Following the initiative of Santa Maria-Bonita School District (SMBSD) to develop flexible and forward-looking Education Specifications for TK-6 Elementary School design to support students in reaching their highest potential and succeed as citizens, Santa Maria Bonita Elementary School will be the first new TK-6 Elementary School to carry this vision forward.

The 56,890 SF school will house 750-900 TK-6 students on a 10-acre site with joint use acreage coming from an adjoining city park that contains the historic Enos house students can visit. The triangular site configuration accommodates three separate drop-off loops for buses, kindergarten and elementary school each on one side, making for ideal traffic flow and high security.
Being known for the culture of winery and the home of historical Californian architecture, Santa Maria Bonita Unified District stated that one of the main goals for the new Elementary school was to embrace and celebrate the identity of the community and respect the surrounding architecture, while providing a modern physical environment to support future ready learning as well as the future growth in student population.

The design outcome pioneers Santa Maria-Bonita School District’s updated educational specifications. In organizing the learning studios around shared Learning Commons, multiple modes of learning and facilitating learning are supported. In shaping the buildings around safe outdoor learning zones, new opportunities for learning are created, especially project-based learning. Access to and collaboration between teachers are not only possible but encouraged. SMBSD has been very excited to open their very first school of its kind and plans to integrate innovative curriculum to match the unprecedented architectural design.

The design also achieves their aesthetic goals. The roof slopes correspond to the simple shed roofs of the local winery agriculture. The massing seamlessly integrates with the scale of the commercial and multifamily residential development. The use of corrugated panels, wood-look fiber cement panels, and plaster recall the materiality of the central California coast area.

Total Construction Budget: $42.4 Million.
The community engagement process was expedited due to a tight timeline. Despite this challenge, the design team made sure parents and community members' voices were heard and thoroughly considered for the future school.

The process of focus group interviews with educational leadership and teachers was the driving force for the planning process. The school will play a huge role in the evolution of the Ed Specs by serving as a beta test. The FF&E from the Ed Specs will be procured as pilot projects in other schools first, using more interviews, professional development, and surveys to inform the FF&E for this campus.

Images: Community Engagement

Collage: Visioning Boards for Focus Group
One of SMBSD’s core values is: “We believe the greatest learning occurs in a safe environment”. A U-shaped site configuration of mainstream learning studios interwoven with special needs learning studios wraps around students and staff creating a safe and welcoming courtyard with various zones to support different learning styles. The learning studios directly connect to the outdoor spaces with transparency making a clear line of sight to all outdoor areas. This planning principle is key to empowering students to take more ownership of their learning in a safe environment. The Learning and Gathering Courtyard becomes a place of countless collaboration and learning opportunities with shaded zones equipped with Wi-Fi and loose furniture to facilitate any type of learning style outdoors.

A strong driver for the design is a vision for an inclusive environment that supports students with special needs. Mainstream learning studios and the special education studios are interwoven and adjacent to Learning Commons where learners can connect with each other naturally and engage in social emotional learning experiences.

The Therapeutic Learning Suite has various types of spaces to support the needs of Special Education students, a Re-boot Room to help students de-escalate and an Honors Room to reward good behavior. The Severe SDC Learning Studio is centrally located below the library and opens on to another greener side of the courtyard affording this group opportunities to spend more time in nature.
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Diagram: Learning Studio Layouts with flexible furniture.

Rendering: Kindergarten Learning Studio with flexible activity stations.

MEASURE T  ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  SANTA MARIA-BONITA SCHOOL DISTRICT
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Rendering: Outdoor Learning Space and Grand Stair to support multiple learning styles especially project-based.

MEASURE T ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  SANTA MARIA-BONITA SCHOOL DISTRICT
As a top priority not only to Santa Maria-Bonita School District, but also to any School District, security is one of the most crucial factors that affects a design. After multiple studies on site flow and circulation, security vulnerabilities are considered by using a combination of buildings as the campus edge with two main controlled entrances: one between the Administration suite and Kindergarten suite, the second between the Kindergarten suite and the Multipurpose Building.
Besides providing a safe and flexible space for future ready learning, sustainability is also a key driver for the design of the new Elementary school. Key sustainability strategies include:

- Maximizing the daylighting in the learning studios
- Energy efficient lighting
- Overhangs to protect the interior from overheating
- Drought tolerant landscaping
- Bioswales in the courtyard,
- All buildings photovoltaic ready
- Student garden that grows produce to be served at lunch time with light cooking incorporated into the health education curriculum.

Building aesthetics are also carefully studied through many iterations, giving the school, community and other stakeholders possibilities to explore and investigate what is best for their youth.
Images: Facade Iterations - Multiple studies were included in the design process.

Rendering: Final design provides permeability in the architectural skin to connect the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
Santa Maria-Bonita School District officials recently held a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of construction for the new Elementary School, where their vision for the future education becomes reality, reaching new heights.

"I feel because it’s a new and exciting design, it will give folks an opportunity to maybe be more collaborative and to also have a better sense of school community because we’re going to be a little closer together" said Santa Maria Bonita School District board member Vedamarie Alvarez-Flores.
OUTCOME

Rendering: Aerial view toward parent drop-off. The buildings create a safe and protected core.

Rendering: Community facing view to the Academic and Administration Building.
Rendering: The Library is another flexible learning environment.

Rendering: Learning Studios open to shared Learning Commons through large glass sliding doors.

Rendering: Multi Purpose Room provides daylit space for eating, playing, and assemblies.
Rendering: Outdoor Learning and Grand Stair for multiple learning activities and gatherings.