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Meadowdale Middle School

2013 James D. MacConnell Award Submission

Executive Summary

Meadowdale Middle School is the first middle school Edmonds School District has ever built, replacing an outmoded junior high school building at the end of its service life. Being the first of four planned middle school replacement projects, the District embarked on the planning process beginning with several key questions- 'What makes a middle school different?' and 'What are the best practices today that can inform our decisions and ensure that the new school will serve the community well for the next 50 years?'

Establishing the Vision: The District hired an architect and educational planning team to lead a large group of stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, District staff, and community members in establishing a new vision for their new middle schools. The process entailed a series of workshops, charrettes, and tours, both real and virtual of outstanding recent projects, culminating in a mission statement and guiding principles for Meadowdale that formed the basis for the design of the new facility, as well as serving as a roadmap for the school to transform their curriculum.



Transforming the School Culture: The new building has provided an inspiring and invigorating new setting that has helped to transform the school culture. Carefully tailored to support the developmental needs of the emerging adolescent, already the new spaces and their configuration are changing how the students behave. According to the principal Christine Avery, who was involved throughout planning and design process, in the old building lunchtime was the worst part of the day, run as a virtual lock-down. In the new Commons it has become her favorite time of the day, the kids are so different and she enjoys hanging out in the Café area, informally interacting with the students.



*"Meadowdale middle school is a **personalized learning community** where emerging adolescents and adults work together to create safe, relevant, and **developmentally appropriate learning experiences.**"*



Evolving Curriculum for the Emerging Adolescent: The early visioning process brought into clarity for all of the participants the need to provide a new building which facilitates and supports a much larger range of teaching and learning modalities as a way to learn how to work more successfully with this age group. New paradigms like cooperative and performance-based learning are already making their way into daily practice. Positive feedback from the staff in the new building indicates that the design intent is definitely meeting that goal. “In a time when we’re doing a lot of experimentation with how we work with the students, the new facility has already served us well, with all the flexibility and opportunities it has afforded, both within each teaching space and especially in the shared areas.” Joe Webster, assistant principal

Community Reception. “With all the pressure coming from General Fund Budget cuts, a decaying existing building, an occupied site, and having never built a middle school, it would have been easy to provide a much more conventional design, but we made a bolder choice and it is working.” The new Meadowdale has been so well received that the Superintendent, Nick Brossoit wants to use it as the model for replacing the other three Middle Schools. “The Community has responded overwhelmingly positively to the new Meadowdale. They love it!”



Establishing a Vision - Community Engagement Process

In the beginning of 2008 a representative group of community members, neighbors students and their parents (both current and future users), staff, administrators, educational planners and architects were organized to assist the school district in creating a vision for Meadowdale Middle School that would guide the planning and design of the new facility. Wanting to go beyond the standard community collaboration process, the District put a challenge to this group- to develop guiding principles and design goals that would bring together the District's overall mission and philosophy with the best and most appropriate current thinking on teaching and learning and school design in a way that will ensure that Meadowdale will be a comprehensive learning center designed to support various educational models will serve the high standards of the District for the next 50 years.



Biweekly workshops were held in the MMS library

Major participants: Roles and Opportunities

- School Board – Elected Directors having final responsibility and authority.
- Project Steering Committee – Core project decision making group composed of the Capital Projects Director, Executive Director for Business and Operations, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Programs, and School Principal. Also staffed by District Project Manager and Architect. This team was responsible for all aspects of scope budget and schedule, and made final recommendations to the School Board.
- District-wide Middle School visioning committee. Met during the Predesign phase.
- Meadowdale Design Review Committee – Broad based committee composed of site-specific teachers and staff, parents, students and community members. This group met regularly in the visioning phase, and periodically at milestones to review the on-going design and make recommendations to the Project Steering Committee.
- Curriculum Focus Groups – District-wide reviews of programming, schematic and semi-final designs for specific curriculum and activity areas.
- Integrated Design Charrette Team- Formal facilitated goal setting and preliminary plans review that focuses on sustainability issues in the context of overall project goals and objectives. Includes all design disciplines, building users, District maintenance and custodial managers, major energy utility providers.

*middle school students are a **unique age group** that are very diverse with many social needs who need help to appropriately **experience** this exciting and confusing time*



Student WAM workshop- drawing session with students



The Hopes and Fears exercise brought out key values

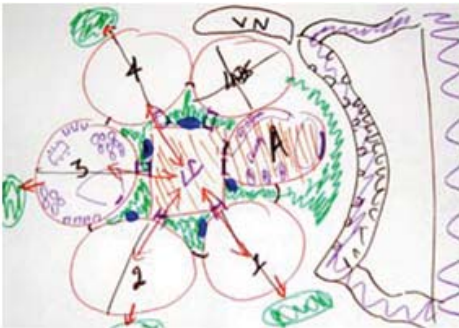
- Community Presentations: Milestone presentations/ discussions. Included open house sessions at major project phases, school staff meetings, and special presentations.

Project Assets

- Widespread community support for the project. The Citizens Planning Committee recommended the Meadowdale project as a priority for the 2006 Bond measure.
- History within the District of continuous community support for progressive projects following a series of well-received innovative schools
- Having an established and successful community engagement process within the District, used for acclaimed projects, such as Lynnwood HS.
- Extensive experience and sustaining continuity within the Capital Improvements office.
- Well established relationship with Integrus, lasting over 20 years
- A key architect on the Integrus' team, Trevor Lunde attended Meadowdale MS and originally connected with Integrus as a HS student in a Tech Ed design class. He interned at Integrus through his college years, eventually getting hired as an intern architect. He was involved through the whole Meadowdale project, playing a major role through construction
- Bringing in Fielding/Nair to facilitate the initial visioning process, bringing their expertise and skills in prodding the group to extend their imaginations to what is possible. Having John Wiley come and talk about the emerging adolescent was really pivotal.

Process. A series of Design Review team workshops were held over a two month period at the existing school, led by the architects & facility planners. Initial exercises were geared toward engaging all stakeholders: sharing best practices, discovering preferred educational reform strategies, bringing out hopes and fears, and eventually developing a consensus that culminated in establishing a mission statement and guiding principles that served as a foundation for the planning and design.

Challenges. The Edmonds School District had never built a middle school before this project. The four middle school programs were situated in old junior high school buildings, using a 7th -8th grade model that was established principally to respond to enrollment challenges rather than educational program objectives. Further complicating Meadowdale's process, the District had not yet fully articulated a middle school curriculum, challenged by changing State curriculum (e.g. Math) and testing requirements, at the time called Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and which has since been replaced by Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) applied to grades 3-8.



Design Review team sketch for a personal learning community

The District has had a long standing policy of an inclusive planning process that included teachers and maintenance staff. The District was facing reduced state funding for educational operations and increased state requirements for student and teacher evaluations. Any additional demand for staff time created both logistical and emotional stress, as these stakeholders had limited time to devote to planning a new facility. To allow full participation of these critical stakeholders and give them an important voice in shaping the new building, a strategic, streamlined process was developed with the architects and educational planner.



Diagram for how to accommodate a variety of modalities

All of these challenges contributed to an atmosphere in which it would have been far easier to resort to a highly conventional and traditional design that used minimal community input, however the District held to their established process in the belief that it would yield a more successful outcome.



Exploring the potential for a re-imagined Commons

Process Value

- The process maintained trust and credibility with the community by delivering a quality product within tight schedule and budget constraints.
- The process allowed involvement at many different levels, thus was both very inclusive and very efficient. Anyone could be involved without compromising their schedule. The process focused input so that there was appropriate review when needed.
- The process introduced the guiding concept of the unique developmental needs of middle school students.
- The process yielded design changes that enhanced educational program performance, e.g. giving the fitness room a direct connection to the main gym, relocating the gym "Barn Doors" to enlarge running loop; moving the Technology/STEM labs to a high visibility position; moving music rooms to allow better connection with the gym, commons and student drop-off loop.



Session with Jon Wiles discussing the emerging adolescent

Establishing Mission Statement and Guiding Principles.

A major turning point occurred in the visioning process when Jon Wiles, author of 'The Essential Middle School' joined the team share his perspective on the developmental stages of the typical middle school student, and also to help work through the details of moving to block scheduling.

Jon spent the morning session briefing faculty on this unique stage of development, where kids are changing faster than at any other time. This pivotal 'Aha' moment coalesced a lot of disparate ideas and led to the creation of the mission statement with it's five key components.

The following summarizes the essential understanding that came out this session:

Creating Appropriate Programs For Emerging Adolescents And Why It Is So Important?

- The new school should acknowledge the developmental level of this age group and support adapting curriculum that directly meets and accommodates their needs
- Middle school students are a unique age group that are very diverse with many social needs who need help to appropriately experience this exciting and confusing time
- This age group wants more independence as they take on more responsibility and interest in their own learning, yet still needs boundaries
- "Tween" 10-12 growing so fast trying to understand themselves and their relationships to others
- The "tween" is a young adolescent coming of age and trying to deal with hormones; confusion; self-image; searching; excitement; discovering talents
- The middle school program should make school experiences age appropriate - the student's physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual development is the basis for how to design the learning process, which should accommodate a wide range of learners based on student interests
- Health and fitness activities should not only be athletic based, but also be diverse enough to promote the students to pursue on their own
- The school program should be appropriate for the middle school attention span, learning styles, as well as depth and breadth capabilities while presenting opportunities to display ones talents

*The middle school program should make school experiences **age appropriate***

Mission Statement.

“Meadowdale middle school is a personalized learning community where emerging adolescents and adults work together to create safe, relevant, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.”



Guiding Principles

Personalized Learning Community

- A place that meets the needs of each individual child. “Learning is tailored to my interests – help, support, celebrations.” Each student has unique and different needs so there is a variety of learning/teaching styles and environments available in the PLC
- “An intimate environment where I know everyone and everyone knows me. It’s my school family.”

Emerging Adolescents

- Acknowledging the developmental level of this age group & adapting curriculum to directly meet and accommodate their needs
- A unique age group; very diverse; many needs; exciting confusing time for many (for themselves and maybe their parents as well); high social needs
- Wanting more independence yet still needing boundaries
- Beginning to take more responsibility, interest in own learning
- “Tween” 10-12 growing so fast trying to understand themselves and their relationship to others
- Coming of age; hormones; confusion; self-image; searching; excitement; discovering talents



Safe

- Welcoming atmosphere; a comforting space – physically and psychologically, but guarded from the outside. A safe environment for the students so they can flourish and engage in the learning process
- Immediate and effective interventions and resources are provided and accessible when safety is disrupted / threatened
- Everyone looks out for everyone else (Everyone at the school knows my child)

Relevant

- Relevant to the world & interests of the student- demands of the 21st century culture, economy, and society
- Meaningful to each learner and applicable to both their interests and real world situations- each child is challenged and engaged in the learning process. Addresses “How is it important in my life?”
- “Providing me with skills, tools, and knowledge; I need to be successful”



Developmentally Appropriate

- Making school experiences age appropriate- the student's physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual development is the basis for how to design the learning process. Appropriate for attention span, for learning styles, for depth and breadth capabilities.
- Meets the needs of each child's developmental process, academically and emotionally
- Health and fitness activities that all students will pursue on their own

*“Learning is tailored
to my **interests**
– help, support,
celebrations.”*

Educational Specifications

- Bringing the Vision to Fruition

should acknowledge the developmental level of this age group and support adapting curriculum that directly meets and accommodates their needs

The Educational Specifications built on the work of the Design Review Team, integrating those long-term conceptual goals with specific day-to-day functional needs identified in numerous interviews with staff, students, and community users during the programming process.

Programming Process

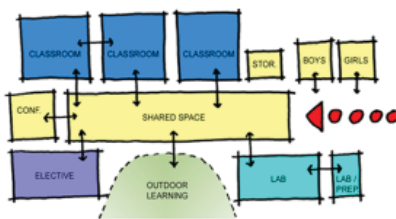
Specifically, the Educational Specification outlines in detail the instructional program needs as they will be reflected in the building itself. The following identifies the basic steps in obtaining the information required to successfully understand the parameters of the Educational Specification:

- Goals: Identify the goals established by the District.
- Facts: Collect and analyze the facts and information provided by the users.
- Concepts: Present and test concepts.
- Needs: Identify and understand the needs of the user.

Meetings were held with Curriculum Focus Groups where necessary, bringing in District-level educators to interact with Meadowdale teachers. Specific areas of focus:

- CTE: What is the direction of CTE (now evolved into STEM)? What will be taught when MMS opens? What kinds of facility & specifically what types of spaces should we be building?
- Health, Fitness, Athletics: Can we integrate the health curriculum with fitness & athletics? Can we combine a health classroom with a fitness room? Should the health classroom be located in the academic area?

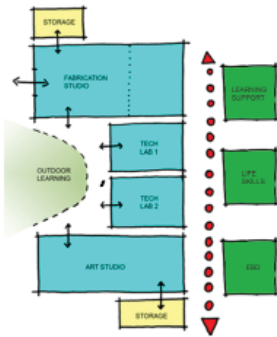
This process provides a framework to classify and document all of the required information. The end result, therefore, is an Educational Specification utilized by the design team for creating a school that not only addresses the goals and philosophy of the district, but also meets the needs of the students, faculty, staff, and the community.



Personal Learning Communities

Opportunity for Change. Recognizing that current teaching & learning practices at Meadowdale will evolve in the new building, the Steering Committee embraced the strategy of using the move to a new facility as a way to instigate change, primarily in how Meadowdale currently teaches the students. The staff used the temporary disruption and dislocation that occurred during construction, and combined with the excitement of moving into a new building, began exploring more innovative teaching and learning modalities prior to the move.

Design Themes and Goals. Meadowdale Middle School exists to provide a learning environment which empowers students, staff, and the community to maximize their personal, creative, and academic potential in order to become lifelong learners and responsible world citizens.

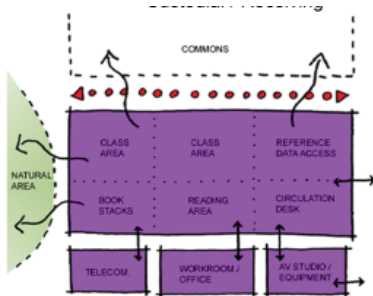


Specialized Labs

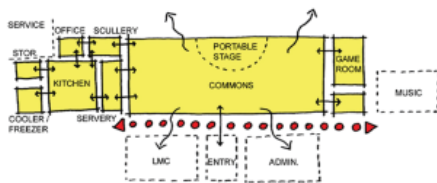
In order to make the educational process successful for each and every student, a school for the twenty-first century must be capable of meeting the needs of a variety of users and support a variety of education models that address the mission of the Edmonds School District. In order to meet this objective, the Design Review Committee identified a series of “General Goals” which are stated below:

Our new school should:

- Identify and architecturally express the unique qualities or characteristics of the school, its community, and place
- Be inviting, welcoming, and have a clear sense of identity in scale with the neighborhood
- Have quality spaces that are comfortable and personable, with good natural light with visual connections
- Be designed with a variety of textures and materials that are aesthetically pleasing and long lasting
- Have clustered spaces for intimacy and collegiality within the larger school community, while avoiding separation or isolation
- Have spaces and furniture that can be easily reconfigured
- Have ample natural light throughout the classrooms, shared spaces, and circulation areas
- Consider its impact on the surrounding environment and consider methods of sustainable design that reach beyond the typical
- Have spaces that are open and inviting, that are designed to support educational models currently practiced by teachers, yet be flexible enough to adapt to future educational models
- Be colorful and inviting to help promote a fun, interesting, and engaging teaching and learning environment
- Take advantage of multiple use spaces
- Have large science rooms with enough space for both labs and tables
- Have technology integrated throughout all spaces and be properly prepped for future upgrades
- Represent the context of the northwest with functional and beautiful learning spaces
- Be a place that can be used by the community
- Take in more consideration for private staff accommodations
- Be designed to facilitate small classroom loads (25 or less)
- Support a modern physical fitness program
- Take advantage of flexible space for a modern performance space with a variety of seating choices
- Accommodate natural landscaping that engages the interior and provides a learning focused landscape



Library Media Center



Commons and Kitchen

meaningful to each learner and applicable to both their interests and real world situations

- Have a social commons for the students and community that is a healthy and comfortable environment to socialize and collaborate
- Have modern integrated technologies with wireless capabilities for technologies and visual aids that can provide a richer learning experience
- Consider non – traditional dynamic classrooms with lots of transparency, connectedness, and natural light that promote collaborative learning

Through a series of workshops with the Design Review Committee, with school staff, district facilities personnel, students, and community stakeholders, the team established three broad design themes (Educational, Site, and Contextual) that will serve as touchstones throughout the design and construction process. The themes and corresponding goals that apply to each theme are listed below:

EDUCATIONAL DESIGN THEMES:

Meadowdale Middle School should be designed to preserve its role as a center of learning for the surrounding community while taking in considerations for the future of educational reform

Variety of Learning Settings

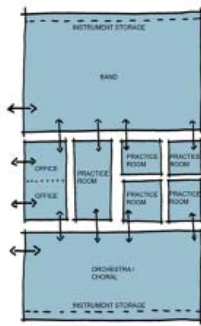
- A variety of spaces should be provided for the many learning activities that will occur in the new schools. The variety should be both in size and character, planned for efficient utilization and the ability to be reconfigured easily to allow multiple uses.
- Make learning settings highly flexible to accommodate multiple activities in a single school day.
- The school's organization and overall character will support and promote professional collaboration and teamwork.

Flexibility and Adaptability

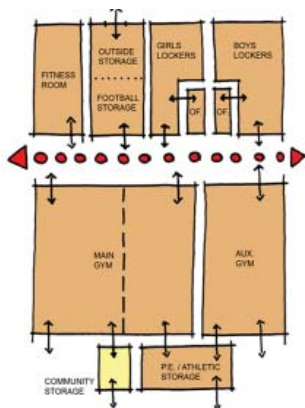
- The design should provide an adaptable building that is flexible enough to accommodate both short and long term goals for different educational strategies.
- Create adaptability in the use of spaces, building systems, and furnishings by maintaining flexible design solutions that allow for change to take place with minimal effort and time spent.
- Provide a variety of room sizes and volumes to ensure that changes in populations and curriculum can support a variety of class sizes and activities.

Integration of Technology

- Integrated technology should be provided that is accessible to all, with flexibility in mind to allow adaptation to future technological advancements. Provide adequate over-sizing in cabling and conduits to allow future expansion of information access technology.
- Decentralize technology and integrate its use into all learning settings while providing a robust infrastructure that accommodates technological change.
- Utilize technology to create a sustainable school facility that minimizes operation / maintenance costs and provides long term efficiency.



Music and Performing Arts



Physical Education and Athletics

Safety and Security

-
- The schematic diagram illustrates the layout of the study site, showing the following rooms and their connections:
- Top Office** connects to **Nursing Office** and **Health**.
 - Nursing Office** connects to **Health** and **Nurse 1 PTN**.
 - Health** connects to **Nurse 1 PTN** and **Staff Room**.
 - Nurse 1 PTN** connects to **Staff Room**.
 - Staff Room** connects to **Reception** (bottom left).
 - Counsellor** (top) connects to **Counsellor** (middle) and **Office**.
 - Office** connects to **Reception** (top right).
 - Reception** (top right) connects to **Nurse**, **Nurse 2**, and **Nurse 3**.
 - Reception** (middle left) connects to **Multi Workroom** and **Reception** (bottom right).
 - Multi Workroom** connects to **Conference**.
 - Conference** connects to **Reception** (bottom right).
 - Reception** (bottom right) connects to **Prenatal** and **Assistant Managing**.
 - Prenatal** connects to **Assistant Managing**.

Connection to Site and the Environment

- ## Circulation

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CONTEXTUAL DESIGN THEMES:

Meadowdale Middle School - 2013 James D. MacConnell Award Submission

Image and Identity

- The school's main entry and offices should be welcoming and inviting. They both should be easily identifiable to new visitors from both the site entry and the main parking area.
- The school is a community center, which will be warm, inviting, visually and spatially interesting, and will provide an image and identity that represents the values of the Edmonds School District, Lynnwood community, and Meadowdale area.
- Materials and exterior of the building will be durable for school use purposes, but of appropriate scale, texture, and color to fit into the neighborhood

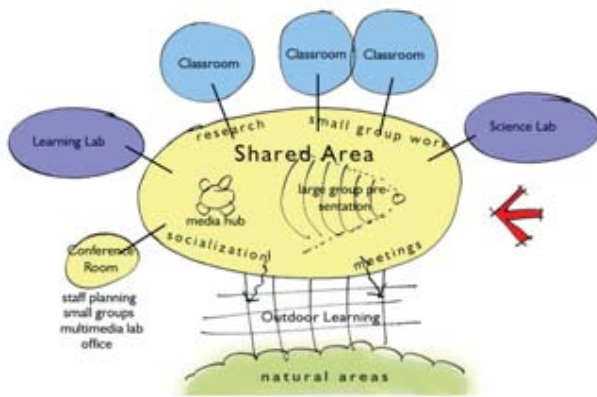
Community Use and Partnerships

- Space should be provided at the school for programs that might form partnerships with various community organizations in the future. This space could be provided by means of an adaptable building plan which could be easily expanded or reconfigured in the future.
- Event parking should be provided on site that is adequate for a majority of the events currently taking place at the school. Visitor parking should be located adjacent to the main building entry.

Programmatic Elements

Personal Learning Communities (PLC)

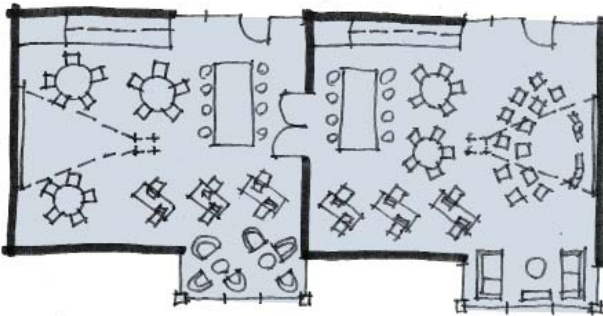
- The PLC should accommodate a variety of learning settings and be able to support a variety of learning modalities. In the future, they should also be able to adapt to embrace more hands-on project-based learning and cooperative learning.
- Provide a centralized shared area- center of the PLC, crafted to allow for both structured and informal learning, areas for wet and messy work, research, group presentation, and socialization.
- The design should be organized to support team teaching with an adjacent conferencing space for teacher collaboration.
- The PLC should be able to adapt over the life of the building, to flex between a departmental model and interdisciplinary model
- Provide ready access to outdoor learning spaces.
- Provide abundant transparency to maximize connectivity, allow for passive supervision. Well day-lit spaces throughout the PLC that creates a sense of connection to the outdoors



wanting more
independence
yet still needing
boundaries



Learning Setting 2010



Learning Setting 2020- able to accommodate more project-based hands-on learning, student collaboration

Classrooms

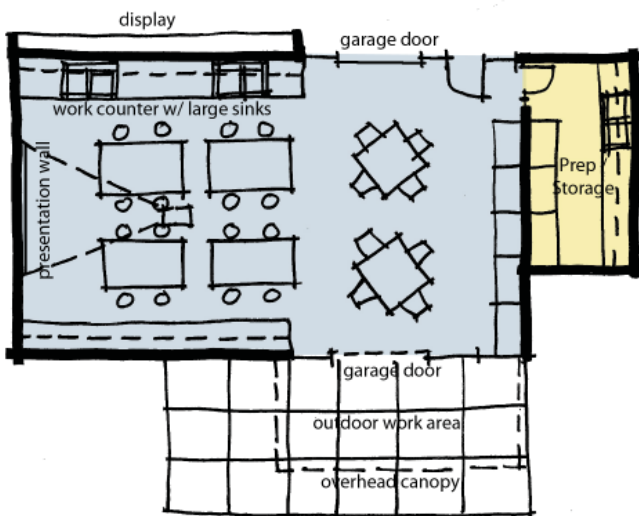
- Each classroom should be adaptable and able to accommodate a variety of teaching and learning modalities, from the traditional methods to practices such as collaborative learning and more hands-on project based learning.
- Provide a more intimately-scaled zone within the classroom more conducive to individual and small group activities, separate but connected.
- Provide some classrooms with direct interconnection to facilitate team teaching.
- Teaching wall concept will continue as the location where presentation technology will be focused in the near future.
- Classrooms should be provided with plenty of natural light and direct visual connections to the outdoors, while also having the ability to control glare for visual presentations.

Integrated Science Lab

- Create a space that is interconnected with the PLC's and the regular curriculum, yet located so as to retain a unique departmental identity to enable collaboration.
- Provide connection to outdoor learning focused landscapes to support a wide variety of curriculum
- The design should accommodate various modalities, including lectures, collaboration, private space, wet and messy activities, etc.
- Provide a design that is flexible enough to adapt to a variety of future learning modalities- 'DaVinci' studio

Flexible Studios

Flexible 'DaVinci' style studios: Zoned with space for wet and messy work, and garage doors that allow activities to spill out into the Shared Area, the studios could be used as a resource space by teaming with other classes. There is extra storage for materials and student work and the spaces would ideally be furnished with workshop-style tables.



DaVinci Studio



Tech Lab/Stem program

- Provide a space that is a technically-oriented creative environment- supports a curriculum based around the ideas of theory, design, fabrication, testing, and redesign.
- Create a space that can easily adapt to future teaching modalities and curricula, and accommodate emerging technologies. Which could be influenced by fields as disparate as design and modeling, the magic of electronics, science of technology, automation and robotics, flight and space.
- Design a space that can incorporate the principles behind the traditional wood and metal shop, but which can also integrate computer technologies.
- Centrally located within the larger school to feature the STEM curriculum and showcase to the kids the exciting technology and variety of student works.

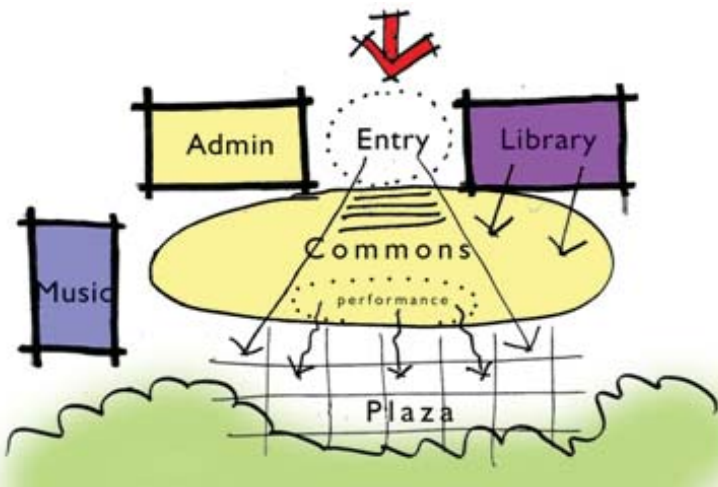
Fitness and Health

- An integrated curriculum is envisioned, combining health, fitness, and athletics. where students can learn to integrate ideas about healthy lifestyles, diet, and exercise. Create a multi-purpose fitness classroom, intimately linked to the two gyms, outfitted with exercise equipment, classroom area with laptops, and space for stretching.
- Provide two gyms, a main gym for school athletics and tournaments, large music performances, and a second smaller auxiliary gym for fitness and community oriented programs.
- Naturally light the gymnasiums to save energy as well as to provide a more inspiring space for students and teachers.

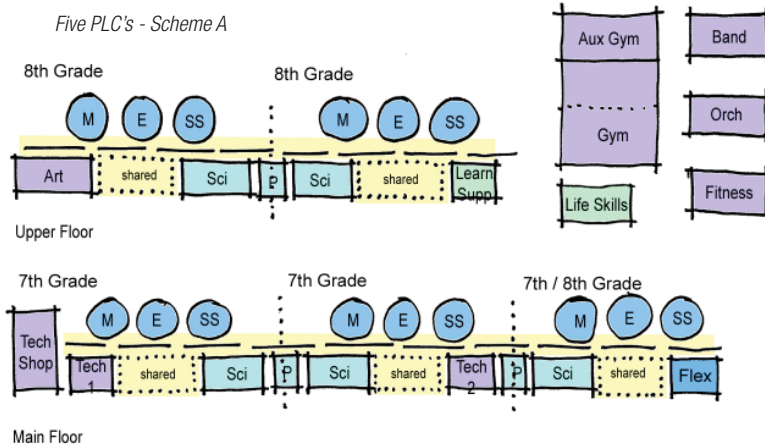
Student Social Center: Commons, Café, Library, Covered Outdoor Area

Commons as the living room- Well crafted setting for dining, informal socialization, studying, formal and informal large gatherings, presentations, and be able to accommodate a variety of performances.

- Create a variety of zones within the Commons that offer different settings for the many different types of middle school students- large traditional open area of tables, café area, cyberbar, tiered forum-style seating, covered outdoor area with seating.
- Provide direct lines of sight and maximize visibility between the Commons, Cafe, Library, and outdoor activity areas for excellent supervision.
- The Commons should be immediately adjacent to outdoor activity areas, both active and passive, to allow the easy transition between socializing, play, and athletics
- Design a cafe that serves as a social connection between the main commons and the library to provide a buffer between active and non active spaces



Five PLC's - Scheme A

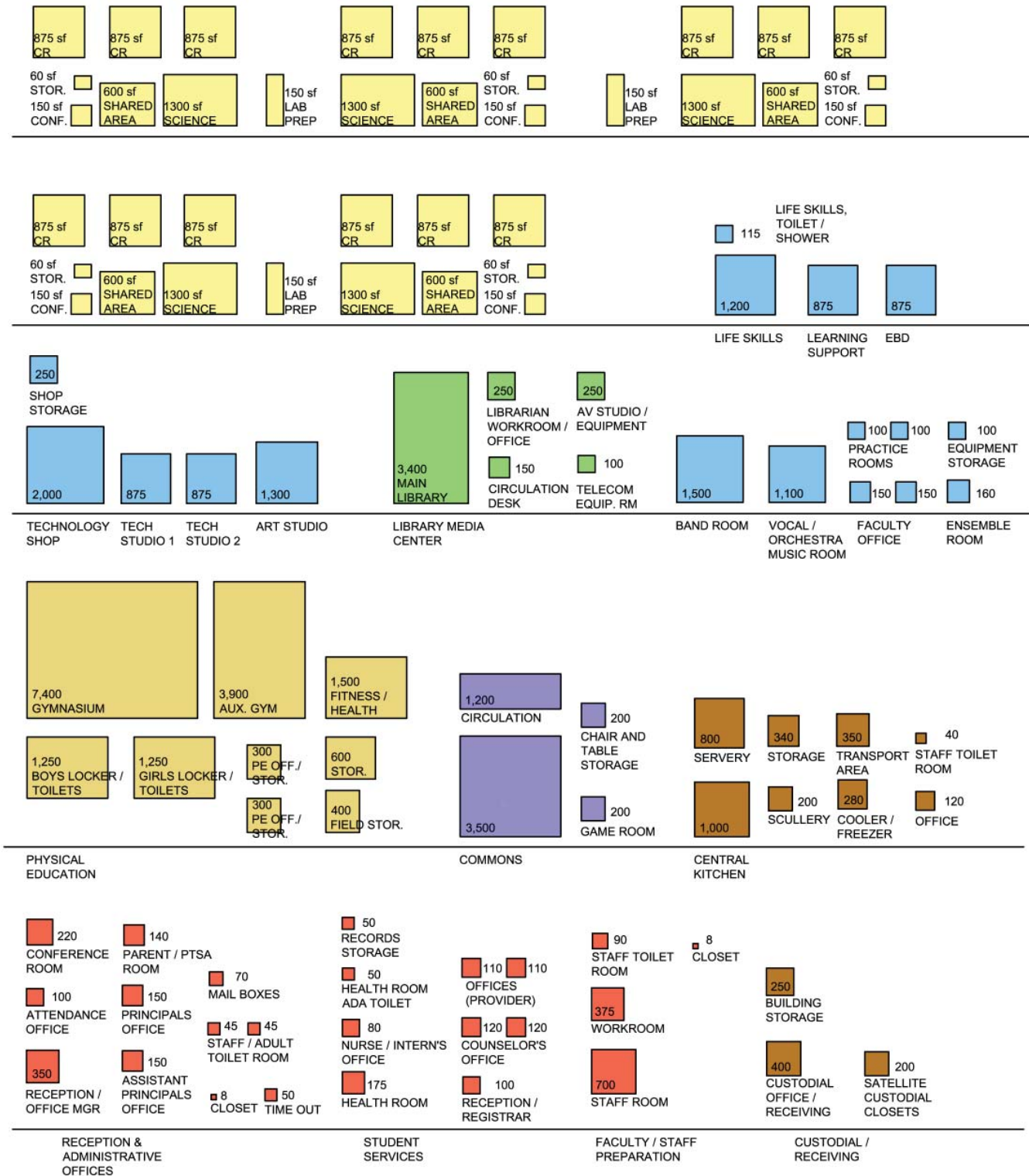


Academic Organization Diagram

Building Organization. In accordance with and support of the school's mission statement, the organization of the core academic portions of the school is subdivided into five personal learning communities. This smaller scale enables the creation of a more intimate social environment within the larger school, allowing 5 teachers to interact with 150 students, and helps support the goals of providing a more relevant and developmentally appropriate, safe middle school experience for Meadowdale's students.

A variety of diagrams were presented to the Steering Committee to weigh the desired amount of autonomy each PLC should have in relation to the rest of the school and also the question of whether elective spaces would be integrated into the PLC's. The final solution is based on the idea of a string of pearls, interconnected with a central circulation spine, each with a distinct identity, but definitely not as separate and isolated neighborhoods. It was decided that including the electives in the PLC's would interfere with a desired sense of scale and intimacy and were to be placed where they were the strongest adjacencies, such as having the music program near the Commons and Gym for performing.

Program Summary



Design

The new Meadowdale Middle school was designed to serve the cultural values of the Meadowdale school community. In particular, the community stressed the importance of having a new school facility that creates opportunities for mixing social and educational activities, that supports the curricular emphasis on collaboration and self-directed exploration, that strengthens students' awareness of their place within the natural environment, and that can be used by entire community,

Site. The new building embraces the site with minimal disruption to the existing landscape despite a complex phasing scheme that allowed students to remain on site during construction. The building has been located to take advantage of changes in topography and zoned to create opportunities for outdoor learning activities. An existing wooded knoll was preserved and replanted with native plants. Drainage from the knoll is used to replenish areas of restored habitat and rain gardens. Tucked within this restored landscape is a collection of outdoor learning areas connected by meandering pathways. These areas include a library amphitheater, an art balcony, a covered outdoor commons, and environmental learning paths and demonstration deck. To complete the sitework, after demolition of the existing buildings, new playfields – with direct access from the gym/lockers - were terraced into the newly reclaimed sloping landscape.

“An intimate environment where I know everyone and everyone knows me. It’s my school family.”

Site organization

- The main entry is located adjacent to the street and directly across the existing elementary school to create a pedestrian friendly school zone, with traffic calming features on the street to create a safe connection between the schools.
- Student Plaza outside the student commons to complement the idea of the living room- for socialization, play, and sports activities. Designed with tiered forum-style seating, seat walls, and concrete tables. Located centrally for easy supervision from within the Commons.
- The existing mature second growth woods along 164th St SW - much-loved by the community - were preserved, the natural path upgraded, and concurrently used as a way to screen the parking lot from the public view.



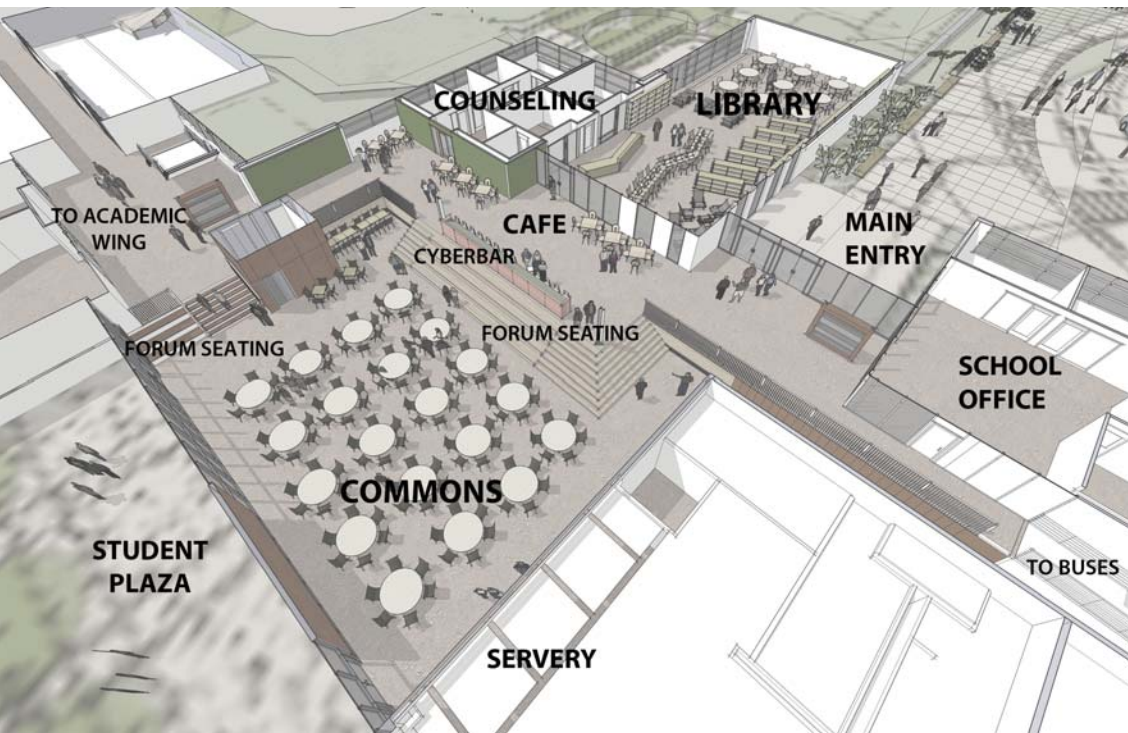
Vehicular Circulation, Pedestrian Access, and Safety

- The vehicular portion of the site is designed to separate the bus loading area and bus traffic from the main parking lot. Students arriving by bus enter the building at the east entrance adjacent to the gyms. A canopy is provided to provide shelter for students loading onto the buses.
- A separate route alongside the parking area provided adequate space for cars queuing to pick-up or drop-off students
- Traffic calming area immediately in front of main entry

*the **student's** physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual **development** is the basis for how to design the **learning process***

Building

Public Areas. The centrally located library and commons are designed to accommodate use by members of the local community and can be zoned jointly or independently to accommodate functions of different sizes and nature. Their placement and organization reinforces the relationship between learning and socialization by creating a flex zone between them that blurs the separation of their uses. Finishes and furnishings in the commons area are designed to be attractive and comfortable for both middle-schoolers and adults. Zoned for easy community use with the academic wing able to be closed off from the main public use spaces.



Personalized Learning Communities In accordance with and support of the school's mission statement, the organization of the core academic portions of the school is subdivided into five personal learning communities. This smaller scale enables the creation of a more intimate social environment within the larger school, allowing 5 teachers to interact with 150 students, and helps support the goals of providing a more relevant and developmentally appropriate, safe middle school experience for Meadowdale's students.



In line with the thinking that there needs to be flexibility to accommodate more collaborative and multi-disciplinary curricula in the future, an organization based around Personal Learning Communities (PLC) works well for both the traditional departmental model and multi-disciplinary models. The PLC expands the traditional range of learning settings beyond the classroom. Each PLC consists of a shared learning area, 3 humanities classrooms, a science room, a learning support room, and a small conference room opening directly to the shared-use space. Outdoor learning areas are connected both visually and physically to the PLCs through the extensive use of glazing and stairways.

The Shared Area, located right off the central circulation spine, is thought of as an active social and work space that serves as the heart of each PLC. Potential activities include socialization, large group instruction, computer research and media access at a cyberbar, and individual or small group work. Large windows are provided to the north to provide good daylighting, as well as views to the north rain garden areas. They can be expanded into the learning support spaces by opening large overhead doors, providing the flexibility to respond to changing needs over time. Each Shared-use area also includes a cyber bar, situated between the PLC and the adjacent corridor, consisting of a flexible combination of seating, display, teaching, and storage opportunities.





Outcomes

Project Value

Community Reception: The new facility has been extremely well received by the community- “This just makes sense!” said a parent touring the new school.’ Parents feel welcome, with an open and inviting entry area, welcoming office and the adjacent Commons, often sitting at the Commons café tables outside the Library.

Developmentally appropriate: “The design has definitely met the goal of supporting the unique developmental needs of the middle school age group through a balance of attractive, varied, and welcoming social space, with ease of supervision.”

Student Behavior: Dramatic improvement in overall student behavior: “Seventh graders at the old building were so unruly that lunch was run as a virtual lock-down. The same students as eighth graders at the new building required no special supervision at lunch. They became extremely well-behaved.”

“A visiting student from another school had only been there 20 minutes and made the comment that the kids at Meadowdale are so nice. When asked why, she said that several kids had already come up to her to say hi and asked if she was a new student.”

Student Performance: Meadowdale just received a 2012 Washington Academic Achievement Award in the category of closing the achievement gap. Many schools received an award, but state-wide only 8 or 9 middle schools. Most significantly, the science scores went up 20%, from 60% to 80%. Avery thinks that some of this can be attributed to the great environment they have.

“...when you are in an environment that is so beautiful and conducive to what they want to do, I think it makes them feel like they could be successful.”

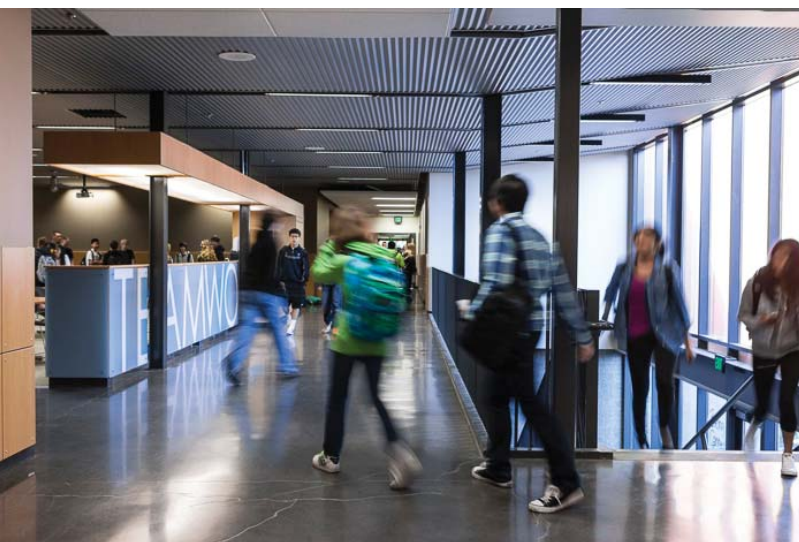
- Principal Avery

Teacher Morale: “A lot of things are changing for teachers, especially on the state level and they are under a lot of stress about their jobs and getting discouraged. Some are even thinking about leaving the profession. But when you are in an environment that is so beautiful and conducive to what they want to do, I think it makes them feel like they could be successful”- principal Avery

Safety and Security: Easy supervision throughout the school adds to a feeling amongst the staff of safety and security, a significant change from the way students were in the old building.

Building Organization: “The building functions so well the District plans on using this concept as a template (not prototype) for replacing their other three middle schools.”- Ed Peters, Capital Projects director

Meadowdale easily accommodated major enrollment increase ‘We felt more crowded in the old building with 600 students than we do here with 800 students’





Commons as the Living Room. “With the variety of possibilities, kids are learning that they don’t need to completely isolate themselves.”

Welcoming and inviting: The café area at the Commons edge, located next to the main entry is a welcoming and comfortable space, centrally located. Students gather there before school in small groups for either studying or socializing, parents and families really enjoy it as a relaxed waiting area at all hours. During performances, parents with small children can let the kids run around screened by the cyberbar, without disturbing performances in the Commons.

Living Room for the students: The variety of spatial and seating opportunities has gone a long way toward supporting a wholesome and inspiring home for the students.

Students who love to sit with their friends amongst the whole mass of the student body still have their place at the large tables in the middle of the space

The edges provide a host of other socializing opportunities- informally along the forum-style steps, which continue outside along the student plaza; at the café tables where there is a more intimate atmosphere, suitable for small groups, or even for a girl absorbed in a book while eating her lunch; at the cyberbar with views out over the Commons and beyond, either talking with friends or catching up on homework on their laptops. There is a foosball nook where boys run everyday to play with their friends over lunch.

*“With the variety of possible settings that support **socializing**, kids are learning that they **don’t** need to completely **isolate** themselves.”*



Outside the large roof overhang is penetrated with skylights and provides great shelter. Some of the cafeteria tables are placed out there - even in the wet winter months - for kids who wish to be outdoors. There are a variety of permanent outdoor seating options where small groups love to congregate. Some kids need to blow off steam and immediately run out to the courts and fields as soon as lunch begins.

Supervision: Staff loves the fact that one teacher can stand at the edge of the space, near the office and be able to see all of the students, including those at the outside plaza and recreation area.

Activities: Accommodates a wide range of activities in a very inspiring, well-lit space:

Socializing: Karaoke Fridays, small music combos, NCAA playoffs on the big screen, movie nights, music at lunchtime from student's iPods.

School: Some teachers are sending reliable student teams into the commons for team project work- the café space is very conducive to this type of small group work, with plenty of passive supervision. Large group testing. The STEM lab is using the Commons to race and test their CO2 cars.

Large Gatherings: Meadowdale recently held an anti-bullying gathering for just the girls. It was a large group, but it still felt intimate, the girls were acting like they were in their own living room having a serious conversation.

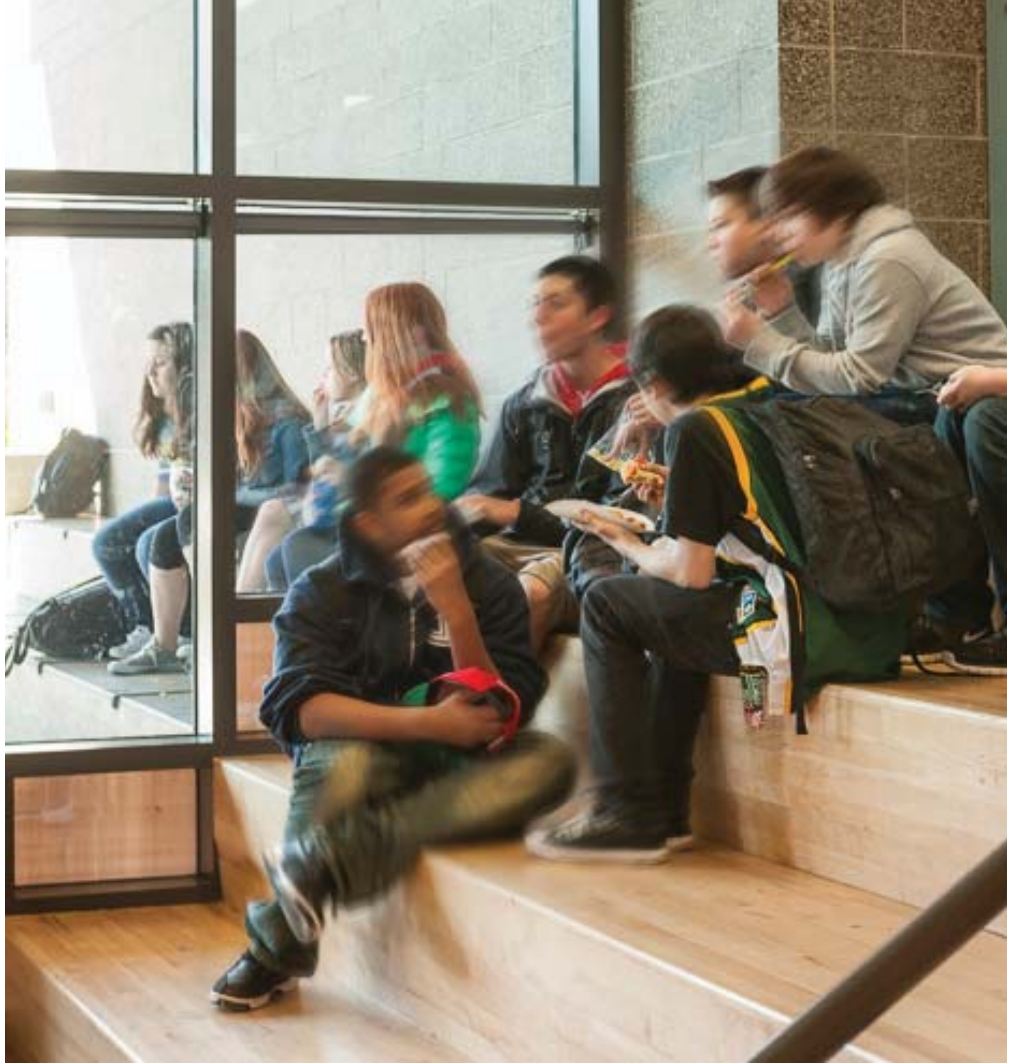
Performances: Choirs perform on the forum steps, audiences on the forum steps w/ the potential for a portable stage placed against the south wall.



*a welcoming
atmosphere; a
comforting space*

“The way the commons is designed **honors** all of the **needs** of all of the **students**”

- Principal Christine Avery



Personal Learning Communities. The District's commitment to providing small learning communities in all of their schools, along with the Meadowdale vision of creating personal learning communities to address the particular needs of the emerging adolescent for an intimate, relevant and personal learning experience is highly successful in the new school.

Shared Area as the center of the PLC: The way the Shared Area has been designed works in creating a central area in each PLC that is comfortable, with great northern views and daylight.



Atmosphere as a Learning Community: Students naturally migrate to the space in between classes, while the organization creates an atmosphere of real expectations- it's okay to relax and socialize in between classes, but during class time it's a place where work is to be done. Some students have said, "This is more like a college than a middle school." Being surrounded by five teaching spaces with lots of internal glazing provides an adequate amount of passive supervision without it feeling claustrophobic. The large windows on the north side have really provided a relief from containment

Connected Community: The cyberbar has succeeded in defining the Shared Area and creating a proper sense of place, without feeling cut-off from the rest of the school, and yet screening distraction from the overall circulation- a nice balance between separation and integration.



Variety of Use- At any given period of the day, there is a real variety of use of the Shared Areas, from being full with students engaged in teamwork from several classes, some working with a tutor, or a single student doing make-up work, to some Shared Areas where most of activity is happening within the teaching spaces.

One surprise benefit of the Shared Area is the use of the space for mini-mainstreaming of special ed students by having them work out in small groups in the Shared Area where they feel they are part of the rest of the student population.

The loose arrangement of the Shared Areas in each PLC has allowed space for a gradual curriculum evolution – from traditional departmental organization through partial integration & allowing for further development

*"The **space** sends a message that Meadowdale is a learning **community**, inspiring and **invigorating**"*

“These Science labs are some of the **best** outfitted and flexible **science labs** in the **district**, even compared to those at the HS level.”

- Ed Peters,
Capital Projects Director

Classrooms. Bay window: Moving throughout the building, there is a wide variety in how the bay window area is used, perhaps a testament to their flexibility. In some the furnishing is set up for informal activity, using bench seating, others set up like a seminar area for small group work. One teacher uses it as an incentive, rewarding students with being able to spend class time there working by the large window. Other teachers are using the area just as part of the larger classroom.

Teaching and learning modalities: In discussion with teachers throughout the building, there is a real variety in how the teachers are interacting with the kids. Some classes are in full cooperative learning mode, with several teams working on their own in the Shared Area. Many teachers have migrated to a permanent set-up of four-student grouping and are learning that they don't need to be front and center. Some use a combination- with the flexibility of the triangular desk, one teacher starts with them in rows, “so I can see all of their faces” and at certain times has every other row rotate, so that they change to a configuration of teams of four. Teachers are learning that they don't need to be front and center.



Integrated Science. The location of being integrated in each of the PLC's, while sharing prep room space with another science room has not eroded the feeling of being a science department.

Tech Lab / STEM. Central Location: Gives Technology Labs/STEM front and center prominence and provides a way to showcase the interesting work and ignite student's interest in the STEM program. Says Tom Pirie, “It's way better than the old model of putting the tech programs in the back 40. And the new equipment like the wind tunnel and laser cutter are the way to go, allowing to kids to combine work on the computer with hands-on fabrication and testing.”

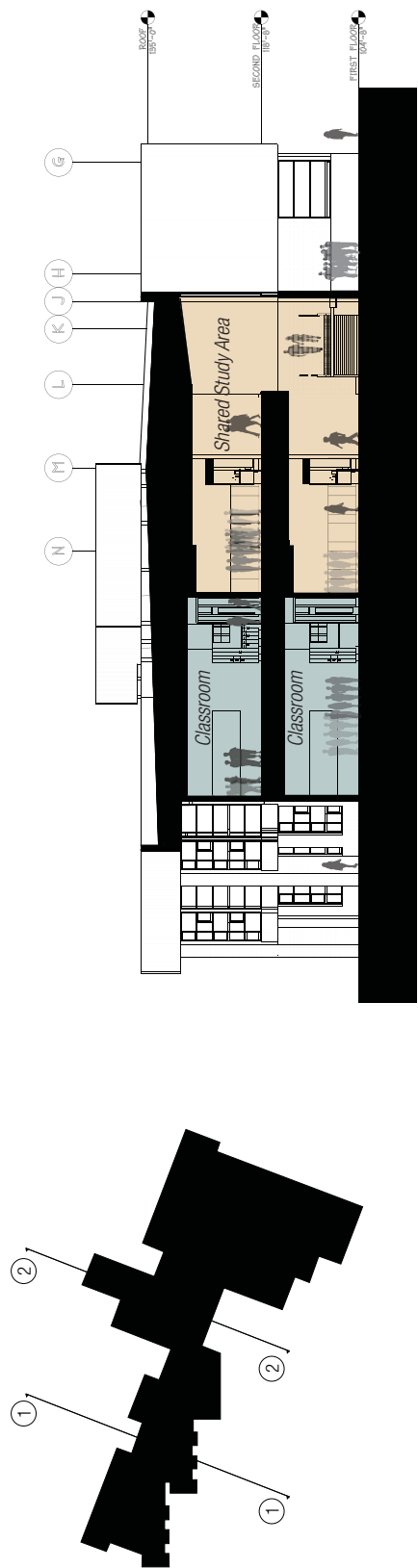
Fitness and Health. Facilitated Connections: “The new building layout finally gives us opportunity to link these programs really nicely. With the Fitness classroom next to the gyms, we have developed a curriculum that loops the kids through a three component program going from health where they learn about the connection of diet, exercise and making healthy choices, to fitness in the Aux Gym, where they are doing activities like stretching and yoga, to the Main Gym where we focus on traditional athletics. The sliding barn doors between the gyms allow us to have the kids running distances even in the winter- we know how many laps it takes to make a mile.”

- Guin Joyce, Health and Fitness Instructor.

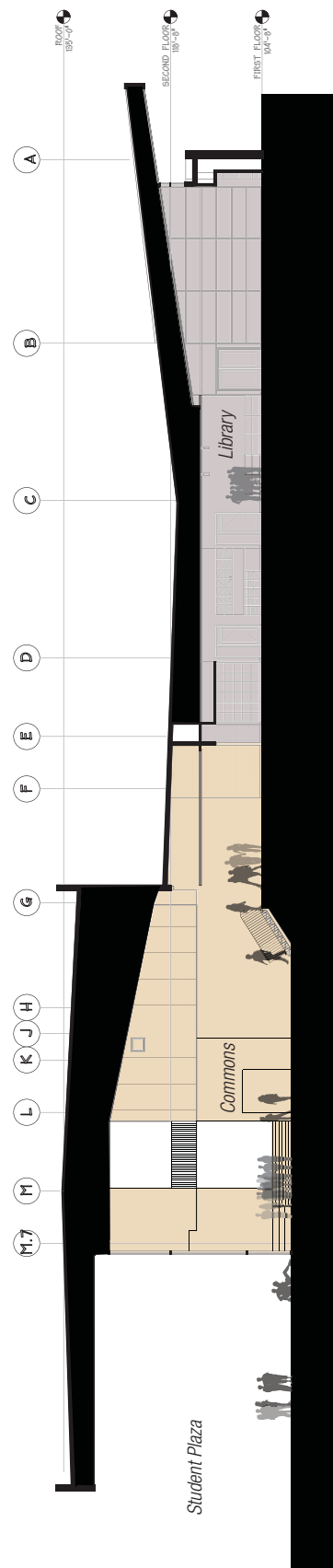








0 5 10 20
Classroom / Shared Study Area - Section 1



0 5 10 20
Commons / Library - Section 2









Meadowdale Middle School

Project Data:

Scope of Work:

Planning and Design for replacement of Meadowdale Middle School. Including demolition of existing one-story 106,000 sf middle school, and design and construction of new 750 student capacity middle school

Area: 102,925 sf; Two stories

Site Area: 17.14 Acres

Total Project Budget: \$52 million

Construction Cost: \$38 million

Opening Date: September 2011