Buckhorn Creek Elementary School

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Executive Summary
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opened in 2018 to accommodate a rapidly growing student population, Buckhorn Creek Elementary School is a 112,607-square-foot facility located in Holly Springs, North Carolina. Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) elected to use Moseley Architects’ E-plan prototype, previously utilized at two other WCPSS elementary schools: Pleasant Grove and Oakview.

As the Wake County region continues to boom in population, the school district has striven to keep pace with the construction of high-quality 21st century learning environments that meet the requirements of modern education. The use of prototype designs such as the E-plan eases this process, allowing WCPSS to move forward with projects knowing they and their stakeholders can trust the process and the design. At the request of the client, the adaptation of the prototype for Buckhorn Creek prioritized the enhancement of collaborative learning spaces, incorporating new learning commons spaces into the classroom wings.

The school was designed with an initial capacity of 800 students and a core capacity of 900, and there are already plans for future growth. The E-plan has remained a trusted model for the district and was recently employed again in the design of the new Barton Pond Elementary School.
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Scope of Work and Budget
Scope of Work and Budget

**Budget**
$29,234,377

**Scope**
The scope of this project entailed the design of an elementary school with:
- 52 teaching spaces
- A capacity of 800 students
- A capacity of 900 students in its core spaces
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School and Community Engagement
Community
Wake County, North Carolina, has experienced enormous population growth in recent years, with Holly Springs in particular becoming a boom-town. This rapid growth has required the construction of a number of new school facilities to meet demands. Wake County Public Schools currently serves nearly 160,500 students.

Stakeholders
This project’s stakeholders include:

• Students
• Faculty/staff
• Families/parents
• The school district
• The broader Wake County community
Challenges
The use of a prototype that had already been successfully implemented within the school district allowed for a smooth process with few challenges with community engagement. The school location at the time of construction was surrounded by farmland, with few immediate neighbors, and there were no notable concerns raised within the community about the project.

On the design front, one area of debate was the inclusion of special acrylic ribbon elements in the ceilings of the learning commons spaces (seen in the photograph above). Despite generating additional costs, these features were considered important to the creation of a space where students would feel creative and inspired, and they were ultimately incorporated into the final design.

Available Assets
Funding was allocated from the 2013 Bond Referendum via the construction contract award price (CCAP).

Value of Process and Project to Community at Large
Public community meetings and reviews were held to allow for community feedback, although there was little. The use of a proven prototype made this process a familiar one to the community at large.
Educational Environment
Educational Vision and Goals of the School
Buckhorn Creek Elementary School prioritizes relationships, communication, and responsive instruction. Their stated purpose is to "unlock the treasure in every child," and they aim to provide each student a strong foundation for their continued development.

Across the board, WCPSS strives to foster in its students the four Cs: collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking.

How the Environment Supports the Curriculum
In keeping with current learning styles and trends, the school layout incorporates large learning commons areas that support collaboration in a safe, highly visible environment. These spaces are located at the end of each classroom wing corridor, where they are accessible by six surrounding classrooms. The ends of each corridor are capped with a glass framing system, allowing for maximum daylight and views within the learning commons and classroom spaces.

How the Environment Supports a Variety of Learning and Teaching Styles
Children learn in different ways and at different paces, and modern curricula often accommodate diverse learning styles through the integration of both traditional teaching techniques and more hands-on, project-based learning. At Buckhorn Creek, classroom activities can spill out into dedicated collaborative spaces that allow for group learning.
How the Environment is Adaptable and Flexible

The majority of the school’s classrooms boast movable glass walls, allowing these spaces to accommodate evolving curriculum needs. The design also features writable wall surfaces and flexible furniture, which can be arranged and rearranged as needed. The flexibility built into the school’s design allows classroom activities to spread out into the hallways and common spaces as needed. The upper levels feature reading nook window sills, allowing children additional space to focus.
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Physical Environment
Physical Attributes of the Environment
Notable features include the folding glass walls of the connecting learning commons, which allow the learning environments to be flooded with natural daylight both from the interior of the space from the exterior windows, creating a fun, well-lit area for engaging and learning. In addition, the learning commons have been designed with special ceiling details that create a light, fun, airy environment for learning beyond the classroom.

How the Facility Fits within the Larger Context of the Community
Buckhorn Creek is one of Wake County Public School System’s 114 operational elementary schools. As a prototype, the school’s design is meant to fit within a variety of locations and contexts. For this reason, the aesthetic of the building’s exterior is intentionally simple and stately, ensuring that it will blend well with potential future development in the area.

How the Project Inspires and Motivates
Bursts of color and an abundance of natural light create an engaging and inspiring learning environment for young children. Special attention was paid to the learning commons spaces, where design details such as acrylic ceiling ribbons, integrated with acoustical ceiling clouds, stoke students’ creativity. The ceiling ribbons and floor designs in the learning commons are color coded according to wings in which they are located. These elements help to visually separate these areas from regular corridor spaces.
Results of the Process and Project
How the Project Achieves Educational Goals and Objectives
Buckhorn Creek Elementary School is an inviting 21st century learning environment that supports the development of the young children and fosters an atmosphere of collaboration and flexibility that is in line with modern educational trends.

How the Project Achieves School District Goals
The completion of Buckhorn Creek Elementary School is an important part of WCPSS’s ongoing efforts to provide top-quality facilities to accommodate its rapidly growing student population. The school was designed with growth in mind, an essential factor given the continual migration of new families to the region.

How the Project Achieves Community Goals
The use of the E-plan prototype in this project ensured a school design that the broader community could embrace with confidence.

Unintended Results and Achievements of the Process and Project
The success of this project and WCPSS’s continued satisfaction with the E-plan led to the prototype being selected once again as the model for another recently completed elementary school in the district, Barton Pond Elementary School in Raleigh, NC.