RISE KOHYANG HIGH SCHOOL

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, LOS ANGELES, CA



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The school's name, Kohyang — Korean for "hometown" — sets the tone: this is more than a building; it's a gathering place, a cultural anchor, and a launchpad for future leaders. The challenge was to create a full-fledged campus for 650 students, faculty, and staff on a mere 1.2 acres. The solution is an elegant, three-story composition wrapped around a sunlit entry courtyard that opens directly onto First Street, inviting the neighborhood in.

Two sweeping staircases frame the courtyard, lifting students toward 24 classrooms, science labs, a library/media center, and a gymnasium. Using the site's topography and recessing the parking into the hillside raises all learning spaces to provide natural light and city/mountain views. Administrative offices are intentionally scattered across all floors, keeping leadership close to the action, while open collaboration zones dissolve the boundaries between learning, socializing, and discovery. Despite the 1.2-acre site that includes the school, parking, pick up / drop off, and gymnasium, 30% of the site is utilized as outdoor learning and play space. Sustainable at its core, the building surpasses the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) benchmarks and outperforms Title 24 standards.

Rise Kohyang High School doesn't just educate; it elevates. Its architecture turns a small site into a vibrant hometown where every stair, courtyard, and classroom carries the pulse of its community.



2. SCOPE OF WORK

PROGRAM NEW CHARTER HS & GYM **PROJECT SIZE** 87,812SF **SITE CONDITION** NEW CONSTRUCTION **BUDGET** $38.6M **COMPLETED** FALL 2024



DESIGN INTENT

Optimize the use of a small urban site organized around a courtyard that opens up to the community and creates a welcoming front door to the school. The primary north-facing façade overlooking the community courtyard is a tapestry of windows and colored metal panels inspired by the Korean wrapping cloth—weaving vibrant threads into a “Bojagi.”

3. SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT : CONTEXT

COMMUNITY

Rise Kohyang High School (RKHS) sits in the heart of Los Angeles' Koreatown. The community is highly diverse ethnically, with half the residents identifying Latino and a third identifying Asian. The school serves an entirely minority student body, 94% of whom face economic challenges.

STAKEHOLDERS

RKHS is one of nine Bright Star Schools, tuition-free charter public schools across Los Angeles where 3,700+ students experience rigorous academics, social-emotional support, and rich life opportunities beyond the classroom. Additional project stakeholders include LAUSD, Pacific Charter School Development, Blueprint Futures and the local community.

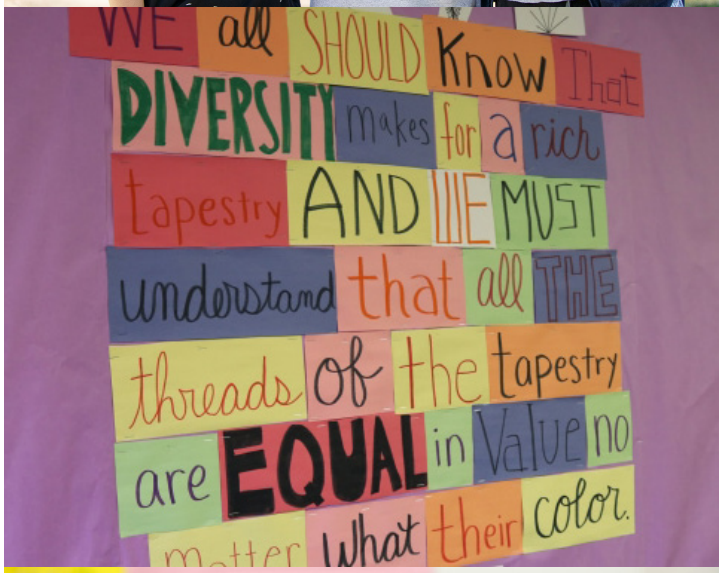
CHALLENGES

Using a California Proposition 51 grant and LAUSD's matching augmentation grant to fund the project, RKHS was required to meet the strict standards of LAUSD while accommodating the needs and budget constraints of Bright Star Schools on an extremely small site of 1.2 acres.

AVAILABLE ASSETS

Bright Star Schools and Rise Kohyang High School already had a Elementary School and Middle School in the nearby area, helping to support the growth of the High School. The existing High School that was to be moved to the new location served around 300 students. The community is also an asset with a similar level of diversity and economic need in the school; it reflects the surrounding Koreatown community.







3. SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT : PROCESS

Our practice is focused on Educational Public Works projects, most of which are on K-14 campuses. We believe that long-term relationships with the campus faculty and staff and project management organization are mutually beneficial. We strive to develop a depth of knowledge about the school that is complementary to the onsite school staff, allowing us to “get it” as far as the needs of the organization. We develop a strong sense of ownership and pride not only in our own work but in the overall success of the school and its long-term sustainability.

Building consensus among the stakeholders for the design of projects on a school campus is a critical initial step. In this instance, the firm worked with stakeholders at Bright Star Schools along with the Principal for Rise Kohyang High School in a series of programming and visioning sessions.

VISIONING

Community sessions were held in which the designs were presented and findings from these sessions influenced the design. The design of the perimeter fence boldly features the school’s name in a mix of English and Korean as a graphic element, a fitting nod to the community the school serves.

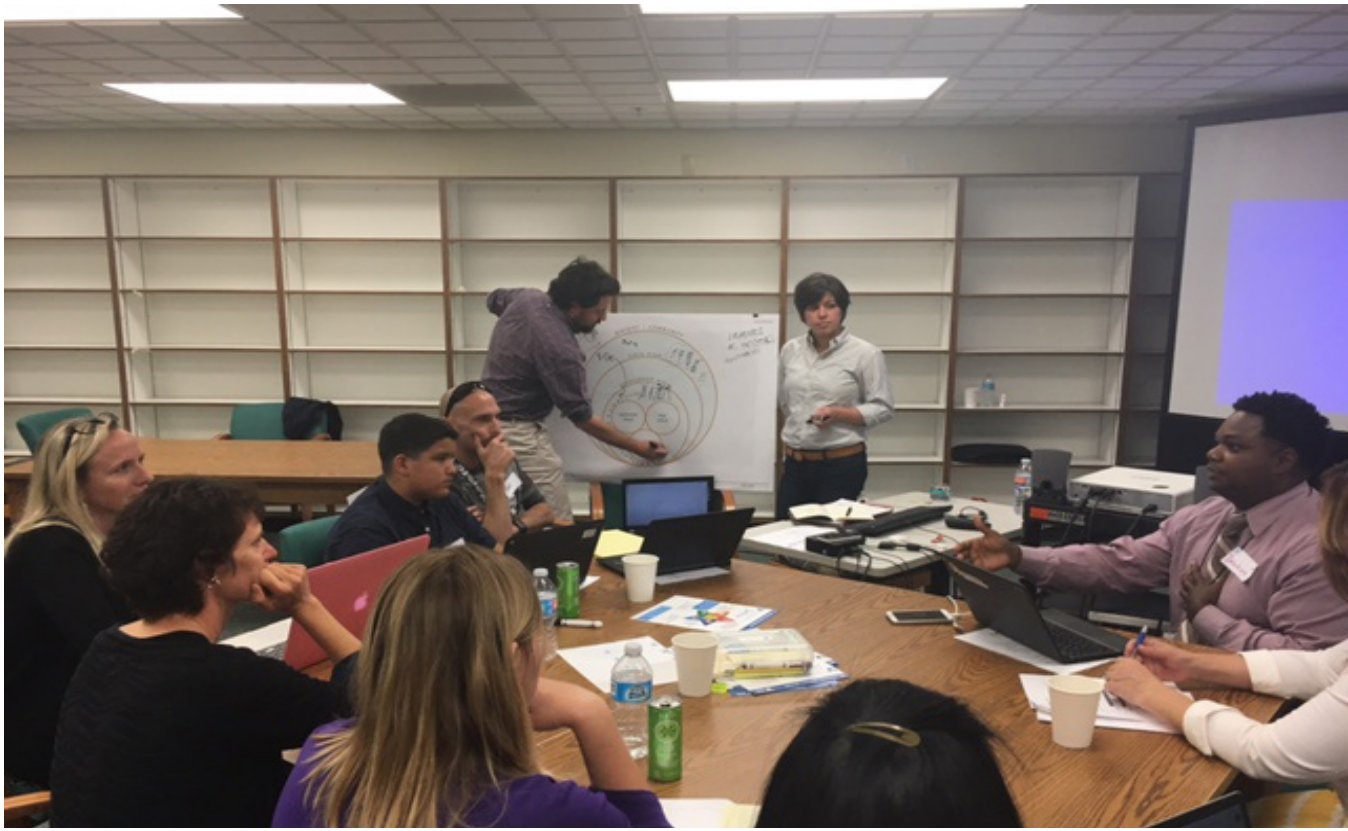
The Visioning and Engagement process involved diverse ethnic groups which comprise the community and school. The visioning session included stakeholders from different levels within the organization ensuring that all ideas were heard.

Additionally the team met on a regular basis with LAUSD Design staff to ensure that the project met LAUSD’s Vision.

PROGRAMMING

Through interviews, questionnaires, site tours and additional workshops, we gathered the detailed information about the facility requirements and documented them in a program. Information included the size and shape of classrooms, to mechanical, electrical, plumbing, A/V, Data, Security, and FF&E requirements. The program document was developed with Bright Star Schools, forming the basis of design as the project progressed.

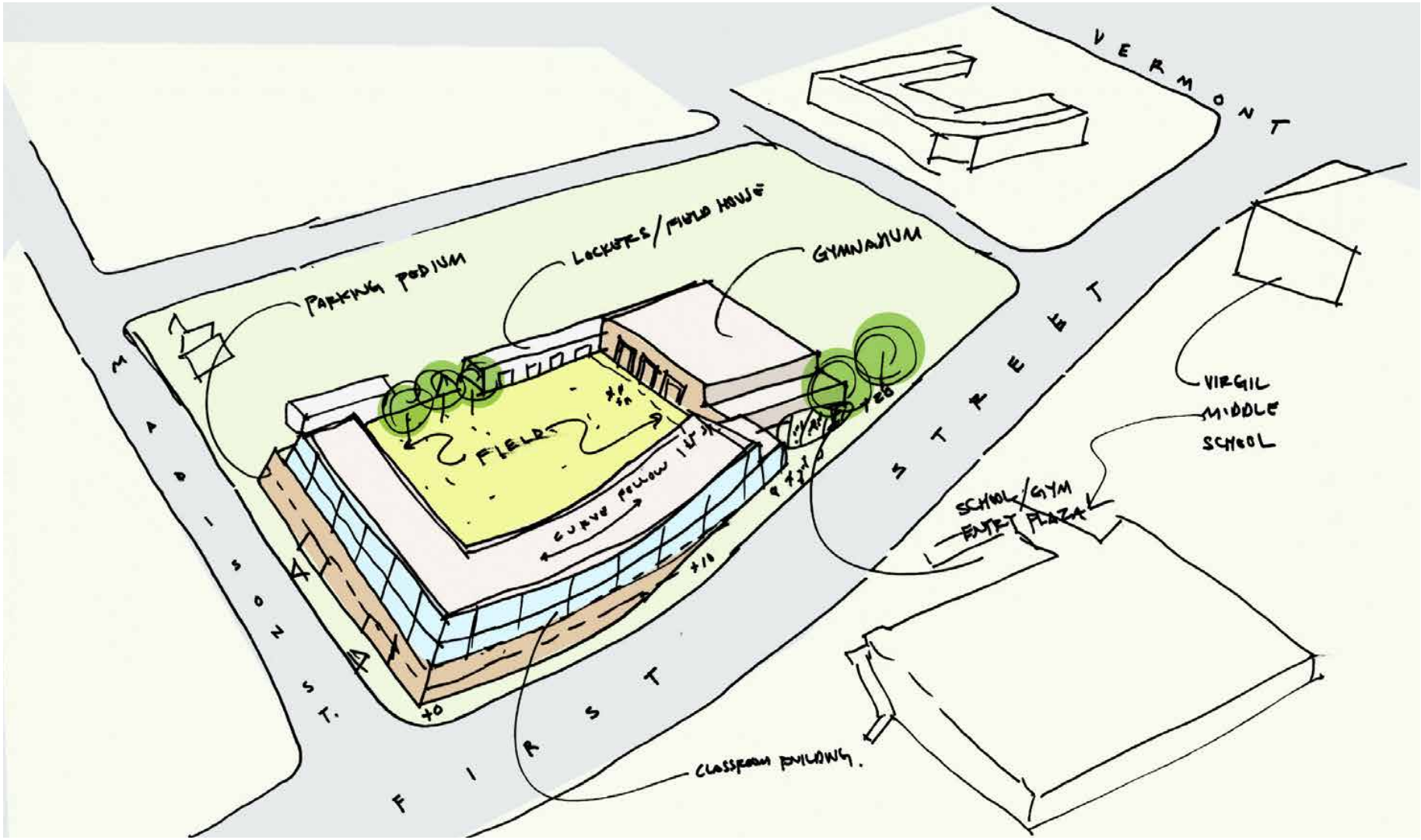
From the earliest planning stages, the needs of the students were prioritized. Flexible spaces, open spaces, spaces to foster collaboration and interaction were integral to the design concept.



4. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: CONTEXT

The primary challenge was accommodating RKHS students, faculty, and staff while programming an outdoor space on an extraordinarily small 1.2 acre site. The courtyard acts as the school's main entryway and takes advantage of the naturally sloping campus topography to integrate a partially subterranean ground level for parking and student drop-off.

The design of the facility speaks to the Los Angeles Koreatown community that it sits within, as well as pays respect to the community with a creative subterranean drop off and pick up.



4. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: RESPONSE

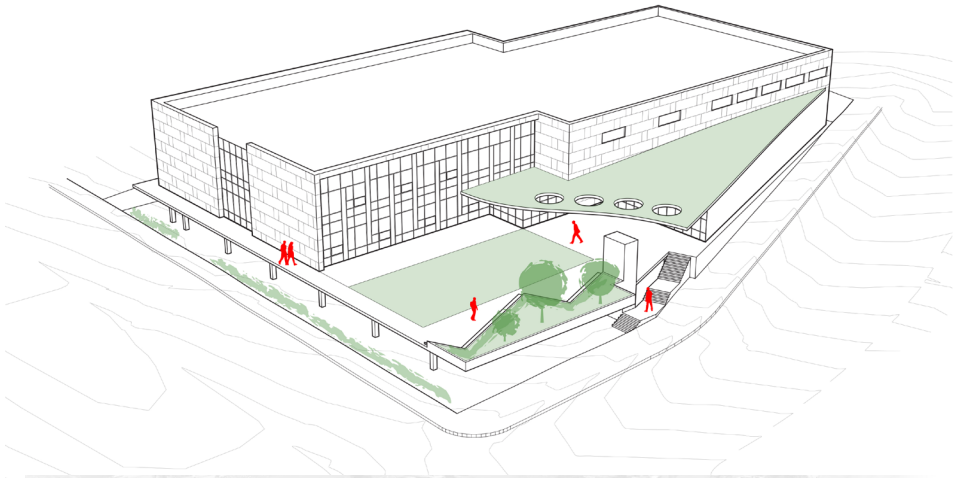
To best respond to the tight urban lot, the team worked with the District and Charter School on multiple design iterations. The final design incorporates natural light and an open air courtyard which allows for outdoor time, shown to increase student performance.

The three-story high school totals 87,812 square feet. The L-shaped RKHS building is organized around a central courtyard. This outdoor space is the heart of the campus and is accessed by the ground-level multipurpose room/lunch area and school offices. Two grand stairs on opposite ends of the building lead to the second floor, providing access to 24 classrooms on two levels, a library/media room, and additional staff areas. Offices are dispersed among all three floors to provide student supervision and facilitate collaboration between administrative staff and teachers. A second-floor balcony overlooks the courtyard.

The sloping RKHS site is accentuated with perimeter fencing, creating an undulating ribbon around the campus. The slanted rhythm of the fence provides both secure enclosure and visual connection to the outside for students. The fence boldly features the school's name in a mix of English and Korean as a graphic element, a fitting nod to the community the school serves. The primary north-facing façade overlooking the community courtyard is a tapestry of windows and colored metal panels inspired by the Korean wrapping cloth, weaving vibrant threads into a "Bojagi."

The project incorporates LAUSD Standards which address wellness through the LAUSD Blueprint for Wellness Policy, as well as the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) Guidelines which emphasize healthy indoor environments, reduced energy consumption and sustainability.

Several green-design features promote water conservation, energy efficiency, greenhouse-gas emission reduction, and indoor environmental quality. A mix of skylights, louvered sun blades, and roller-type window shades balance natural light and solar heat gain.







4. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: RESPONSE (CONT'D)



Gross Building Area: 67,233SF

Site Area: 49,761SF/1.142 Acres

Sustainability Measures

- Full Building Commissioning
- Bicycle Parking
- Views and ample natural light create excellent learning environments throughout the school.
- Exceeds Title 24 by 15%
- Stormwater Management
- Good Indoor Air Quality
- Redevelopment of a Brown Field site with extensive environmental remediation completed prior to construction of the school.
- Outdoor Learning spaces create additional classroom spaces with minimal energy use and embodied carbon
- Dense utilization of the urban site minimizes the use of energy and reduces the carbon footprint of the building.



5. EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: CONTEXT

VISION AND GOALS

Rise Kohyang High School is designed to support the development of the whole child through a strong focus on college and career readiness, socioemotional learning, and community-centered education.

The school's vision emphasizes rigorous academic preparation alongside student wellness, belonging, and meaningful community engagement.

As a community school, RKHS prioritizes relationships, accessibility, and partnerships that connect students and families to resources both on and off campus.



RKHS VALUES

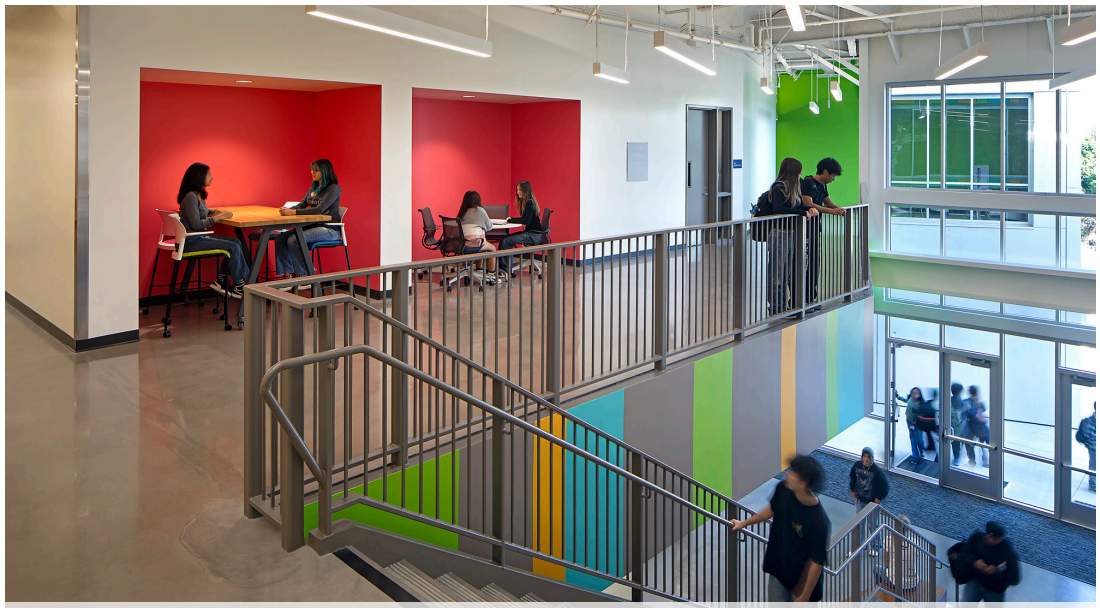
Integridad means we need to be the best versions of ourselves **Ubuntu** means our humanity is shared and we value kindness **Kohyang** means hometown and encourages us to build meaningful connections **Growth** means having a mindset that allows us to achieve excellence



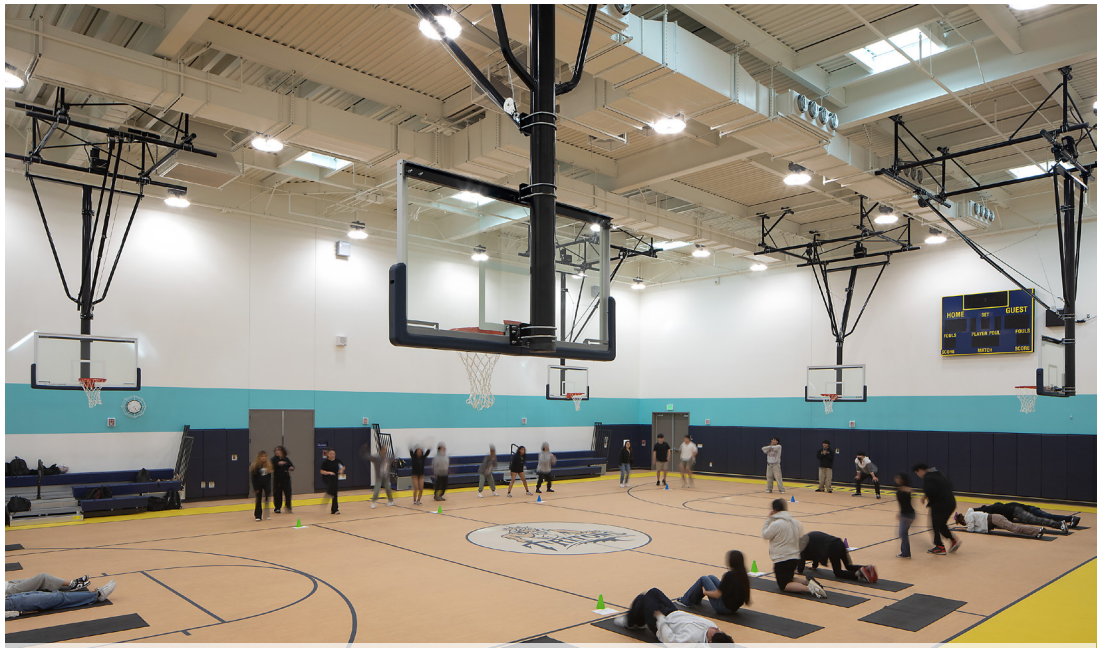
5. EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: CONTEXT

EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Flexible classroom configurations to support differentiated instruction and small group learning
- Specialized instructional spaces including science labs, art, and music classrooms
- Spaces designed for socioemotional support, counseling, and restorative practices
- Multi-use community and assembly spaces
- Technology integration to support modern instructional practices
- Student-centered design elements that promote safety, belonging, wellness, and accessibility
- Meet LAUSD Design Standards for optimize learning enviornments



Collaboration spaces are located along the main circulation, affording opportunities for small groups to work together outside the classrooms.



The CIF compliant basketball and volleyball gymnasium hosts practices, athletic events, and assemblies, and is accessible to the community when school is closed.

5. EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: RESPONSE

The RKHS campus was intentionally designed to support both academic rigor and student engagement across disciplines. Two fully equipped science laboratory classrooms provide students with opportunities for hands-on, inquiry-based learning aligned to college and career readiness standards. The CIF regulation gymnasium supports physical education, athletics, assemblies, and schoolwide programming that reinforces school culture and community. Throughout the campus, natural light and open spaces create an environment that promotes focus, collaboration, and student wellness.

RKHS provides multiple learning environments that support differentiated instruction and varied teaching approaches. Classrooms are equipped with projectors and smart boards to enhance instruction and student engagement. Dedicated spaces such as the Music Room and Art Studio allow students to engage in creative and performance-based learning experiences. Additional office spaces and breakout areas support small group instruction, intervention services, counseling, and individualized student support.



Flexible classroom configurations support differentiated instruction and small group learning.



Circulation spaces support informal meeting and collaboration.



5. EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: RESPONSE (CONT'D)

The campus was designed with flexibility in mind to meet the evolving needs of students and staff. Spacious classrooms with additional storage allow teachers to reconfigure learning environments for collaboration, intervention groups, presentations, and project-based learning. Benches and seating areas throughout hallways create opportunities for informal socioemotional check-ins and restorative conversations. Small offices and flexible meeting spaces support one-on-one conferencing, counseling sessions, and targeted small group support.

RKHS includes several innovative features that enhance both safety and functionality. The two science laboratories are equipped with professional-grade instructional features including eyewash stations, gas connections, and lab-ready infrastructure to support authentic scientific inquiry. The gymnasium includes large projection screens that allow the space to transform into a venue for grade-level meetings, assemblies, presentations, and community events, maximizing the functionality of a single shared space.



The innovative design on the tight urban lot allows classrooms to enjoy ample natural light and offer clear views to the outdoors—both proven to enhance student learning and well-being.



Informal collaborative learning spaces model contemporary work places.

6. RESULTS

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The RKHS campus directly supports the school's educational goals by creating spaces that foster academic engagement, collaboration, and community. The gymnasium serves as a central gathering space for student assemblies, celebrations, and schoolwide programming that strengthens school culture and belonging. Spacious classrooms support flexible instructional models, allowing teachers to implement collaborative learning structures, differentiated instruction, and project-based learning experiences.

SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

The campus design supports instructional goals related to intervention, personalization, and equitable access to learning. In mathematics, larger classroom spaces allow teachers and instructional aides to simultaneously facilitate multiple learning labs during the same class period. This flexibility enables intentional student grouping structures, targeted interventions, and differentiated academic support tailored to student learning needs.





6. RESULTS (CONT'D)

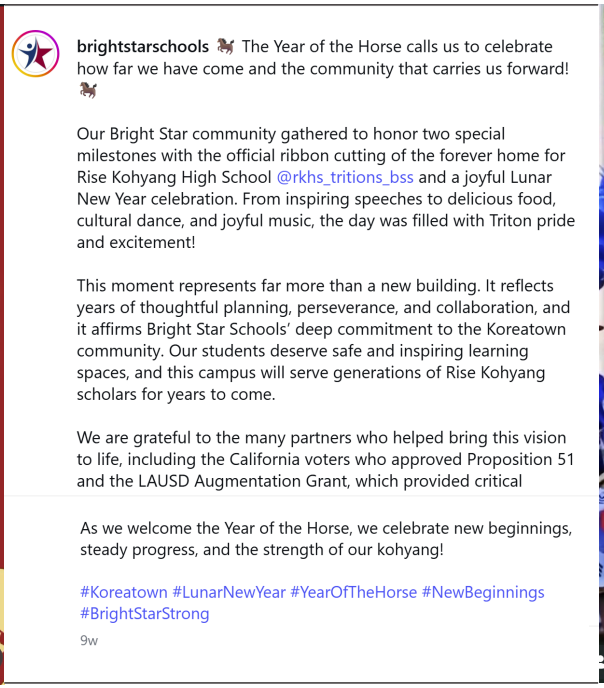
COMMUNITY GOALS

RKHS was intentionally designed to function as a community-centered campus. The Parent Center provides a dedicated space for family engagement and partnership. The outdoor courtyard supports events with community organizations and partners, strengthening school-community connections. The campus location also provides students with access to public transportation, nearby schools, and local service opportunities, including volunteer partnerships with a nearby food bank. These features increase accessibility, civic engagement, and community involvement for students and families.

OTHER OUTCOMES

In addition to its intended academic outcomes, the campus has contributed to increased feelings of belonging and safety among students, staff, and caregivers. According to Panorama Survey results, the school has experienced measurable increases in students' and staff members' sense of belonging on campus, as well as increased perceptions of physical and emotional safety within the school environment.











6. RESULTS (CONT'D)

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The project demonstrates strong stewardship of financial resources by investing in multi-purpose spaces that reduce long-term operational costs. Having an on-campus basketball and volleyball gymnasium allows RKHS to host practices, athletic events, assemblies, and school functions without the ongoing expense of renting local recreational facilities. The flexible design of campus spaces also maximizes functionality and long-term usability.

The site purchased for the school was the largest that the owner could afford. The design concept optimized the use of the site and met all of the client's program requirements. Designed with Los Angeles Unified School District on a 30 year lease, the property is considered part of LAUSD's portfolio, furthering the district's land for future learners.





6. RESULTS (CONT'D)

SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS

The RKHS campus promotes sustainability and wellness through the use of natural lighting, open gathering spaces, and flexible environments that support student wellbeing. Indoor and outdoor spaces were designed to encourage collaboration, movement, and connection while supporting positive mental health and socioemotional development. The campus's accessibility to public transportation further supports environmental sustainability and equitable student access.

The school is designed with CHPS sustainable features that promote water and energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emission reduction, materials and waste management, and enhanced indoor environmental quality. Skylights above the main circulation corridor and gymnasium will bring natural light into the interior of the building and lower the energy use intensity. For the south facing classrooms the windows have sun louvers that block direct solar heat gain and reduce glare but allow unobstructed exterior views. Storm water run-off from rooftops, balcony, and site paving is captured and filtered through sand basins in the garage. Biophilia is promoted though the use of native and drought tolerant plants located near the common student areas in the courtyard.



