

DR. CLAUDIA THOMAS MIDDLE SCHOOL

11509 Holden Rd SW, Lakewood, WA

VISION & GOALS

The new Dr. Claudia Thomas Middle School replaces two Lakewood middle schools, Mann and Woodbrook. As zoning at the Woodbrook site changed and both facilities aged, the district undertook a significant exploration and planning effort, which led to the decision to build a new school on the Mann site. Thomas Middle School cohesively brings together two school communities, and carries on the legacy of Clover Park Schools' deep ties to the surrounding military communities.

Clover Park School District leads with the mission to "ensure each child learns what he or she needs to know to succeed and contribute to the community." With goals to encourage student growth and achievement, increase parent and community engagement, and create a supportive learning environment for students, the new Thomas Middle School needed to create a space for these goals and missions to be carried out.

Students within the district follow a diverse number of pathways upon graduation, entering the workforce directly, going to four-year colleges, attending local community and technical colleges, and joining the military. To support these outcomes, and give students the skills needed to follow whichever path they choose, the district curriculum includes a number of hand-on programs to provide students with viable experience to nurture their interests and academic goals.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

The design team was faced with the notable challenge of fusing two distinct school communities into a new school with its own unique character, still honoring the legacy of the existing schools. This means that the stakeholder group for the new middle school was large in size and diverse, with many who had not worked together in the past. The stakeholder collaboration and visioning process for the new, consolidated Thomas Middle School was a crucial effort to ensure a cohesive space that felt both familiar and inclusive.

The Design Advisory Team (DAT) brought together district administration, staff, teachers, parents, and students from both Woodbrook and Mann Middle Schools. Through three DAT meetings and student "camp out" workshops at each school, the design team became familiar with what made each of the existing schools and communities special, how each current school facility served the students and faculty well, and what they wished to see in a new facility.

Lakewood's students have strong military connections, nearly 50% being children of service members, and military-led youth programs were already present at both schools. Army Youth Programs in your Neighborhood (AYPN), is a particular organization that was very active in both schools, and that all stakeholders were insistent on keeping active in the new school. AYPN provides mentoring and advisory in the form of different meetings and activities, programs that help students develop life skills, advocates a strong culture of family outreach, and helps to fund and organize events such as book fairs and movie nights. Because of these strong connections, the school is designed with a number of large community spaces that can be used for these organized events and meetings.

There was also an established culture around developing technical Career Training skills at the existing schools. Feedback from both staff and students placed particular importance on the Robotics programs, which engage a significant number of students in both in-class and after school programs. With growing interest in these programs, and rapidly-changing educational programming in mind, it was important to incorporate technology and maker spaces that would serve the needs of the existing programs, but also be adaptable for the future.

PHYSICAL SPACE

Through the use of color, natural materials, and daylighting, the new school utilizes calming tones to establish a soothing aesthetic. Warm wood accents strategically placed throughout the school create cozy corners for student quiet spaces, while large windows throughout provide immense access to natural light. Drawing on the site and views of the northwest jewel, Mt. Rainier, directional signage at each corridor incorporates wood cut-out murals, featuring major Washington mountains. These directional art pieces also include each mountain's indigenous place names, paying respect to the history of the region.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Owner: Clover Park School District
 Architect: Studio Meng Strazzara
 Contractor: Korsmo Construction
 Civil Engineer: AHBL
 Landscape Architect: Weisman Design Group
 Structural Engineer: PCS Structural Solutions
 Mechanical Engineer: Metrix Engineers
 Electrical Engineer: Cross Engineers
 Food Service Design: Halliday Associates
 Acoustical Consultant: SSA Acoustics
 Value Analysis Consultant: Sazan
 Traffic Consultant: Transpo Group
 Alternative Delivery Consultant: Parametrix

Classrooms are equipped with opportunities for hands-on learning, including the Career and Technical Education spaces, makers spaces for robotics, an art studio classroom, and specialized science labs. Providing dedicated spaces equipped with tools for hands-on learning, students are able to access different modes of teaching and experience the learning process in a way that feels tailored to their needs. Outside of classrooms, a mix of spaces are available for student use, such as tucked away nooks at the stairwells, hallway collaboration stations, and additional resource rooms.

Furthering the inclusion of safe and supportive space, the building was programmed in a grade-configured organization, rather than with a department-centered approach. This provides secure circulation for students, allowing them to feel more comfortable moving from class-to-class without having to track across the school or become overwhelmed by traffic from other grades. This configuration works two-fold, as it also provides acoustic separation between the "noisy" spaces at the gymnasium, music rooms, and CTE labs from the classroom wing.

It was made clear during stakeholder engagement that the community plays a huge role in supporting the students and administration throughout Clover Park School District. After school activities, military-sponsored clubs, and extracurricular events often take place at CPSD schools. To support these activities and encourage their continuation, the large common spaces are centrally located within the school and accessible from the main core. The Commons is accessible from both the interior of the school as well as an exterior entrance at the main entry plaza. This area acts as a multi-use space for after school activities, productions, and community events.

A number of outdoor recreation facilities were incorporated into the campus design. A track and field, tennis courts, baseball and softball fields are located at the south and east sides of the campus. Positioning these facilities along the south entrance of the site, adjacent to the gymnasium at the south end of the school and accessible by both parking lots, provides ease of access for community gatherings and activities.

Thomas Middle School is strategically placed on the site to ensure light-filled spaces throughout the day. This use of daylighting allows for less mechanical load on HVAC equipment for heating, reducing the building's energy footprint. Efficient fixtures were used throughout the building, including low-flow plumbing, lighting, and technology components. Ready for the future, the roof has been designed for the easy future installation of photovoltaic panels for solar power. Dr. Claudia Thomas Middle School was designed to meet the Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP).

RESULTS & OUTCOMES

The new Thomas Middle School reinforces the goals to provide an educational space that is inclusive, safe, and prepares students for the future. Specialized spaces strengthen the school's hands-on curriculum. Support spaces for students are intentionally designed with calming aesthetic and safety at the forefront.

The school's culture is deeply tied to its connection to JBLM and the armed services, and the new Thomas Middle School was designed with this partnership in mind. With an abundance of common areas, military-sponsored after school activities have a new home with enough space to carry on and grow. The gymnasium, commons, and outdoor fields are easily accessed by both parking lots, making them ideal facilities for community events.

As teachers and faculty adapted to an online teaching model during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for additional quiet areas increased. The student resource rooms were fitted to meet these needs, functioning as additional offices for faculty to conduct distant learning. When the district was ready and able to return to in-person learning in spring of 2021, the spacious classrooms were configured in a way to ensure compliance with spacing requirements as outlined by the State's Department of Health and the CDC.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Grade Levels: 6-8
 Site Area: 21.41 Acres
 Floor Area: 131,599 SF
 Opening Date: September 2020
 Cost / SF: \$414/SF
 Delivery Method: GC/CM



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

- LEGEND
- ADMINISTRATION
 - CIRCULATION
 - CLASSROOM - GENERAL
 - COMMONS
 - FOOD SERVICE / KITCHEN
 - LIBRARY / MEDIA CENTER
 - PERFORMING ARTS
 - PHYSICAL EDUCATION / ATHLETICS
 - RESOURCE
 - RESTROOM
 - SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ART
 - SPECIAL EDUCATION
 - UTILITY / STORAGE / CUSTODIAL

