

Buena Park Middle School Music Building

—Buena Park, CA





Since completion, this building has become a favored gathering spot for the students, and has been nicknamed the *Little Jewel Box* of Buena Park Middle School.

Buena Park Middle School was originally built in 1962. With steady population growth, the school slowly built up to keep up with enrollment, including the addition of portable classrooms. In 2009, the school then built a new two-story gym as a centerpiece and welcome mat to the school. Save for the gym, the rest of the campus sits tucked against the horizon, a smattering of single-story rectangular boxes arranged on a grid, with modest shed and gabled roofs.

Over time, Buena Park Middle School updated its curriculum and classroom technologies towards supporting more STEM classes, however, it was soon realized that there was a need to uplift the arts and music departments. Participation in the arts can significantly boost children’s academic and social-emotional growth and provide students with a well-rounded course of study.

The District desired a new performing arts and music building — a dedicated place where students would have the opportunity to practice, perform, and show their creativity to the entire community.



CAMPUS PLAN

PROJECT DATES: 2018–2021

COST: \$3,067,637

BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE: 3,300 SF

SITE SQUARE FOOTAGE: 24,000 SF

The budget was a primary concern, given it was funded by a school bond and spread across seven campuses. Through thorough research, and early-on, intentional meetings with music teachers, we were able to push for design that went beyond addressing the students’ specific needs, while remaining within our tight-budget.

The program included:

- A large music classroom
- Four practice rooms
- A faculty office
- Instrument storage
- A shaded gathering space
- A convenient drop-off area
- A covered walkway that integrates seamlessly into the other campus paths of travel



SITE PLAN

SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

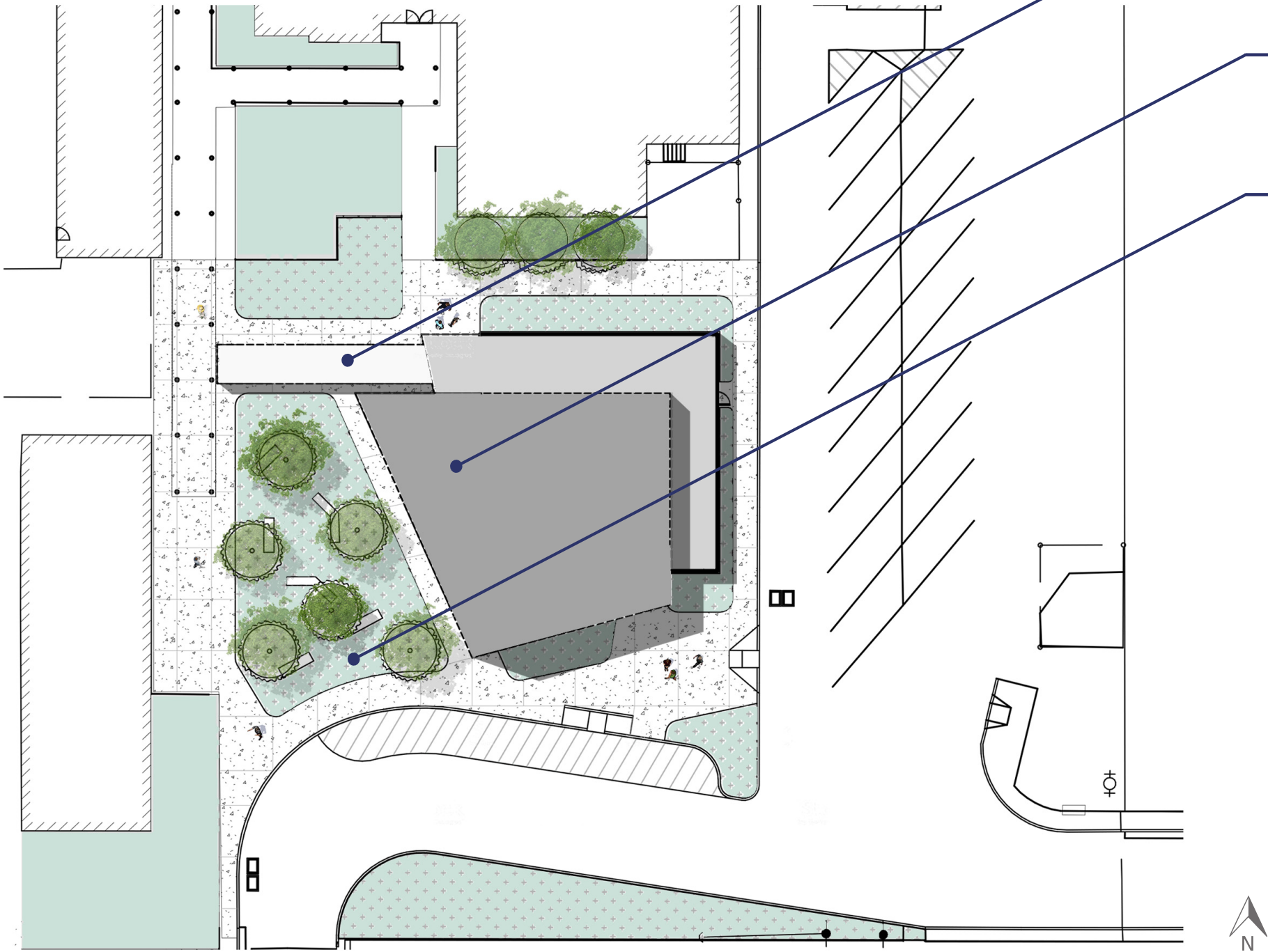
TROMBONE ALLEY

Covered walkway connects and integrates with the rest of the campus' walkway system.

NEW MUSIC JEWEL BOX

OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACE

Open garden space suitable for different sized groups and gatherings.



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Buena Park Middle School directly serves the diverse community and families of Buena Park, a suburban community 21 miles southeast of Los Angeles. The new music building provides a place for gathering and community celebration. Quality educational facilities, such as this, have never been more crucial, especially for communities who have lacked access to them for so many years. Prior to this project, the music classes were held in regular classrooms and the music teacher was a part-time employee who traveled between other campuses in the district.



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the project developed the Superintendent mentioned that a primary goal was to have a new photo spot for the campus. The campus hadn't had any significant improvements since the gym was constructed ten years prior. As the rest of the campus was out-dated and lackluster in design, the school became excited that they would now have a building to photograph and show off. Located on the edge of campus, the new music building acts as a beacon of pride reaching out to the surrounding community.





EDUCATIONAL GOALS INCLUDE:

Interdisciplinary learning

Community engagement

Collaboration and social skills

Outdoor education

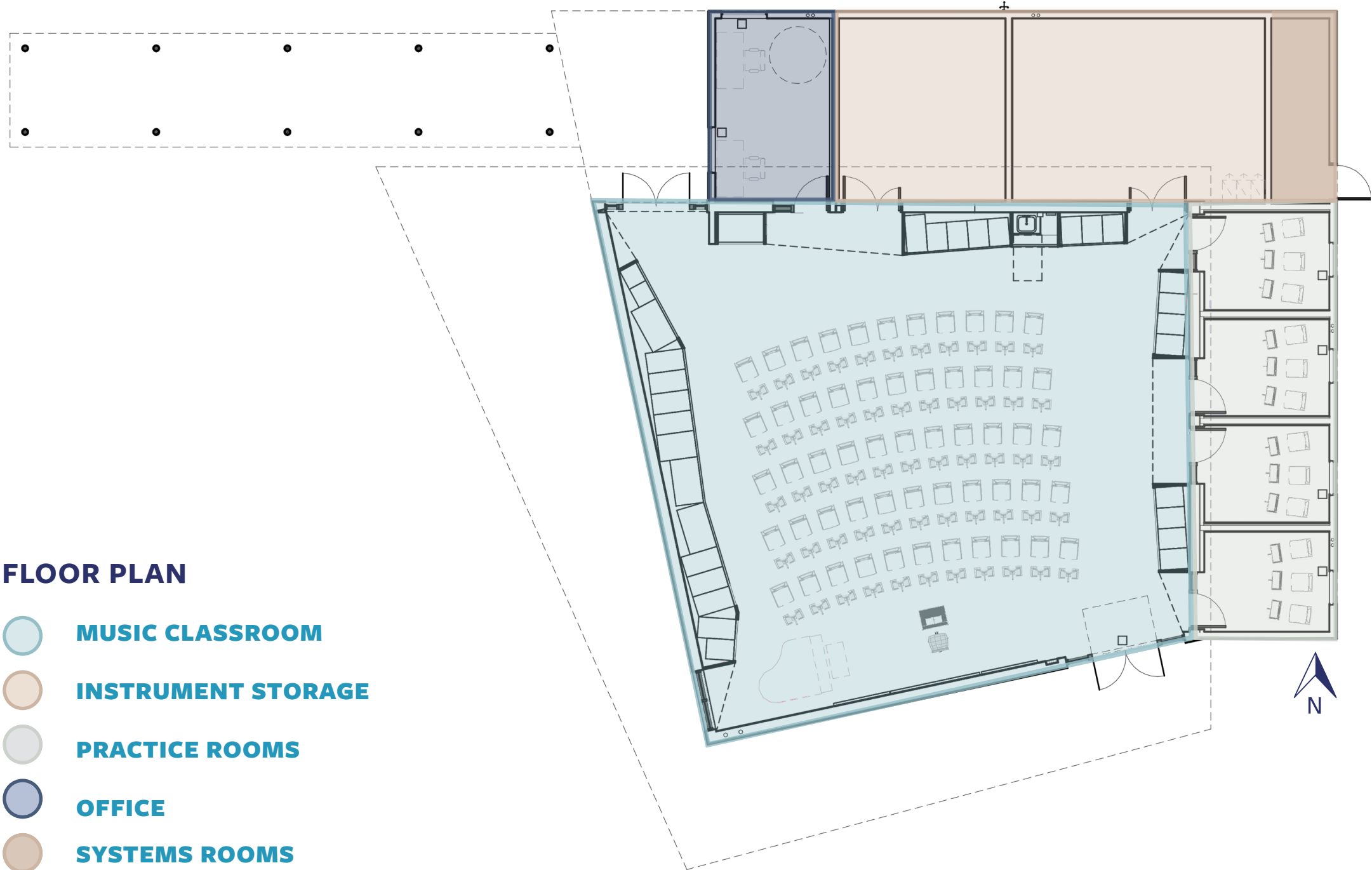
Leadership roles and extensive teamwork

Confidence building via performances

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

As the first new construction in nearly a decade, the District wanted something unique but not out of place and in line with the visual vocabulary of the campus. Intended as a space for music, the building needed to be acoustically sensitive, requiring higher ceilings and non-parallel surfaces. Height for the main performance classroom space was achieved with a mono-pitched roof which serves two additional purposes: not only does this allow for natural light through clerestory windows, but the split level also provides a shielded area to hide unsightly mechanical equipment. A lower and larger massing that includes individual practice spaces and faculty offices wraps around the central volume, matching the height of the surrounding covered walkways and building canopies to integrate into the campus feel.

Buena Park Middle School views their music program as an opportunity for students to foster teamwork and discipline while learning to navigate the new social and academic responsibilities of middle school.



FLOOR PLAN

- MUSIC CLASSROOM**
- INSTRUMENT STORAGE**
- PRACTICE ROOMS**
- OFFICE**
- SYSTEMS ROOMS**
Electrical and Low Voltage

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- Teacher preparation space
- Makes more space for learning
- Customized storage
- Individual learning
- Sound-proofed Practice space
- Group/collaborative learning
- Inter-disciplinary learning space
- Community gathering space
- Specialized acoustics
- Multi-use event space
- Teaching wall
- Flexible furnishings



Preserving wall space for teaching and storage is imperative, so light enters the room from a few strategic spots. Positioning the high end of the roof at the north side of the building permits a line of clerestory windows providing indirect north light to the room.

For equity and consistency, a teaching wall matching those installed in the recent classroom upgrades across the campus occupies a solid portion of the southern wall.

Built-in storage for smaller instruments occupies portions of the western, northern and eastern walls. **Customizing the storage to individual instruments encourages ownership and accountability from the students in being responsible for the instruments they play.** The shape of the storage also aids in the acoustical treatment of the space.

Suspended ceiling clouds further improve the acoustical performance of the room which must be designed to accommodate sounds from both instrumental and voice performances. To facilitate band and choral classes, the floor is flat and the choir uses movable risers to create varying heights.



The practice rooms each accommodate two to three students who need to practice their voice or instrument pieces separately from the larger class. **This provides a safe space for students to learn individually and autonomously.** Sound control in these rooms is particularly important, both to prevent sounds from the music classroom and exterior campus from entering these practice rooms, and to prevent sound transmission from the practice rooms to the surrounding spaces.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The designed gardening area provides a space for gathering, a performance space, and an outdoor classroom while tying into the existing quad. All student body and faculty members share this area as an interdisciplinary space for all learning types.

At the intersection of the Horticulture and Music programs, the seating areas around the new building have become a beloved gathering area for all the students on campus. Science classes and a botany club now utilize the gardens as outdoor laboratories where students can grow specimens from their studies. The planters were created as an intentionally blank canvas for the students to populate based on their curriculum. The students take ownership as the landscapers of this courtyard and active participants in their environment.



Interdisciplinary learning at the intersection between Music and science

Contributes to a feeling of school pride

Horticulture garden gives student's ownership

Outdoor education

A place for socializing & gathering

Equipped with seating & a backdrop for performances

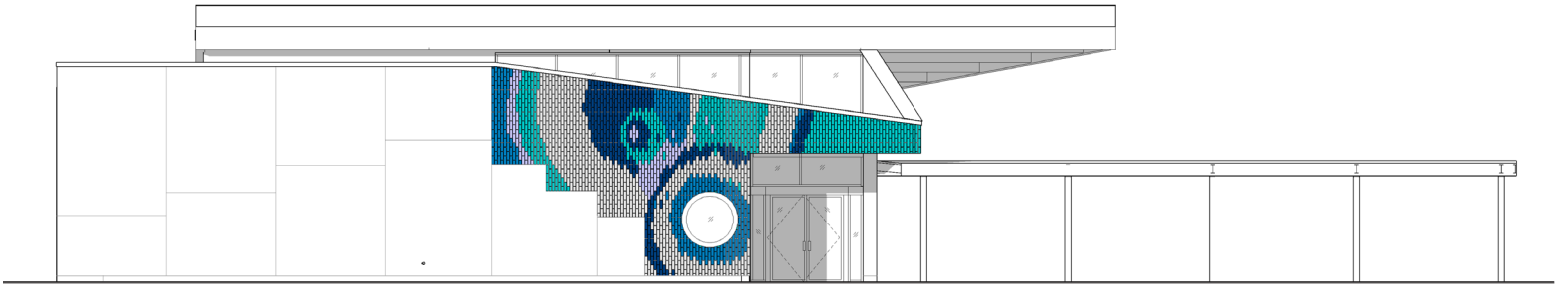
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

There is a feeling of interconnectedness with existing covered walkways on campus. The mono-pitched roof connects with and acts as a bridge between the existing canopies of the campus.

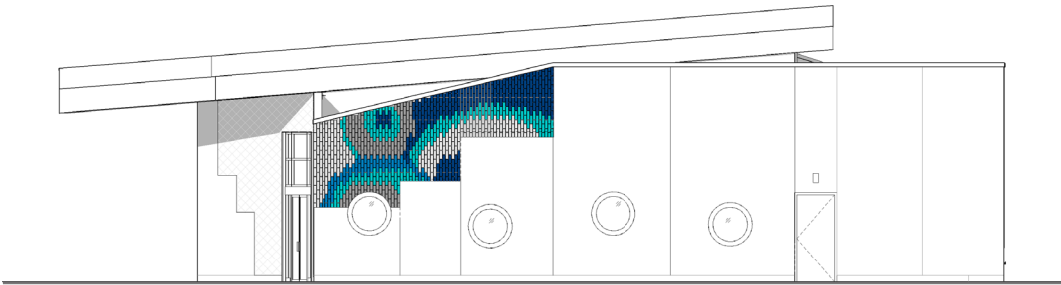


PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

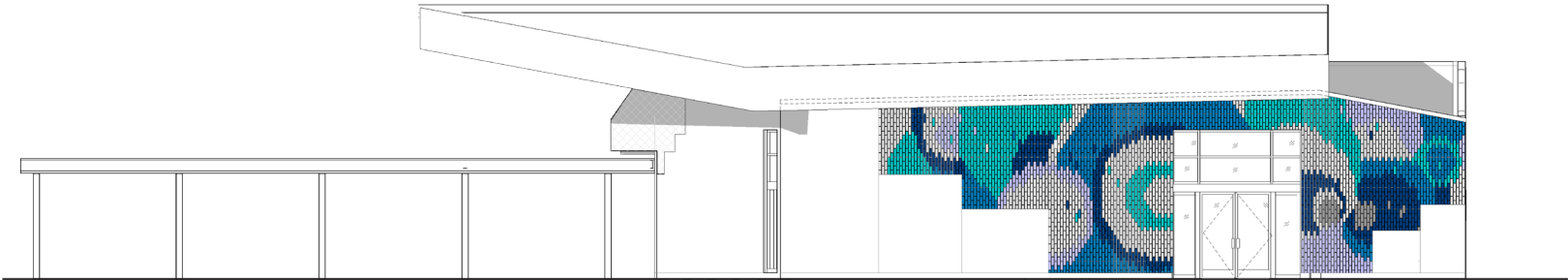
The sensory experience of live music is visualized in a brick tile mural that embellishes the building’s façade. Using a minimal color palette, the patterns illustrate lively sound-waves emanating from the building. Modeled after rippling audio waves, the array illustrates the musical vibrations inside.



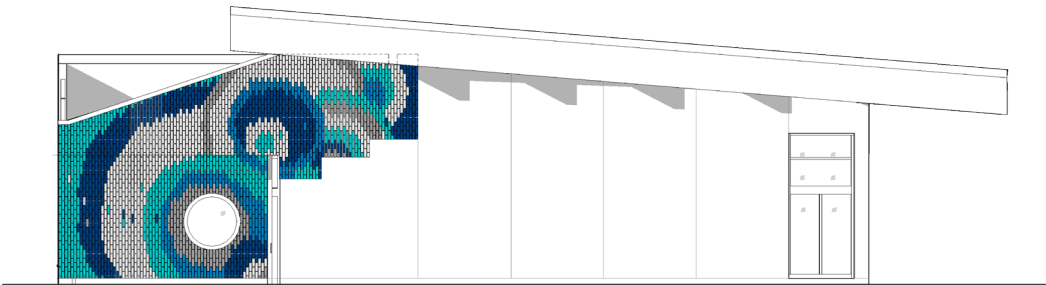
NORTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

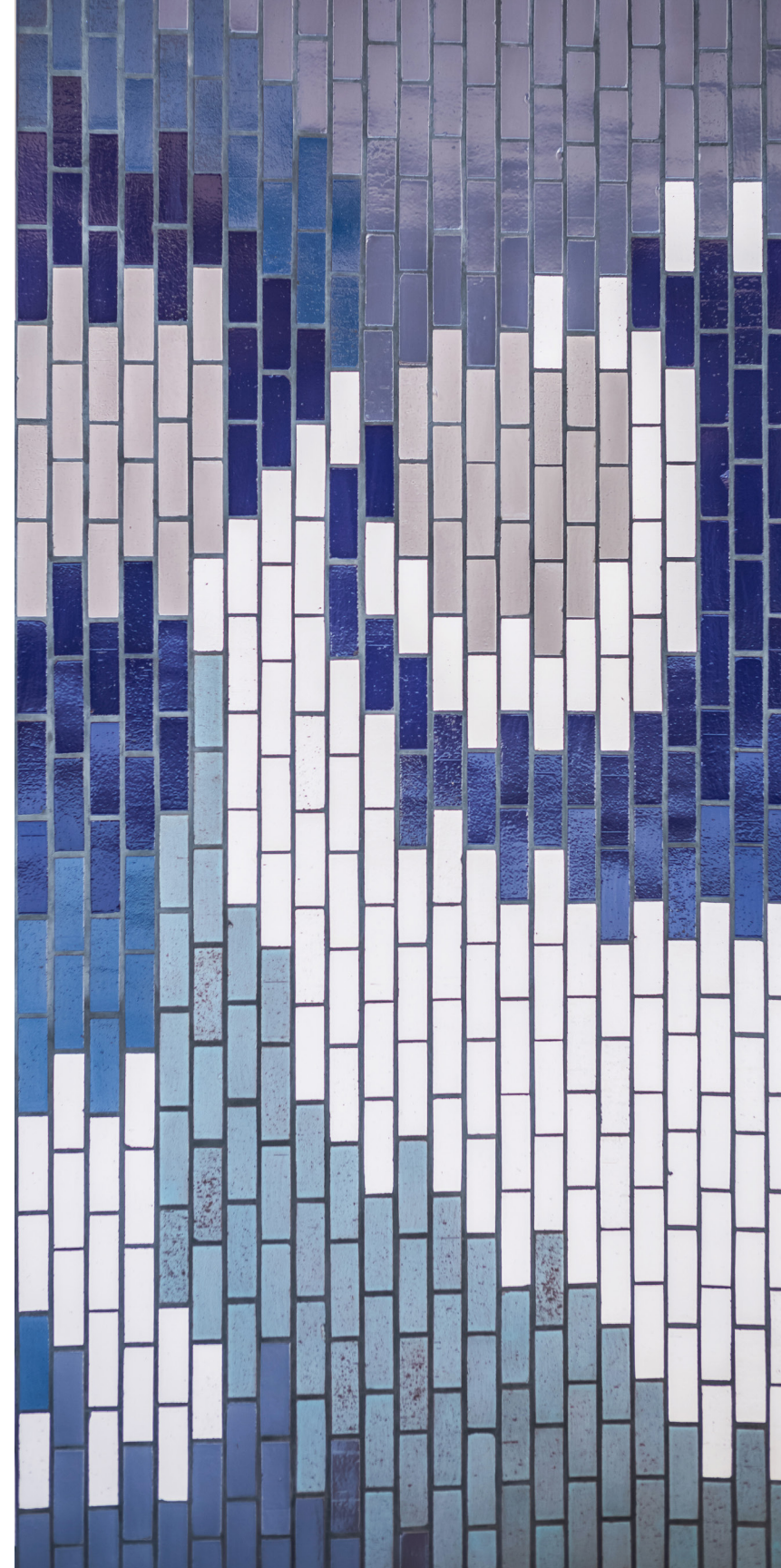


SOUTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION





PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The main driver for design was to create a space that not only integrated with the existing campus, but also had its own communicated identity on a sensory level.

We wanted to capture the idea of music not only through auditory senses, but also visually and with a thoughtful take on materiality. Alternating porthole windows punctuate the sides of the building, adding to the **overall feeling of play and improvisation.**

Opting for the lifespan of durable glazed thin brick, we contacted a **local** California based company that commits to using **sustainable** manufacturing practices and **recycled materials.** We thought extensively about what a building means to be a home, geographical location, and having a tie to the land. In this sense, using clay as a defining characteristic of a new home, made sense to us. It is from the earth, baked strong, and vibrant with color.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Music Building is designed for passive sustainability. The south entrance and west-facing walls are shaded with an extended soffit featuring exposed, natural glulam beams.

The porthole windows on the east offer views of the outdoors while limiting heat. North clerestory windows in the primary classroom let in natural light to reduce the demand on the artificial lighting system, while preventing heat gain.



After many years of making do with inadequate facilities and temporary instructors, the new music building stands proud as a permanent home for high-quality music education at Buena Park Middle School. From acoustic-sensitive material choices, to classroom layout, to the rhythmic and iconic mural playing along the exterior of the building, every space is designed specifically to support music education.

UNINTENDED RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- As the school's pride and joy, the building is now used to host a variety of school and community events beyond the music department.
- The outdoor classroom/performance courtyard supports multi-disciplinary learning with the intersection of science and music.
- The building has become the school's proud photo moment, contributing to enrollment marketing and school pride.
- The new building has drawn the attention of a dedicated music teacher, who has joined the faculty staff as a full-time employee with a dedicated facility for the music program and his own permanent office.

