Greenville County Schools decided to convert Rudolph Gordon Elementary School to a K-8 facility and dramatically expand capacity to 1,600 students, an increase of 750 seats. Partnering closely with McMillan Pazdan Smith on the project, the district organized the design intent around their academic program and curriculum — a project-based learning environment with emphasis on teamwork, group projects, and career-focused technology.

The project created a new building to the right of the existing Rudolph Gordon facility and a new, two-story glass entrance to connect the two “wings”. A new kindergarten and early learning wing addition on the rear of the existing building and additional classrooms on the existing building allows kindergarten through fourth grade to remain in their current building, with greater capacity. Fifth through eighth grades are located in the new building.

To maximize the project-based capabilities of the curriculum, each of the four grade areas in the new building are designed as a pod of six classrooms around a central shared workspace for group projects. Two major labs provide students access to equipment similar to that found in the region’s numerous advanced manufacturing businesses, including 3D printers, work tables, compressed air hoses, and exhaust fans. Roll-up style garage doors allow manufacturers to drive equipment in and out of the labs as needed.

The new building includes a cafeteria and a larger combination gymnasium and auditorium, as well as consolidated office space for the school’s administration. A secure courtyard between the wings creates space for two circular outdoor classrooms. Athletic facilities include a football/soccer field with a track, tennis courts, a baseball field and a softball field.