Embracing Diversity and Promoting Community:
How One School Risked Conformity for Inclusivity
HCPS STATS_2017-18

City of Harrisonburg Population: **53,000+**

# of Schools: **1 HS + 2 MS + 6 ES + 1 PK**

Student Enrollment: **6,100+**

Historical Growth: **+ 200 Students / Year***

Languages Spoken: **50+**

F/R Eligible%: **71.68%***

*2012 - 2017
New PK + New ES + SHIFT 5TH BACK TO ES = MORE CAPACITY
Embracing a diverse community of learners became a primary driver in the design and programming of a new elementary school.
In the following pages you will find an abbreviated record of our Programming and Concept Design phase work, and more in-depth illustrations of our Schematic Design progress.
COMMUNITY VISION & BUILDING ORGANIZATION

“open to the community at all times”
Site Planning Factors

- Summer sun rise
- Summer sun set
- Winter sun set
- Winter sun rise
- Prevailing winds
- Topography & stormwater
- Vehicular access
- Distant views
Collaboration, Community, Connection: A Pattern Language for the Next Generation

Site Context
The site is open, rolling agricultural land adjacent to a city golf course. A central ridge runs north-south, sloping to the south, falling off to both east and west.

Response to Site
The building creates connections with a path that is sinuous and unfolding, framed by and passing through orthogonal elements that are ordered and apparent. As an environmental place in the service of exploring nature, site and building elements establish a light sense of order to a child’s learning and development process that is rooted in a natural sense of wonder, discovery and curiosity.

Concept Design Planning Principles
1. To design and enhance large scale open spaces for joint use by the school and community.
2. To support the city’s masterplan for connecting public parks and city amenities via the integration of bike and walking paths that promote safe, healthy, alternative transportation choices for children, parents, teachers, staff and community members.
3. To create and communicate a sense of place, identity and meaning with 21st century educational purpose.
4. To design attractive, appealing indoor-outdoor spaces and places that satisfy age-appropriate needs for comfort, safety and a sense of belonging.
5. To create a variety of grade-level appropriate play and learning environments that promote physical activity, social engagement and experiential learning.
6. To optimize passive design strategies for energy conservation, sustainable ecologies and project-based learning opportunities. [Building and Landscape As a Teaching Tool / Lab]

Design Statement
Emerging from the hillside on the sloped site, tectonic site walls combine to knit and stitch a newly created natural learning environment. The concept of carving into the hillside to establish solid plinths and terraces allows upper level floors to float above and over the ridge and open to vistas and views beyond the school boundaries. In holistic combination, a diverse sequence of indoor/outdoor places is generated throughout the building as a network of learning ecologies along a physical continuum. As a learning and interpretive center where community meets nature; and through the experiences that are created there, nature can be seen differently as a though it is a park, grounded between forest and farmland. Communal shared learning experiences are oriented north-south along an active navigation path, beginning and ending with outdoor learning settings and playscapes. “Core” learning environments are arranged as ‘edge,’ porch and porch to form communal, collaborative shared spaces with views to nature from every vantage point.

Top 10 Visioning Workshop Goals
1. Use it all the time (6)
2. Natural light (4)
3. Creative outdoor spaces (4)
4. Adaptable sliding doors/walls (4)
5. Stormwater solutions (4)
6. Space for teachers (4)
7. Color, color, color (changing) (4)
8. Arrival space (3)
9. Net-Zero (3)
10. Library for 2030 (3)
Terraces + Carving.
Major axis along ridge creates an ordering element and viewshed through the building’s communal spaces. Site walls oriented across the ridge establish levels and define learning communities on terraces that organize from the main axis and extend out into the landscape. Each learning bar aids the creation of a related exterior learning and play space.
Site Planning_Focused on Community Assets
BLUESTONE ELEMENTARY STATS

Size of Site: 10.8 acres

Student Capacity: 775 (grades K-5)

Building Area: 103,700 SF

Total Construction Cost: $26.7M

Cost / Square Foot: $257 / SF

Space / Student: 134 SF / Student
Floor Plans
20th Century Learning Model (Outdated)
21\textsuperscript{th} Century Learning Model (Bluestone Learning Model)
Learning Neighborhood: Diverse Learning Spaces

A  OPEN STUDIO
B  SUPER STUDIO
C  SINGLE STUDIO
D  SHARED STAFF RESOURCE / MEETING
E  SMALL GROUP RESOURCE
Learning Space Typologies

A. OPEN STUDIO

1. STUDENT + TEACHER RESOURCE STORAGE
2. MOVEABLE PARTITION
3. SINK + RESOURCE AREA

B. SUPER STUDIO

4. TACKABLE SURFACE
5. READING WINDOW NOOK
6. STUDIO TOILET (k/1)

C. SINGLE STUDIO

7. THRESHOLD BENCH
8. INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY
9. WRITABLE WALL

Legend:
- FLEXIBLE CONNECTION
- PERMANENT CONNECTION
- MOVEABLE PARTITION
Open Studio: Flexible Learning Space
Open Studio: Flexible Learning Space
Open Studio: Flexible Learning Space
Open Studio: Flexible Learning Space
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice

The school is/belongs to the broader **community**.

Who is the community and how can all share their voice and develop a sense of belonging?
Creating a Community of **Connected Learning** and Collaborative Voice

How do we develop **strong connections to each other**?
How do we encourage **students making personal connections to learning topics** and across content areas?
What is **authentic and real** for students and our community?
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice

The value of participation and collaboration. Sharing our voice and developing trust.
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice

The school is/belongs to the broader community. Who is the community and how can all share their voice and develop a sense of belonging?
Welcome to Bluestone

750 Garbers Church Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Exploring Bluestone Elementary School is like trailblazing through the Shenandoah Valley. Each floor of our school represents a geological layer of the region while each hallway becomes a trail you would find in that region. Continuing down the trails, each classroom is a local animal that would be found in that trail’s surrounding landscape. Our school celebrates all of the unique landscapes and fauna our region has to offer!
Caverns Around The World

1. Grand Caverns 13 miles
2. Fantasy Cave 902 miles
3. Cave of the Crystals 4,977 miles
4. Little Akidland 1,932 miles
5. Sheep's Cave 3,012 miles
6. Carlsensert Ice Caves 4,024 miles
7. Thurston Lava Tube 8,670 miles
8. The Marble Chapel 3,031 miles
9. Warono Caves 8,594 miles

Wayfinding + Environmental Graphics
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A Community Asset: Music as a common language
Dining Terrace: Indoor | Outdoor + Community Connections
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice

How do we develop strong connections to each other?
How do we encourage students making personal connections to learning topics and across content areas?
What is authentic and real for students and our community?
Hands-on Discovery: Authentic Learning
Small Group Spaces: Learning made visible
Main Entry Lobby ‘Valley’: A welcoming space
Creating a Community of Connected Learning and Collaborative Voice

The value of participation and collaboration.
Sharing our voice and developing trust.
Dining Commons: A central gathering hub
Dining Commons: A daily space for sharing
Bus Entry Lobby ‘Canyon’: Promoting Movement + Choice
Space for Teamwork: Developing Trust
Nature-based play: Risk-taking + Teamwork
equity
[ˈekwədē]
NOUN
1. the quality of being fair and impartial.

Every child getting what they need to be successful. First, they need to be known.
Lessons Learned

1. Change takes time.
2. People do best when they act in confidence (not fear or doubt) and feel secure.
3. Community only happens when people develop a sense of belonging.
THANK YOU!

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PHOTO CREDITS

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PROJECT TEAM