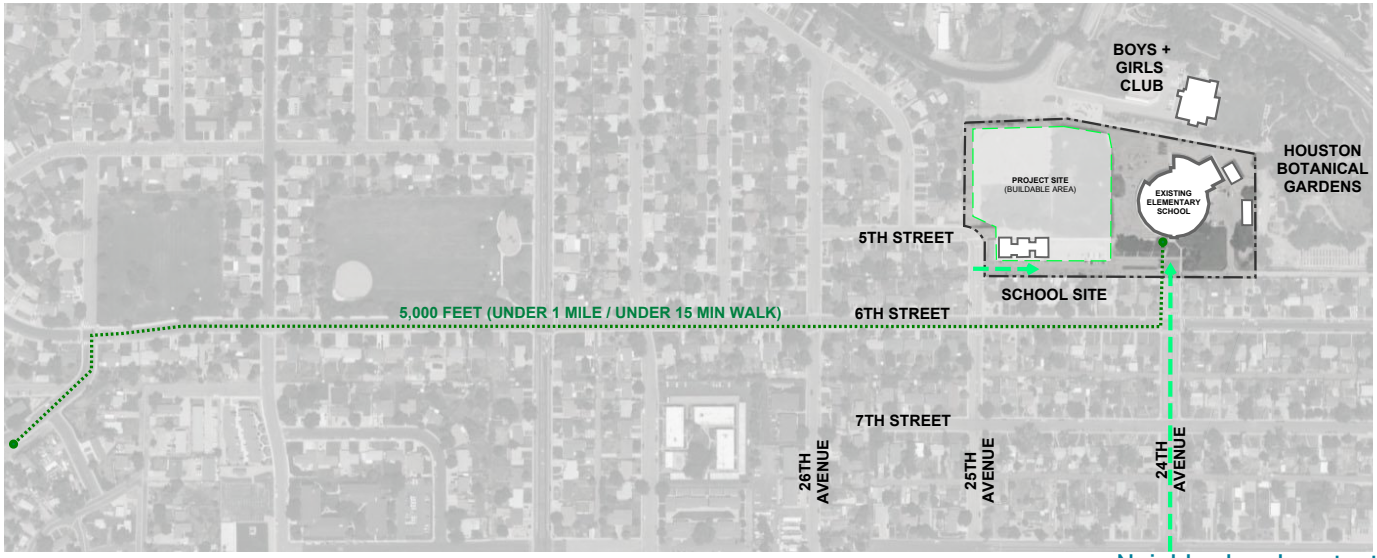
COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT



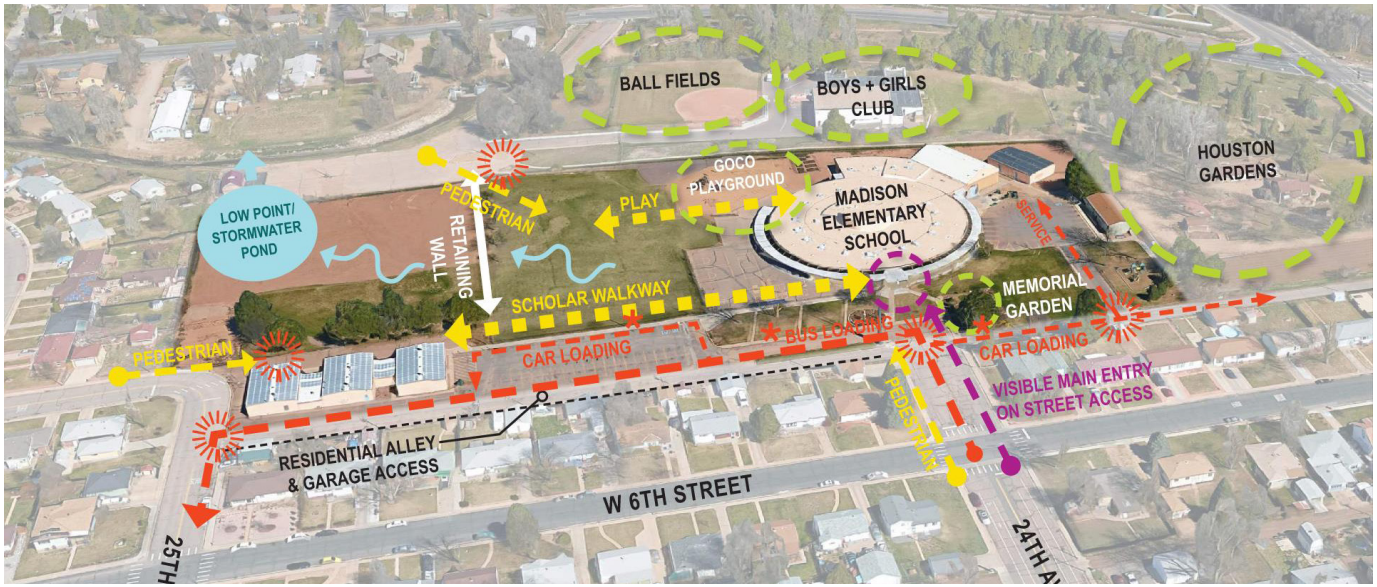








Neighborhood context



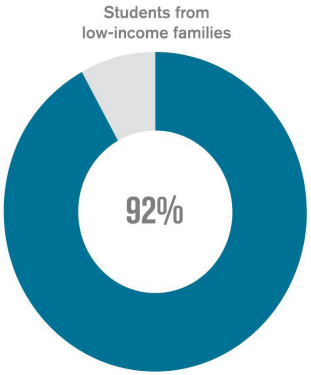
Original elementary school site analysis

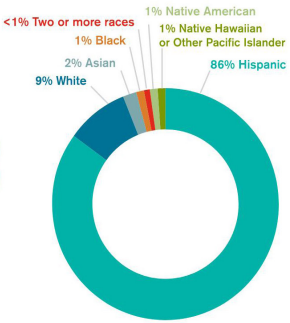
Community + Stakeholders

Madison Academy is a community anchor in a relatively dense, walkable urban neighborhood. The surrounding residents are approximately 86% Hispanic and up to 92% of students come from low-income families in Greeley. The adjacent Boys and Girls club is an essential supplemental program for supporting the same students for activities outside of the school day.

Challenges

The major challenge facing this project was reconciling the desire to keep the school in the existing neighborhood, on the existing site, while at the same time expanding the school from a standard elementary to a PK-8 with about twice the enrollment and traffic. Numerous site constraints for the design included varied topography, and limited street access to the small site.





COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships with the adjoing gardens and Boys and Girls Club make the school's outdoor areas a unifying heart of the neighborhood.







COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT





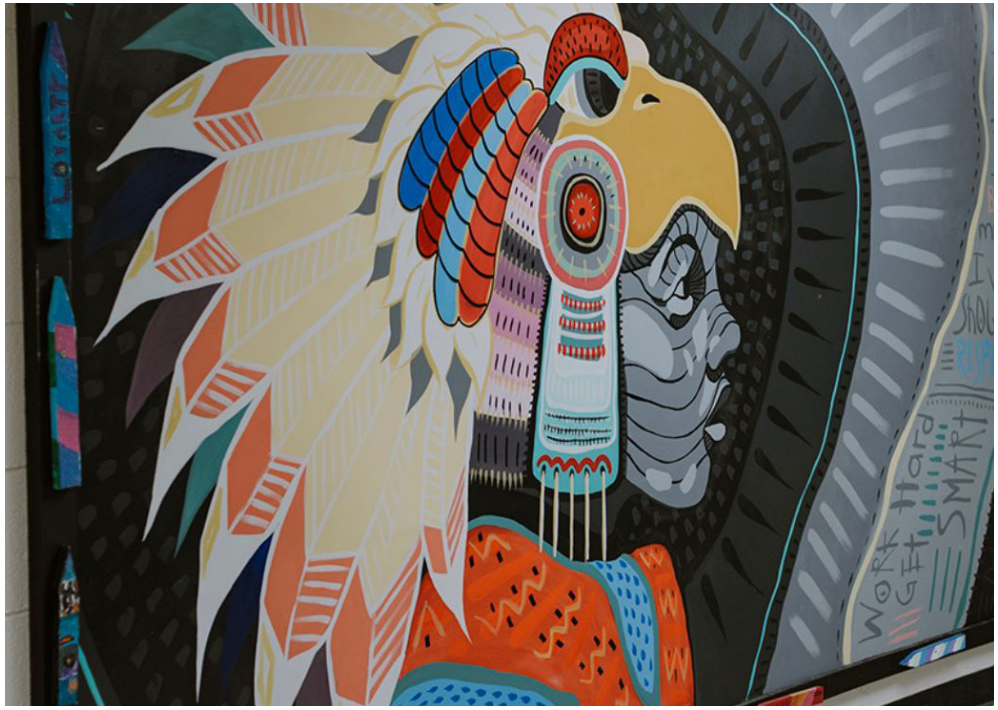
Community Clinic

The James Madison STEAM Academy is unique to its neighborhood through addressing a combination of existing culture, aspiring curriculum ooportunities and accessible community amenities. In addtion to performance spaces, a “pre-function “ dining commons entry, and a park-like outdoor setting, the school also incorporates a community health clinic accessible by the public and supporting low-income families in the area.

Community Heritage

The former elementary’s hand-painted murals by a local artist found a new home in the halls of James Madson STEAM Academy



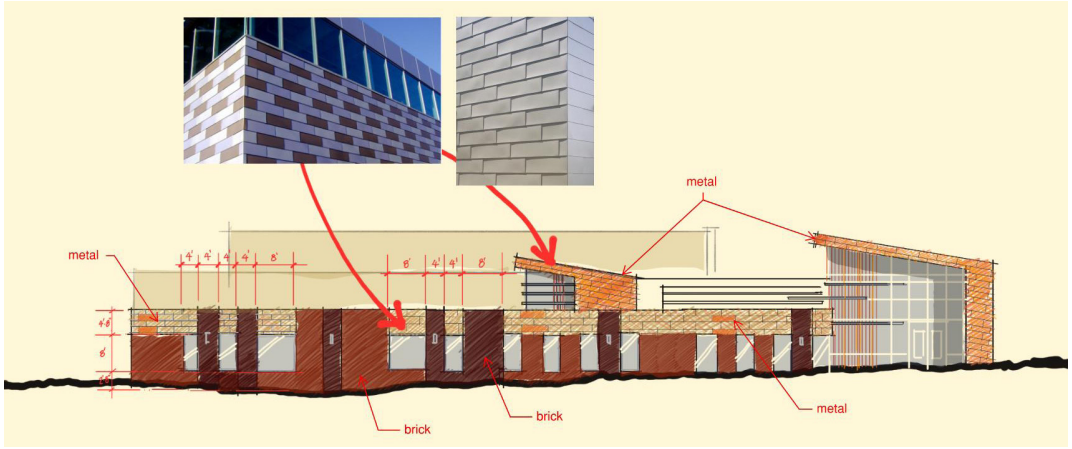


COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT

Process and Inclusion

The visioning process for this school included goal setting and programming with district leadership, visioning sessions with the faculty and staff, plus design progress reviews with the local community, and finally, a Design Advisory Group process involving a team of neighbors, staff and students, which met 6 times to set goals and evaluate options for school configuration. In order to maintain an inclusive process, much of the design collateral was bilingual, and where necessary, included translators (for multiple languages). This broad-ranging visioning and design sequence served to align the goals of the unique neighborhood with the educational vision of District 6.

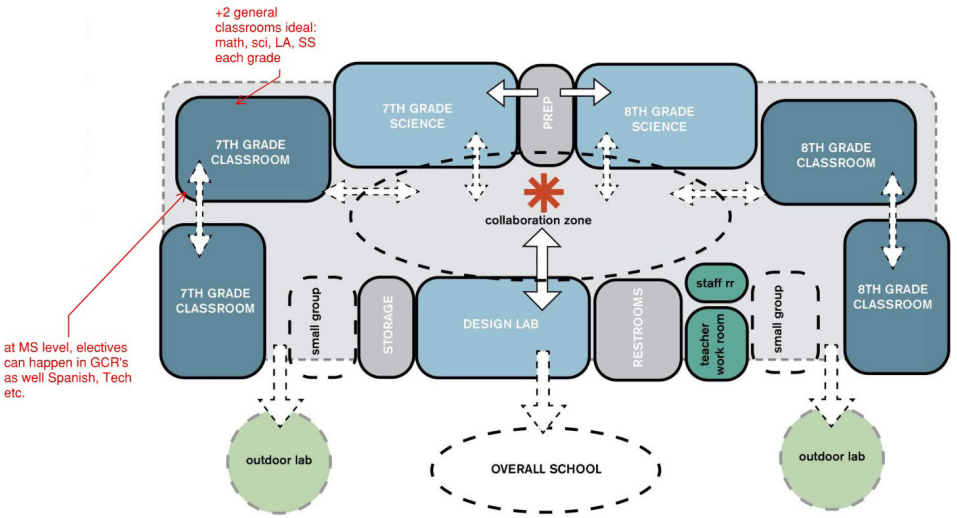
Exterior patterning exploration: neighborhood face



Design Advisory Meeting



Staff meeting programming notes



COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT

What other opportunities do we have to make this school unique and responsive to the community?

Community / Parent resource room?

family health services clinic?
(community health center)
could be a trade with aux gym space
room for future health center addition?
nurse practitioner from sunrise hc / dental exam rooms.
needs separate controlled access

laundry facilities for families
good for family engagement

School Family Values:
We believe everyone on our campus of learning is equal and important.
We believe that diversity is a strength that we value and celebrate.
We work to put our scholars first, academically and emotionally; we always do what is best for them.
We build positive and respectful relationships with all in our community: scholars, families, and other stakeholders.
We commit to being a school where scholars become lifelong learners who are college and career ready.
We commit to making a difference through innovation, continuous improvement, and retaining quality staff.

STEAM

a. What is the "a" emphasis?
Performing Arts, or Visual Arts, or both?

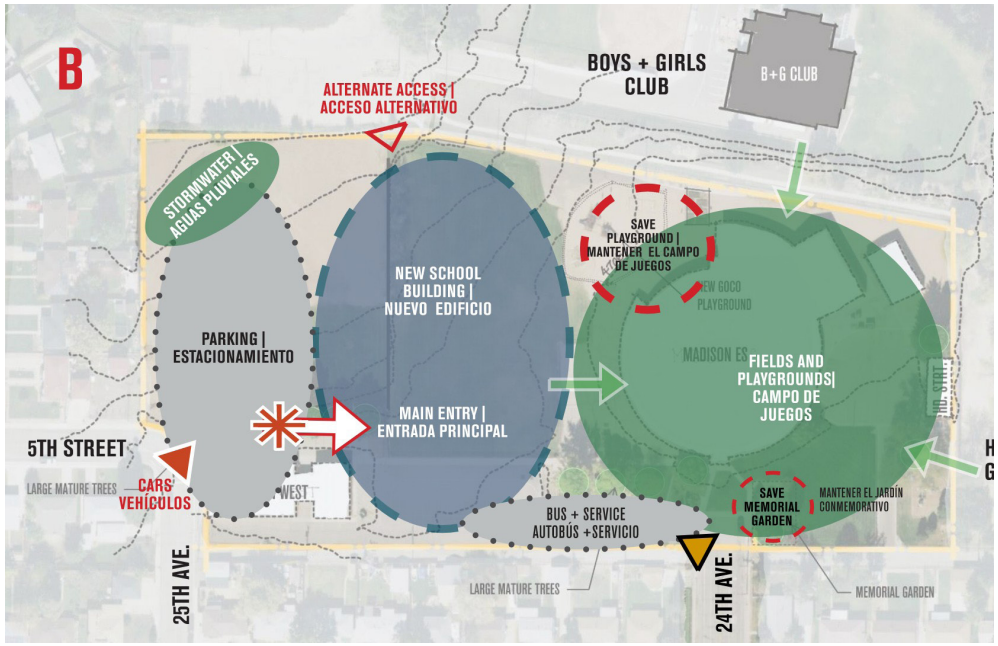
visual arts at first. MS to include more performance. strong vis arts exists at ES level. 1 ES + 1 MS art class. 3-round (vs. 4-round at Tointon). 2 music rooms as well. (K-4 group and 5-8 group)

b. What are the electives/classes that will support this curriculum?

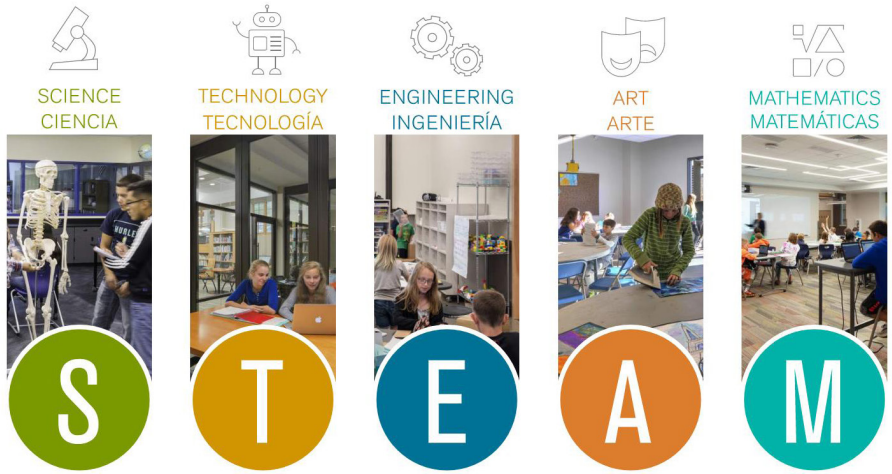
drama? same room as band or choir - multipurpose approach.

2 simultaneous PE classes with 2 teachers = 2 gyms? 1 gym with curtain?

Visioning Exhibits and Process Graphics



Bilingual Diagrams and Visioning Exercises



A SCHOOL WORTHY OF THE STUDENTS
HANDS-ON STEAM PROJECTS
WELCOMING

ENGINEERING LABS

MAKERSPACE
AUDITORIUM
WINDOWS / NATURAL LIGHT
CHANGE CARPET!

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

DISABILITES SERVED,
NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT

INVITING PLACE FOR KIDS TO BE PROUD OF
HANDS-ON STEAM PROJECTS
STUDENT-FRIENDLY
OUTSIDE LEARNING ENVIRONS
GARDEN, ETC.

More time for the gifted and talented program.

A SCHOOL THAT IS STILL CURRENT IN 30 YEARS
PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES
FLEXIBLE STRUCTURE TO STAY RELEVANT

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING
TIMELESS
SCHOLARS / FAMILIES AS FOCUS
TRUE STEAM K8 AVID
REFLECT THE ATTENDING COMMUNITY
PRIDE IN STEAM AND AVID

HEALTH CENTER

OUTDOOR LEARNING
HANDS-ON PROJECT SPACES
AUDITORIUM
SINK IN ART ROOM
WINDOWS

Areas for professional development / staff gatherings

What are your Greatest Hopes for this project?
Cuáles son tus mayors esperanzas para este proyecto?

NO CARPET IN GYM
MODERN ART ROOM
NATURAL LIGHT
PLACE FOR SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS / PERFORMANCE

MORE SPACE + MORE STORAGE
HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES
OUTSIDE CLASSROOMS
FUN LEARNING
STAGE

BUILDING FOR FUTURE STUDENTS
LASTING AND FUNCTIONAL LONG-TERM
UNDER BUDGET

ONE-SPACE / SINGLE BUIDLING

Sensory pathways in the halls!

WATER FILLING

TRUE FLOW OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
KIDS ARE INCLUDED
GROUPED BY AGE
SMALL GROUPS AND CONF ROOM
CO-TEACHING
INCORP. NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

BETTER PARKING
BETTER COMPUTER LAB

BUILDING IS INVITING TO COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY HUB

BRING BACK THE LIBRARY

One thing I want to keep and bring over to the new building is our Armando Silva mural that he created with some of our students!

More time for the gifted and talented program.

BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL
A NEW MURAL



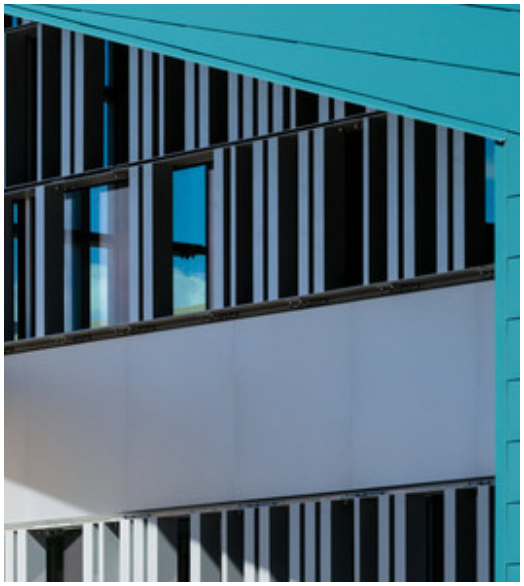
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

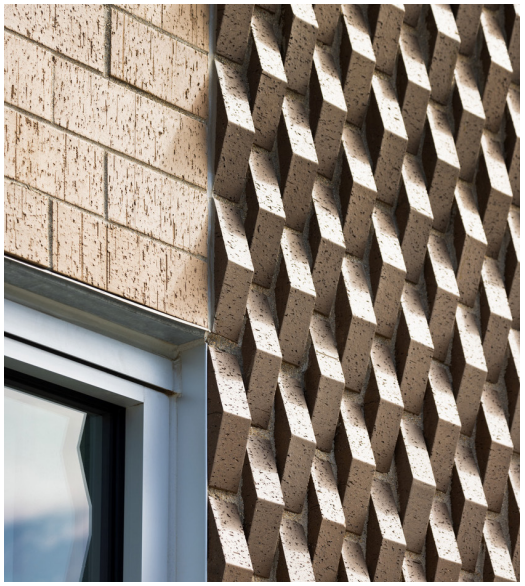
Community Context

Positioned to face the local neighborhood and open to pedestrian connections, the school presents a grand entry and gateway between the residential housing at its west and south perimeters and its park-like school play area to the east. The school's outdoor area flows into the adjacent Boys and Girls Club lot as well as Houston Gardens, a small community botanical garden to the east. The splayed layout of the floor plan creates a pair of academic courtyards leading out to the playgrounds. Exterior woven masonry patterning and interior gradations of color and texture make the school unique to its neighborhood and culture.

Textures





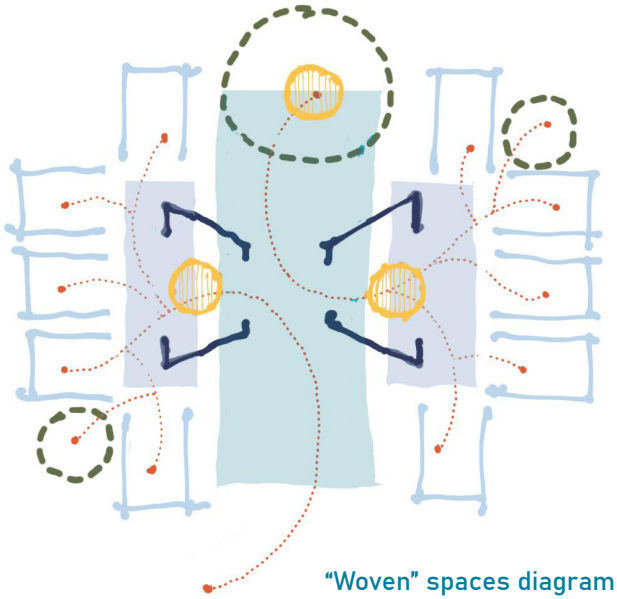




PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

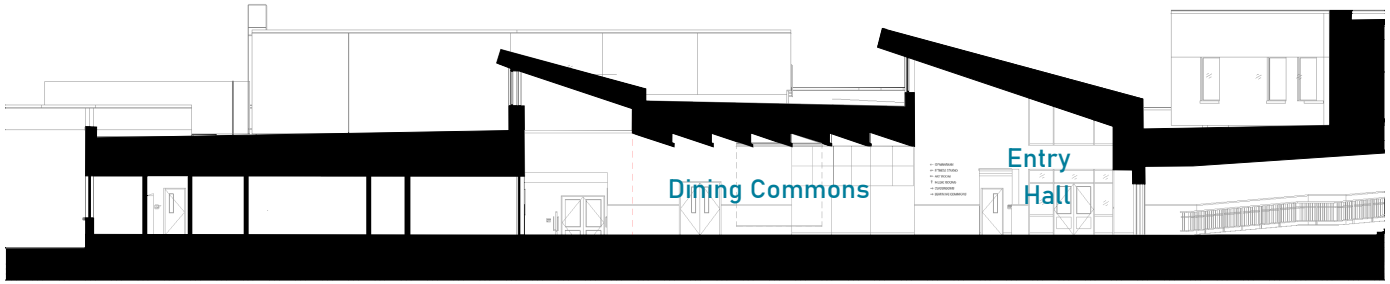
Innovation and Inspiration

Due to site constraints, the library is situated between 2 classroom wings and opens out into a STEM-themed learning court, while the music department connects out to a courtyard amphitheater for outdoor performances. The constrained nature of the site layout does produce direct relationships between spaces, such as the design labs for each classroom pod overlooking the activity of the learning commons or even having direct connection to the outdoor STEM courtyard. In addition to inspirational quotes and wall graphics throughout the school, the true inspiration comes from watching the work of other students being developed and presented through the spaces that are "woven" together through visual connections.



"Woven" spaces diagram

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Building section illustrating common area light monitors

Sustainability and Wellness

The physical environment supports sustainability through generous natural light despite a compact footprint on the site. Roof monitors admit daylight above the entry, dining commons, and the cores of the learning communities. The layout encourages easy engagement with protected areas of outdoor learning and experiments, safely flowing into the play areas while keeping traffic at the outside perimeter. Paths to both the Houston Gardens and Boys and Girls club expand opportunities for the students to connect with the larger community.





PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT





Diversity & Inclusion

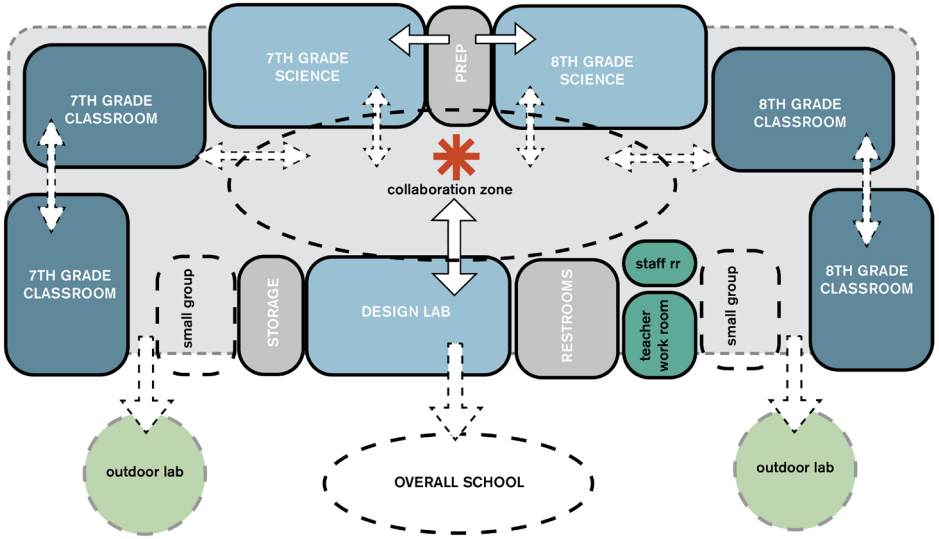
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"All are welcome here."





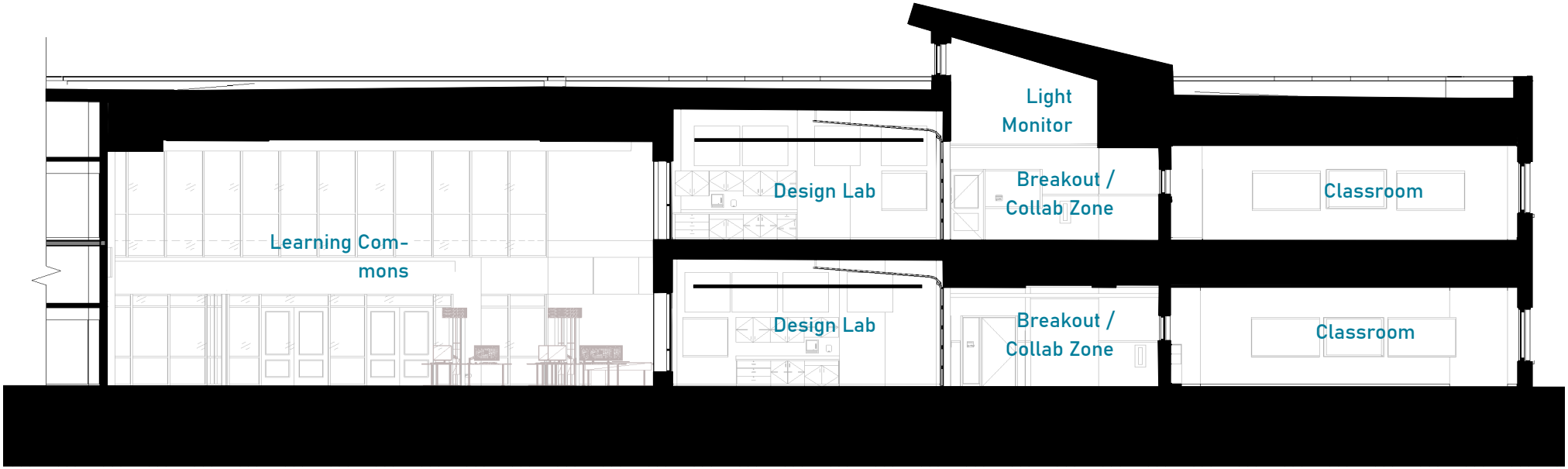
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Learning Community Concept Diagram

Environment Supporting Curriculum

The school's vision was to create a STEAM-based learning academy focused on project-based learning. Integrating the Arts into traditional STEM projects, consistently from PK- through 8th grade, meant weaving the disciplines of music, fine arts, and drama into the daily project efforts of the students. Keeping the arts visible through outdoor connections and with the central design labs of each pod maintains their integration with daily projects.



Building section through classroom pods

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Design Lab



Multi-Purpose Room

Variety of Learning Styles

The variety of educational spaces in the school establishes the practice of supporting all types of learners. From open collaborative areas in the classroom hallways, to the quiet, reflective area beneath the commons stairway, to the highly flexible design studios for each grade level, students can adopt their most effective style of learning.

Additionally, a general multipurpose space (dance, exercise) and outdoor learning areas allow movement to be incorporated into the daily curriculum.



Stairway gathering space



Hallway collaboration zone

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Flexible Adaptable and Innovative

The wide-open area of the learning commons, visible from each of the classroom wings, lends itself to an adaptability that not only supports multiple project-based efforts, but is also visually linked to the classroom wings for inspiration. The central design studios use glass overhead doors to connect to the classroom pods' corridor collaboration areas, allowing each to spill out into the learning community as needed to support projects or presentations at each grade level.



Flexible classrooms



Glass overhead door connections



Indoor-Outdoor programming

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The School as the Teacher



STEAM Plaza: Playful Learning





RESULTS

Meeting Educational Goals

James Madison STEAM Academy has established a neighborhood school with the ability to promote a wide variety of project-based learning endeavors. From outdoor learning areas to project-based design labs, to an active Learning Commons at the heart of the classroom wings, the design of this school has set up the teachers and the students for success in a curriculum that looks ahead to the future.

Unintended Results

The site constraints for this school did not allow for a conventional layout. The Learning Commons, rather than being an isolated, quiet box, was forced to fit between the classroom wings and become a hybrid between library, project lab, presentation space, and primary circulation zone. Despite this challenge and the overlapping functions, the Learning Commons became a nucleus of the STEAM activity that is central to the school's mission - always on display for students to see, and always inviting collaboration.



RESULTS

Meeting District Goals:

The District 6 vision for new school facilities emphasizes flexibility, adaptability and integration with the community. The close connection of Madison Academy to it's surrounding neighborhood, its representation of and respect for a diverse community, and it's innovative space layout all combine to make the facility a model for District 6 schools.

District 6 Priorities:
Flexible collaboration
Indoor-outdoor learning
Natural light
Adaptable to future needs
Technology
Safety
Community partnerships
Celebrating diversity

Meeting Community Goals:

Guiding principles
Timeless, multi-generational
Project-based learning
Inclusion, Universal design
Inviting and reflective of community



RESULTS

Financial Stewardship

This project has saved the Greeley 6 District financially through careful stewardship of the school's existing assets. An existing playground, originally funded by a community grant just 2 years prior to the project, was preserved and incorporated into the site design. The reuse of the property itself saved the acquisition cost of a new site for the larger replacement school, opting for a creative design solution instead. Maintaining the PK8 as a walkable, neighborhood school kept the location centralized, saving on traffic and transportation costs in the long run.

Sustainable and Wellness Outcomes

James Madison STEAM Academy's configuration has resulted in a layout that makes movement and exercise fun. By celebrating the stairs between levels with fun colors, educational graphics, and bridges overlooking project based-learning areas, Madison encourages students to get moving. Generous daylight serves as a reminder of the ample connections to the outdoors and the exterior learning opportunities that bolster health and morale within the student body.