



Fielding
International

Designing schools where learners thrive

PORTAGE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS | 100 YEARS

Innovate, Iterate, Launch

Hands-On Learning to Shape Future-Ready Schools

April 30th, 2025 9:00-10:00 am

We are **designers, educators** *and life-long learners*

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Mike Posthumus



Sara Wagenaar



Danielle Weitzman



Jeremy Zonts





Agenda

- + Hands-On Learning
- + Plan Do Study Act
- + Prototyping in Portage, MI
- + Call To Action

Global School Engagement + Design Leadership



50+
Countries

18
International
Design Awards

4
Published
Books

Certified



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Corporation

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We aim to bring **benefit** to others.

We're part of a community using business
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We help communities design their ideal learning environments, not just school buildings.



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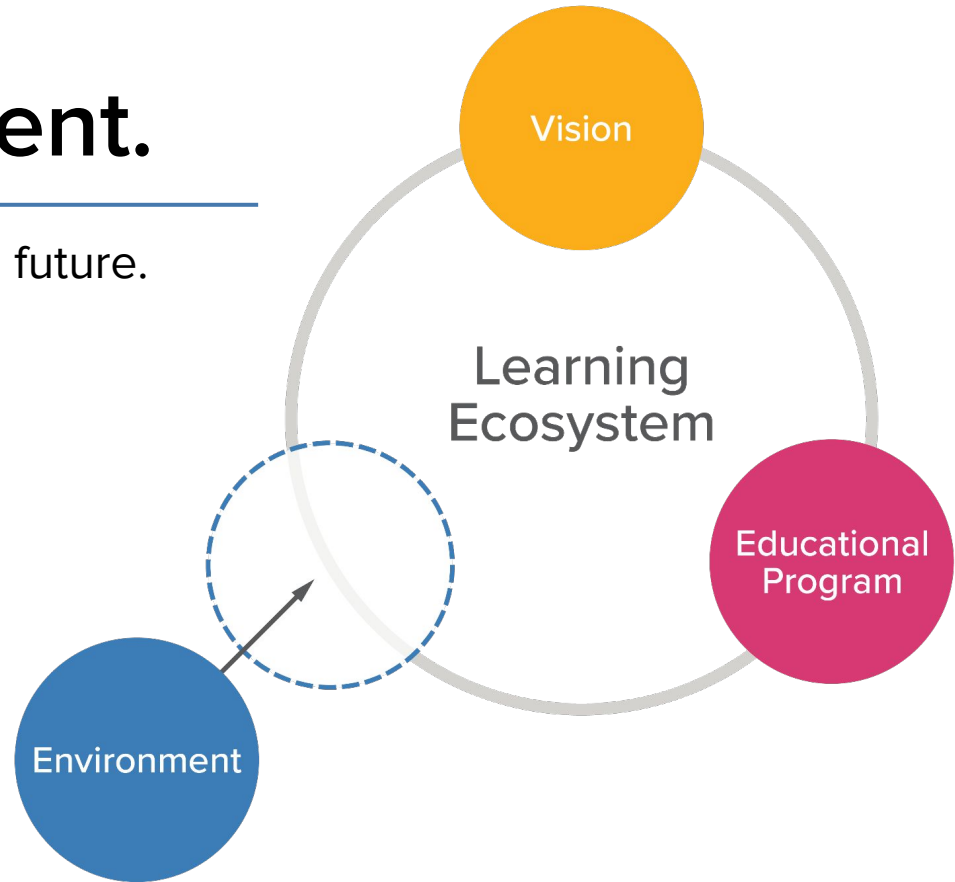
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100
YEARS

Our process focuses on alignment.

Alignment begins with a vision for the future.



Portage Public Schools

- Academic Excellence
- Innovative Learning
- Dedicated Staff
- Inclusive Community
- Enriching Activities
- Tradition of Excellence
- State of the Art Facilities

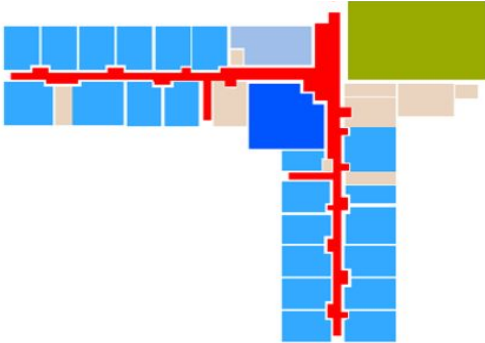


Portage Public Schools' vision is to be an exceptional, continuously improving learning culture, committed to all!

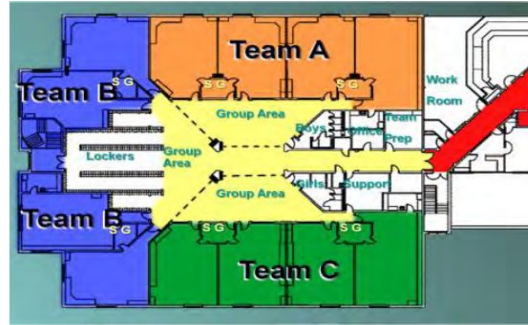


The Starting Point | Education Specifications from 2019

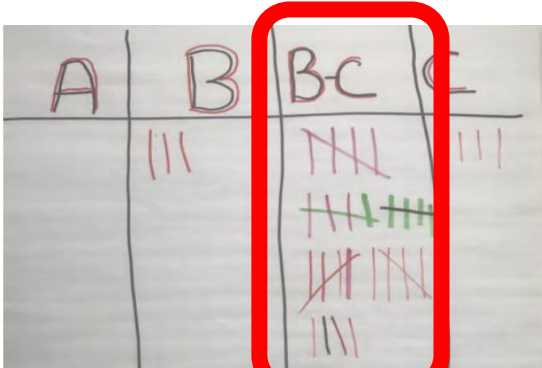
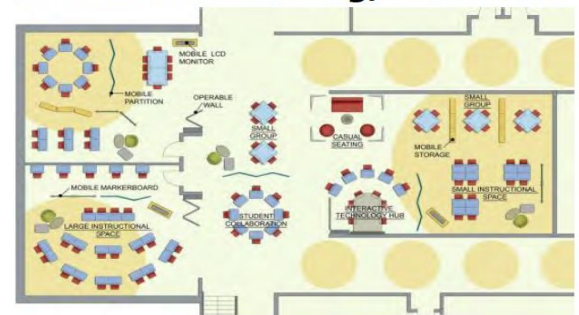
A. Double Loaded Corridor



B. Pods



C. Extended Learning Commons



Ed Spec Page 5:

It is envisioned there would be “neighborhoods” in the building:

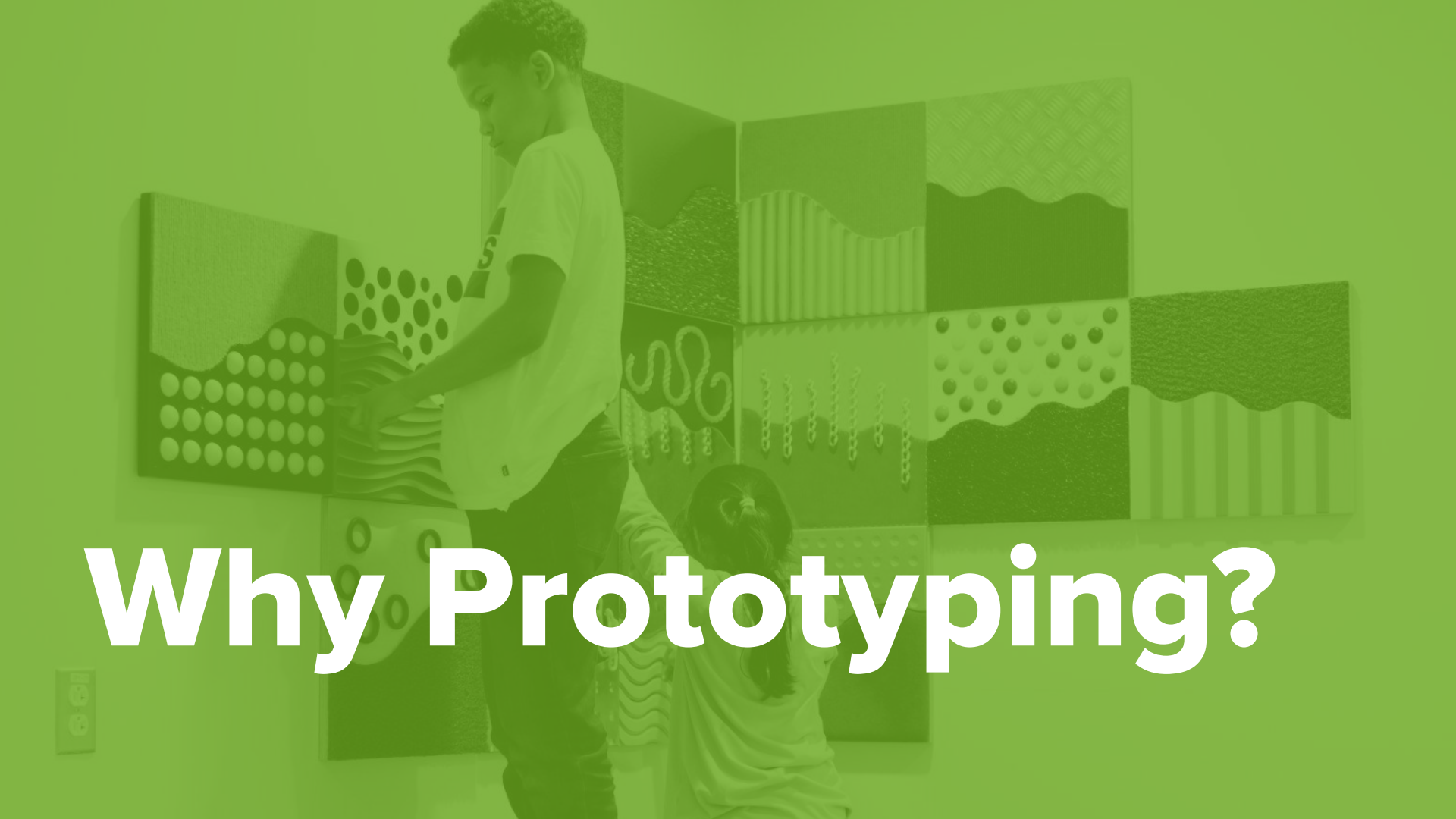
- + Young 5’s
- + Kindergarten & Grade 1
- + Grades 2-3
- + Grades 4-5



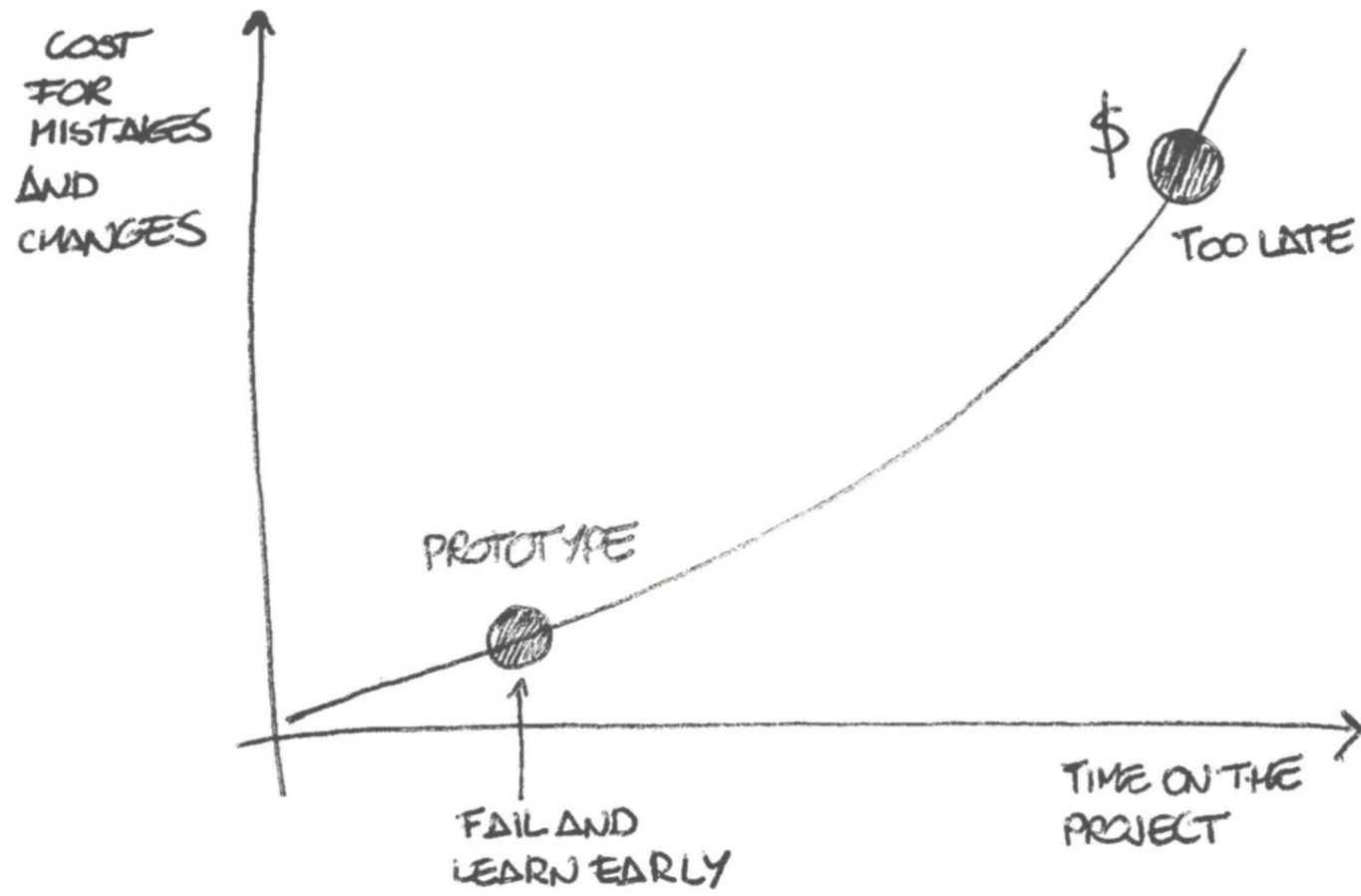
NEST

Setting the Stage

Hands-On Adult Learning Through Prototyping



Why Prototyping?



A young boy with dark hair and glasses is sitting at a desk in a classroom. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. In front of him is a laptop and a tablet on a stand. The background shows a blurred classroom setting with bookshelves and other students.

Activity

Plan-Do-Study-Act



Hands-On Learning for Adults:

Participants engage in a mini prototyping session, using the Plan-Do-Study-Act approach that can be replicated with teams in preparation for new environments or practices.

Systematized Practice



Plan - Do - Study - Act

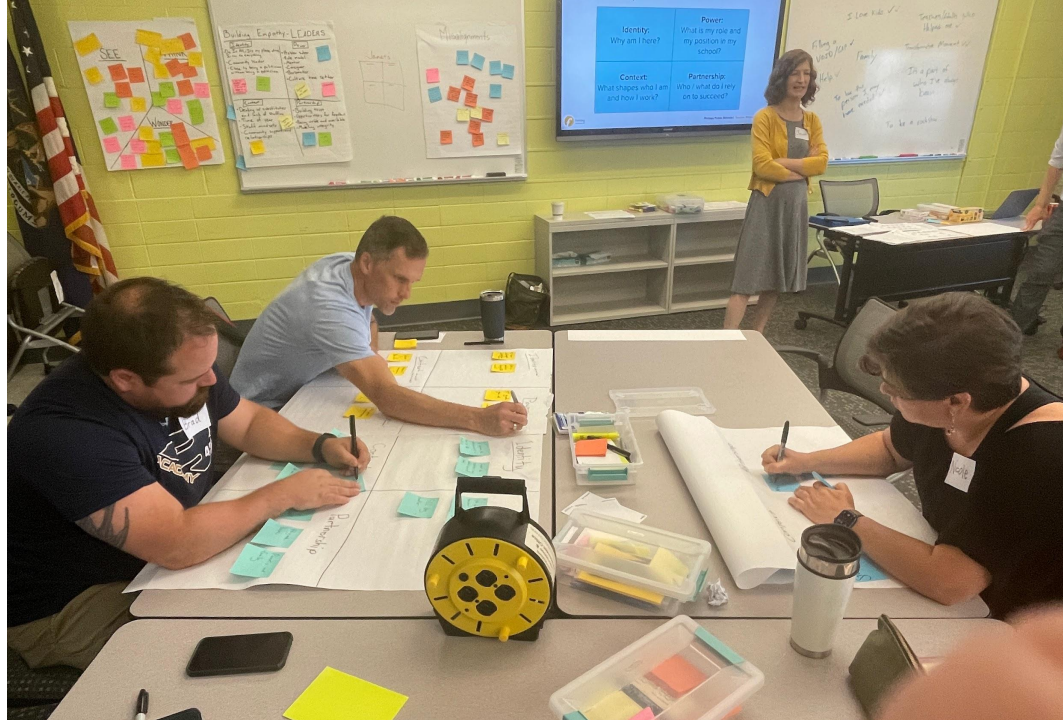
Steps

- 1. Plan (2 minutes)**
 - In small groups, participants identify an instructional goal (e.g., “We want to encourage more student collaboration”) and brainstorm a quick layout that might achieve it.
 - They decide which “furniture pieces” or “zones” they need (e.g., small-group table, presentation station) and how they’ll arrange them.
- 2. Do (3 minutes)**
 - Each group sketches a quick floor plan on paper or arranges the index cards/post-its on a table to represent their layout. This is their “first draft” prototype.
- 3. Study (3 minutes)**
 - Groups rotate to another group’s layout and provide quick feedback: “Is there enough space for movement?” “Will students see/hear each other effectively?”
 - Original group members note what worked and what may need adjusting.
- 4. Act (2 minutes)**
 - Each group returns to their prototype, makes one or two improvements based on the feedback, and solidifies their final design.
 - **SHARE (5 minutes)** A quick share-out to the entire room can highlight key lessons or surprises.
 - (If we have an extra 2–5 minutes, let them briefly share how they might replicate or expand this exercise in their own contexts.)



PLAN

- + In small groups discuss: *How might we organize a school to foster more student-directed experiences?*
- + Use note cards to create “zones” or “areas of a school” you might need to support that goal. (e.g. *material resource hub, collaboration stations*)
- + Next create post-it notes with resources you might need to activate each zone (e.g., *small-group table, craft supplies, standing desks, audio recording equipment*) - **One idea per sticky note!**



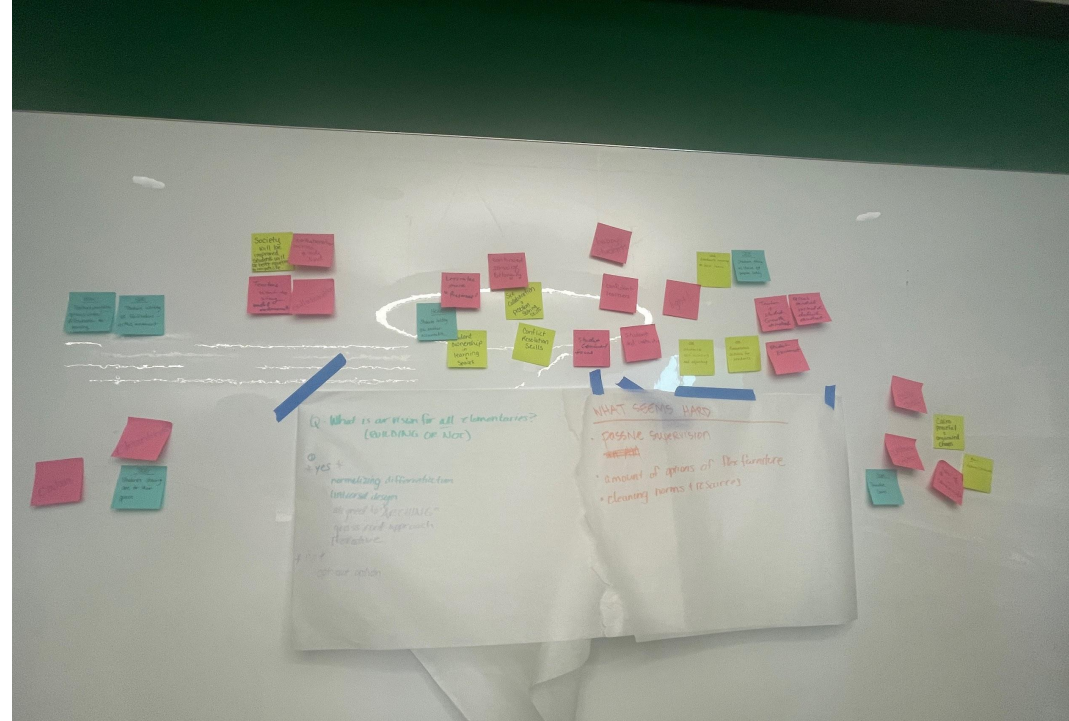
DO

- + Each group sketches a quick floor plan on paper
- + Or arranges the index cards/post-its on a table to represent a layout
- + Focus on a portion of a school or learning environment, not the whole thing.
- + This is your “first draft” prototype.



STUDY

- + Groups rotate to another group's layout and provide quick feedback: *"Is there enough space for movement?"*
"Will students see/hear each other effectively?"
- + Original group members note what worked and what may need adjusting.



ACT

- + Each group returns to their prototype, makes one or two improvements based on the feedback, and solidifies their final design.
- + **SHARE** (*5 minutes*): A quick share-out to the entire room can highlight key lessons or surprises.





Case Studies

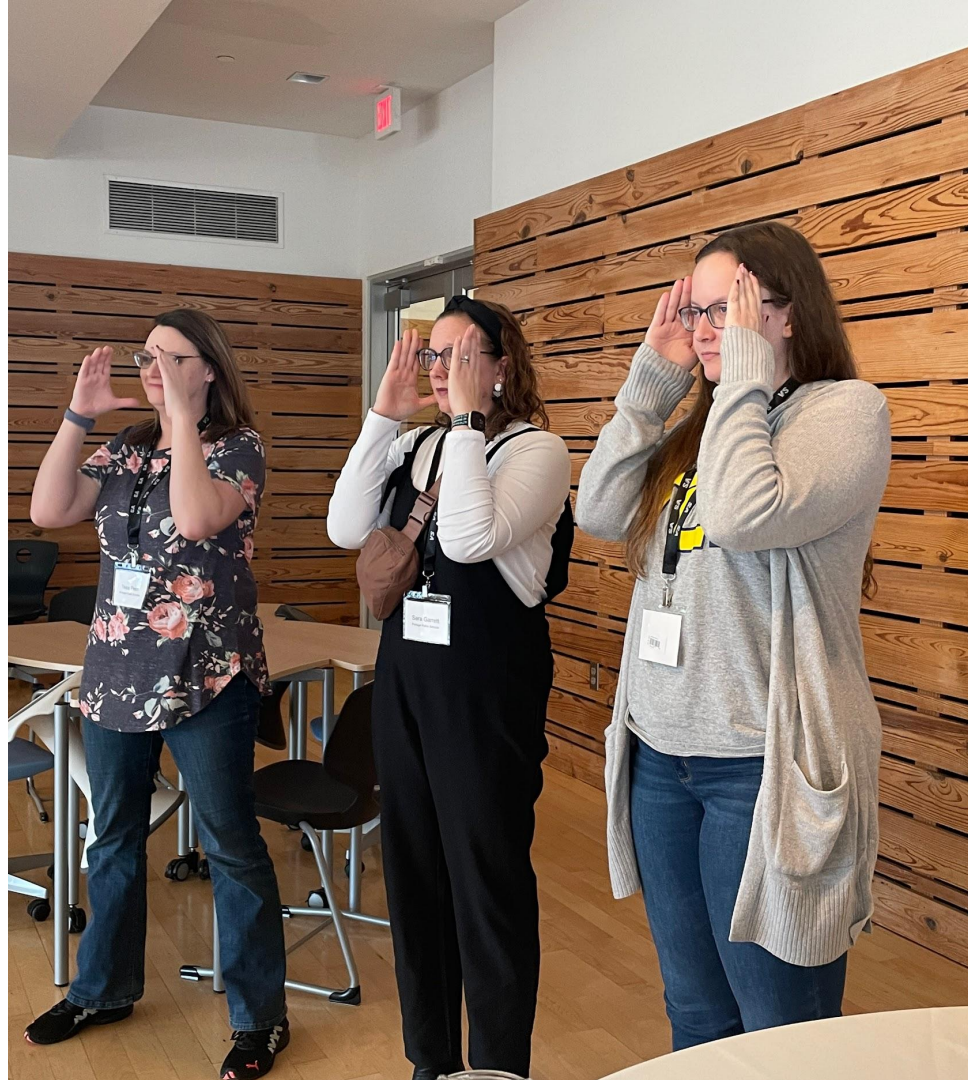
Central, Haverhill & Woodland Elementary Schools

Case Study #1: Central Elementary School



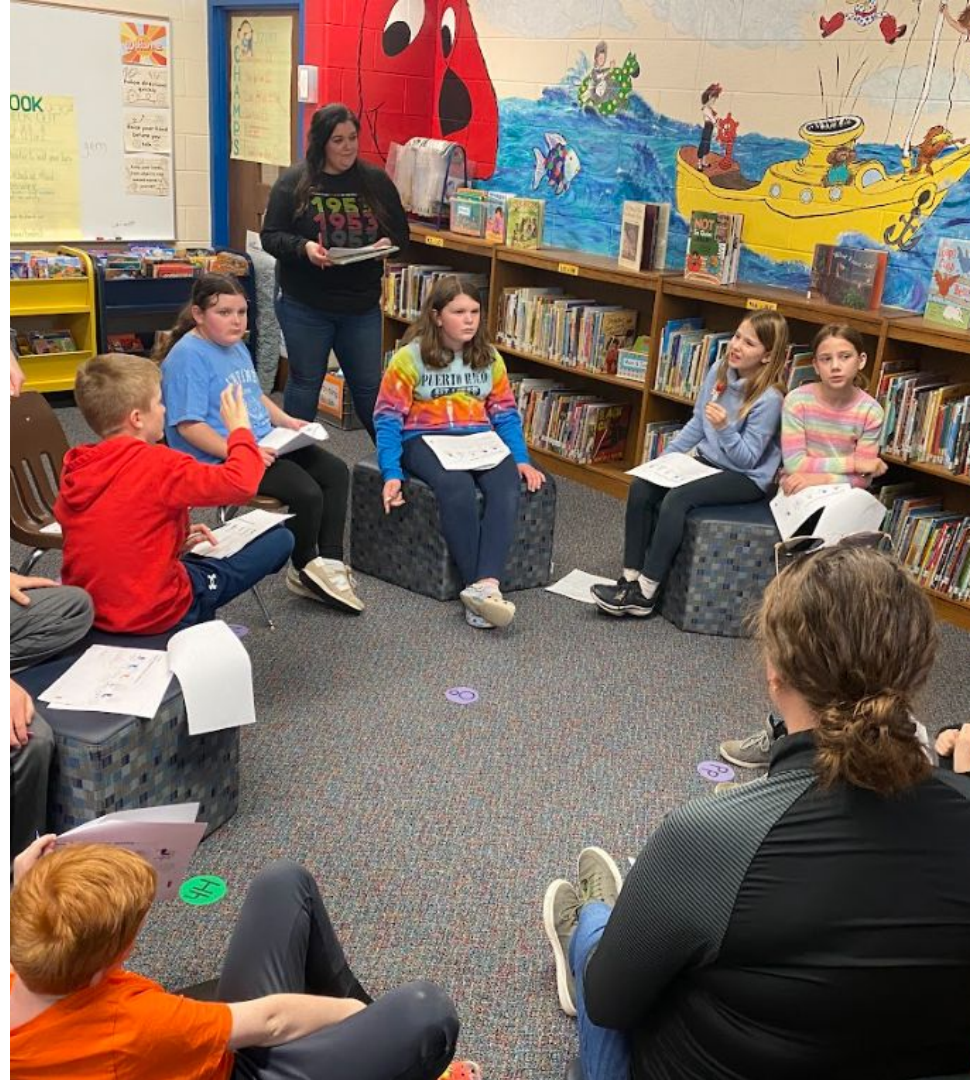
Central Elementary School

- + **Key Takeaway:**
Where you start is not where you'll end up.
- + Moving from one teacher one classroom to community of adults to community of learners



Central Elementary School

- + **Key Takeaway:**
Practice makes us better-
Preparation builds calm
and confidence



Central Elementary School

- + **Key Takeaway:**
Collaborative Practices
- + Gradual Roll Out: Pilot teams year 1 and then adding additional teams each year. Investing in the intellectual prep is invaluable.
- + Development of Collaborative Teaching and Learning Instructional Progression:
Teachers/Staff self assess



Central Elementary School | Furniture Pilot



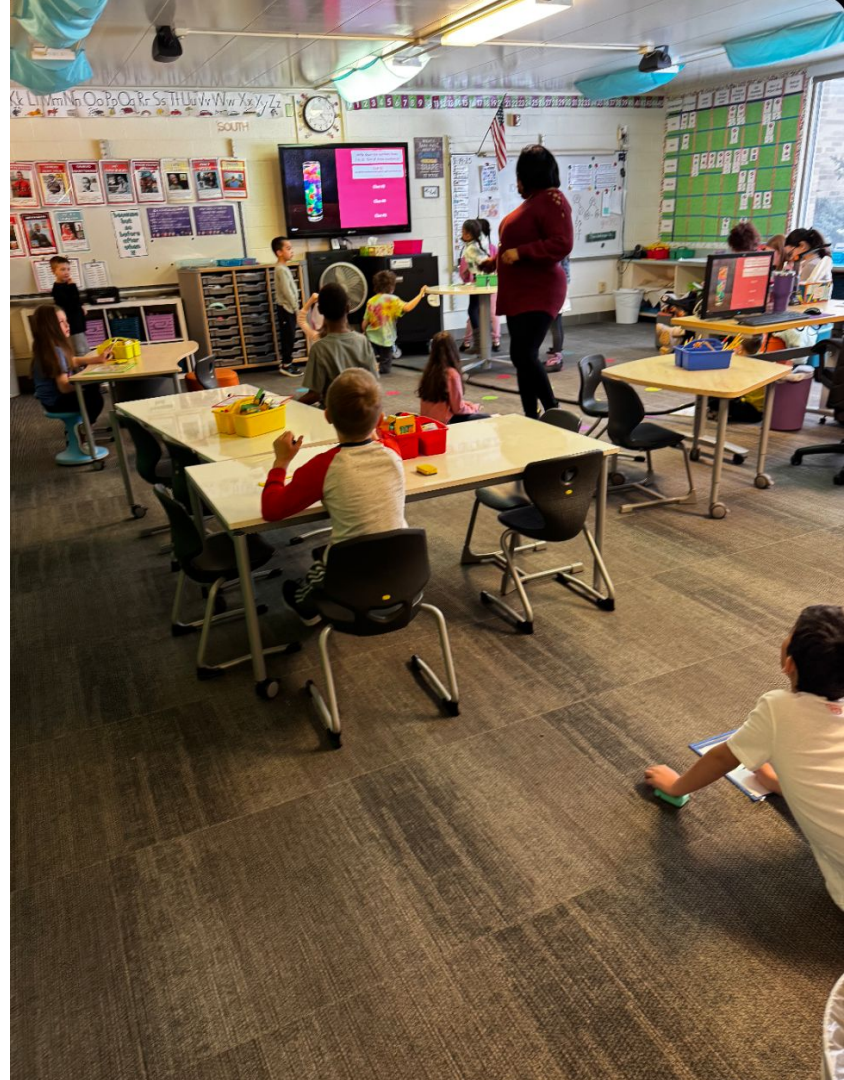
Case Study #2: Haverhill Elementary School



Haverhill Elementary School

+ Key Takeaway:

Teachers need to help design the school, not just decorate it



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Haverhill Elementary School

+ **Key Takeaway:**
The earlier staff
can see the
vision, and live
the vision, the
better.



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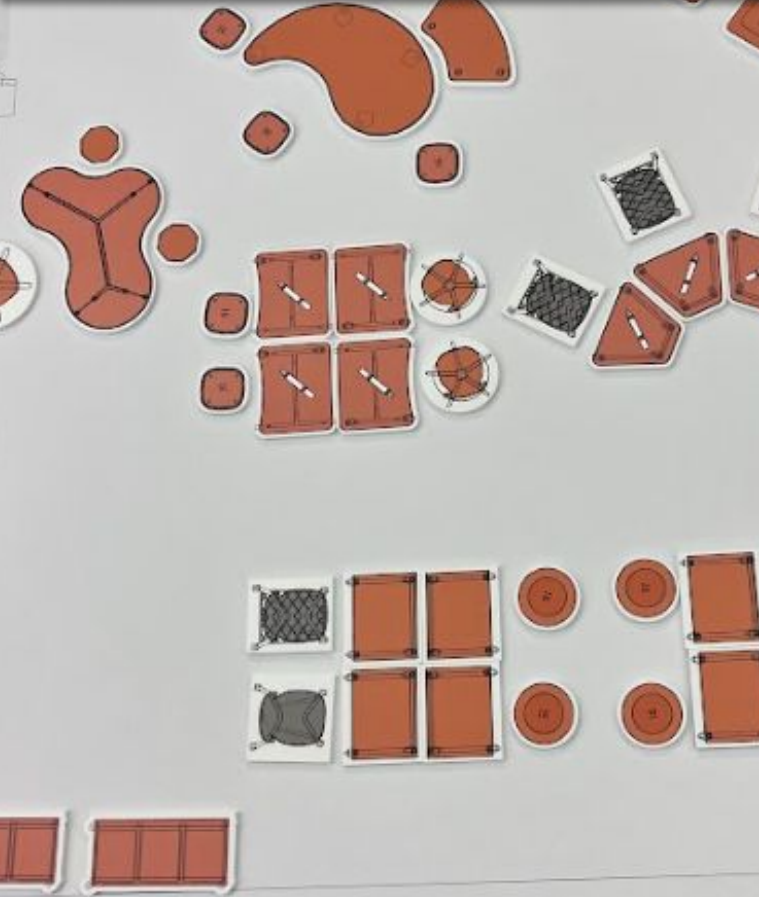
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Haverhill Elementary School



Portage | Furniture Pilot Planning



Case Study #3: Woodland Elementary School



Portage Systems

- + **Key Takeaway:**
- + Culture shift precedes space shifts



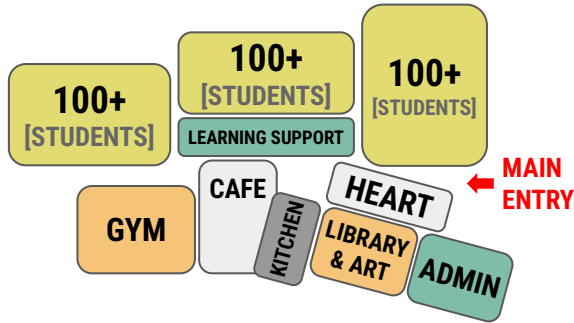
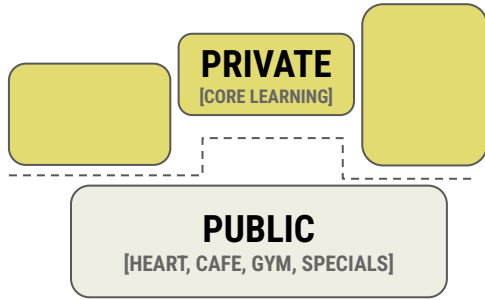


The image is a detailed architectural site plan for a building complex, rendered in a light orange color. The central focus is a large building footprint labeled "BLDG FF @ 886.75'". Surrounding the building are various outdoor and indoor spaces, including a "CONCRETE PLAZA", "OUTDOOR DINING", "GAS GREASE TRAP", "GENERATOR TRANSFORMER", "SCREEN WALL", and "SERVICES @ 665". The plan also shows a parking lot with "35 SPACES" and a "90 DIA BUS TURN AROUND". Numerous doors and windows are marked with elevations, such as "DOORS @ 886.75", "DOORS @ 884.75", and "DOORS @ 886.75". The site is landscaped with trees and shrubs. The overall design is complex and multi-functional.

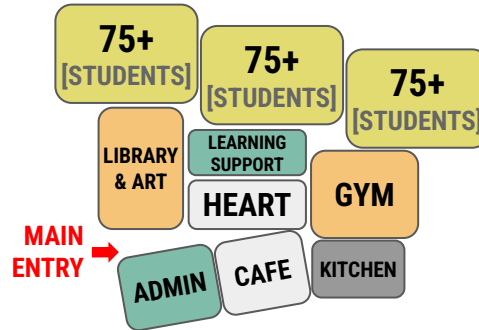
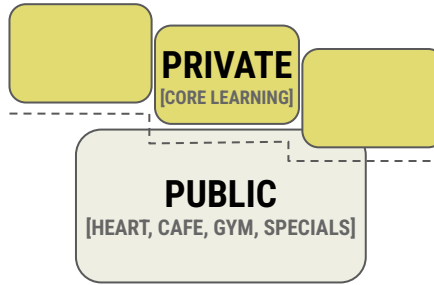
Evolving Design

Evolving Design | Central, Haverhill & Woodland Parti Diagrams

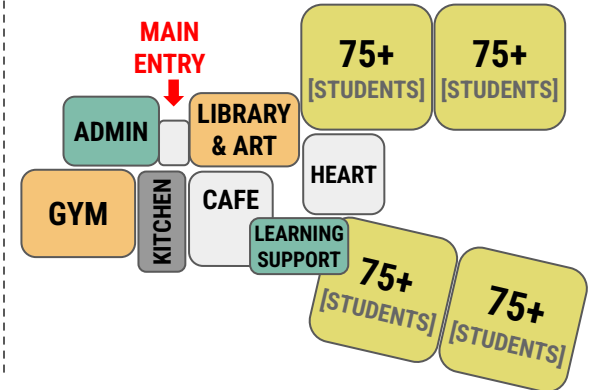
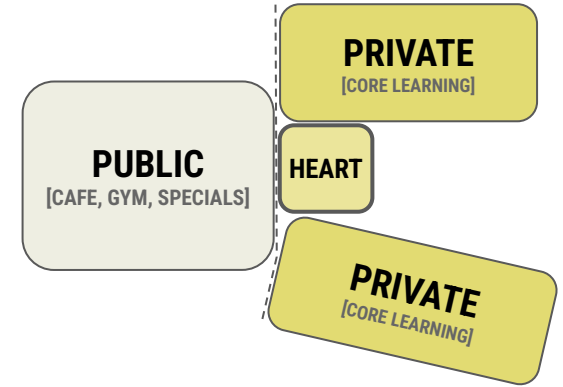
CENTRAL ELEMENTARY



HAVERHILL ELEMENTARY



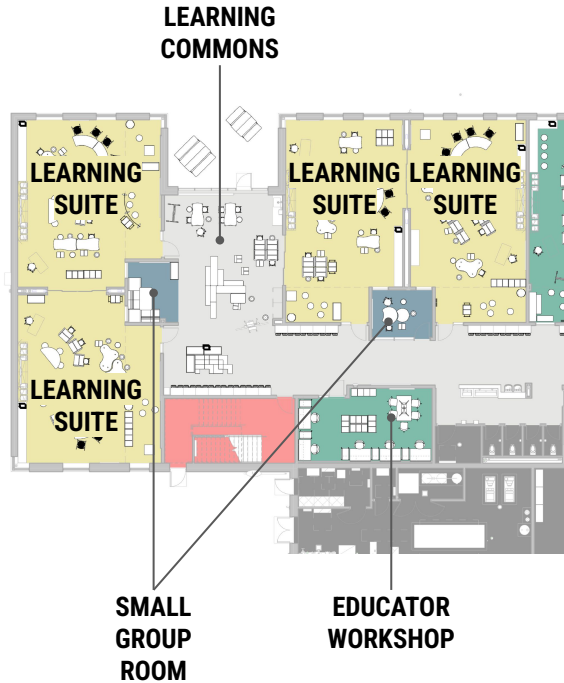
WOODLAND ELEMENTARY



Learning Community Consistency

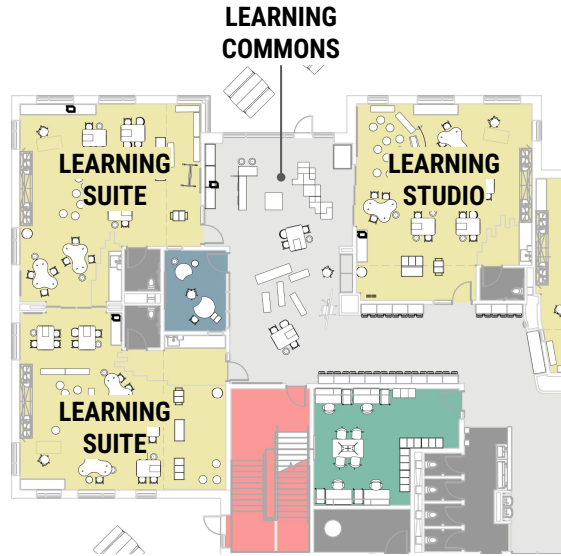
CENTRAL ELEMENTARY

[4 SECTION]



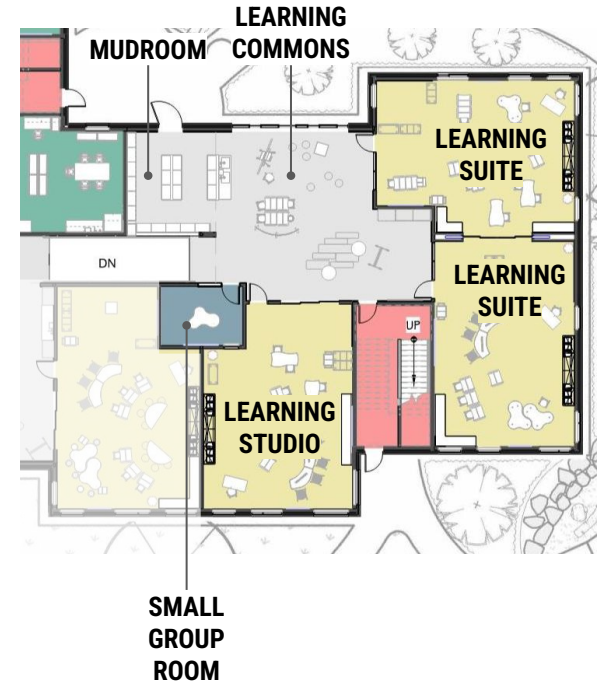
HAVERHILL ELEMENTARY

[3 SECTION]

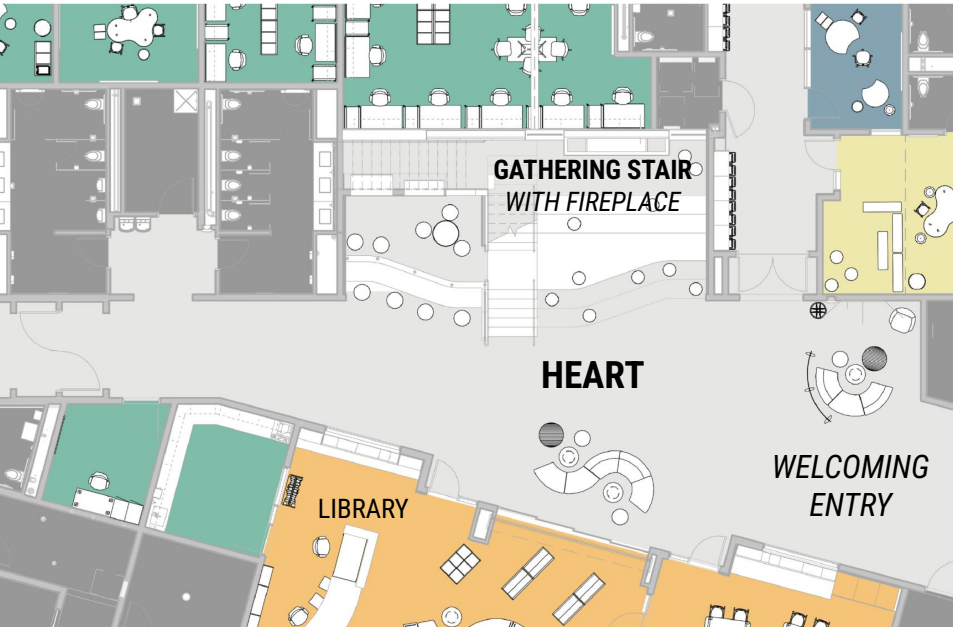


WOODLAND ELEMENTARY

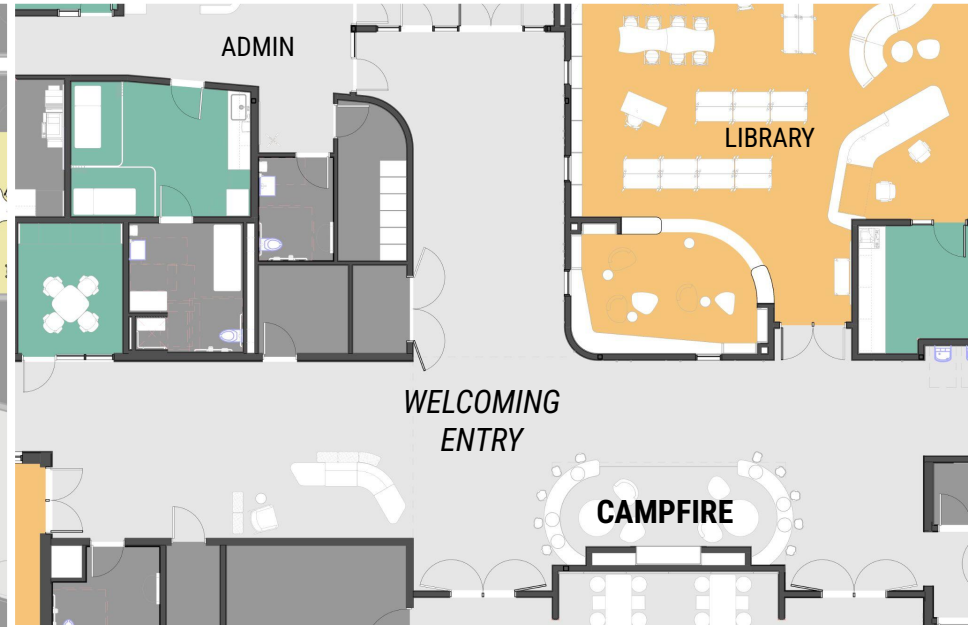
[3 SECTION]



Unique Identity | Central & Woodland



Central Elementary | Welcoming Entry & Heart



Woodland Elementary | Welcoming Entry & Campfire

Evolving Design | Campfire Space

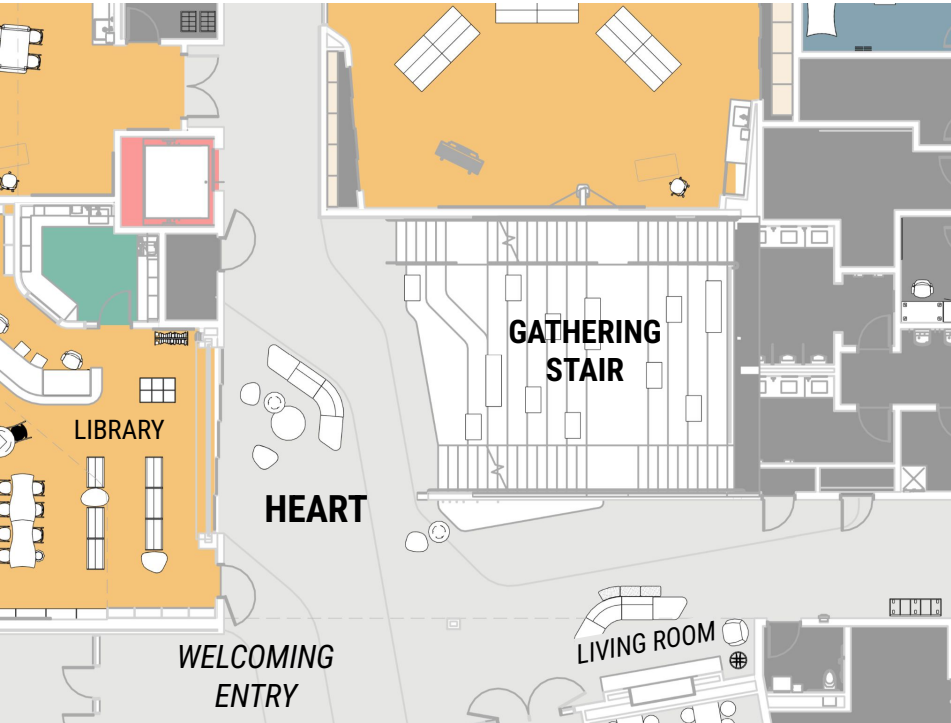


Central Elementary School
Gathering Stair with Fireplace

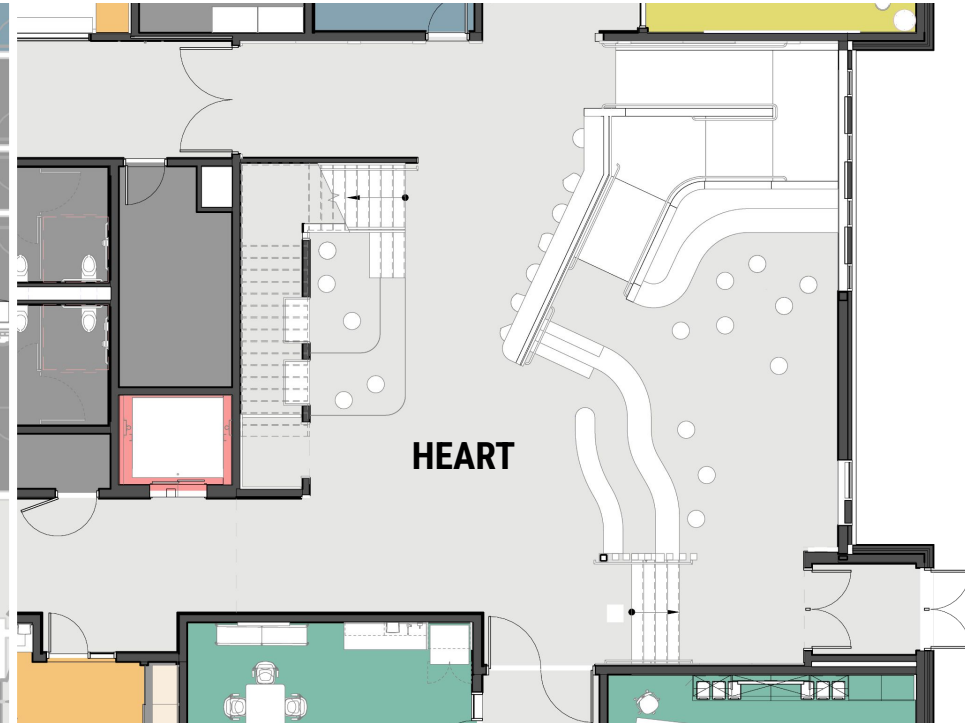


Woodland Elementary School
Welcoming Entry Campfire Space

Unique Identity



Haverhill Elementary | Welcoming Entry & Heart



Woodland Elementary | School Heart

Evolving Design | School Heart with Gathering Element



Haverhill Elementary School
“Public” Heart with Gathering Stair



Woodland Elementary School
“Private” Sunken Living Room

Evolving Design | Library/Media Center



Haverhill Elementary School
Library with Heart Connection



Woodland Elementary School
Library with Cozy Corner



Debriefs & Takeaways

What's Next at PPS

- + Structured modules for onboarding
- + Chunking Learning to smaller bites
- + Despite all this intentional work, We still have people that are reluctant. How do we support those team members?
- + Resistors often turn into champions - a lot of this depends on building leadership, district expectations, and team culture.



Central Elementary School Construction



Haverhill Elementary School Construction

Group Discussion

- + Applying hands-on prototyping?
- + What's been tried in the past, and how this presentation may help you alter or evolve your approach for the future.

Practical Roadmap

Year -2 to -1

- What are the adult and community norms of a flexible learning environment? (continues in perpetuity)
- Define “what this means” (establish clear expectations of behavior and actions)
 - Specifically articulating what collaboration means
 - It’s not smushing kids in 1 space
 - It’s not departmentalizing (I’m the elementary math teacher)
 - So what is it? (develop a rubric or framework for adult growth)
 - Just like kids need a rubric for successful experiential learning, so do adults - what are we aiming for?

Spring Year -1

- Early Adopter team formed and key practices identified as team - what will we Plan, Do, Study, and Act on?

Year 0 (one year until you move into your new space)

- Early Adopter Team implements semester 1, shares fall / winter tactics and successes
- Broaden impact and adoption of key practice to all staff and teams Winter/Spring
- Reflect on successes and challenges - things to shift at end of year

Year 1

- Target 1-2 practices to improve and monitor for growth
- Have all educators implement
- Instructional rounds to observe and give feedback to teams
- Continue this cycle until all practitioners are implementing at desired level - target intervention where appropriate.





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Thank You!

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