

ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
2026 PROJECT AWARDS

| KIPP CAPITAL
HIGH SCHOOL

Project Dossier

Part 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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KIPP Capital Region realized a long-term vision to provide a purpose-built, future-ready learning environment for students in grades 9–12. Developed through more than four years of planning, stakeholder engagement, and educational visioning, the 95,980-square-foot facility completes a cohesive K–12 campus adjacent to existing KIPP primary and middle schools and strengthens the district’s cradle-to-college pathway.

The project is grounded in a student-centered design approach focused on flexibility, equity, and connection. Rather than a traditional high school model, the building supports diverse instructional methods and evolving pedagogies through highly adaptable learning environments, including reconfigurable classrooms, innovation spaces, and collaborative breakout areas. Shared “hub” spaces such as the learning stair and cafeteria function as social and instructional anchors, fostering interaction, school pride, and informal learning. The Large Group Instruction room further expands flexibility, supporting assemblies, presentations, and project-based learning on a larger scale.

Site constraints and steep topography informed a vertically efficient three-story design that maximizes daylight, improves circulation, and reinforces visual and programmatic connections across the K–12 campus. This adjacency supports continuity in the student experience and strengthens a unified campus identity.

Sustainability, wellbeing, and operational efficiency are embedded throughout the design, with high-performance mechanical systems, daylight optimization, and durable materials supporting long-term performance and comfort. Universal design strategies ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all users.

Ultimately, KIPP Capital High School delivers a flexible, engaging learning environment that aligns physical space with educational mission, supporting current instructional needs while anticipating future growth and evolving models of teaching and learning.

Part 2

SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

SCOPE OF WORK

The project scope encompassed the full planning, design, and construction of a new 95,980-square-foot, three-story high school for KIPP Capital Region serving students in grades 9–12. The facility was developed as part of a larger campus strategy, completing a unified K–12 educational environment adjacent to existing KIPP Tech Valley Primary and Middle School facilities.

CSArch's scope of work covered complete architecture, educational planning, mechanical/electrical/plumbing engineering, and interior design services to deliver a fully integrated educational facility. Key program elements include general education classrooms, flexible collaborative learning areas, specialized instructional spaces such as an innovation lab, administration and support spaces, a Large Group Instruction room with telescoping seating for 350, cafeteria and multi-purpose commons with a purposeful yet visually striking learning stair, and outdoor site improvements supporting circulation and campus connectivity.

A significant component of the scope involved campus and site integration, addressing a steeply sloped site condition and coordinating building access, circulation, and massing to align with both topography and adjacency to existing school buildings.

The project included comprehensive mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems designed by CSArch's in-house MEP team for high performance, energy efficiency, and long-term operational sustainability.

BUDGET

The total construction budget for the project was \$46 million, reflecting the scale, complexity, and performance requirements of delivering a modern, future-ready high school within an active educational campus.

Part 3

RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

Context

KIPP Capital High School serves the KIPP Capital Region in Albany, New York, a diverse urban community committed to expanding access to rigorous, college-preparatory education for underserved students. The school is part of a growing K–12 continuum anchored by several existing KIPP primary and middle school campuses, with the new high school completing a unified educational pathway from elementary through graduation.

Key stakeholders included KIPP Capital Region leadership, school administrators, teachers, students, families, alumni, and board members, along with the CSArch design team, sub-consultants, and construction partners. The engagement process also extended to the broader school community through surveys and workshops.

The project faced several challenges, including a constrained and steeply sloped site, the need to integrate with an active K–12 campus, and the requirement to design for both immediate enrollment needs and long-term expansion up to 800 students. Equally important was aligning physical space with KIPP's evolving instructional model while maintaining affordability and operational efficiency within a defined public charter school budget.

Despite these constraints, the site offered meaningful assets. Its adjacency to existing KIPP schools created a unique opportunity to physically unify the K–12 experience, reinforcing continuity in the student journey. The central location of the site with easy access to I-90 would allow the high school to support KIPP students across the Capital Region. The topography also enabled a vertically efficient building that maximized daylight and created distinct yet connected learning environments across three floors.

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RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

Process

The visioning process, led by CSArch's in-house educational planners, was highly collaborative and iterative, beginning with early planning studies in 2021 and continuing through multiple years of stakeholder engagement. CSArch facilitated workshops, programming sessions, and campus visits to other KIPP schools nationwide to better understand successful learning environments and translate those insights into the Capital Region context.

A key component of the process was direct engagement with educators, students, and leadership through surveys and design discussions. This input helped shape critical decisions around spatial priorities, flexibility, and the balance between academic, social, and support spaces. The resulting design reflects a shared vision of a high school that is not only instructional but also deeply communal, where learning extends beyond the classroom into shared, dynamic environments.

The engagement process also reinforced principles of equity and inclusion by ensuring that diverse voices informed programming and design decisions. Spaces were intentionally designed to support varied learning styles, accessibility needs, and cultural responsiveness, creating an environment where all students feel represented and supported.

Ultimately, the engagement process strengthened both the design outcome and its impact, ensuring the facility reflects the community's aspirations while providing a flexible, future-ready learning environment that supports educational equity and long-term student success.

Part 4

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

KIPP Capital High School is a 95,980-square-foot, three-story learning environment designed to complete a unified K–12 campus in Albany, New York. Situated on a steeply sloped site adjacent to KIPP Tech Valley Primary and Middle School, the building responds directly to its topography, using vertical organization to efficiently manage grade-level separation while maintaining strong visual and programmatic connections across the broader campus. The result is a cohesive educational environment that physically reinforces the KIPP Capital Region’s cradle-to-college model within an urban context.

The facility is organized around a series of highly visible, shared learning and community spaces that serve as both functional and symbolic anchors. The learning stair and cafeteria form the social heart of the school, encouraging interaction, visibility, and school-wide connection. The Large Group Instruction room, innovation lab, and flexible breakout spaces extend learning beyond traditional classrooms, supporting collaboration, project-based learning, and community gathering. Reconfigurable classrooms and mobile furnishings further enable adaptability as instructional needs evolve.

The building is designed to inspire and motivate through transparency, scale, and activation of circulation spaces as learning environments. Natural light, open sightlines, and intentional visual connections create a sense of energy and belonging throughout the school. Interior color strategies and intuitive wayfinding reinforce identity while supporting ease of navigation for students and visitors.

Equity and inclusion are embedded in the physical environment through universal design principles, accessible circulation, and multilingual, visually supported wayfinding systems. Spaces are designed to accommodate a wide range of learning styles, physical abilities, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring all students can fully engage in the educational experience.

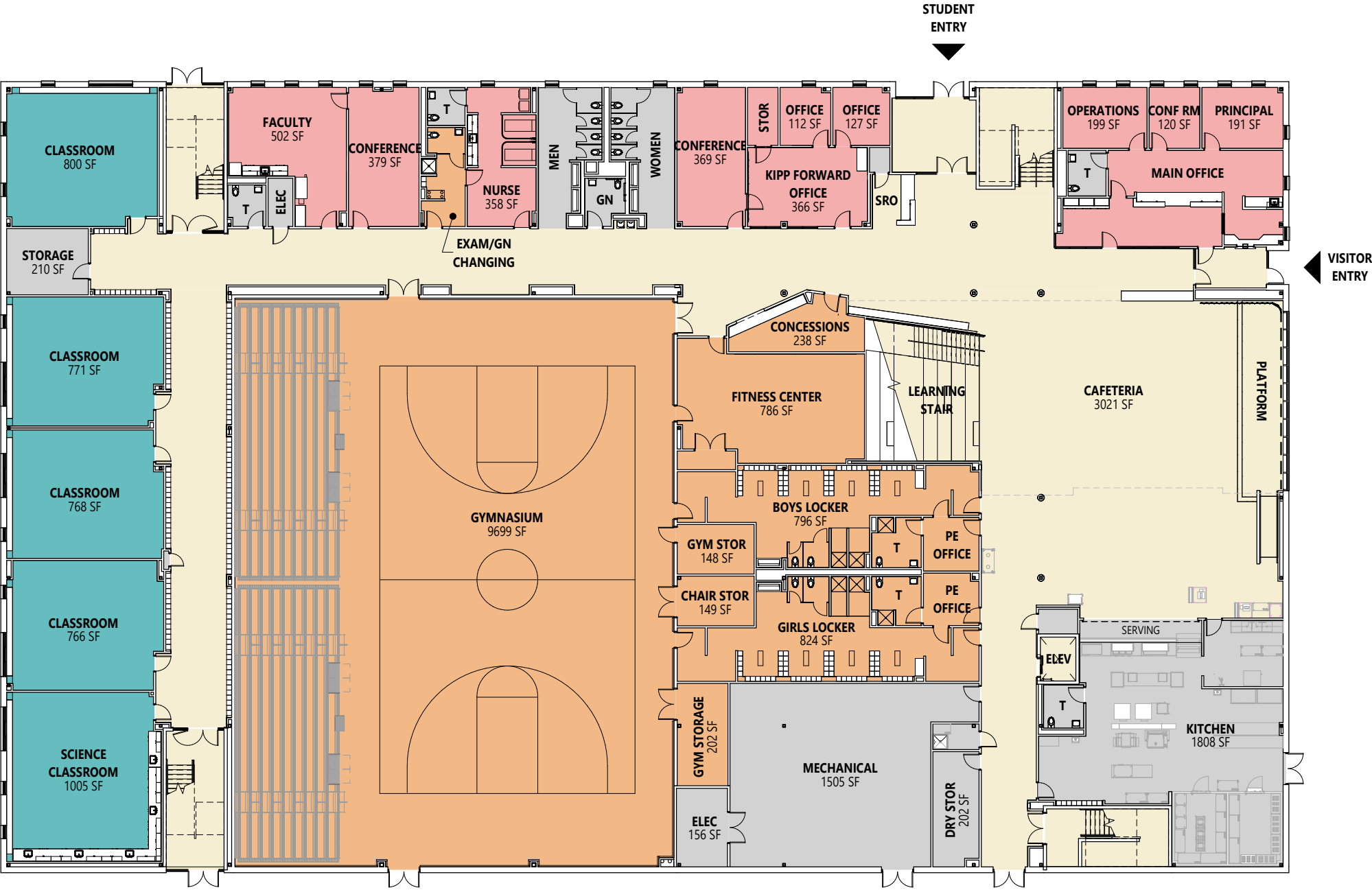
Sustainability and wellness are integral to the design. High-performance mechanical systems, including displacement ventilation and heat pump technologies, improve indoor air quality while reducing energy use. Extensive daylighting strategies enhance comfort, reduce reliance on artificial lighting, and support student wellbeing and focus. Durable, low-maintenance materials and efficient building systems further contribute to long-term operational sustainability and resilience.

Together, these elements create a physically dynamic, inclusive, and high-performance learning environment that reflects both the aspirations of the KIPP Capital community and the evolving needs of modern education.

Site Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



Final Photography | Exterior



Final Photography | Cafeteria and Learning Stair



Final Photography | Cafeteria and Learning Stair



Final Photography | Cafeteria and Learning Stair



Final Photography | Large Group Instruction Room



Final Photography | Flexible Classroom



Final Photography | Flexible Classroom



Final Photography | Science Classroom



Final Photography | Music Classroom



Part 5

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The educational vision for KIPP Capital High School is rooted in preparing students for success in college, career, and life by fostering independence, academic rigor, and a strong sense of community. The school's design supports KIPP's mission to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have access to high-quality, future-ready learning environments that promote engagement, agency, and achievement.

The environment directly supports the curriculum by enabling both structured instruction and interdisciplinary, project-based learning. Traditional classrooms are supplemented by innovation spaces, breakout rooms, and collaborative zones that allow educators to extend learning beyond lecture-based formats. The Large Group Instruction room provides a flexible venue for grade-wide instruction, presentations, and shared learning experiences that reinforce school culture and academic alignment.

A variety of teaching and learning styles are supported through spatial diversity and flexibility. Classrooms are designed with mobile furnishings and minimal fixed elements, allowing teachers to rapidly reconfigure spaces for group work, independent study, discussion-based learning, or direct instruction. Informal learning environments, including the learning stair and commons areas, support peer-to-peer collaboration, mentoring, and student-driven exploration outside of traditional classroom settings.

Adaptability is a defining characteristic of the educational environment. Spaces were intentionally designed to evolve alongside instructional practices and enrollment growth, ensuring long-term relevance. The building supports phased expansion to accommodate up to 800 students while maintaining flexibility in program delivery and space utilization.

Innovation is embedded throughout the design in both planning strategy and spatial organization. The integration of learning environments throughout circulation paths encourages continuous learning beyond the classroom, while transparency and visibility foster connection between programs and grade levels. This approach breaks down traditional barriers between spaces, reinforcing a culture of collaboration, curiosity, and shared learning.

Ultimately, the educational environment at KIPP Capital High School transforms the building into an active participant in the learning process, one that supports diverse instructional approaches while advancing equity, engagement, and academic excellence.

Educational Specifications | Program Spreadsheet

Space Description	Qty.	SF	Total Area	Teaching Stations	Student Occupancy	Remarks/Comments
1.0 Core Academic Classrooms						
1.1 General Classrooms						
General Classroom	21	800 SF	16,800 SF	21	30 (25 preferred)	Provided Classroom SF varies 776 to 1021, with average at 800 SF
1.2 Science						
Science Lab	4	1,200 SF	4,800 SF	4	24 (20 preferred)	Room size varies, 1000-1225
Science Storage Room	1	230 SF	230 SF			
Subtotal, Core Academic Classrooms	25		21,830 SF	25		
2.0 Shared Academic Spaces						
2.1 Music						
Music/Band Classroom	1	1,990 SF	1,990 SF	1 - 2	65	With folding partition, can be divided as (2) general classrooms
Practice Rooms	2	100 SF	200 SF			
2.2 Art						
Art Classroom	1	1,335 SF	1,335 SF	1	30	qty. reduced to (1) room
Kiln/Art Storage	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted, to be included within room if desired
2.3 Innovation						
Innovation Lab	1	1,330 SF	1,330 SF	1	30 (24 preferred)	program use undefined, multi-use for general classroom also
Media Center/Computer Lab	1	1,100 SF	1,100 SF	1	50 (30 preferred)	Revised to include multi-use for Media Center functions
2.4 Miscellaneous						
Small Group 'Break Out' Room (By Dean's Suites)	2	160 SF	320 SF			Added back in after deletion of Open Study Areas
Group 'Break Out' Room (Overlooking Learning Stair)	1	285 SF	285 SF			Added back in after deletion of Open Study Areas
Subtotal, Shared Academic Spaces	7		6,560 SF	5		
3.0 Special Education						
3.1 Resource						
Resource Room	2	370 SF	740 SF	2	8	room areas vary, 360 and 380
Large Resource, OT/PT Room	1	955 SF	955 SF	1	12	

Educational Specifications | Program Spreadsheet

Pull-Out Rooms	2	170 SF	340 SF			
Subtotal, Special Education	5		2,035 SF	3		

4.0 Core Spaces						
4.1 Cafeteria						
Cafeteria	1	3,895 SF	3,895 SF		200	open to circulation/learning stair, seating for 200
Learning Stair	1	870 SF	870 SF			
4.2 Athletics						
Gymnasium	1	9,820 SF	9,820 SF	2	60	60 students for P.E. use. Total bleacher capacity=550
Locker Room	2	800 SF	1,600 SF			includes toilet/shower areas
Fitness Center / Weight Room	1	780 SF	780 SF		20	
Athletic Storage	1	485 SF	485 SF			
Coach's Office	2	110 SF	220 SF			
Coach's Toilet/Shower	2	85 SF	170 SF			
Chair Storage	1	150 SF	150 SF			
Concessions/Tickets/School Store	1	260 SF	260 SF			Multi-use to include concessions, ticket office and school store
4.3 Media Center						
Media Center	0	0 SF	0 SF			Deleted. See 2.3 for multi-use for Media Center functions
4.4 Large Group Instruction						
Large Group Instruction (LGI)	1	3,425 SF	3,425 SF	1	350	retractable seating, capacity=350
4.5 Miscellaneous						
Gender Neutral Change/Shower/Laundry	1	170 SF	170 SF			
AV Control Booth	1	215 SF	215 SF			control for multiple assembly/performance areas
School Store	0	0 SF	0 SF			Deleted, will occur in multi-use concession stand
Subtotal, Core Spaces	16		22,060 SF	2		

Educational Specifications | Program Spreadsheet

Space Description	Qty.	SF	Total Area	Teaching Stations	Student Occupancy	Remarks/Comments
5.0 Administration						
5.1 Main Office						
Main Office Clerical / Reception	1	620 SF	620 SF			
Principal's Office	1	190 SF	190 SF			
Operations Office	1	260 SF	260 SF			shared for 2 staff
Copy/Work Room	1	60 SF	60 SF			
Toilet Room	1	50 SF	50 SF			
Conference Room	1	145 SF	145 SF			
5.2 Nurse's Office						
Nurse's Office / Resting Area	1	350 SF	350 SF			
Exam Room	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted, can utilize adjacent gender neutral changing rm
Toilet Room	1	55 SF	55 SF			
5.3 College/Career Counseling Suite						
College/Career Counseling- Total Area	1	735 SF	735 SF			Suite of rooms, tracked as a single area
5.4 Student Support Counseling Suite						
Student Support Counseling- Total Area	1	1,700 SF	1,700 SF			Suite of rooms, tracked as a single area
5.5 Conference						
Large Collaboration/Professional Dev.	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted
Shared Conference Room	1	375 SF	375 SF			
5.6 Dean's Office Suites						
Student Study/Carrel Area	2	230 SF	200 SF			
Conference Room	2	175 SF	350 SF			
Dean's Office	2	300 SF	600 SF			
5.7 AP Office						
AP Office	1	410 SF	425 SF			shared space for 4+ staff
5.8 KIPP Forward						
KIPP Forward Reception Area	1	362 SF	362 SF			
Conference Room	1	175 SF	175 SF			
Private Office	4	110 SF	440 SF			
5.9 KIPP Regional						
KIPP Regional Open Office Area	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted
Conference Room	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted
Office- Large	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted
Office- Typical	0	0 SF	0 SF			deleted

Educational Specifications | Program Spreadsheet

5.10 Faculty/Staff						
Staff Pod (Phone Room/1:1)	4	80 SF	320 SF			
Faculty Lounge	1	570 SF	570 SF			
Subtotal, Administration	29		7,982 SF	0		

6.0 Service / Building Support						
6.1 Food Service						
Kitchen	1	1,920 SF	1,920 SF			<i>Includes servery. Kitchen supports cooking for this building only, central storage for KIPP Capital Region</i>
6.2 Toilets						
Student Toilets (Gang Style)	6	255 SF	1,530 SF			<i>open to corridor</i>
Student Toilets (Gender-Neutral)	3	50 SF	150 SF			<i>in addition to student gender neutral changing/shower room</i>
Staff Toilets	5	50 SF	250 SF			
6.3 Utilities						
Custodial Closets	1	550 SF	550 SF			<i>multiple locations shown as a singular qty for tracking. 1 provided per floor, additional location adjacent to kitchen</i>
Mechanical, Elec, Data, etc.	1	3,235 SF	3,235 SF			<i>multiple locations shown as a singular qty for tracking</i>
6.4 Storage						
General Building Storage	1	150 SF	150 SF			
Subtotal, Service/Building Support	18		7,785 SF	0		

Total Net Area 68,252 SF
 Grossing Factor w/ Circulation 40% 27,301 SF

Total Gross Area 95,553 SF

95,145 SF Actual proposed building plans
 119 SF Area per student (at 800 student enrollment)

Part 6

PROJECT RESULTS

RESULTS

KIPP Capital High School successfully delivers on its core educational intent: to expand access to a high-quality, college-preparatory learning environment that supports academic excellence, personal growth, and long-term student success within the KIPP Capital Region. The project directly advances the organization's mission to ensure students are prepared for college, career, and beyond through joyful, rigorous, and supportive learning environments.

At the school level, the project achieves its educational goals by translating KIPP's instructional model into a physical environment that supports flexible, student-centered learning. Adaptable classrooms, collaborative learning hubs, and shared community spaces such as the learning stair and cafeteria enable a wide range of instructional strategies, reinforcing project-based learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and student engagement. These spaces are intentionally designed to support strong academic outcomes while fostering a culture of belonging and school pride.

For the KIPP Capital Region network, the project fulfills a critical strategic goal: completing a unified K–12 campus that strengthens continuity across grade levels and supports long-term enrollment growth. As part of a seven-school regional system serving more than 2,500 students, the new high school provides a dedicated facility that allows students to remain within the KIPP pathway through graduation, reinforcing organizational retention and college-preparatory outcomes.

At the community level, the project responds directly to demonstrated demand for expanded high school options, confirmed through stakeholder engagement and regional surveys. It provides a tuition-free, accessible public charter high school designed to serve a diverse student population while strengthening educational opportunity within Albany and the broader Capital Region.

An important, though initially unintended, outcome of the process has been the degree to which the building itself has become a catalyst for school identity and community pride. The integration of highly visible, shared spaces has elevated school culture, encouraging greater student interaction, participation, and engagement beyond the classroom experience.

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PROJECT RESULTS

From a stewardship perspective, the project demonstrates responsible use of public funding through a design that prioritizes durability, operational efficiency, and long-term flexibility. Systems and spaces were intentionally designed to reduce lifecycle costs while supporting evolving educational needs, ensuring the facility remains relevant over time without requiring major structural reinvestment.

Sustainability and wellness outcomes are embedded throughout the project. High-performance mechanical systems, daylight-optimized learning environments, and durable material selections support energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and occupant comfort. These strategies collectively create a healthier, more resilient learning environment that supports both student wellbeing and operational sustainability.

Ultimately, KIPP Capital High School delivers measurable and lasting value by aligning educational vision, community need, and responsible design into a single, adaptable learning environment that supports student success today and into the future.