



TSÉBII'NIDZISGAI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
A HOGAN OF LEARNING





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tsébii'nidzizgai is the original Navajo name for Monument Valley, which translated into English, means "whiteness within the rocks." Monument Valley is a region of the Colorado Plateau that is characterized by a red sand and sage desert with sandstone formations and towering buttes. When the sun shines on the face of sandstone at just the right time of day, the sandstone transforms, and shines with a bright white reflection, thus the whiteness within the rocks.

"WHITENESS WITHIN THE ROCKS"

The San Juan School District opened Tsébii'nidzizgai Elementary School in 2011. The school serves the Navajo Community in picturesque Monument Valley, located on the Utah region of the Navajo Reservation. The 51,800 square foot elementary school houses Pre-K through 6th grade and has a capacity of 375 students. The student body of Tsébii'nidzizgai are primarily Navajo Students, as such the school is interwoven with appropriate traditional Navajo cultural features to provide an integrated educational experience.



PRIMARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

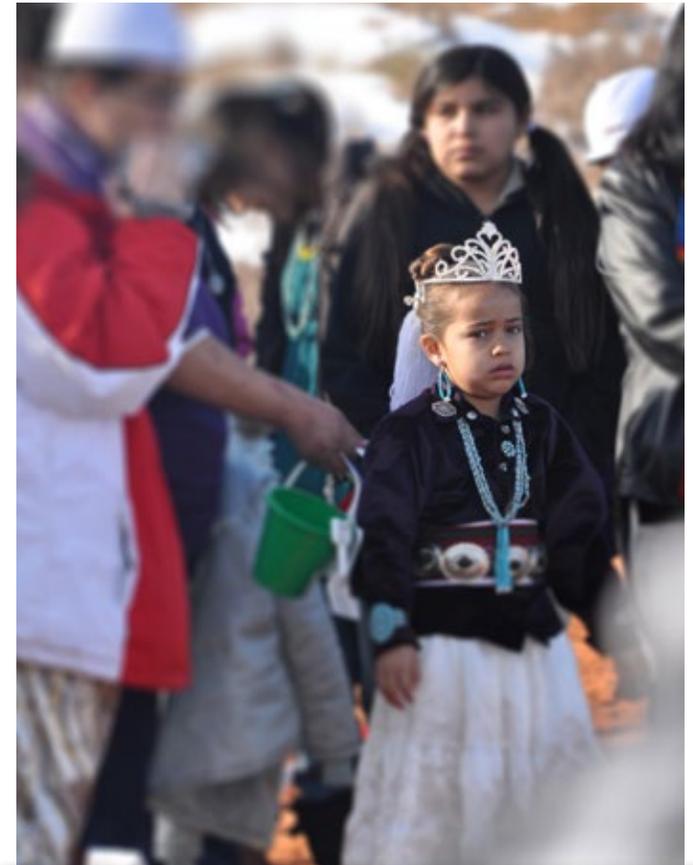
During the consensus process the stakeholder committee established the vision, goals and objectives for the school including:

Students | Focus on students and support their engagement in the educational process. Provide a learning environment that will enhance their educational experience.

Community | Is a welcoming and strong educational center that becomes the heart of the community.

Culture | Integrates Navajo teachings into the design concept of the building, strengthening a sense of identity and pride among students and members of the community.

Setting | Celebrates the stunning natural setting without competing or counterfeiting, create an interior learning environment that is as awe-inspiring as the surrounding natural environment.



“FOCUS ON
STUDENTS”





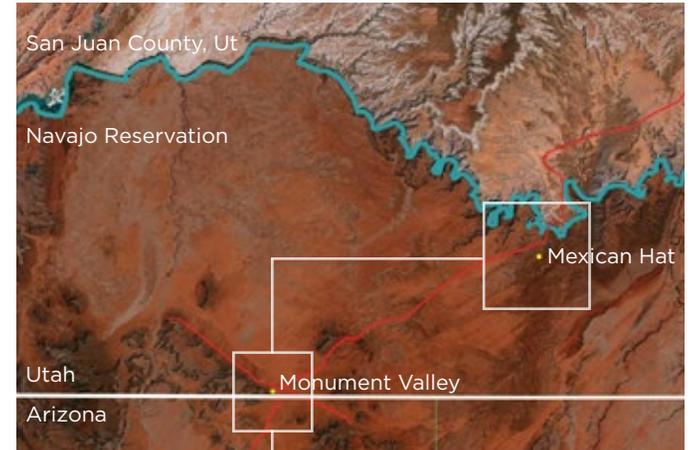
PROJECT INTRODUCTION

History and Location

Before Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School opened in 2011, students were bussed over 20 miles to Mexican Hat Elementary School. Because of the remoteness of the area some students would spend nearly 2 hours each day on the bus. Most of the students attending the Mexican Hat elementary school live in or near the Monument Valley area. In order to bring the school closer to the community it served, and to meet the San Juan School District commitment to provide a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" for every child, the school was moved from the outskirts of the Navajo Nation to the heart of Monument Valley.

Student Needs

The older generations of Navajo are very concerned that their culture and language are slowly disappearing. The youth learn the language less and less, and are not paying attention to Navajo tradition and history. It is becoming increasingly difficult to motivate Navajo youth in cultural traditions and language as English language media and non-Navajo culture flood the reservation.



MONUMENT VALLEY

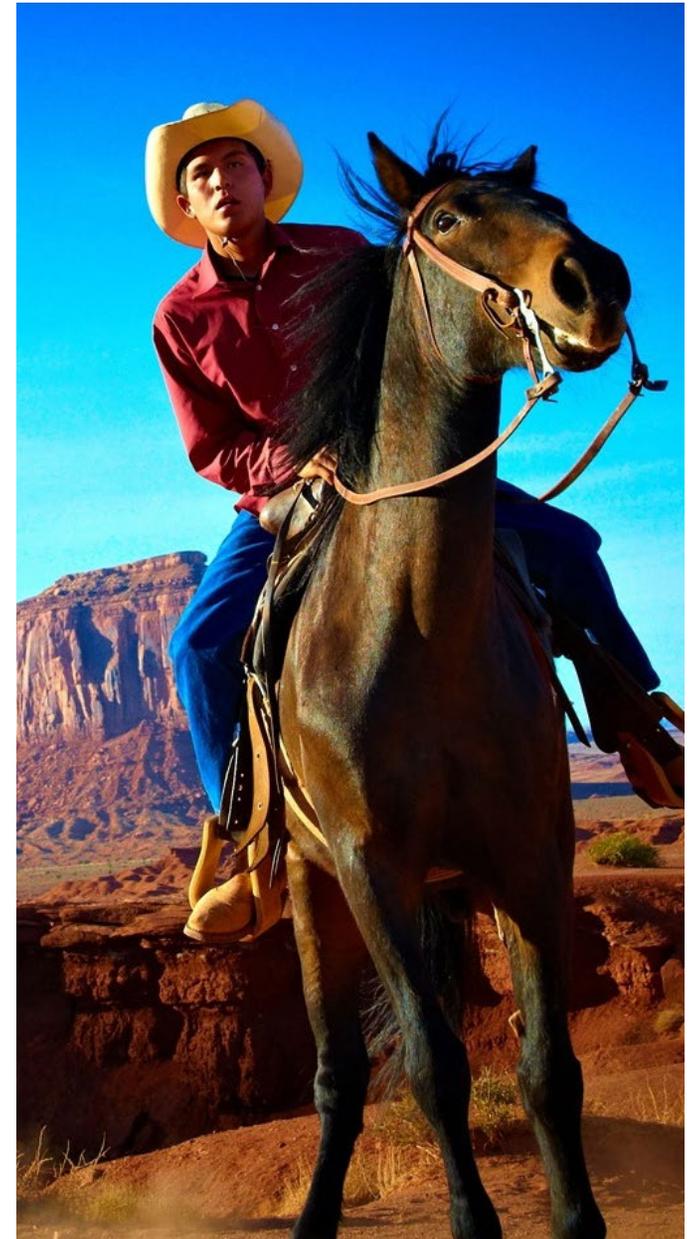
Each learning space in the school is part of a Title I curriculum. To ensure that each student receives instruction that fits his/her diverse needs the school pedagogy focuses on providing individualized targeted instruction.

Scope of Work

The scope of work for the new Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School included an comprehensive range of consulting services, including architectural design, space planning, programming, interior design and landscape design for the 51,800 sf school and 7.6 acre site. Because of the remoteness of the site the scope included improvements that are not typical with an urban area school. The water tank capacity at the district-owned well was increased to provide potable and fire sprinkler water for the school. Teacher housing infrastructure was developed so the district could attract great teachers by having a place to live near the school.

Budget.

The school board approved a \$10 million budget for the school, site development and necessary infrastructure. The final cost of the school was \$9.86 million.







COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING PROCESS

Because the district had the desire for the new Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School to become an integral part of the heart of the Monument Valley community it was critical that the community be engaged in the planning process. The planning process included:

- Stakeholder Visioning
- Interviewing teachers and school personnel
- Community forum meetings
- Navajo culture committee workshops
- Oljato chapter meeting

Stakeholder Visioning

A stakeholder group was established to provide vision and direction for the new school and to reach consensus on the many facets of the design. The stake holder group met regularly during the planning process. During the first meeting the design team lead the stake holder group through a project visioning process. The group established the many facets of the design vision in a fun collaborative way, each following decision was tested against the initial vision statements to ensure the direction continued to



- *Quietly respects its striking natural setting, using design features that are compatible with its environment.*
- *Welcomes and invites building users and visitors with easy accessibility.*
- *Incorporates timeless design principles that will benefit building users far into the future.*
- *Creates an interior learning environment that is as awe-inspiring as the surrounding natural environment.*
- *Focuses on students and supports their engagement in the educational process.*
- *Introduces abundant natural light into the building interior, and maximizes daylighting.*



Environment/Sustainability a project that:

- *Provides an environmentally sensitive response to its location in a desert where resources are scarce. The building should incorporate as many sustainable features as possible within the constraints of the budget.*

meet the vision. The stakeholder group convened often throughout the design process to review the design and give direction. Members of the Stakeholder Group included:

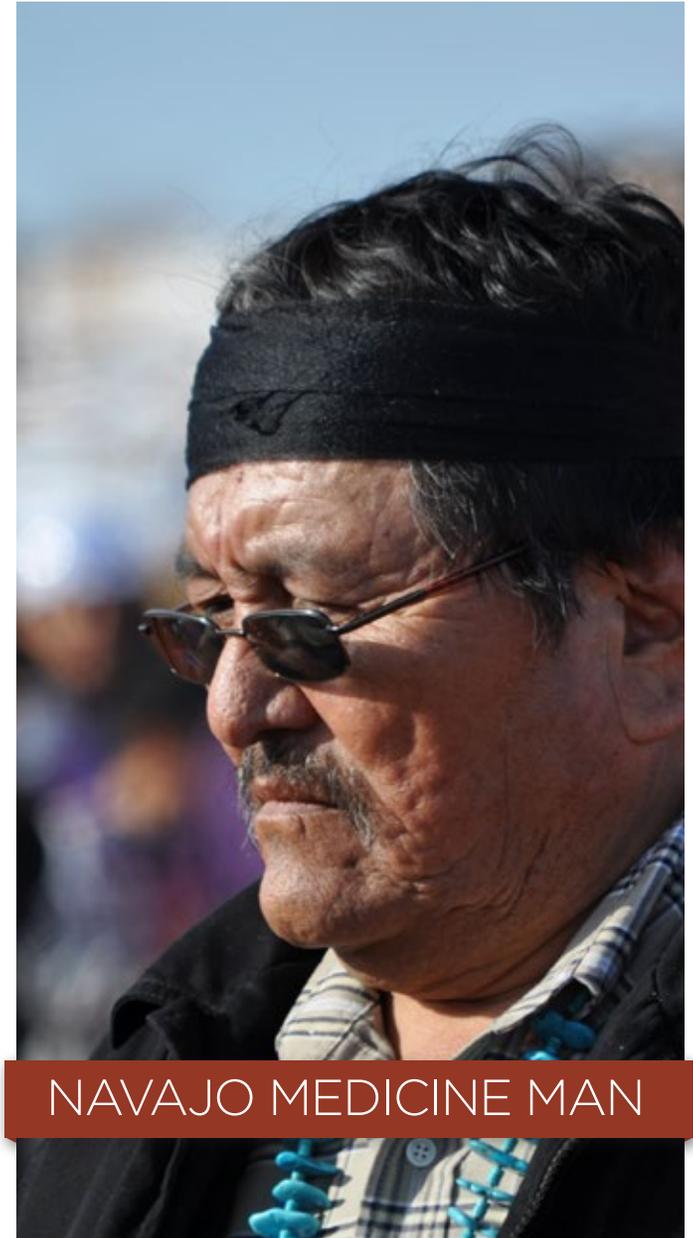
School Board | Superintendent | Business Administrator | Elementary Education
Director | Elementary Principal | Teachers | Parents | Community Leaders

Interviewing teachers and school personnel

The design team spent time interviewing each teacher at the existing Mexican Hat elementary school. School administration and staff were also interviewed. The interviews helped the design team get a clear understanding of how the teachers effectively engage the students in learning activities and what challenges the current space had in supporting those activities. The information was presented to the stakeholder group and a plan to support their learning activities began to develop.

Community Forum Meetings

The district and design team engaged the Monument Valley Community through a series of Community Forum Meetings. Each meeting was held at the high school in Monument Valley, and each member of the community was invited through bulletins, notices to parents and the local chapter house. Early in the design process the community gathered to voice their opinion on where the school should be sited, what amenities it should have and other items. From these meetings the design team learned the desire to have the main entrance facing toward the east, and that one should circulate clockwise through the building. Through the community forum meetings the school district learned of the strong community desire to name the school in Navajo rather than English. They wanted it to be their school and reflect their culture.



NAVAJO MEDICINE MAN

The district turned the naming of the school to the board president, Nelson Yellowman, who is a member of the Monument Valley community. Mr. Yellowman conducted a series of meetings and discussions to gain consensus on the name of the school. Tsébiin'idziszgai, the traditional Navajo word for the Monument Valley area, is the name that was presented to and approved by the school board.

Once concept plans and a school design were conceived they were presented to the community through a forum meeting. The community gave feedback and input which were reflected in final plans. The Navajo tradition is that each person who wishes to speak is allowed, and they are uninterrupted until they are finished. Although this sometimes led to lengthy forum meetings, the result was the design team gaining a full understanding of community opinion regarding the new school. Each person who addressed the group introduced themselves in the traditional Navajo fashion by stating their mother's and father's clan, many recited recent and distant history and all helped the design team make stronger connections to Navajo culture. The result of the community forum meetings was consensus and buy in from the community at large and it generated excitement for the new school.

Navajo Culture Committee

There is a concern with local elders that the younger generation is not connecting to their tradition and culture. They are losing their language, traditional dance, music and ceremonies. A Diné (Navajo) Culture committee was established from world leading Navajo educators and district leaders to collaborate with the design team and teach them appropriate ways to interweave the Navajo Culture into the design of the new school. Through a series of workshops the group collaborated on ways to teach and reflect the rich cultural heritage through the design of the school.

The Diné Culture Committee taught that all Navajo teachings are interrelated. They are organized according to the four directions, the sacred mountains,



[Navajo Culture Workshop]

important mental concepts, the people around you and the life cycle. When you speak of the four directions you begin from the East, circling South, then West and finally North, leading you back to the East, this describes the sun cycle. The cycle concept is entwined throughout Navajo culture, the life cycle, the sun cycle, the cycle of the seasons, the water cycle, and many others are found throughout Navajo tradition and teachings.

Because many traditions are too sacred to reflect in a public school the committee focused on aspects that would be appropriate to display. One of the primary cultural concepts was to consider the school as a Hogan of learning. The Hogan means home, a place to return to. The Hogan is built very carefully in a special manner and with meaning. The Hogan, which always faces East, is made of cedar poles, cedar bark, and earth. When entering a Hogan one follows the sun cycle pattern by beginning in the East and moving through the Hogan in a clockwise (sunwise) direction.

With the broad concept of school as a Hogan of Learning defined, the committee determined the details that would be appropriate for each space.



HERITAGE + LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ELEVATIONS

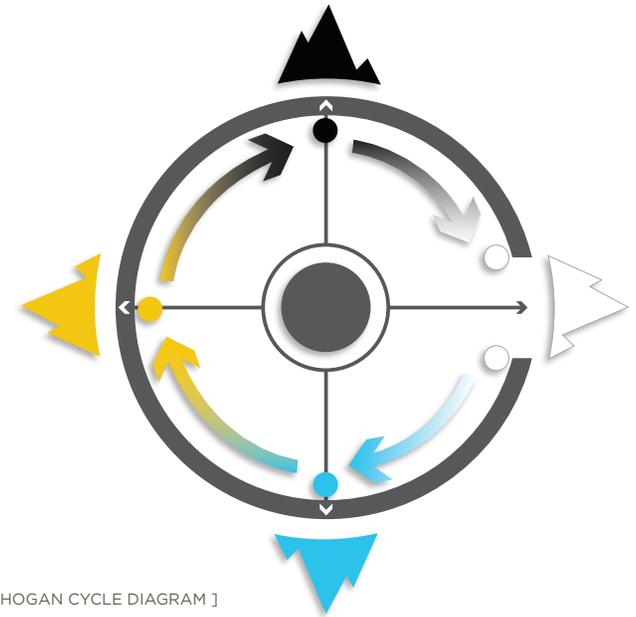


GYMNASIUM ELEVATION EAST

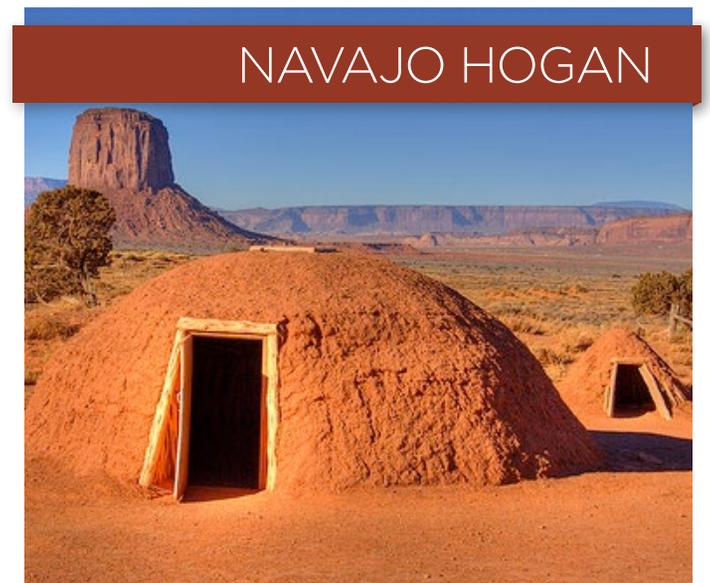


GYMNASIUM ELEVATION NORTH

[NAVAJO CULTURE WORKSHOP DESIGN IDEAS]



[HOGAN CYCLE DIAGRAM]



NAVAJO HOGAN

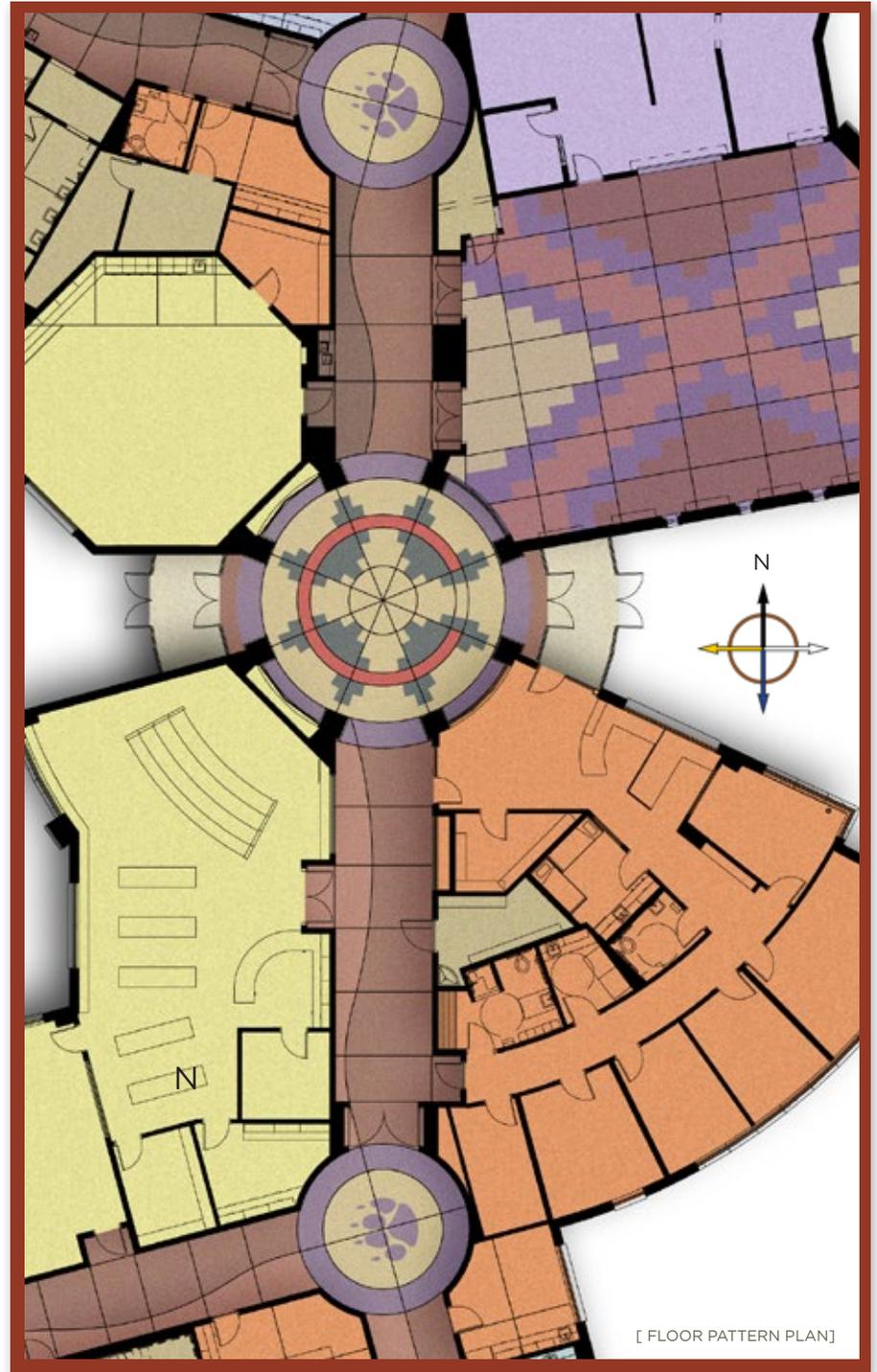
ENTRY ROTUNDA
ELEVATION



[ENTRY ROTUNDA WALL CUSTOM
SCONCE (LIGHT) DESIGNS]



[NAVAJO CULTURE WORKSHOP DESIGN IDEAS]



[FLOOR PATTERN PLAN]

Chapter Meeting

Concept diagrams were presented to the Oljato Chapter House, the Navajo Reservation political equivalent to a city council. This gave the political leaders and the community, especially the elders who are most closely tied to Navajo tradition and culture, a chance to voice their opinion.

Result of Community Engagement

The outcome of the Community Engagement Process was excitement and buy in from the local community. The Monument Valley Community commemorated the ground breaking by attending a medicine man ceremony and school program in the dead of winter. Hundreds flocked to the school to celebrate the grand opening. They celebrated their culture, they celebrated because they felt part of the new school and mostly they celebrated because of what the new school means for the future of their children and grand children.



The community still celebrates the new school by volunteering and tutoring. With the school in the heart of the community, parents and grandparents are able to go to the school and help in reading programs and tutoring, grandfather's and grandmothers come to the school and teach their histories and Navajo Hatałii (Medicine Men) come to the rotunda to teach culture and the Navajo creation story. The community engagement process and completion of the school have helped to heal tension that may have existed in the past between some members of the community and the school district.





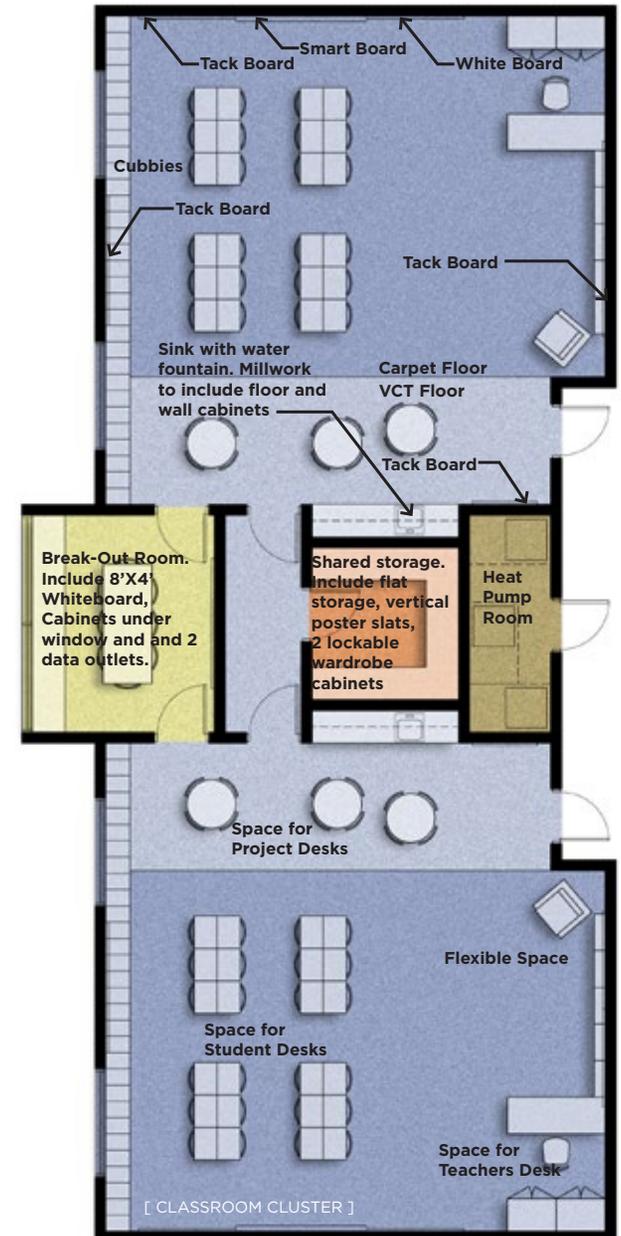


EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The Classroom Cluster

The primary educational environment in the school is the classroom cluster. Careful attention was made to develop the cluster building block to support the school pedagogy completely. The two teachers for each grade work very closely together, they develop lesson plans together, intermingle their classes and coordinate throughout each day. With the small class sizes and ample classrooms, the teachers have the flexibility to collaborate on project based learning. What the students needed most was a place for quiet, individual and small group tutoring and a place to work with Title I interventionists.

The classroom cluster was designed to meet the needs of the students and teachers. The hub of the cluster is the shared intervention room. The intervention room is a break-out space that is shared between the two grade level classrooms. This provides the opportunity for an interventionist to tutor students from both classrooms together. When not used by interventionists the space is used for small group activities, quiet individual learning, conferencing and teacher collaboration. The walls between the intervention room and the classrooms are glass so teachers can always oversee the students they are responsible for.





“ The intervention rooms are wonderful and are used daily for multiple purposes. ”
-Amy Kensley, Teacher

[INTERVENTION ROOM]

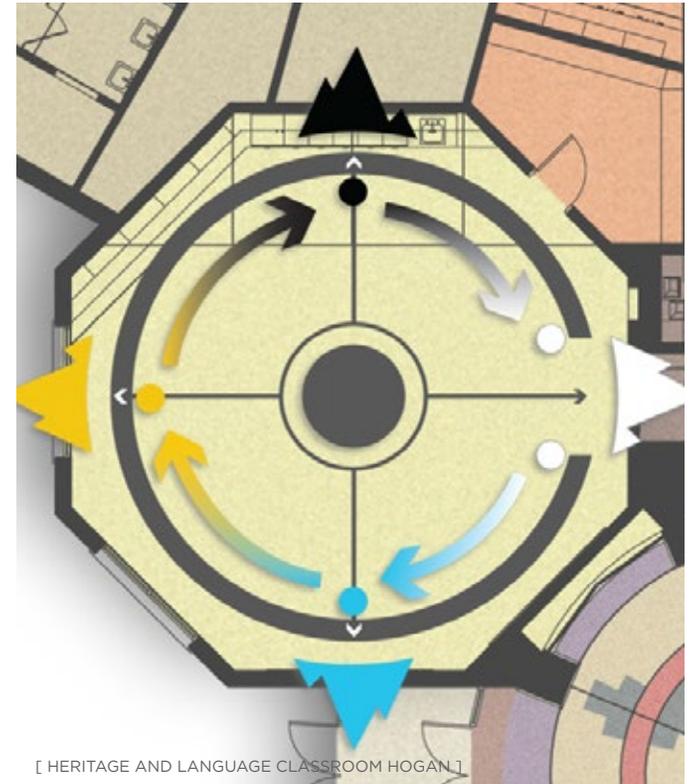


Diné (Navajo) Heritage and Language classroom

The heart of the Navajo cultural education takes place in the heritage and language classroom. It is designed as a contemporary eight-sided hogan. It is the place where the students learn the language, dance, music, and art of the Navajo. In the classroom the four directions are indicated by icons of the four sacred mountains, a rainbow rings the room with an opening at the east doorway, and the ceiling is constructed with the traditional cedar building material. The heritage and language classroom is a learning laboratory where the students connect to the tradition and culture of the Navajo people.

“ This building gives support to the Navajos way of life, beliefs and symbols. The structure of the building in every way supports the Navajo peoples way of living. It’s like a monument added to all the other monuments. ”

-Clayton Long, Director Bilingual Education



[HERITAGE AND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM HOGAN]



[HERITAGE AND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM CEILING IS OF CEDAR, A TRADITIONAL NAVAJO HOGAN MATERIAL]



[SACRED MOUNTAIN LEARNING ELEMENT]



[HERITAGE AND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM HOGAN]

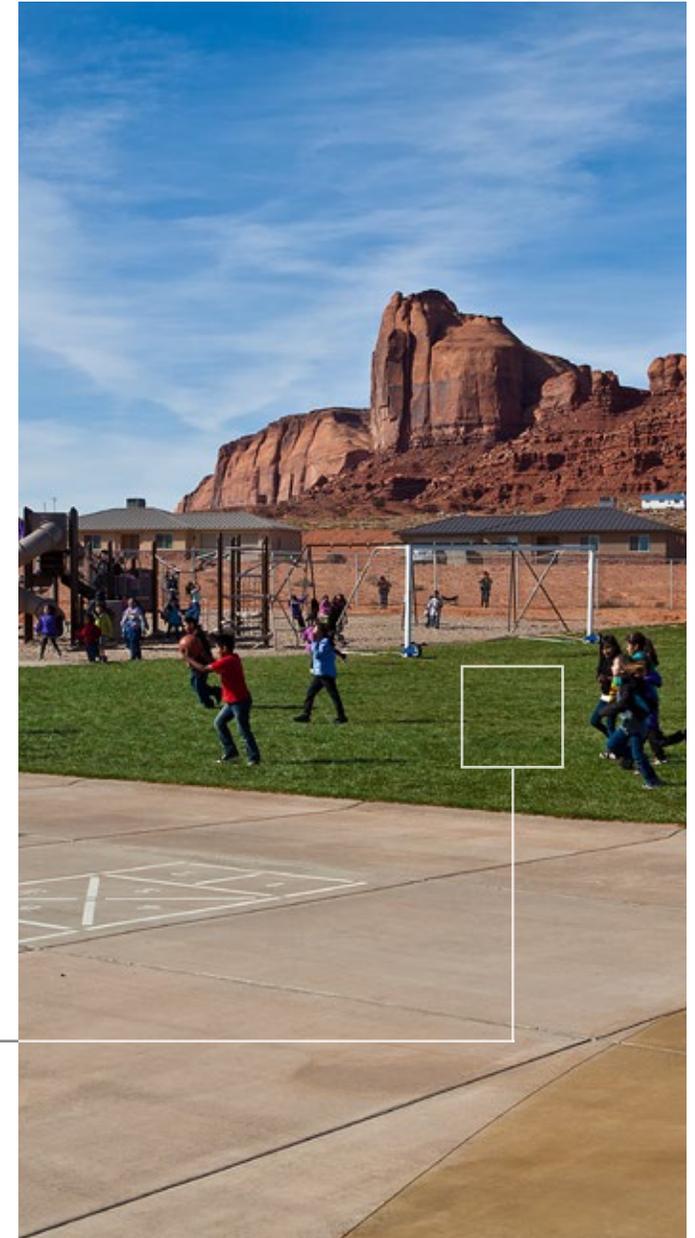


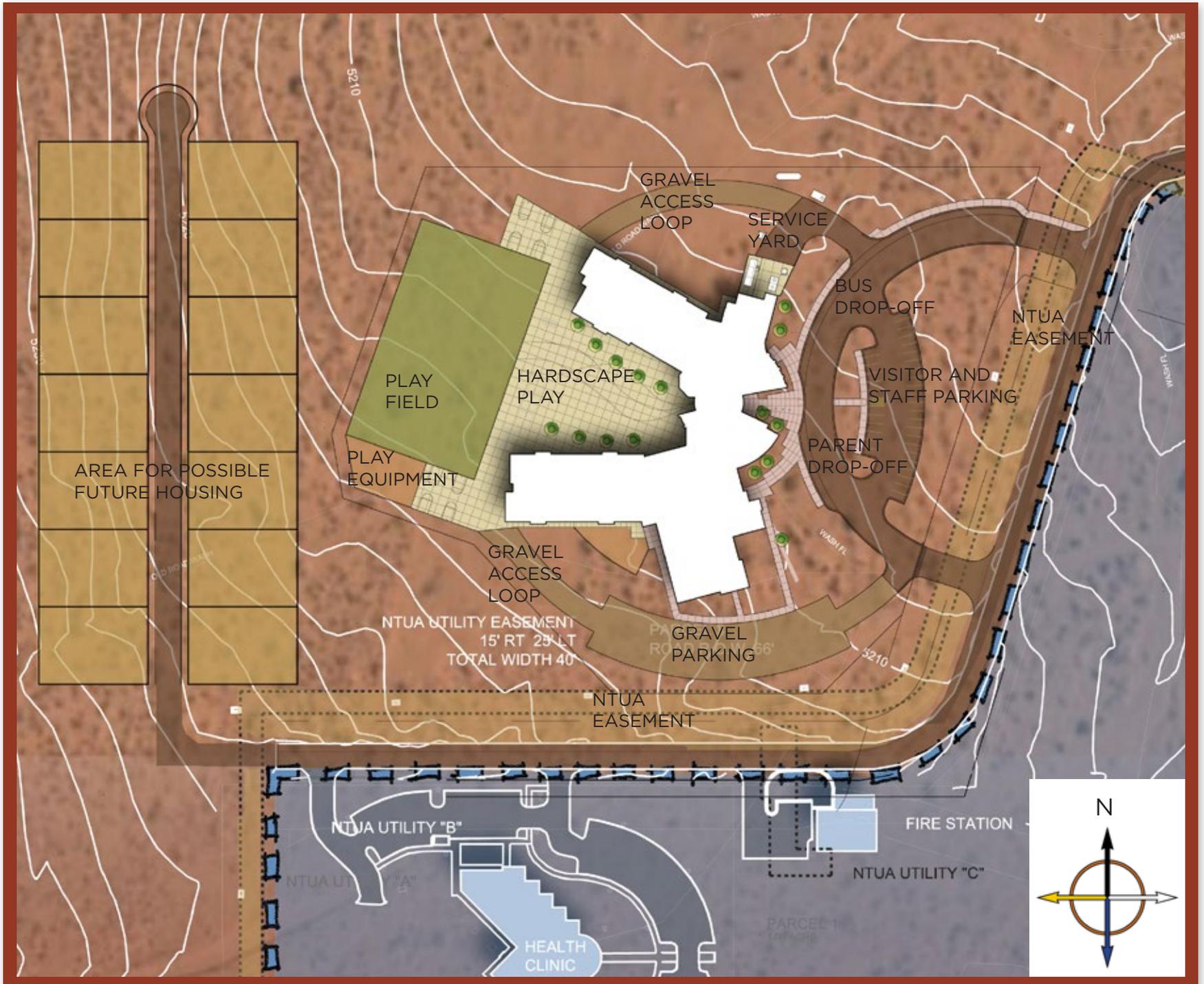


PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Site

Tsébii'nidzsigai Elementary School is located in remote Monument Valley, Utah. Monument Valley is a region of the Colorado Plateau that is characterized by a red sand and sage desert with sandstone formations and towering buttes. The beauty of Monument Valley is world renowned, as such, nearly 500,000 tourists pass by the site each year. To protect the students from tourist traffic the public front of the school faces toward highway 163. The outdoor play and learning activities take place privately behind the school, out of view of visitors. The lawn area on the site is limited to a play field to help the facility fit into the surroundings by practicing xeriscaping principles. Aside from student play, lawn is an unnecessary luxury in the desert. The classroom wings enclose an outdoor learning and play plaza, the wings help create shelter from the hot sun, blustery wind and the occasional desert sandstorm.



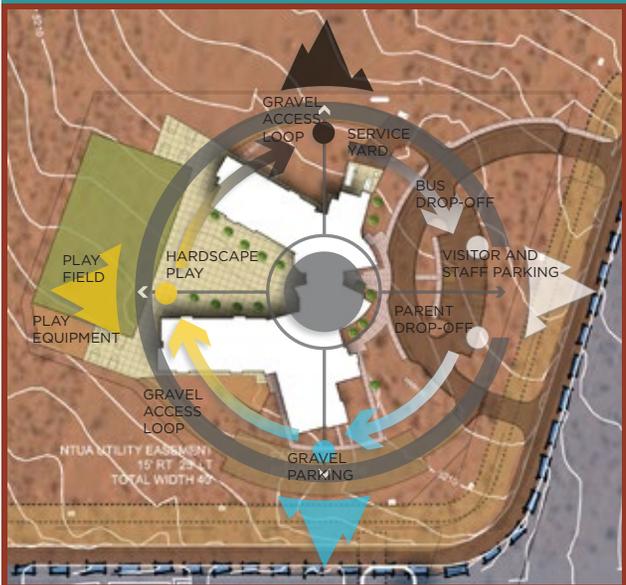


[TSÉBII'NIDZISGAII ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE PLAN]

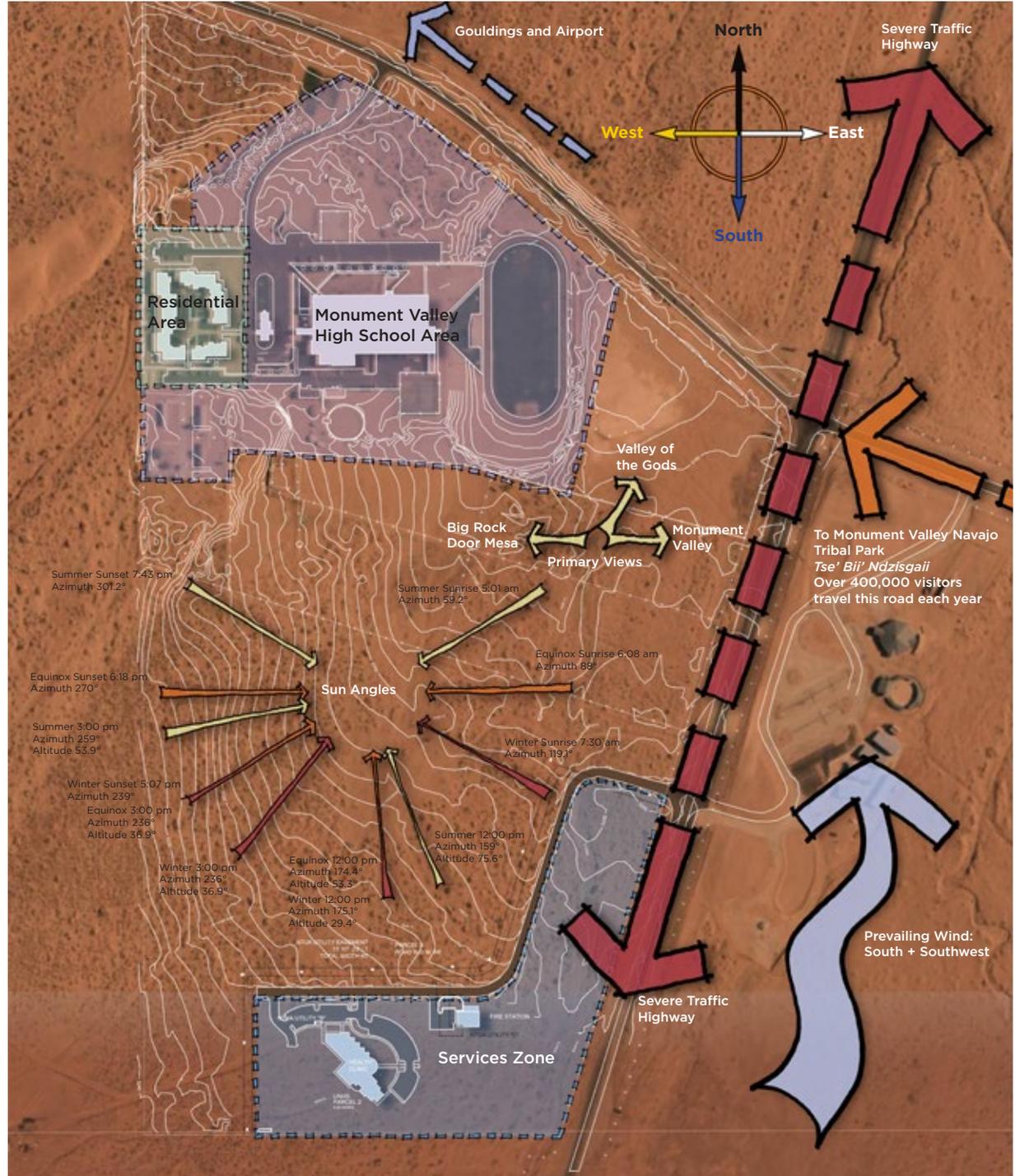


Beauty radiates within me
 There is beauty before me
 There is beauty behind me
 There is beauty below me
 There is beauty above me
 There is beauty all around me
 There is beauty again
 There is beauty again
 There is beauty again
 There is beauty again

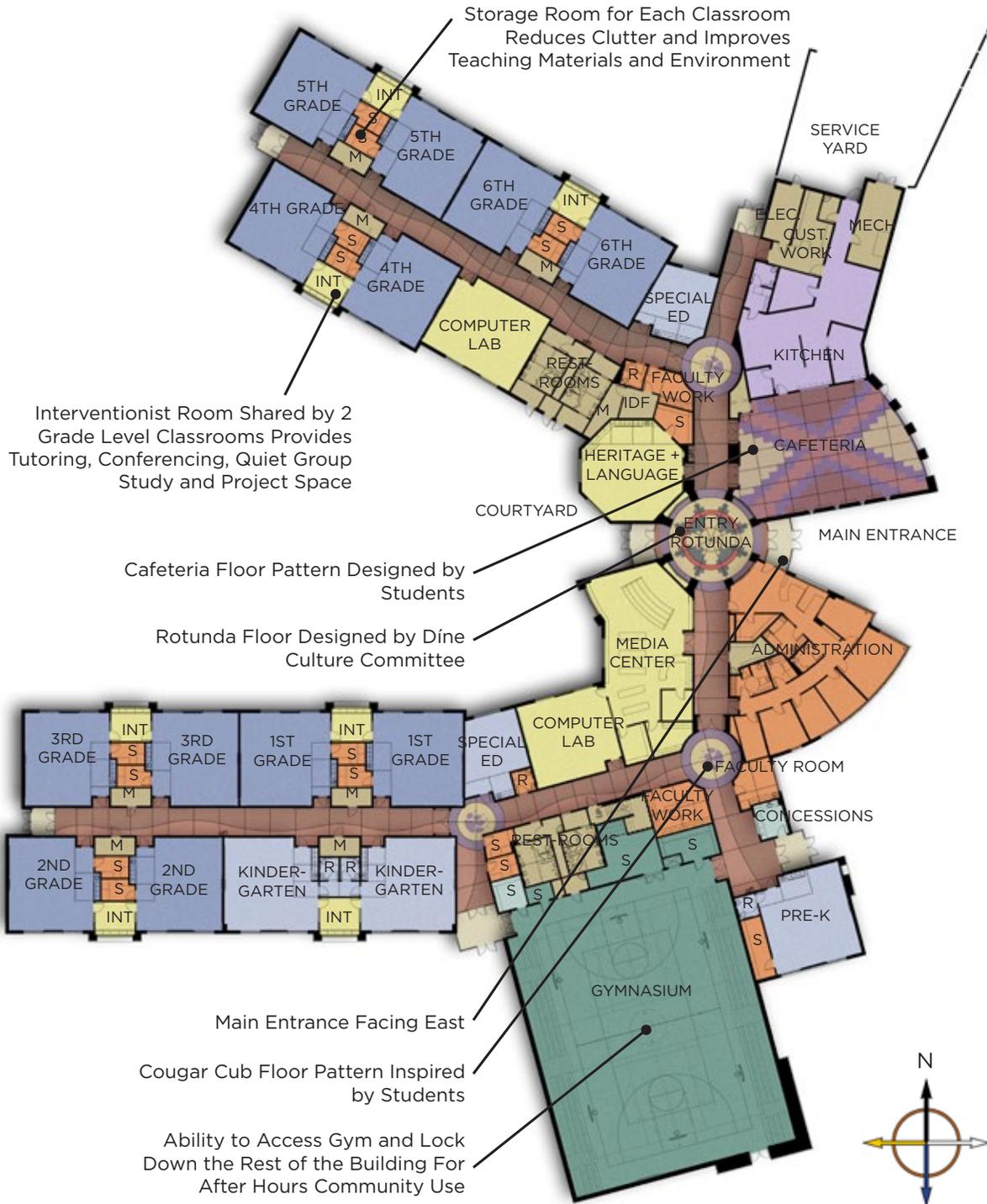
From the 'Blessing Way' Navajo Ceremony



[SITE ORGANIZATION FOLLOWS HOGAN CYCLE]

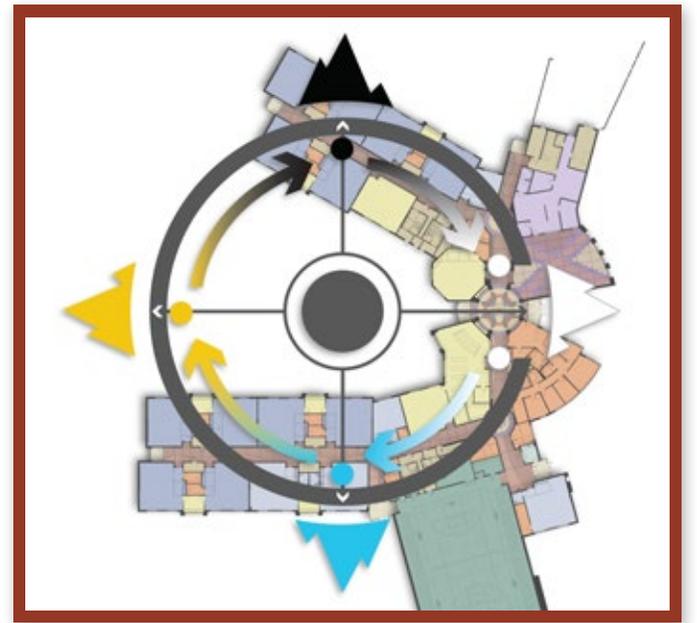


[TSÉBII'NDZISGAI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE ANALYSIS]



“ Tsébiin'ndizisgai Elementary is the hub of education for Pre-K-6 grade students. It's where they learn, socialize and come together for community activities. It is a key building for the community.”

-Clayton Long, Director Bilingual Education



School Plan

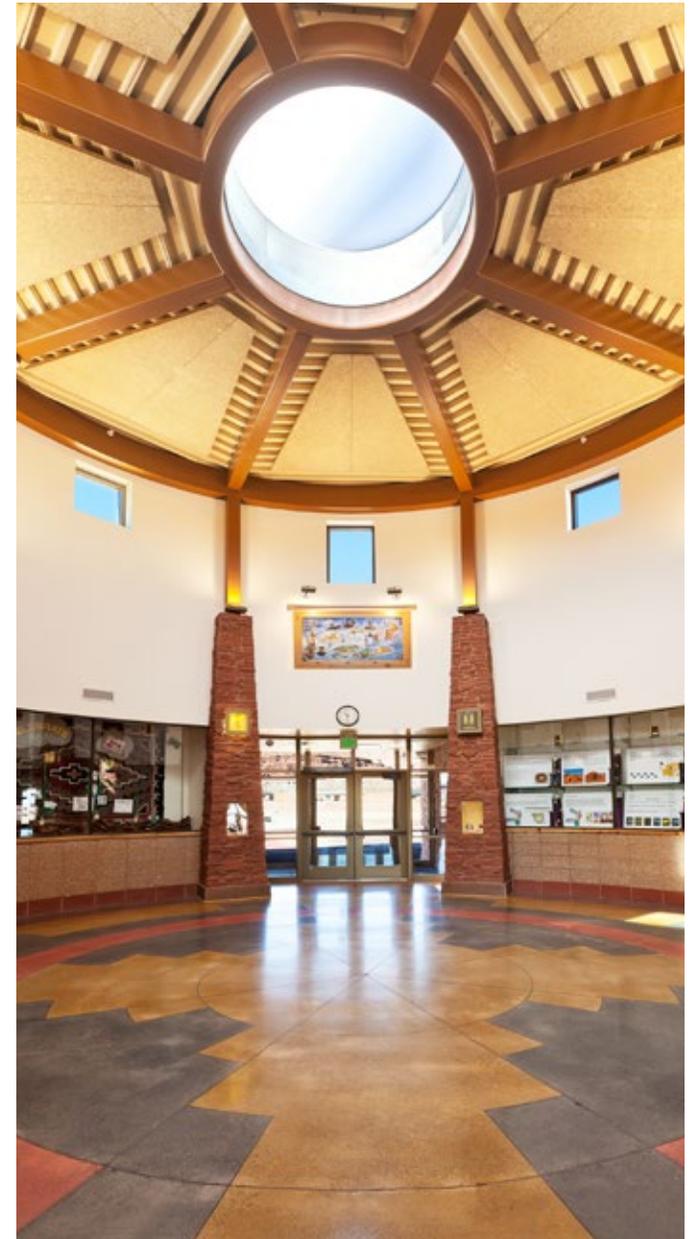
The Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School plan is organized to be a Hogan of Learning. On the first day of kindergarten, students enter the East door and move toward the South where the Kindergarten - 3rd grades are located. They play toward the west and continue their learning cycle with 4-6 grades located toward the West and north. Upon finishing their elementary school experience a student will leave through the east door, completing their cycle.

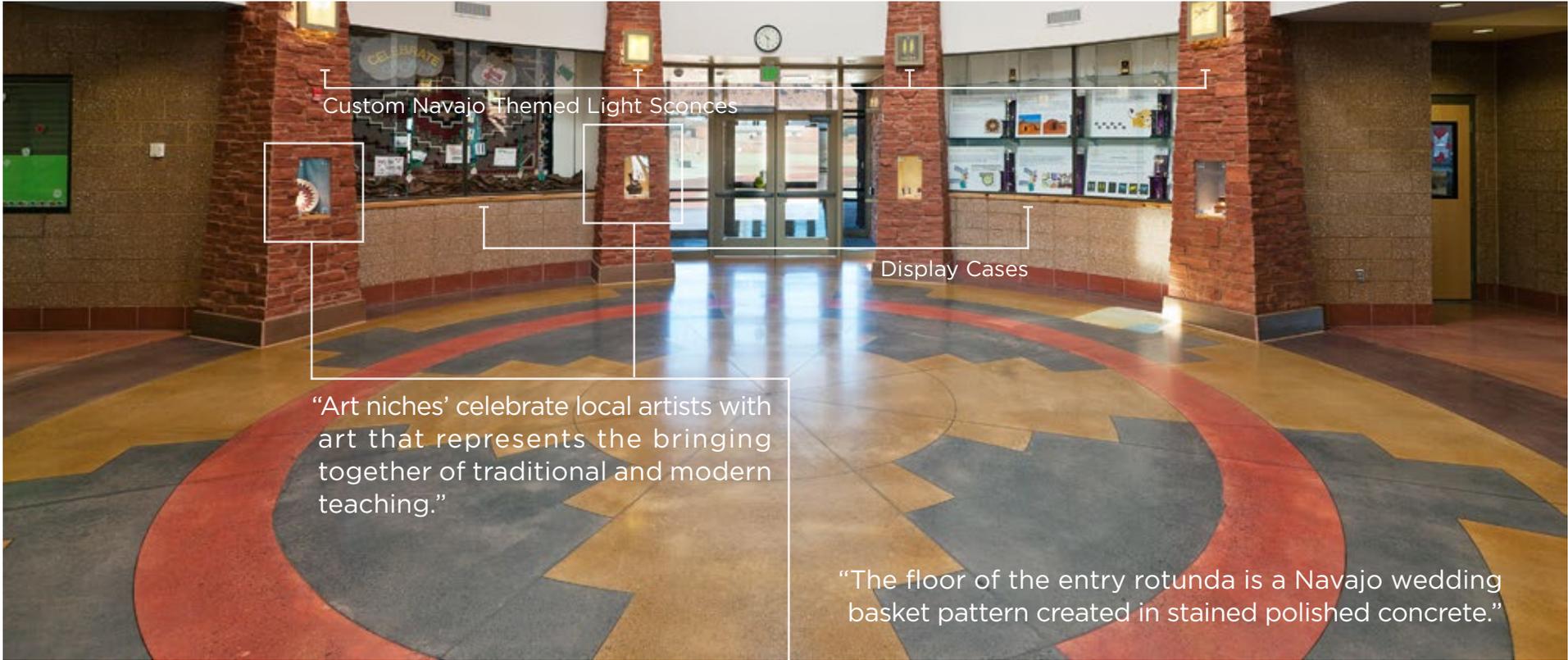
Entry rotunda

The entry rotunda is the heart of the school. It is a formal Hogan designed to celebrate Navajo culture. The floor of the entry rotunda is a Navajo wedding basket pattern created in stained polished concrete. The concrete floors are made from aggregate extracted from the earth and are a reminder of the traditional dirt floor in a Hogan. The four cardinal points of the compass are highlighted through windows which reveal the sky, custom wall sconce designs and traditional colors in painted niches and display areas. There are many places to display cultural elements in the rotunda. Art niches' celebrate local artists with art that represents the bringing together of traditional and modern teaching. The custom wall sconce designs represent, Mother Earth, Father Sky, life, health, food, spirituality, and livelihood. A skylight in the center of the rotunda reveals the sky and hearkens to the opening in the center of a traditional hogan. The rotunda is the heart of many important school functions, it is the gateway to the Heritage and Language Classroom, Cafeteria, Media center and main office.

“ The Hogan in the middle of the school is the hub of all the surrounding wings and rooms. It's like the heart of the whole building. It tells me that learning starts in the Hogan and then it goes outside. ”

-Clayton Long, Director Bilingual Education





Custom Navajo Themed Light Sconces

Display Cases

“Art niches’ celebrate local artists with art that represents the bringing together of traditional and modern teaching.”

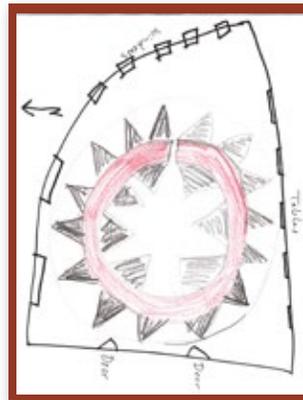
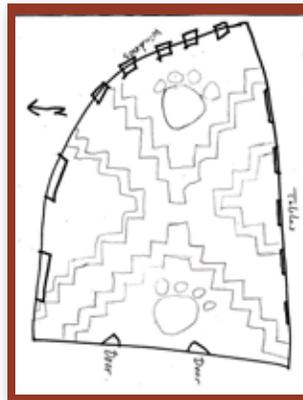
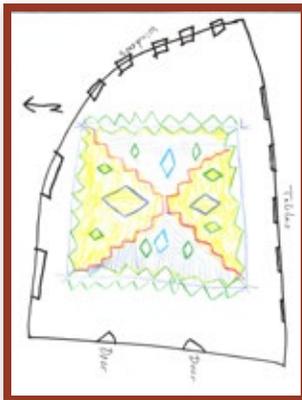
“The floor of the entry rotunda is a Navajo wedding basket pattern created in stained polished concrete.”



Cafeteria

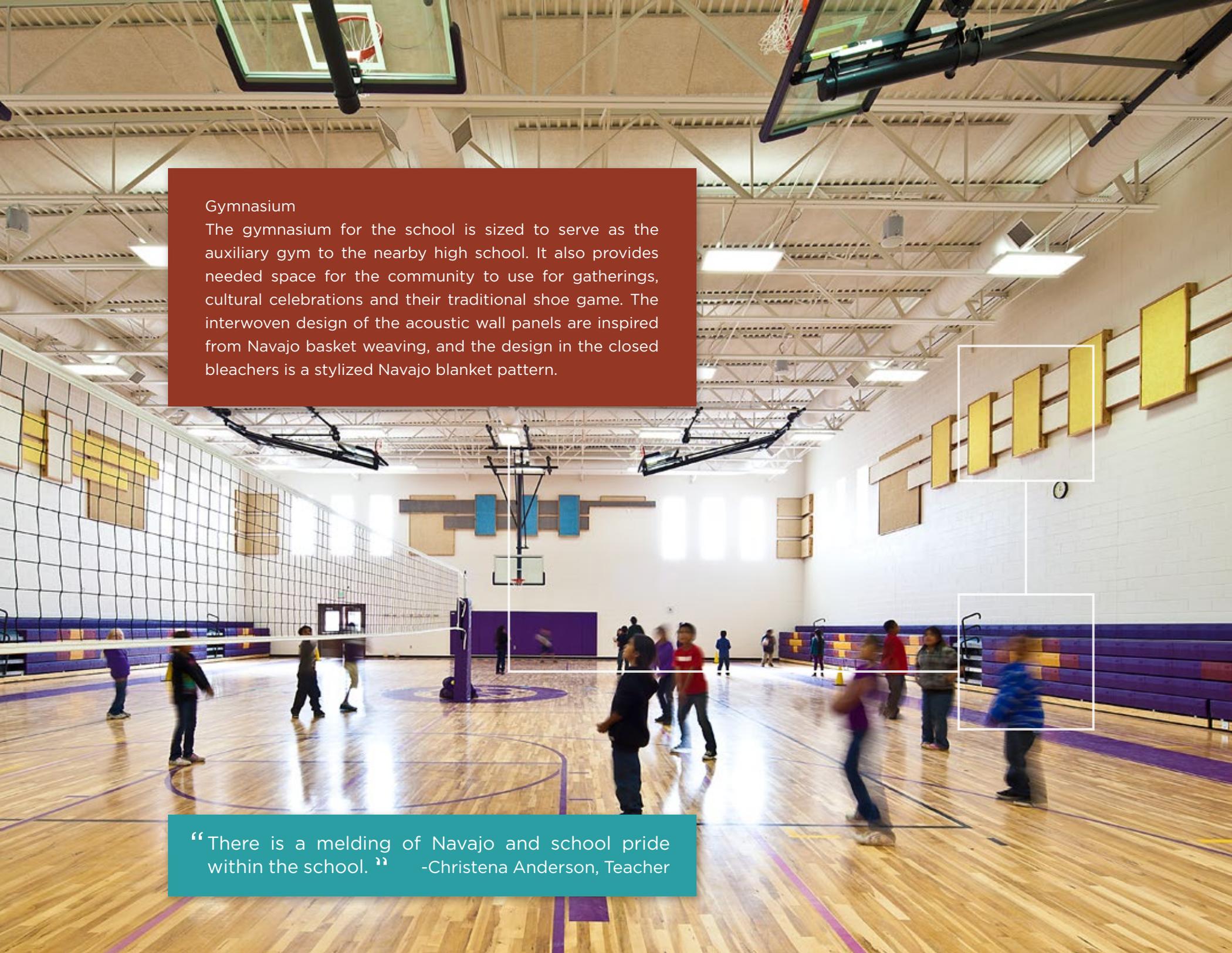
The cafeteria has picture windows oriented toward the East. In addition to revealing a view of the desert buttes and pinnacles that made the region famous, the East facing windows allow the many students who eat breakfast at the school to enjoy the meaningful sun rise welcoming each new day. The floor pattern in the cafeteria is stained concrete with a stylized Navajo rug design inspired by student art. The cougar cub (school mascot) footprints in the corridors were also student ideas. The accent colors on the walls, ceilings and in the mill-work were all determined by the Navajo Culture committee to remind students of cultural ideas.

STUDENT DESIGNS FOR CAFETERIA FLOOR PATTERN



THE FLOOR PATTERNS WERE CREATED FROM A MIXTURE OF STUDENT IDEAS





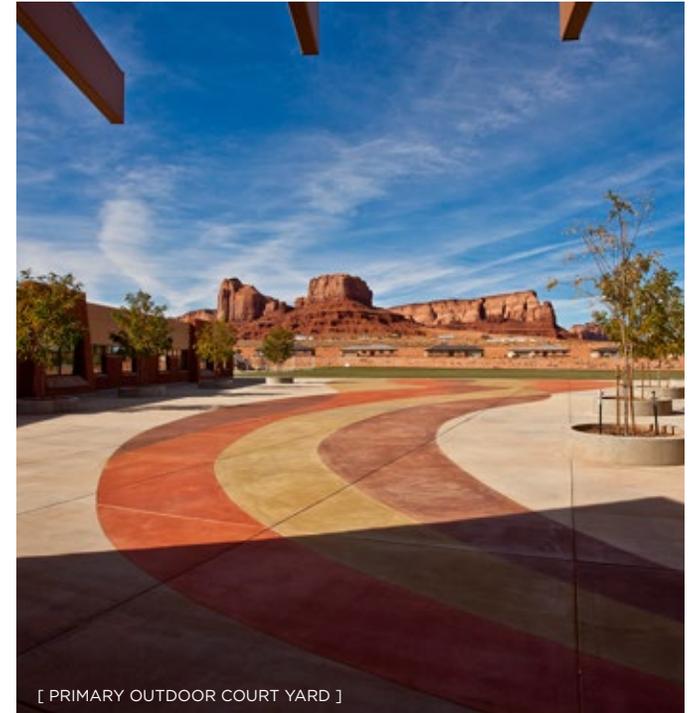
Gymnasium

The gymnasium for the school is sized to serve as the auxiliary gym to the nearby high school. It also provides needed space for the community to use for gatherings, cultural celebrations and their traditional shoe game. The interwoven design of the acoustic wall panels are inspired from Navajo basket weaving, and the design in the closed bleachers is a stylized Navajo blanket pattern.

“There is a melding of Navajo and school pride within the school.”
-Christena Anderson, Teacher



[MASSING AT FRONT ENTRANCE COURTYARD]



[PRIMARY OUTDOOR COURT YARD]

Aesthetic

The material and massing of Tsébií'nidzizgai Elementary School are designed to reflect the fins and buttes in the region. The colors were carefully selected to compliment the sandstone desert environment. The school does not compete with or mimic the majesty of the adjacent landscape, rather it compliments it by its simplicity and desert appropriate design.

“ I see Tsébií'nidzizgai as the pride of the Navajo people. It's definitely the showcase of the Navajo Nation.”

-Clayton Long, Director Bilingual Education



[FRONT OF SCHOOL, DOOR MASA BEYOND]



[DESERT SETTING OF TSÉBII'NIDZISGAÍ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL]



[MAIN ENTRY TSÉBII'NIDZISGAI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL]

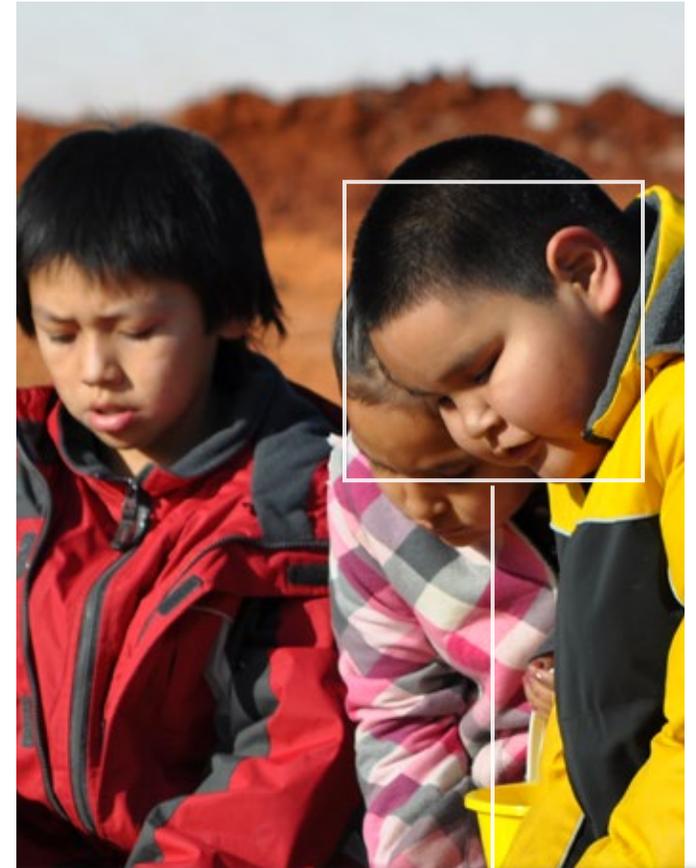




RESULTS OF THE PROCESS AND PROJECT

The community engagement process helped those in the community become part of the planning process for their new elementary school. The welcoming design and unique character of the building create a pleasant atmosphere for community members to enjoy as they go to the school to volunteer, tutor, or participate in community events. Tsébií'nidziszgai elementary school is a unique learning environment which focuses on students and supports a variety of elementary school learning activities and empowers them to explore their culture and tradition.

Tsébií'nidziszgai is the original Navajo name for Monument Valley which translated into English means whiteness within the rocks. When the sun shines on the face of sandstone, the sandstone transforms, and shines with a bright white reflection. Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School is a place where each child is transformed through education and cultural experience. This educational foundation sets each child on the pathway toward a bright future where each can shine. Tsébií'nidziszgai Elementary School is a place that reflects the brightness within each child.



“ The cultural features have really added a supportive element for students. They are a lot more curious about their heritage, and are showing more cultural pride in themselves instead of trying to be like “everyone else.” ”

-Amy Kensley, Teacher