

*The innovative merger of two neighborhood schools with the emergence of a new identity.*

# **C.B. Berry Elementary School**

Arlington Independent School District

**Project Scope**

**Grades Served**

Pre-K - 6th

**Student Capacity**

1,000

**Building Area**

105,000 sq ft

**Site Area**

13.2 acres

**Construction Cost**

\$29.1 M

**Completion Date**

July 2023

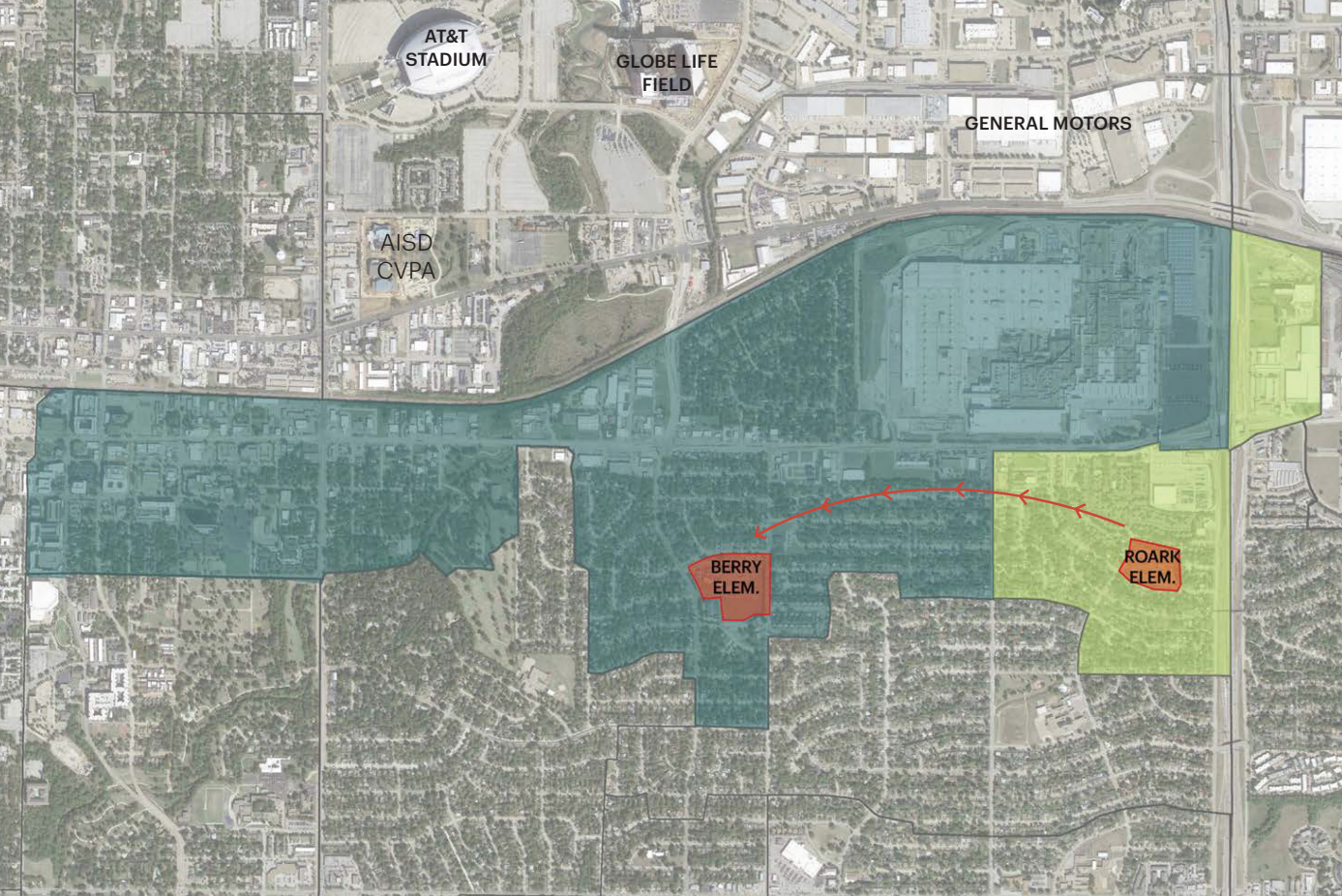
**Executive Summary**

This project explores the innovative merger of two neighborhood schools situated in the area of the Arlington Entertainment District. Historically supported by local industries such as the General Motors plant, these schools have long served working-class families. However, with the emergence of a new identity within the district, a transformative community merger is underway. The merger is not merely a logistical consolidation but a

comprehensive reimagining of community education. Guided by “4 Buckets,” Community, Resilience, Wellness, and Future, the merger seeks to integrate the old school identities into a cohesive educational institution reflective of the evolving community landscape. The main concept of the school’s design is centered around the learning journey. Inspired by the notion that education is a continuous process of growth and discovery, the design of

the school is structured to emulate a journey. The metaphor extends beyond mere physical spaces; it encompasses the educational experiences and milestones that students encounter as they progress through each grade level. For example, the concept of grade-level pods as symbolic destinations within this journey. Just as travelers, students advance through grade levels, each offering unique opportunities for growth and learning.





■ Berry Attendance Zone      ■ Roark Attendance Zone

**School & Community Engagement**

Berry Elementary School and Roark Elementary School will be combined, merging the two student bodies and culture. This initiative aims to modernize the district’s schools and rejuvenate their surrounding neighborhoods. The focus is on furnishing future generations of students with the necessary opportunities to thrive in the 21st century.

**Arlington Independent School District**

The existing Berry Elementary School structure is being replaced as part of Arlington ISD’s 2019 Bond Program. The original school, built in the 1960s, required significant renovations to align with modern standards for education environments. After careful consideration, it was determined that replacing the school entirely was a more economically viable solution.

“We are excited about what this is going to bring to our community,” said Berry principal **Rose Ravin**, “not just for our district but especially in our east Arlington area. We know this building will provide opportunities for our east Arlington students. We are excited because they will be a part of making new history, new memories, new learning, new designs and new creations.”



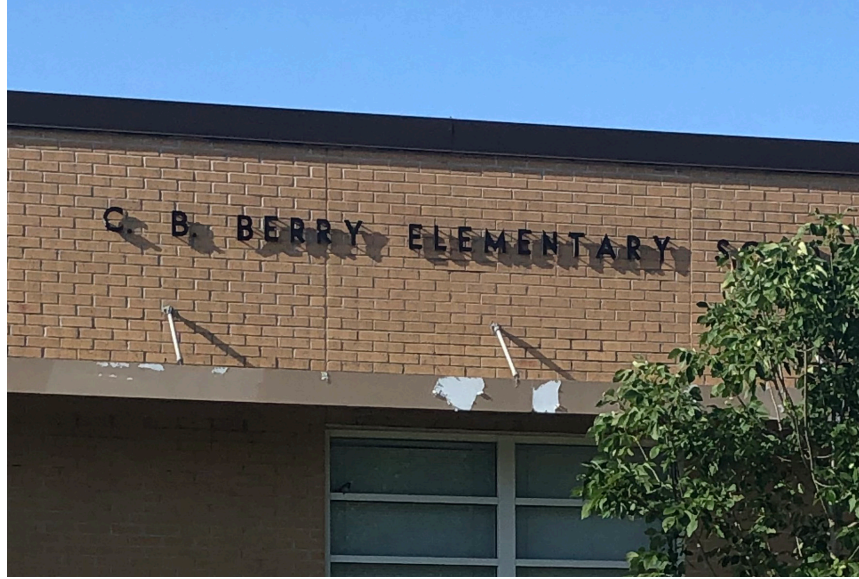
Berry Site Boundaries

**Assets**

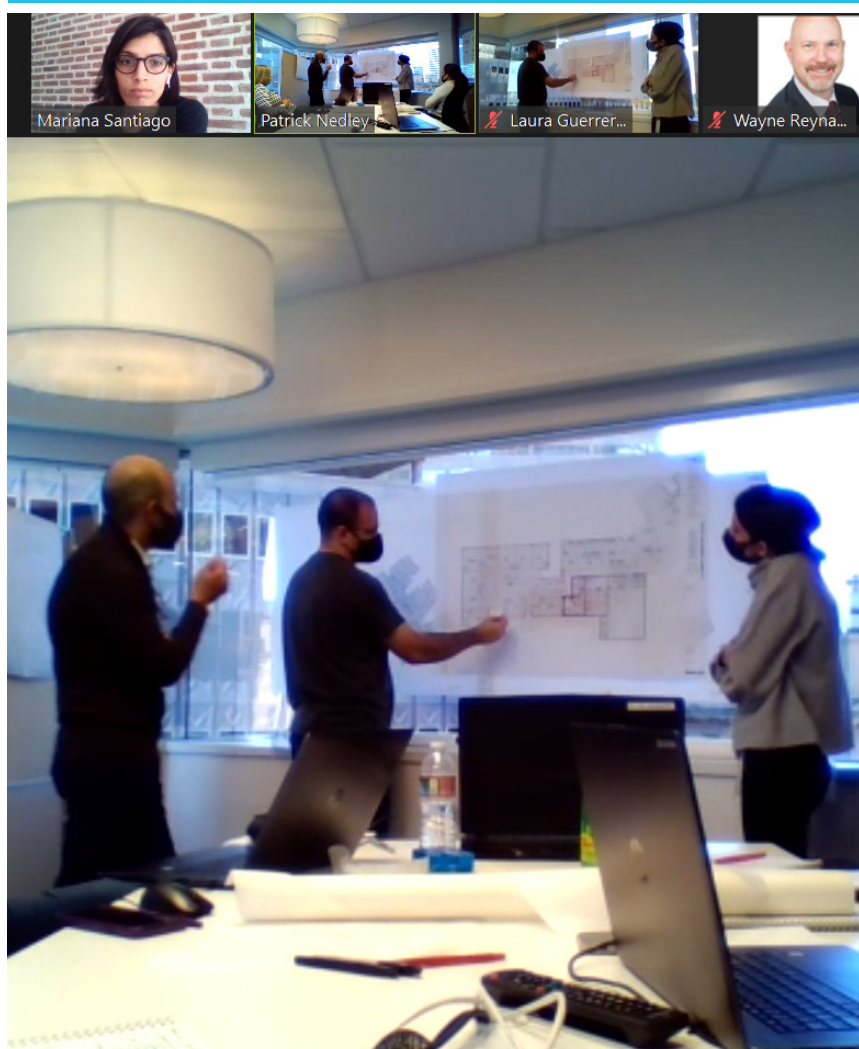
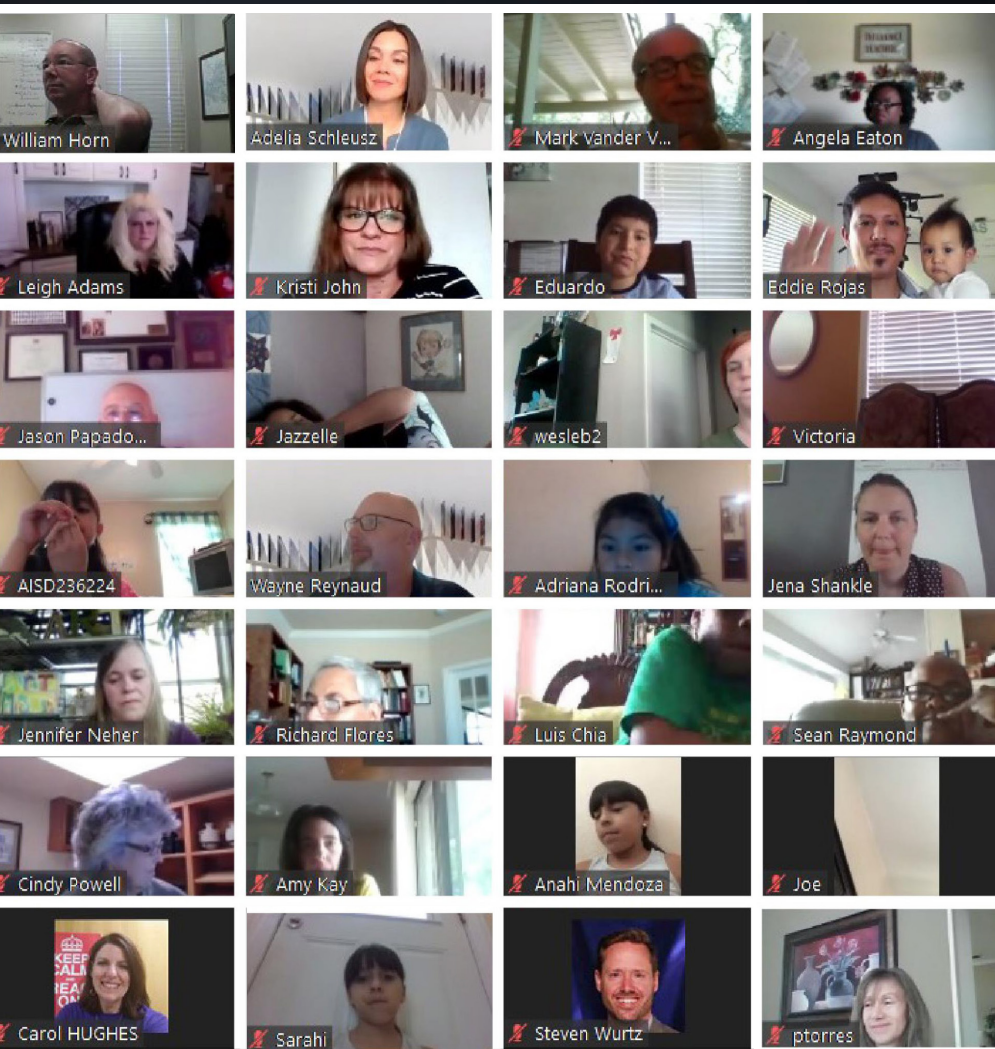
- *The City of Arlington’s Entertainment District has seen billions of dollars in investment in the past few years with more on the way.*
- *The recent renovation of New York Avenue has transformed it into a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare within the neighborhood community.*
- *Revitalization of the east Arlington area.*
- *The northern section of the site is fairly level.*
- *There are significant trees on the site that need to be protected during construction.*

**Opportunities**

- *Developing a campus that invites the community to engage with the site and break down the physical and historical gates that separate the school from the pedestrian.*
- *Take a step back, look at all users and understand how the new facility will enhance the day-to-day wellness of all.*
- *Develop a design tying to district goals and leading to measurable outcomes for success.*
- *Recognizing that the buildable area differs considerably from the actual site due to the presence of the detention basin area.*



This was the first Pandemic ZOOM Schematic Design Charrette

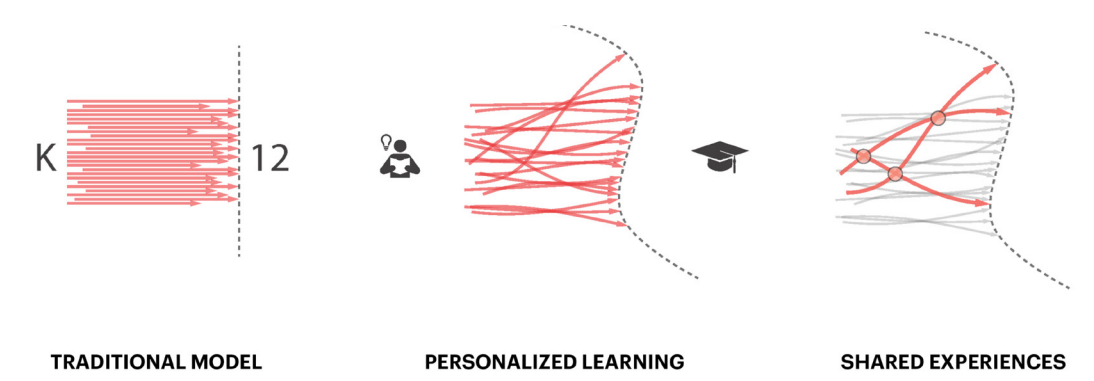


**Community Charrettes**

The project navigated unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the first Pandemic ZOOM Schematic Design Charrette that Arlington ISD had experienced. Adaptive measures were implemented by the project team to foster resilience amidst uncertainty and to inspire educators, architects, and community leaders to embrace innovative approaches in addressing challenges, ultimately fostering more inclusive and resilient educational environments. Overall, the power of collaboration and community engagement not only helped in overcoming immediate challenges but also in laying the groundwork for a more resilient and inclusive future.

**Shared Experiences**

In the realm of education, the shift towards personalized learning models has brought a rethinking of school designs. Berry Elementary School exemplifies this shift through its meticulous consideration of multiple factors, spanning spatial layout, technology integration, and the overall learning atmosphere. Prioritizing the unique needs of each student, the school also recognized the crucial significance of fostering shared experiences within the community. Shared experiences contribute to a sense of belonging and create opportunities for collaboration, communication, and social interaction. Consequently, integrating personalized learning into building design requires a holistic approach that balances individualized instruction with shared experiences. By striking this balance, Berry Elementary School can create environments that cater to diverse learning needs while nurturing a strong sense of community.



**Learning Environment**

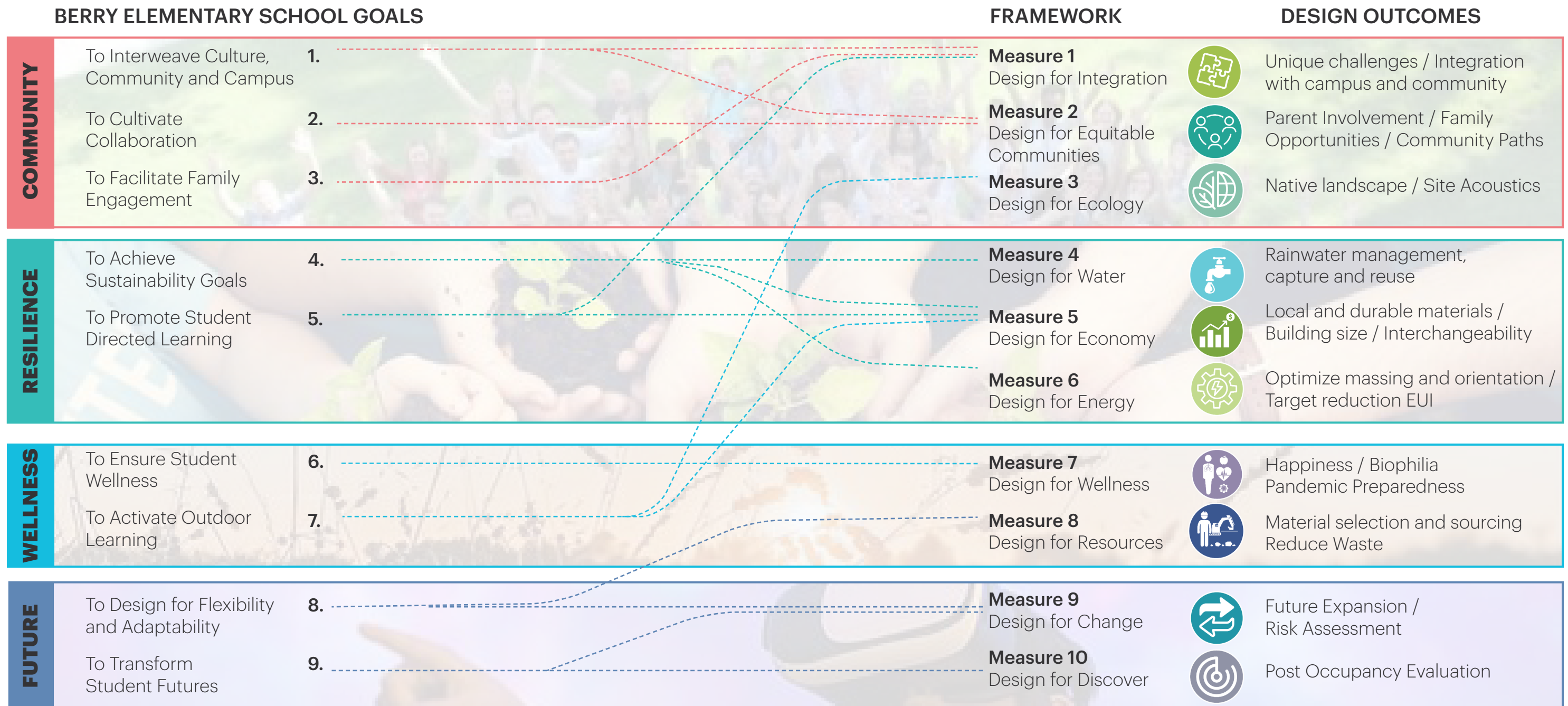
The new Berry Elementary School will combine two existing schools into a state-of-the-art facility design based on four guiding principles: **community, resilience, wellness and student futures**; all tied to district goals and leading to measurable outcomes for success.

Conceptually, the school represents a learning journey, connecting the students to the idea that everyone begins with the same foundation but will embark on their own journeys. The overall concept for the project is to foster a sense of community at all scales and

encourage students to find the path that works best for them. The design approach sought to create both a formal and interstitial space where students and teachers can facilitate driven education.

The new building will provide many opportunities for students through its purposeful design. It was carefully planned with input from Berry teachers and staff, students and parents. The two-story school building with nearly 105,000 square-feet will feature five classrooms for each grade (PK-6), a media center, fine arts classrooms, STEM labs, makerspace, collaboration spaces, outdoor areas and more.

The New Berry Elementary School stands as a symbol of both continuity and possibility, intertwining its rich history with the promise of new experiences and accomplishments. It is more than just a building; it is a symbol of resilience and progress.





The school's layout revolves around a central zone, anchored by the library volume, with shared programs grouped around it. At its core, the project aims to foster a strong sense of community across all facets and to equip students with the autonomy to discern the path that resonates most with them.

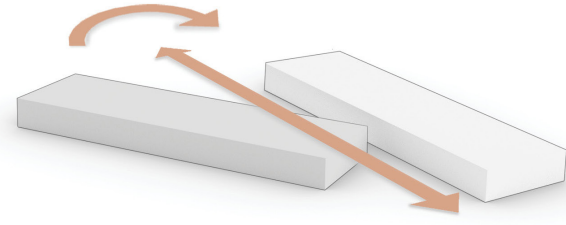


Concept Diagram



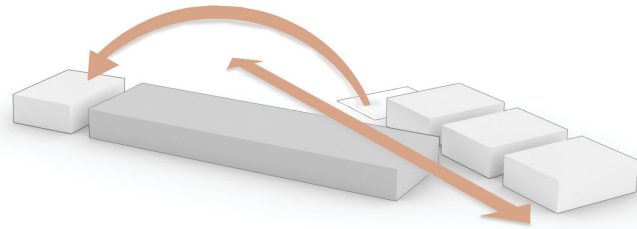
**2.8 Acres of Public  
Green Space**

**Physical Environment - Concept Diagrams**



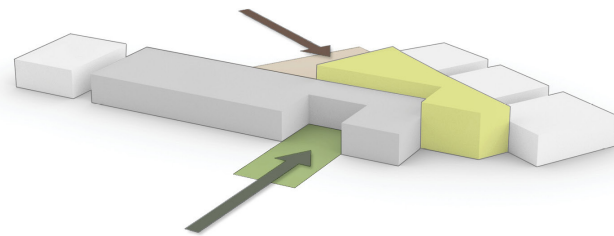
**Learning Pathways**

The program is segmented into learning pathways, establishing a connection to growth and nature, which is referred to as the *Learning Journey* experience.



**Public and Private**

The journey for younger students commences in one section of the building, advancing to the learning pods as they progress. Each grade level pod represents a symbolic destination within their educational journey.



**Learning Convergence**

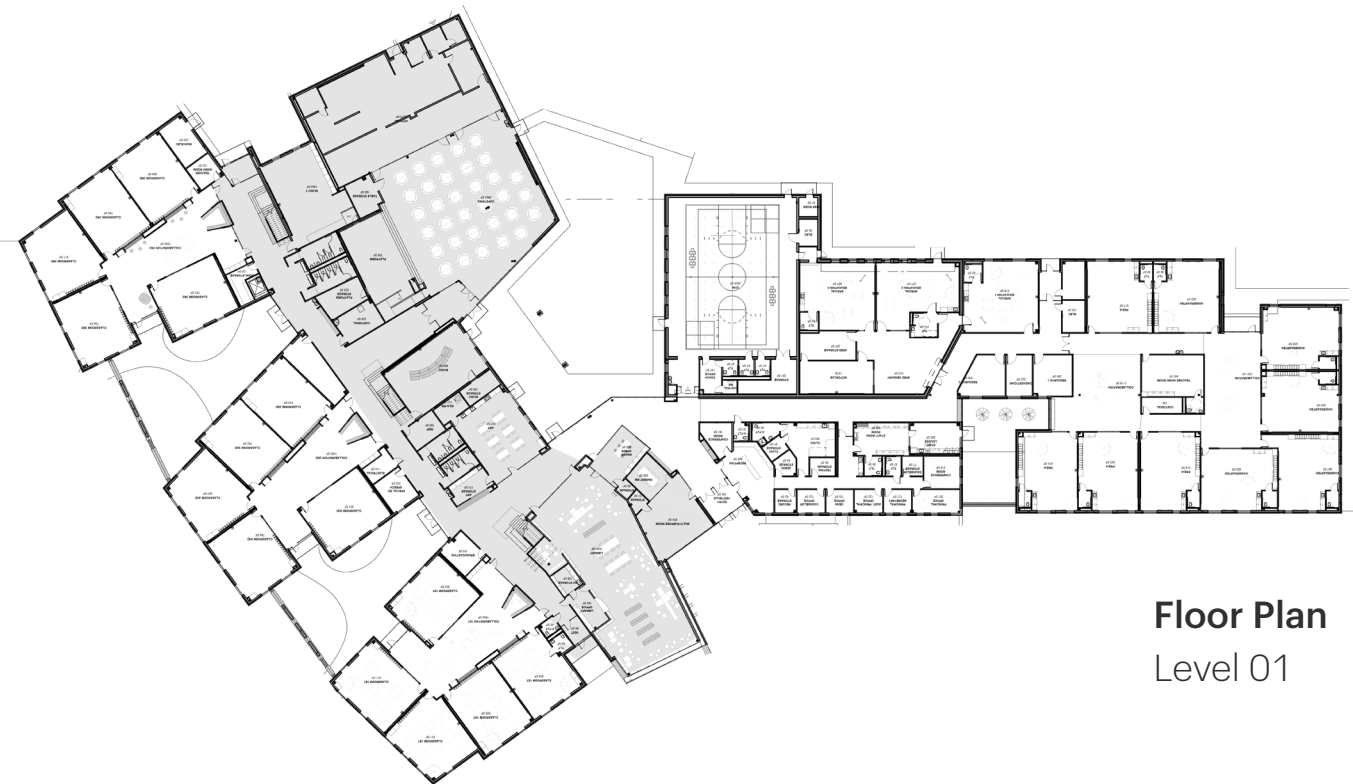
At the heart of the school lies a rich array of various resources such as science classrooms, the library, cafeteria, and maker space, strategically positioned to cultivate innovation and



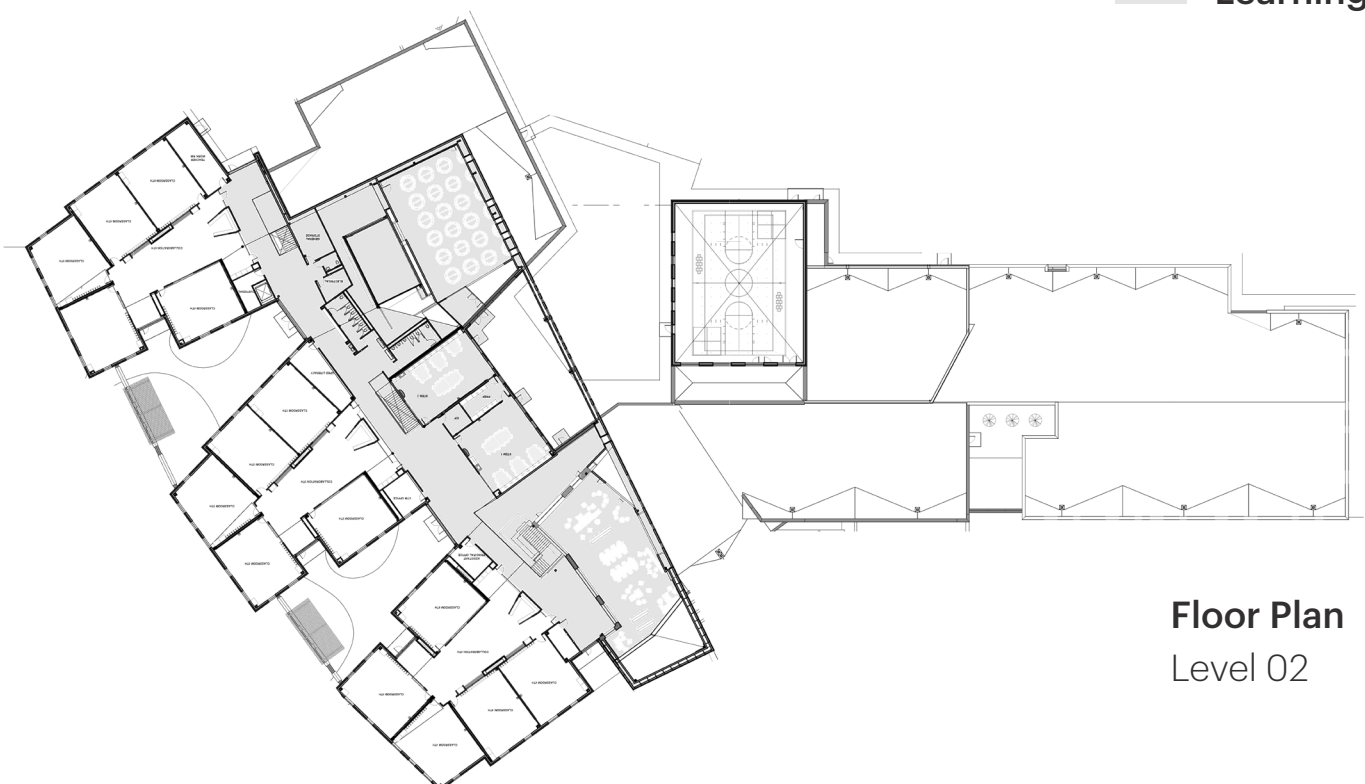




Learning Convergence



Floor Plan  
Level 01



Floor Plan  
Level 02

**Learning Convergence**  
Media Center & Library

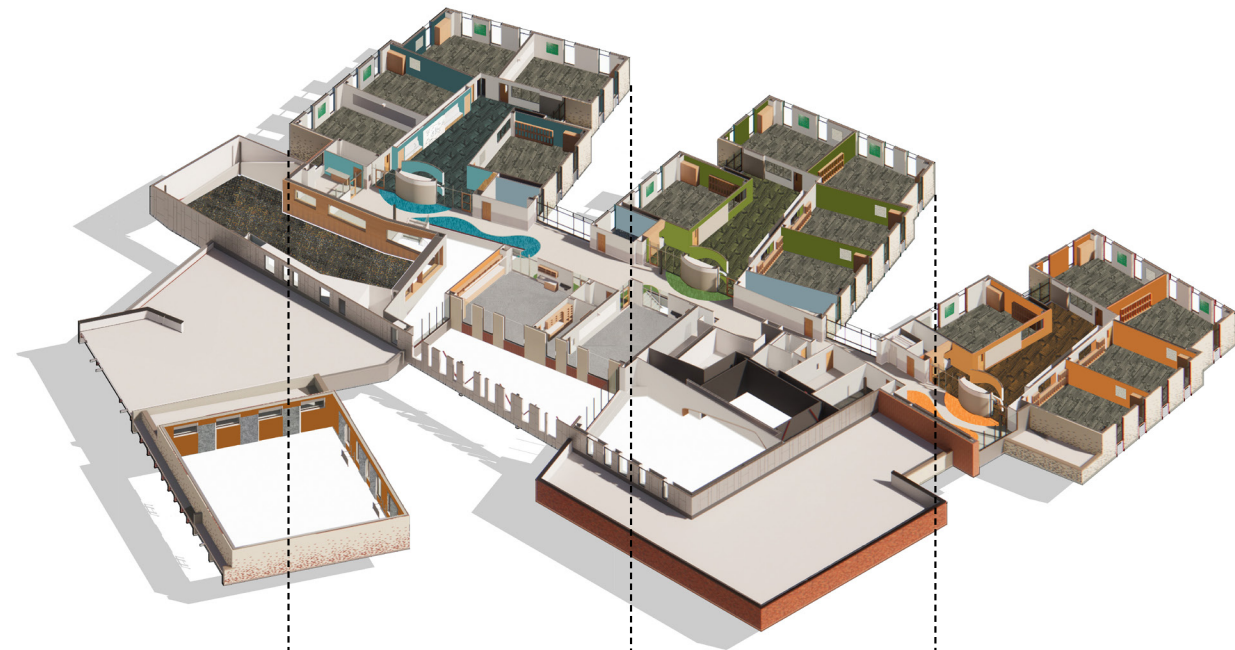


## WHAT MAKES IT A “LEARNING PATHWAY” AND NOT JUST A CORRIDOR?

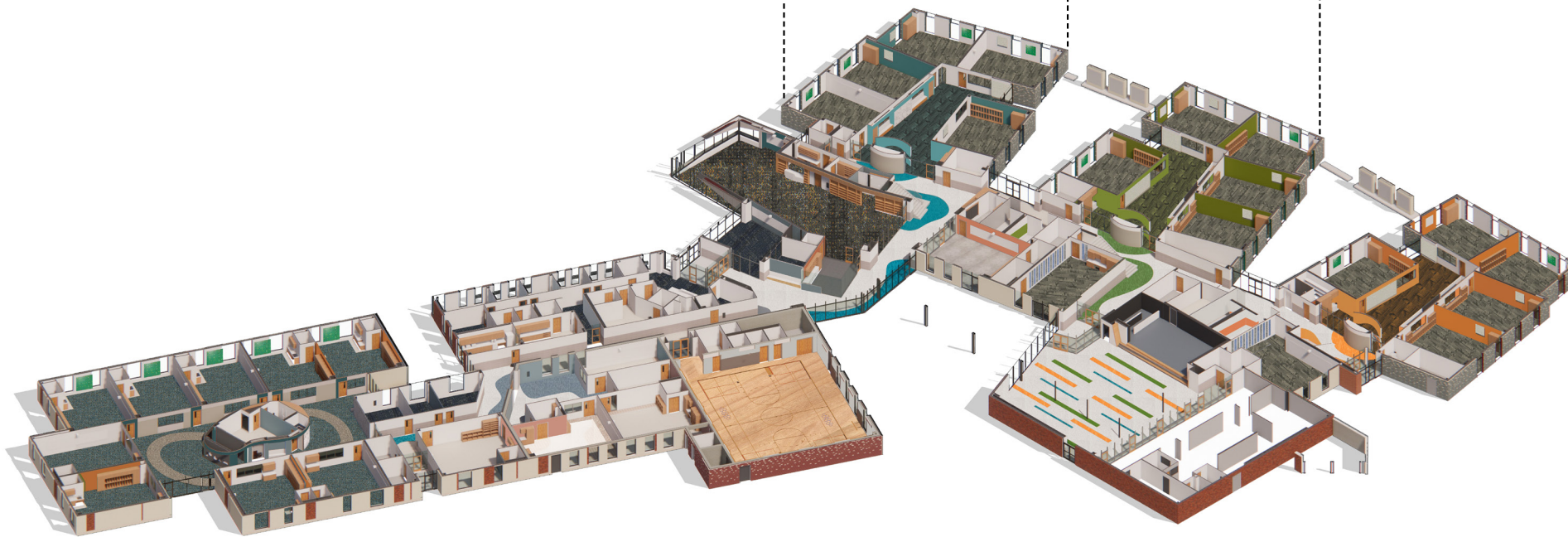
While a corridor merely serves as a passageway from one point to another, a learning pathway symbolizes a deliberate and structured progression towards enlightenment, proficiency, and self-discovery.

A learning pathway transcends the physical confines of a corridor, embodying a multifaceted journey of knowledge.





**Axonometric**  
Level 02



**Axonometric**  
Level 01

**Results of the Planning Process & Project**

**Structured Progression**

The project team’s initial decision was to preserve a centuries-old tree. It was evident from the outset that this decision would serve as a tribute to Berry’s past and a symbol of its future trajectory. The building’s primary entrance is thoughtfully aligned with this majestic tree, enhancing its beauty and significance.

**Resource Integration**

Upon entering the school, the first programmatic features encountered are the administration area on one side and the community gathering room on the other. Progressing along the learning pathway, one is enveloped by an array of facilities, including the Maker Space, the Commons Space, the Gym, the Art rooms, and an outdoor learning courtyard that leads to the cafeteria.

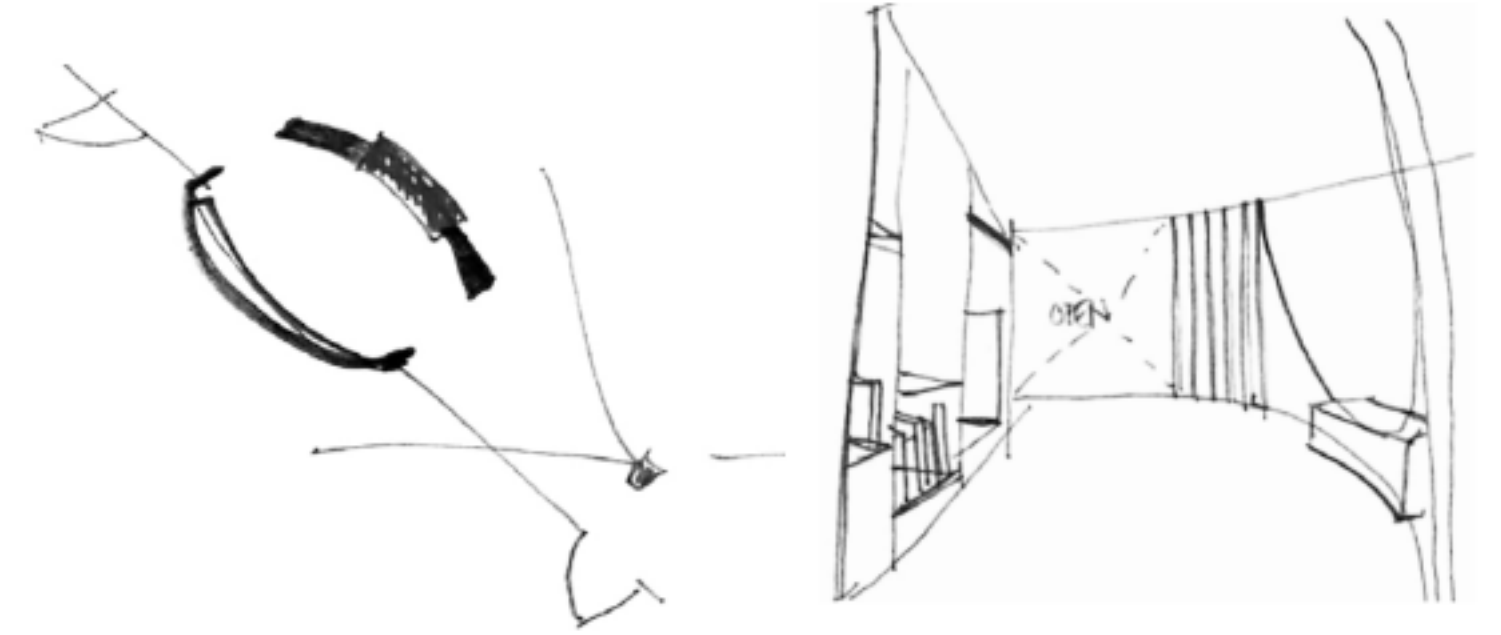
**Personalization**

Pre-K & K and SPED are designated as separate areas situated in a different wing of the building. Given that this structure consists of only one story, it is practical to allocate space for preschoolers here. On the other side, there are the pods, representing a source of pride for the New School. These pods are prominently visible from the community outdoor plaza, welcoming the neighborhood. They organize each grade into collaborative spaces within classrooms, each distinguished by a unique color, offering 1st graders a place to anticipate as they progress. One day, they will have the opportunity to belong to the 6th grade pod. By incorporating elements of personalization, the pathway becomes more responsive to the unique needs of each learner.

**Reflective Practice**

Encouraging reflection and metacognition is a hallmark of a learning pathway. The Collaboration Spaces provide students visual connection to nature; improving mental engagement, attentiveness, and reducing stress. These spaces were set up to allow for multiple scales of group interaction. Through the use of both fixed and mobile furniture, the space can be arranged to accommodate many functions throughout the day. As the Collaboration Spaces evolved, the concept of a metaphorical “seed” developed that would provide students an area for respite, small group interaction, study, and exploration.

Reflective Practice  
The Seed





## **Results of the Planning Process & Project**

### **Community Impact**

In North Texas, schools often miss out on the numerous benefits of holding classes outdoors. Many educational institutions overlook the potential advantages of utilizing outdoor spaces for learning. Outdoor classrooms offer a dynamic environment that can enhance students' engagement and comprehension. Research suggests that exposure to natural settings can improve concentration, creativity, and overall academic performance. For Berry, integrating outdoor lessons into the curriculum can be relatively simple and cost-effective, requiring only a willingness to embrace alternative teaching methods and utilize available outdoor spaces.

### **Future Phase Learning Courtyards**

The design team invested extensive time in crafting the school's surroundings, meticulously planning both interior and exterior spaces. Formal and interstitial areas were strategically positioned across the site, offering students flexible learning settings. These spaces were intended to fulfill several key objectives:

1. **Facilitating Non-Traditional Learning:** Outdoor areas featuring water tables and gardens were incorporated to offer students unconventional learning experiences. These spaces encourage hands-on exploration and foster a deeper connection with nature, providing a refreshing departure from traditional classroom settings.
2. **Fostering Harmony with Nature:** The design aimed to cultivate a sense of harmony and rhythm with the natural environment. Students are immersed in surroundings that reflect the beauty and balance of the natural world, enhancing their appreciation for ecological systems.
3. **Understanding of Environmental Science:** Students are given the opportunity to actively participate in caring for the school's vegetation, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. They gain valuable insights into concepts such as micro-climates and ecology.

In striving to meet the needs of modern education while anticipating pedagogical shifts, the design team sought to create an environment that not only supports academic growth but also nurtures students' **connection to the world around them.**





*We chose to preserve the existing tree, honoring its significance as a part of the collective memory while symbolizing the journey towards a brighter future.*