

STELLA MIDDLE CHARTER ACADEMY

Los Angeles, CA
New Construction





Bright Star Schools (BSS) Stella Middle Charter Academy is located on Martin Luther King Blvd. in the Crenshaw neighborhood of Los Angeles. The new, 500 student school is a major new community resource made possible through a relocation agreement with LAX and a joint use agreement with Bethany Baptist Church that was supported by a long list of community and LA City stakeholders. When LAX identified BSS's former school site as the location for the proposed Consolidated Rental Car Facility, BSS entered into an agreement to vacate by September 2019. This set in motion a three-year timeline to identify a new location, entitle, design, permit, and build a school within reasonable travel distance of their current students.

BSS entered into a 30 year lease with Bethany Baptist Church to develop the Stella Charter Middle Academy on 1 acre of vacant land adjacent to the church. Through the shared use of the large church parking lot and the new school gymnasium, the school is a valuable addition to the Crenshaw community, providing new facilities and resources. The compatible uses of the school and the church allowed for the optimization of the use of both. Bright Star Schools provides quality educational opportunities to students in underserved areas. They encourage students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers who share in the responsibility of receiving a quality education. The design of the school communicates this mission to the community and sends the message that quality education and learning is happening here. The school was completed in September 2019, meeting the 3 year deadline.



PROJECT DATE: 2017-2020

PROGRAM: Grades 6-8 Middle School with 21 Classrooms, Administration offices, 4,000SF MPR/Gymnasium, 15,000SF play fields, outdoor learning lab. Classrooms that support project based learning and collaboration spaces. Shared use of the play field, MPR/Gymnasium, and parking lot with Bethany Baptist Church.

SITE CONDITIONS: Vacant 49,000SF site facing Martin Luther King Blvd. on the south, Los Angeles Fire Station 94 on the west, Coliseum Street Elementary School on the north, and Bethany Baptist Church WLA Church on the east. Soils conditions required foundations to be on piles. The school is accessed off a service road of Martin Luther King Blvd.

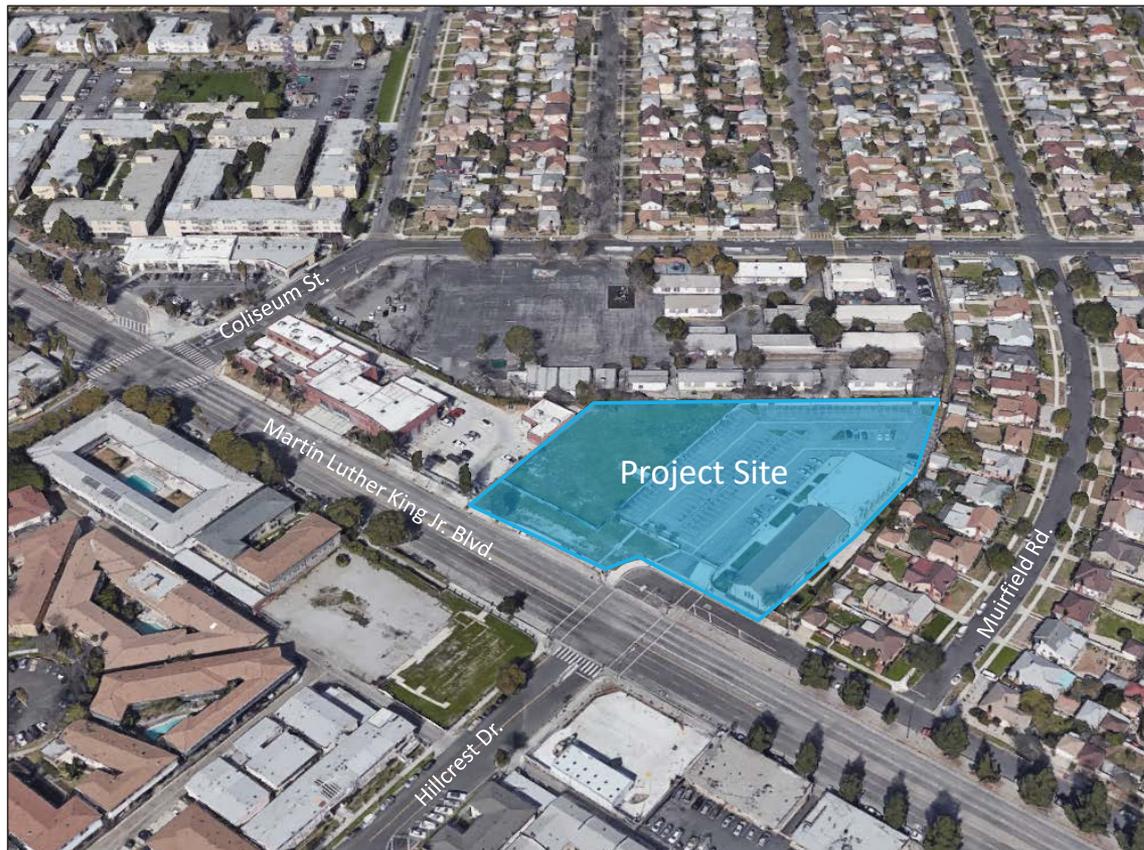
SIZE: 39,680 SF

BUDGET: \$13,500,000

THE COMMUNITY

Stella Middle Charter Academy is located within the Leimert Community Plan Area and CPIO commercial corridor. Councilmember Herb Wesson Jr. of Council District 10 was instrumental in negotiating the joint use agreement and the expedited city approval process. The area was identified by BSS because of the low performance of local public schools and their mission to provide choices for students and parents in underserved communities. The school site is within walking distance of Crenshaw Blvd and the redevelopment area.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



- 1. Project Location:**
 - 4115 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90008
- 2. Jurisdiction:**
 - Council District 10, Councilmember Herb Wesson Jr.
 - West Adams – Baldwin Hills – Leimert Community Plan Area, CPIO Commercial Corridors Subarea
- 3. Existing Zoning:**
 - C2-1VL-CPIO (1VL = 45' / 3 stories / 1.5:1 FAR)

Bright Star School Relocation Project Stella Middle Charter Academy

STAKEHOLDERS

Because of the complexity of the agreement with LAX, the joint use agreement with Bethany Baptist Church, and the interaction with community members there is a very long list of stakeholders that were brought together to support this project.

- Bright Star Schools – Staff Teachers & Students
- Baldwin Village Community In Action (BVCIA)
- Empowerment Congress West Area Council
- Mothers In Action
- Brotherhood Crusade
- Crystal Stairs
- West Angeles CDC
- Jackie Dupont Walker, Metro
- Baldwin Hills Mall
- Assembly member Sebastian Ridley-Thomas
- State Senator Holly Mitchell
- Congressmember Karen Bass
- Senator Kamala Harris
- Los Angeles Sentinel
- Los Angeles Standard
- LAUSD District 1
- Antoinette Anderson - South Los Angeles Area Planning Commission



- To enable implementation of LAX LAMP Program, Bright Star must relocate from existing location.
- Bright Star Charter Schools Requests for Assistance for Expedited Site Plan Review and Plan Check Approval for School Relocation



Existing Location



- Bright Star Middle and High School currently located in Manchester Square near LAX; future location of the Consolidated Rental Car Facility
- Per BOAC approved relocation agreement, Bright Star facilities must be relocated by September 1, 2019 in order for LAMP to stay on schedule



CHALLENGES

Rain affected both the major foundation revisions as well as the overall time-frame and labor costs. Rain delays also created increases in material costs as a result of the extended time-frame of the project. This already high water table required an increase in the number of piles for the building, but additional piles were required due to the heavy rains.

The 3 year requirement to find a site, entitle it, design the school, permit, and complete construction was very challenging. The project team was focused on meeting this requirement and public agencies assisted us with the entitlement and permitting of the project expeditiously

Next Steps / Project Timeline

1. **October 2017 – September 2019:** Conduct outreach to CD10, Bethany Baptist Church, and other local stakeholders
2. **November 2017** – File for Site Plan Approval
3. **March 2018** – File for Plan Check
4. **September 2018** – Start Construction
5. **August 2019** – Construction End / Obtain Certificates of Occupancy
6. **September 2019** – Fall Classes Begin



EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS OF THE SCHOOL

Bright Star Schools mission is to provide holistic, inclusive support for all students to achieve academic excellence. They support students' unique talents and interests so that they can find joy and fulfillment in education and life. The goal of Stella Charter Middle Academy is to serve the needs of their students so that they become college-ready and competitive with their peers, while emphasizing positive relationships and valuing the whole child.

FIRST FLOOR

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

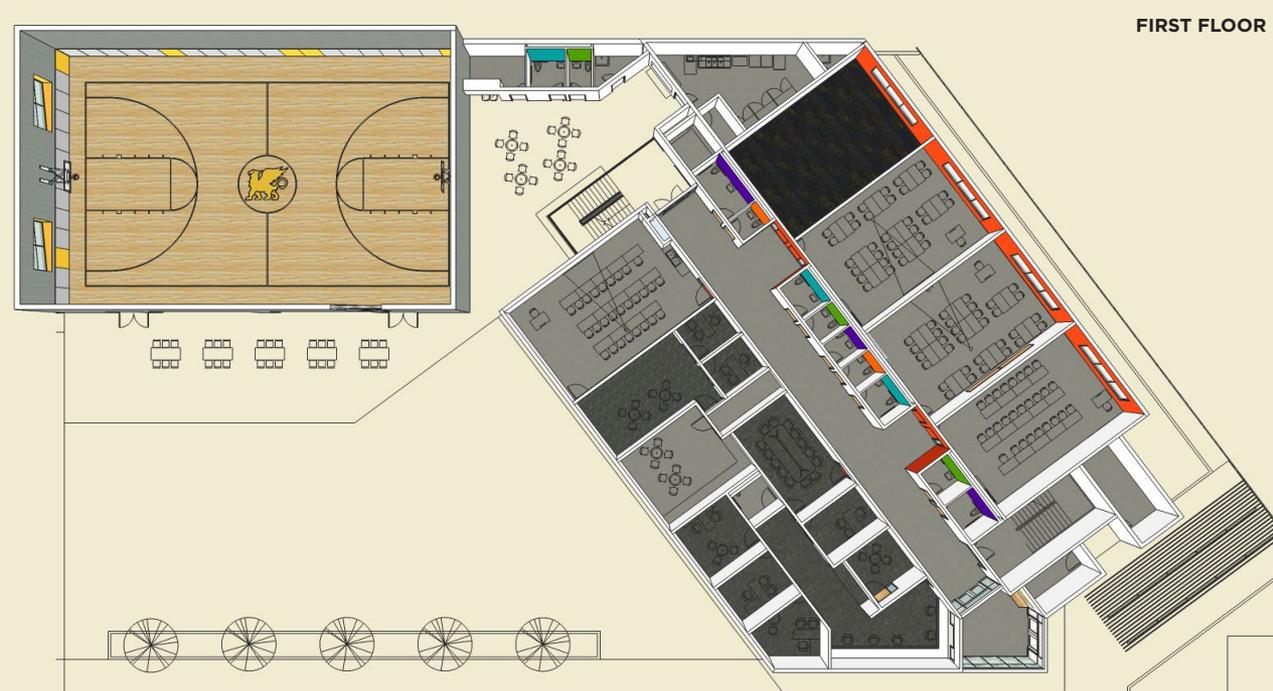
HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS THE CURRICULUM

The design of the learning spaces focused on providing naturally lit classrooms, quiet HVAC system that provides fresh air to each classroom, and transparency into the classrooms from the adjacent circulation. The classroom building is oriented north-south and most windows are either facing due north with views of the Santa Monica Mountains or due south with views of the Baldwin Hills. This orientation allows for good sun control allowing the windows to be shaded with eyebrows and mecho shades maximizing glare-free natural light.

The three story classroom building minimizes the building footprint on the small site allowing for the maximum amount of outdoor area for play and learning spaces. Each floor is used by a single grade allowing for a strong sense of community. The gymnasium has large doors that open directly to a shaded patio and play fields beyond.

BSS program called for all restrooms to be single occupancy, eliminating opportunities for bullying that often occurs in multi occupancy restrooms and providing gender neutral accommodations for all students and teachers. Middle school is a challenging time in child development and these design features make the school environment safer and friendlier for student development.

SECOND AND THIRD FLOORS





HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING & TEACHING STYLES

The proportions of the classrooms allow for multiple configurations of furniture depending on the teaching style being used. Tables and chairs can be in rows, or grouped in any number of ways. Lighting is designed to provide a consistent 50 FC at desk height, allowing the furniture to be configured in any way and provide shadow free light.

Equality and social justice are major themes of the Stella Charter Middle Academy curriculum. Single occupancy gender neutral student and teacher restrooms are provided throughout the school to address issues of gender identity and bullying. The restrooms are located along the circulation corridors to maximize security for the individual restrooms. This design also reduces the amount of space dedicated to restrooms since they share the general circulation space and do not duplicate it in the restroom.



HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IS ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE

The three-story school is oriented north south providing ideal natural light in the classrooms along with views from most classrooms of the Baldwin Hills to the south and Hollywood Hills to the north. The classrooms are organized around a wide corridor that serves as both circulation and collaboration spaces. Classrooms are designed to accommodate various curriculum to provide flexibility in how they are used. Projectors, sinks, white boards, tack boards, lighting, A/V, and furniture are similar in all rooms to provide flexibility.



PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

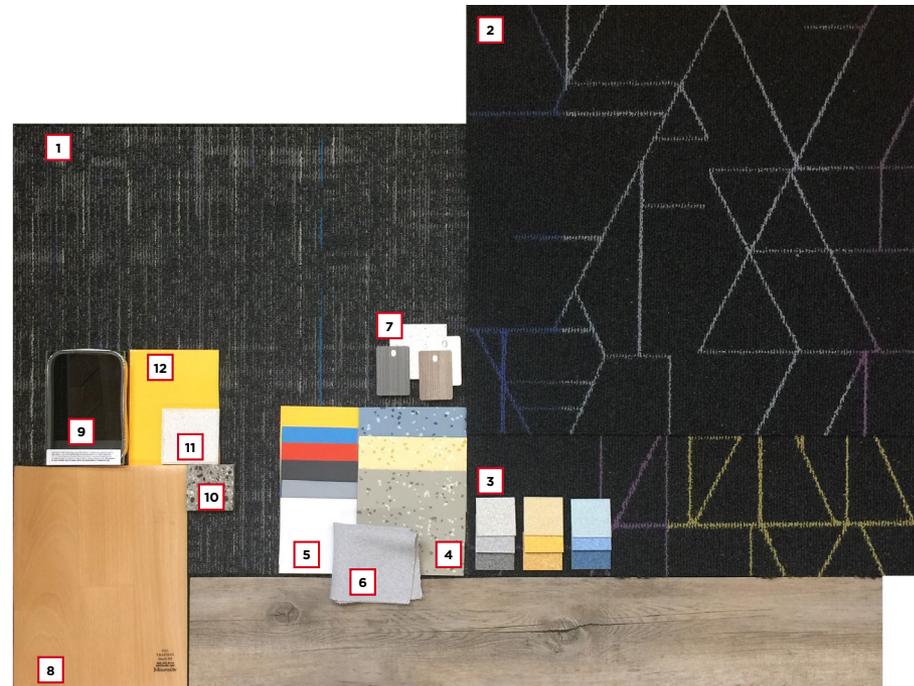
The one-story Gym building pivots around a shared courtyard where the servery is located. The Gym accommodates a middle school basketball court and is used for a multitude of activities for the school and church. Two large glass garage doors along the east façade open up to a shaded lunch area and play fields beyond allowing activities to flow from inside to outside. The large shade canopy is cantilevered off the gym building to eliminate all columns that otherwise would be adjacent to the play field.





HOW THE FACILITY FITS WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY

Approximately one acre in area, the use of the site is optimized through the careful arrangement of the classroom building, gymnasium and play fields. The front entry of the school is on Martin Luther King Blvd. with a tree shaded walkway leading to the front door of the school. Outdoor learning spaces are located along the walkway with shade provided by trees. The gymnasium is accessed off the front entry allowing it to be used for church and community events when the rest of the school is closed. The existing church parking lot provides generous drop off and pick up space for the school as well as providing the parking for both facilities. No new parking was created thus eliminating increasing impervious area.



- LEGEND**
- 1** CARPET IN ADMIN SUITE AND OFFICES
 - 2** CARPET IN MUSIC CLASSROOM
 - 3** FLOORING OPTION #1:
VINYL ENHANCED TILES
HALLWAYS - PIXELATED GREY TILES WITH SOLID ACCENT COLOR
CLASSROOMS - PIXELATED ACCENT COLOR IN THREE VARIATED SHADES
 - 4** FLOORING OPTION #2:
RUBBER TILES AND LVT
HALLWAYS - GREY RUBBER TILES WITH ACCENT COLOR
CLASSROOMS - WOOD LOOK LVT
 - 5** PAINTS
RED ACCENT PAINT ON 1ST FLOOR
YELLOW ACCENT PAINT ON 2ND FLOOR
BLUE ACCENT PAINT ON 3RD FLOOR
 - 6** TACKABLE PANEL FABRIC FOR HALLWAYS ONLY
 - 7** MILLWORK FINISHES:
CLASSROOMS - QUARTZ SURFACE ON SINK COUNTERTOPS, GREY LINEATED LAMINATE ON BASE CABINET AND STORAGE UNITS
ADMIN SUITE - WHITE LAMINATE WORKSURFACE, WOOD LOOK LAMINATE ON BASE CABINET
TEACHER'S LOUNGE: QUARTZ SURFACE ON COUNTERTOP, WOOD LOOK LAMINATE ON BASE/UPPER CABINETS
 - 8** WOOD LOOK SHEET VINYL GYM FLOORING
 - 9** EXTERIOR GLAZING
 - 10** CONCRETE MASONRY UNIT (GYM BUILDING)
 - 11** PLASTER COLOR AND FINISH (MAIN BUILDING)
 - 12** EXTERIOR ACCENT COLOR

HOW THE PROJECT INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

Stella Charter Middle Academy presents a clean modern aesthetic facing Martin Luther King Blvd, clearly branding the school as a contemporary learning environment with high standards and goals. The open, clear circulation connection between indoor and outdoor spaces and bountiful natural light and transparency into classrooms creates uplifting inspiring learning spaces. The organization of one grade per floor, with each succeeding grade being on a higher floor is a subtle motivator to students as they progress from 6th to 7th to 8th grade on the third floor. Interior materials were selected to create a home-like feel to the school and increase student comfort. Exposed wood trusses, wood patterned flooring, warm paint colors, ample color temperature balanced lighting all contribute to this feeling of warmth and safety. The interior spaces are not institutional and provide a soothing environment. Exterior materials and colors were selected to create a modern, clean aesthetic that branded the school as a contemporary learning environment with high standards. Exterior materials include shot blast concrete block laid in a stack bond for the gymnasium and painted plaster and metal for the classroom building. Materials and colors were selected to provide a warm and uplifting aesthetic to the school.

HIGH PERFORMANCE/SUSTAINABILITY IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF THE PROJECT AND METRICS USED

Natural light fills all the classrooms and circulation spaces minimizing the need for electric light. The use of LED lighting and high efficiency HVAC units allows the building exceed Title 24 requirements. The classroom building is wood construction which has far less embodied carbon than steel or concrete structures. The gymnasium utilizes masonry block walls and steel long span roof trusses, creating open spaces at minimum cost and embodied carbon vs. all steel construction. Artificial turf was used for play fields minimizing the use of water and optimizing the use of the field. All other plant materials are low water use species along with trees in key locations to provide shade. The large shade structure hung off the gymnasium provides over 2000SF of outdoor shaded space for lunch, outdoor learning, and multiple activities. Outdoor shade is an increasingly important resource for many school activities. The structure has no supporting columns eliminating risk of students on the adjacent play field.



HOW THE PROJECT ACHIEVES EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The new Stella Middle School provides a modern facility that supports BSS's curriculum, pedagogy, and mission. The school provides classrooms, collaboration spaces, outdoor play/learning spaces, and a gymnasium, far exceeding the school's prior facilities. The school is centrally located in the student's community providing easy access for families. Bright, naturally lit classrooms have good acoustics, and high quality HVAC systems provide fresh clean air. The school has an open transparency between classrooms and circulation, helping build the bond between students teachers and strengthening the small learning community.





HOW THE PROJECT ACHIEVES SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

This project furthers BSS's goal to building a new elementary, middle and high school in each of its three service areas—West Adams, Koreatown, and the East San Fernando Valley. BSS's mission is to provide excellent learning opportunities in each of the underserved communities that they are located in. Stella Middle Charter Academy provides the facilities and programs to achieve that in the West Adams neighborhood.

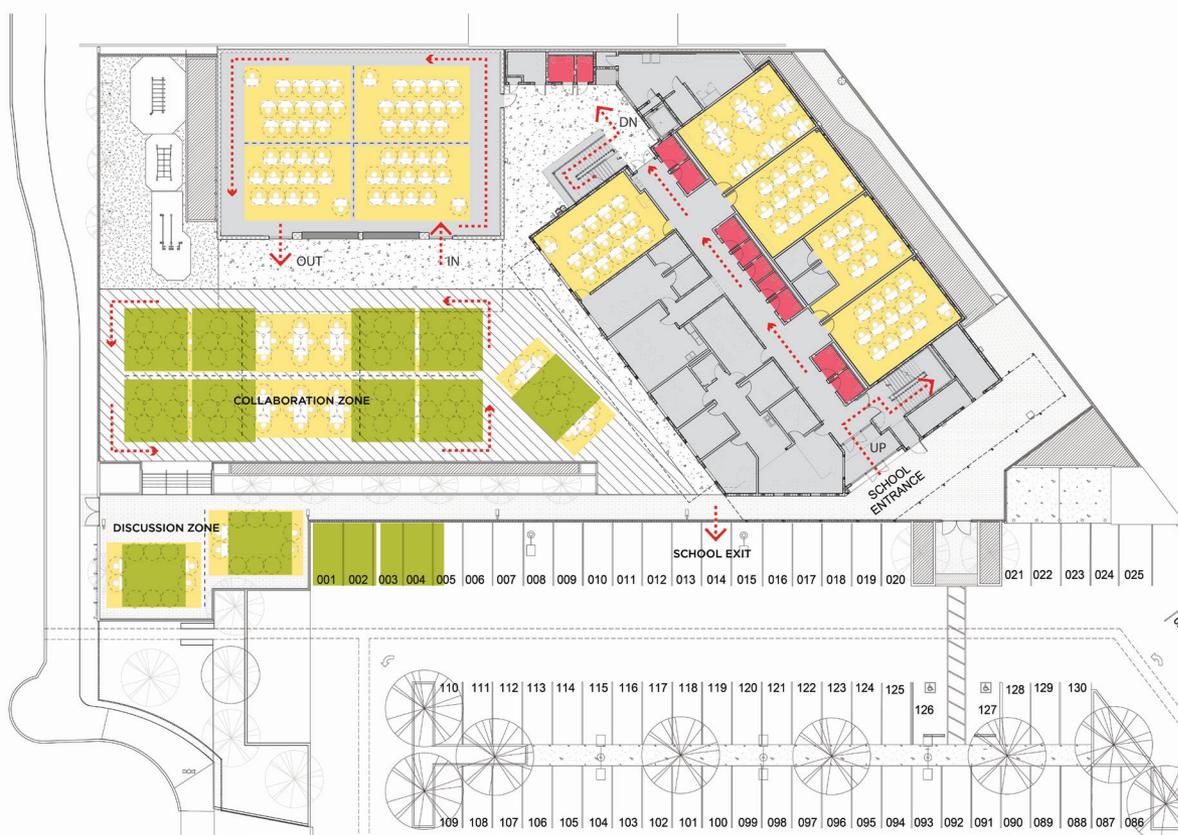
HOW THE PROJECT ACHIEVES COMMUNITY GOALS

The complex entitlement and joint use agreement negotiation created a strong bond with the church and local community. The school is paying rent for the long term lease to Bethany Baptist Church, which will support the churches long term viability. The shared use of the school fields and gymnasium provides the church with new facilities for its programs. A long unused lot in a central location in the neighborhood is now a center of community activity and energy. This project is a win-win for BSS, Bethany Baptist Church and the surrounding community. In addition Stella Middle School offers a choice for parents in the Crenshaw community of where to send their children to school. This elevates the student experience and the surrounding community.

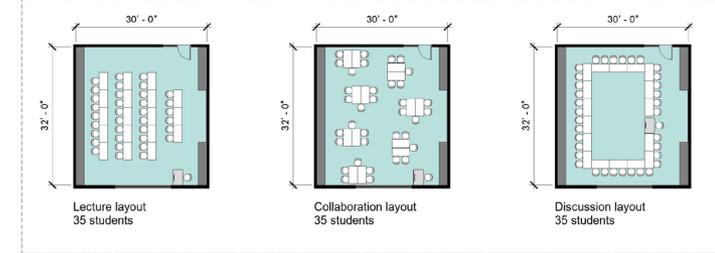
The project was finished and occupied in September of 2019, a few months before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was an opening ceremony just prior to the pandemic, attended by many of the stakeholders that shepherded this project through a complex approval process. The church, local and community leaders, and the Bright Star community joined together in celebration of the new school and the opportunities it offers.



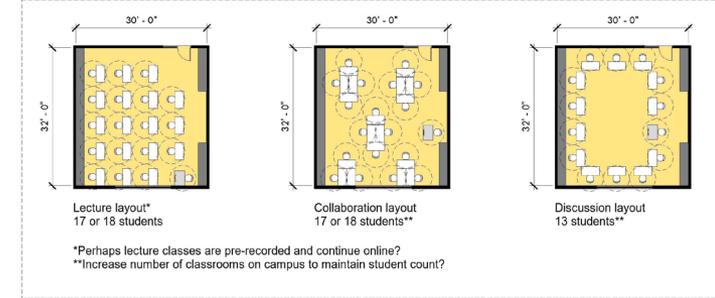
	SCHOOL PRIOR TO COVID-19	SCHOOLS WITH EXISTING CLASSROOMS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING	SCHOOL WITH ADDITIONAL FLEX CLASSROOMS IN COMMON AREAS
# OF STUDENTS	504	252	408
# OF CLASSROOMS	21	21	34



PRE-COVID: 960 squarefoot classroom - 9-12th GRADE



DURING-COVID: 960 squarefoot classroom - 9-12th GRADE



UNINTENDED RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

The school was completed shortly before the pandemic began. To help the school plan the return of students, our firm conducted a series of studies on how to utilize outdoor spaces, multipurpose areas, and excess event parking as classroom space to accommodate for social distancing. We also considered circulation and signage, as well as controlled entry and exit points and a modified pick-up/drop-off pattern.



