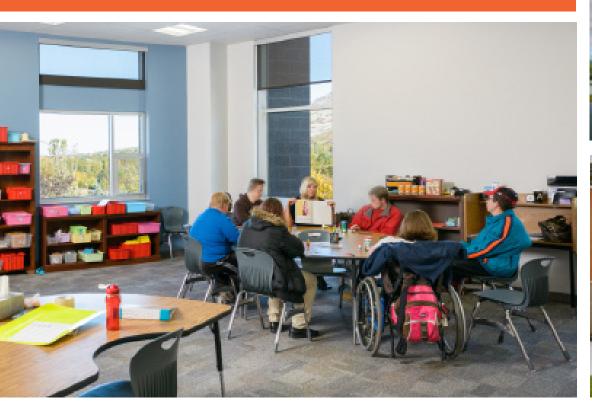


2014 JAMES MACCONNELL AWARD







VISTA EDUCATION CAMPUS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The new Vista Educational Campus (VEC) is an exceptional facility specifically planned and designed to serve the students of the Davis School District who have special needs. The school environment is a pleasant balance of the intersection between an engaging 21st century learning and careful design features which support students with special needs. The result truly is a barrier-free environment that is active and engaging school that supports each student as they transition to responsible independence.

The school runs four unique programs to serve high school aged students with special needs - STEPS, MAPS, STAR and STRIDE. The building's unique design supports these four individual programs. The spaces are organized to allow each program to function individually while being part of the whole school. Each program has its own dedicated learning community and there are several shared spaces around the town center that are organized to facilitate student exploration.

The VEC replaced the old Vista School on the same site through a series of demolition and construction phases. Careful planning led to a reduction of disturbance to student routine and promoted safety though the construction process.

The planning process began by engaging stakeholders through a series of workshops and discussions to develop consensus on vision and project goals. The stakeholders also combined their expertise to envision a school that is specifically tailored to meet a variety of requirements for students with special needs while implementing principles to support 21st century learning engagement.

The completed campus is an active learning environment that supports collaboration, interaction, learning by doing and discovery. All aspects of the school help students learn the skills and abilities necessary to transition to a responsible independent lifestyle.



SCOPE OF WORK

The campus serves high school students with special needs in the 66,600-student Davis School District. They range from ninth grade up to 22 years old. Most of the school district's students with special needs attend their local school as part of an extensive inclusion plan which provides the least restrictive environment to meet the individual education plans for each student. The campus provides an option for students and parents who desire attention and programs beyond those offered by the neighborhood high school.

The original school began its life in the early 1960s as a community elementary school. As the community evolved and needs changed, a larger elementary school was constructed. In the late 1980s the vacant elementary became the home for the district's high school-aged students with special needs. Since that time, the faculty and staff have made due with the elementary school spaces and have provided exceptional care and individualized education despite the challenge of not having a space specifically designed to support students with special needs. Through a series of demolition and construction phases the new VEC replaced the existing school on-site while maintaining use of the campus. The school had nearly 250 students at the onset of planning and now the new campus is designed for 350 students.



STAR

(Students Transitioning to Adult Responsibilities)

The STAR program serves posthigh school students 18 to 22 years old with mild to moderate learning disabilities. The program provides individualized education and training, with focus on daily living skills and employability.

STEPS

(Students Transitioning for Educational & Personal Success)

The STEPS program serves ninth grade through 22-year-old students who have moderate to severe intellectual, cognitive and/or physical disabilities. It focuses on transitioning from high school to adult life and independence through improving daily living skills and employability.

PROGRAMS

The Vista Education Center houses the four Davis School District programs that have been carefully developed to meet the specific educational, physical, behavioral and emotional needs of high school aged students with special needs. The four programs are:

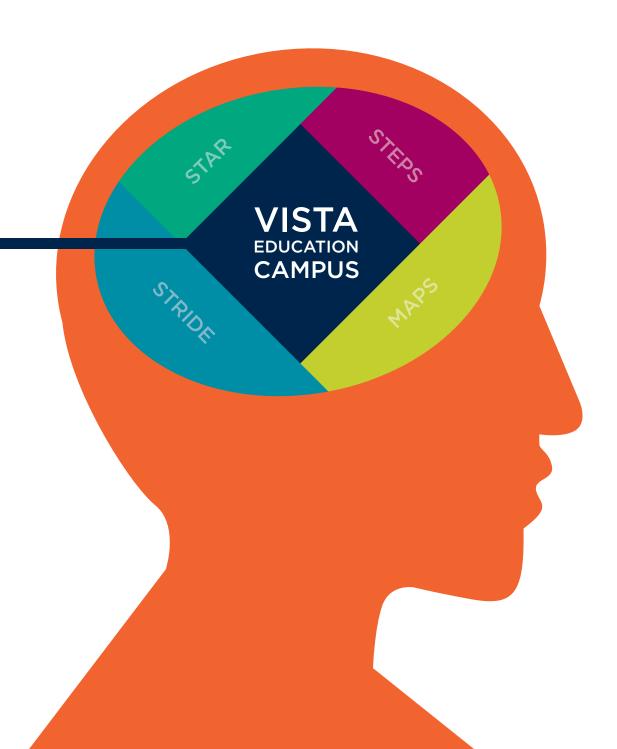
MAPS

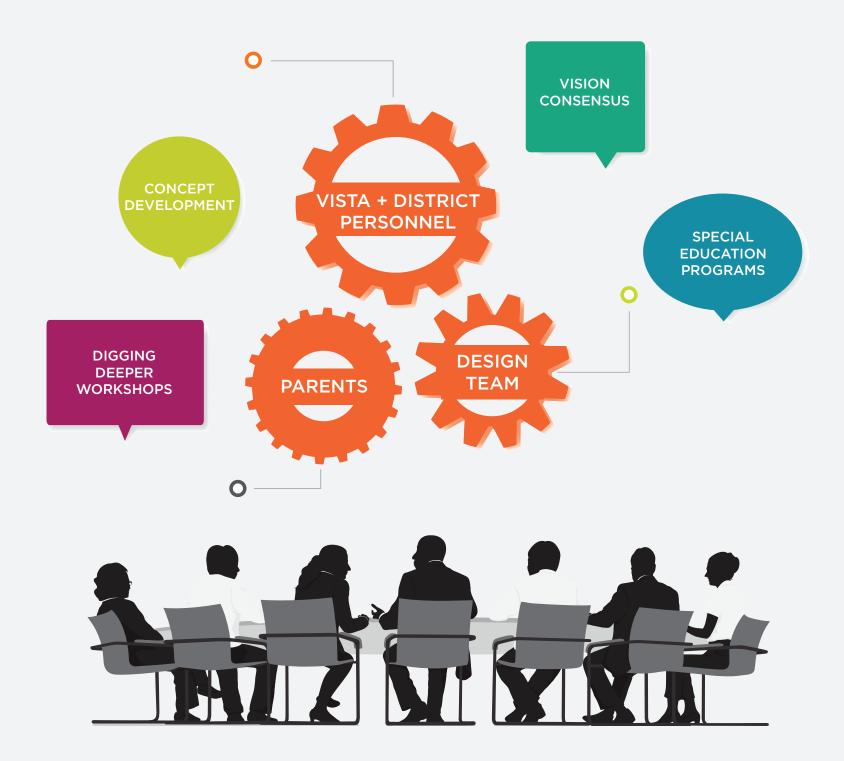
(Making Advancements toward Personal Success)

The MAPS program serves ninth grade to 22-year-old students who are severely medically fragile and/ or severely cognitively challenged. The program focuses on individual progress toward personal success and quality of life.

STRIDE

(Students Transitioning and Reaching for Independent Direction in Education)
The STRIDE program serves ninth grade to 22-year-old students who display moderate to severe cognitive and behavioral disabilities. It is individualized for specific student needs with a focus on learning the





ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Because the campus serves so many students across the school district, it has a non-traditional school community. Generally a school community includes the students, parents, teachers, residents, local businesses and civic resources in a neighborhood or town. The geographic area VEC serves encompasses all of Davis County which includes eight high school communities. The community includes the same

groups as a traditional school, only most residents, local businesses and municipalities tend to focus on their local community high school. This gives the school the unique opportunity to focus most of its attention on the needs of the each student and utilize the support and resources of the entire county.

The Davis School District has a vast special education community. It is comprised of the district's special education director and specialists, district medical and nursing departments, special education teachers, para-educators and aides from each school and, most importantly, the students and their parents.

STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders involved in planning came primarily from the high school aged special education community, specifically those involved in the existing Vista School. The Stakeholders included:

- District Director of Special Education
- District Facilities Management and Planning Director
- District Architectural Services Manager
- Vista School Principal
- STAR Director and Educators
- STEPS Director and Educators
- MAPS Director and Educators
- STRIDE Director and Educators
- Vista Administrators
- District Nursing
- Davis Diagnostic Resource Center
- Parents

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process involved the collaboration between two highly expert groups. The first group was the district leadership and facility planning department who has vast experience in providing inviting 21st century learning environments. The second group was the special education community who master the complexities of providing for the educational, medical, emotional and social needs of each individual student. While the two groups came from different backgrounds, they were instantly able to unite around a common goal, "Provide the best learning environment possible to support the educational requirements of students with special needs."

The planning process involved many idea sharing and consensus building workshops, including:

- Vision consensus
- Diving into special education programs
- Digging Deeper Workshops
- Concept development



Typical Classroom



VISION CONSENSUS BUILDING

The planning process began with a visioning workshop where all participants had opportunities to share their big picture vision ideas for the replacement of the Vista School. They then crafted the following vision statement:

The district and it's special education administrators have a goal of providing a new facility for those programs that is equivalent to other district facilities. They want to provide education and training in the facility that is respectful of the students' needs, with adequately sized spaces and an organization that supports special education programs and functions.

DIVING INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

With the big vision goal as a guide, the design team then began to dive into each of the four district programs and the characteristics of the students within each program. Extensive tours of the existing facility were conducted so the facility planners with the district and design team could get a firm grasp of what sorts of learning activities students from each group engage in. The directors and teachers of each program shared their needs in terms of what spaces they need and how the spaces could be organized and detailed to help support their variety of learning activities.

ASKING QUESTIONS

RETHINKING TRADITIONS

CONSIDERING 21ST CENTURY SPACES

CONSOLIDATION OF SPACES

CONSENSUS WITH 4 PROGRAMS



DIGGING DEEPER WORKSHOPS

Once the design team had a grasp of what the educators were doing and the variety of spaces they needed to support their students they were able to dig deeper into the essence of what was needed. Through thoughtful discussions and questioning they tested the traditions and possibilities of how space is used and how it might be improved to provide a more engaging learning environment.

Generally special education curriculum is at the forefront of many 21st century education methodologies. With each student having a learning profile and individual objectives, special education has long practiced differentiated learning and has realized that each student has unique strengths and weaknesses. Through the Digging Deeper Workshops the teaching methodologies were clarified and understood to a higher degree.

During the workshops, the design team questioned the traditions in how special education is supported. The traditions of what types of space might be necessary and what is done in each space were reconsidered. The goal was to understand if something was being done, "because we always have" or "because it was the right way to do it." Furthermore, was the space supporting the activity "because it was what was available" or "because it was ideal?" Through the Digging Deeper Workshops the strict traditions of how special education was administered began to soften, and the educators were able to get to the core of what they really needed to do and were able to better describe the space needs to support them.

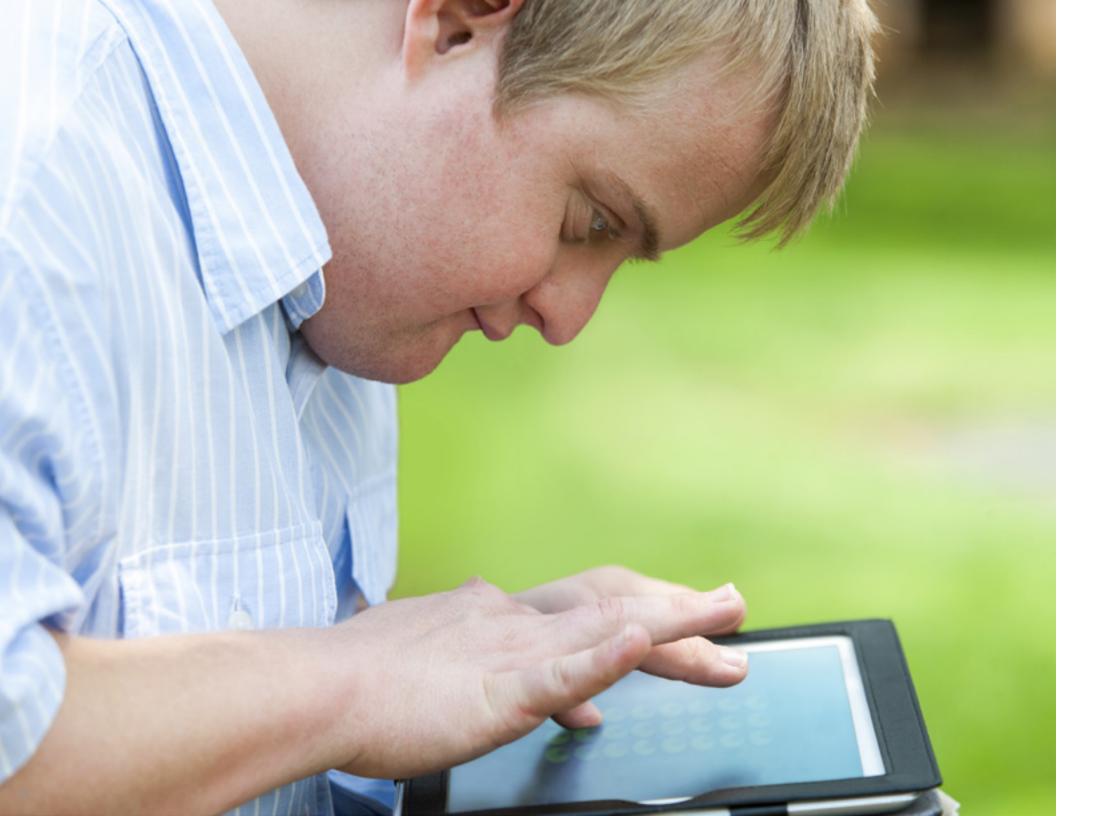
The Digging Deeper Workshops became the enlightening period in the planning process. As the educators began to rethink what has always been done and realize what was possible, their perceptions of the space to support learning elevated. Through the discussions and questioning of space to support students with special needs the design team was enlightened regarding the essence of what each program

was trying to accomplish, and how the facility might better support the learning objectives. During the Digging Deeper Workshops, the paradigm of what a school for students with special needs could be shifted. A consensus was achieved in how the specific needs of each student could be met within the framework of 21st century learning best practices.

An example of a paradigm shift that came about through the Digging Deeper Workshops was the way physical education is supported within the facility. During the initial discussions the faculty requested a gymnasium. Their description of the gym was a standard high bay gymnasium sized to support a full court basketball game. As the traditions of a gymnasium were questioned it was quickly discovered that instead of needing a gym, they needed a place to do Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy (OT/PT) activities. OT/PT activities include stretching, walking, yoga, exercise ball therapy, apparatus (scooter) manipulation, etc. They expressed the wish to have weight machine equipment, but that it would get in the way of the basketball court. It was discovered that they never play organized basketball as you might in a traditional school, but that a few of the students needed to shoot baskets. The design result was a space that was open to the main commons where students could stretch and do yoga together, manipulate their bodies in the exercise equipment, walk on a treadmill, use the Wii fit to play games which work their bodies in various ways, and a mobile basketball hoop for the shooters. The space is much more pleasant than the traditional gym initially requested, it uses less space and costs less, and above all, it supports the physical needs of the student body in a more specific and appropriate way.

Through the Digging Deeper Workshops the educators and the design team were able to rethink or reinforce the ways the educational space could support the individual needs of the students. The result is a facility that has been rethought and sometimes reinvented to support students with special needs in the most appropriate way.

STAR Community





CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

One of the design concepts was to support students transitioning to independent lifestyles. Most of the students will end up functioning independently. For many this will mean going to college, for most it will mean thriving in today's high paced society. To support that transition the stakeholders wanted an open, active aesthetic to help students acclimate to an open energetic environment so they will be comfortable independently going to places like a shopping mall or university student union.

It was very important to the stakeholders that the four distinct learning groups have their own sense of community and identity, and feel connected and unified with the whole school. The "Mayberry Concept" was developed around the idea of a comfortable, shared town center or gathering place, with small communities, similar to small town neighborhoods, connected through the town center.

Through the planning process of vision consensus building, diving into programs, digging deeper into what a facility to support students with special needs had to be, and concept development an extensive space list was developed along with the understanding of what each unique program really needed in order to meet the individual needs of each student. The stakeholders also unified behind the following four desired outcomes:

- A school specifically tailored to meet the educational, physical, behavioral and emotional needs of each student.
- Promote best practices in facility design to 21st century learning principles.
- Open, active aesthetic to acclimate students transitioning to independent lifestyle.
- Have a unified school culture with four distinct learning communities.





EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The educational environment is a careful intertwining of space and details which support students with special needs and spaces which support 21st century learning engagement. Each learning community supports a specific program and the Town Center is shared by all programs. The learning spaces support the educational goals to help each student transition to responsible independent adults.

SITE

One of the greatest challenges the school had was with the safe student access to the school. Most of the students arrive to school by bus. The old school did not have enough clear circulation for the 13 buses to safely drop students off. The new VEC has simplified the circulation of the buses and has provided space for up to 20 buses to safely queue. The entry and exiting of the school is greatly improved as buses are able to pull next to the entrance canopy and drop each student off under the shelter of the canopy. The main entrance doors are storefront automatic sliding doors that allow for a group of students to enter and exit the school in a quick, barrier free manner.

The site is a hillside that dramatically slopes down from the east to toward the west. To help create a school that would be completely accessible, the main level and main entrance is on the east. The three most restrictive programs and the town center are on the main level. The STAR Community is located on the lower level because the students are most mobile and responsible. Many of the students leave during the day, and most are able to easily navigate the stairs and school at large. The STAR location below the main level, on the west side of the site provides a more direct walking path to the city bus stop nearby.

The site has been carved out east of the school to provide a level nature trail and outdoor learning area. This area is sheltered from the neighborhood by the school and hillside, so it gives the students a safe private area to go outdoors to learn and enjoy nature. Should they desire the school could begin a garden program in this outdoor learning area.

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MAIN LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

TOWN CENTER

Like a small town, shared public spaces are organized around the Town Center. The Cafeteria (restaurant), school store (shopping), media center (library), main office (businesses), PE area (recreation), performance platform (entertainment) and apartment simulator (living) are all accessible from the Town Center. Like neighborhoods, each of the school districts four special needs programs have distinct identities and are located in more private areas with pathways leading directly to the Town Center. This organization empowers each of the learning communities to support the characteristics and learning needs of each student, while being an important part of the whole school.

In the quest to help each student transition to a responsible, independent adult, the function of many spaces is altered to become a learning laboratory to teach students life skills and marketable job skills.

The store and kitchen provide an opportunity for our students to get training and gain skills that have the potential to lead to future employment in competitive job markets.

- Roz Welch, Parent



CAFETERIA AND KITCHEN

The dining commons is part of the open Town Center. Similar to a university student union, the dining commons is open and available for group discussion, individual study and contemplation and other learning activities throughout the day. Synergy is developed between learning spaces and the dining commons as a student is able to see into the apartment simulator, life skills room, student store, and overlook the PE area though an open balcony.

Most of the kitchens in the school district are warming and serving kitchens. Additional equipment was added to the VEC kitchen to create a small learning commercial kitchen. Students can work through the lunch period at the commercial kitchen and learn food service skills that might prepare them for employment at a restaurant.





LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

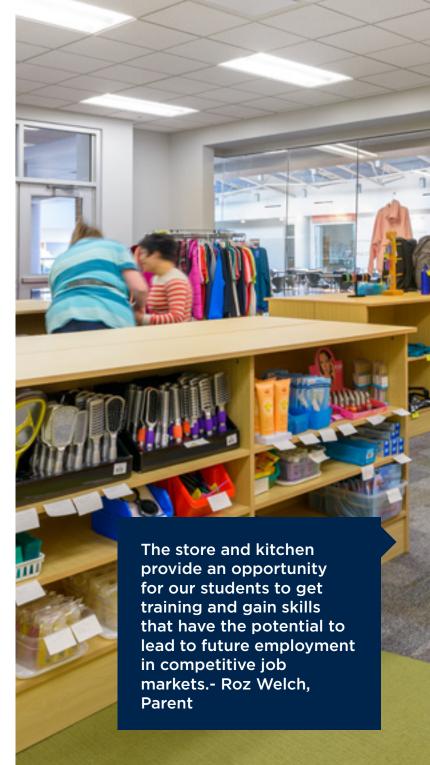


APARTMENT SIMULATOR

The apartment simulator is a small mock-apartment that has a kitchenette, sleeping area, siting area and a residential restroom with a tub. Students can practice and prepare for independent living through apartment simulation learning. They are taught how to clean the sink, kitchen, bathroom, tub and toilet. They practice vacuuming the carpet, making the bed and maintaining a small household. An observation area behind a one way mirror allows the teacher to observe student behavior and learning. This area empowers students to gain the skills and confidence necessary to live on their own.

SCHOOL STORE

The school store sells school supplies, snacks, Vista-wear school apparel and other items necessary for daily school activities. The sole purpose for the store is to help in the daily life skills learning and job training for students. Students learn the retail industry, sales, and money handling as they are assigned to run the store and work the cash register. The store is also a learning lab for all students as they learn to count money, figure out change, and practice purchasing items on their own as they learn to live independently.



School Store





The Town Center overlooks the PE area which is located on the lower level. The PE area supports the activities the students need. While there is a portable basketball hoop for use by students who enjoy shooting baskets, most of the equipment supports moving, exercising and stretching activities for students in a non traditional way. The space supports the exercise available through a weight machine, a Wii fit, yoga groups, practicing on scooting apparatus, and other stretching and aerobic activity. The open staircase between floor levels is part of the PE area. These stairs give students with mobility challenges an opportunity to practice going up and down stairs with the help of a physical therapist. The building elevator is located near the PE area so students who are unable to use stairs can conveniently use the space. In the PE area students are able to exercise and manipulate their bodies in a comfortable, open and engaging environment.

LIFE SKILLS

The life skills room is similar to a traditional high school foods room. Students learn independent living through discovering how to cook meals. Through cooking students practice motor skills and math application. More importantly, the students learn how to care for themselves through preparing meals and learning principles of food preparation and kitchen cleaning.



The Media Center is designed to be more like a mini community library than a traditional media center. Students might go to the media center to look up bus schedules, shop or learn online. The book stack area is small, but full of resources the students may need in applying for college or a job. It has wide aisles and bookcases at heights that are accessible to everyone. Through the media center students practice finding information on their own in a way they would if they were not in the school setting.

MAIN OFFICE

The main office sits between the main entry and the Town Center. The main entrance vestibule has sliding store front doors to provide quick access for a bus load of students to enter, or leave the school. The vestibule is designed to be able to lock down the doors into the building and force all visitors to pass through the main entrance before entering the building. This vestibule set up insures all visitors are known and it provides an extra level of security to the school. The main office is conveniently located so student and parent meetings can conveniently take place.











STAR COMMUNITY

The students in the STAR program are focusing on daily living skills, employability and job skills. The STAR community has 6 classrooms of differing sizes to support a variety of group sizes and a break-out conference room organized around a shared collaboration area. The classrooms and break-out room support students in engaging in specific core academic fundamentals and in learning a variety of employment skills. In practicing core learning, communication, and other daily living skills the collaboration area supports groups of students working and learning together. Because the students in the STAR program are most independent, they often come to school to check-in, then catch a city bus to their place of employment. The collaboration area provides an ideal place to check-in and the direct access to the exterior is a convenient way for pedestrian traffic to get to the city bus. The faculty offices for the STAR community are located adjacent to the learning spaces. This enhances the community by having all the faculty and staff near the students they serve. The faculty offices are designed to fit within two classroom modules so they could be converted to classroom spaces as part of a built-in future growth plan.

STEPS

Students in the STEPS program are often organized into groups of 8-10 with similar physical and learning abilities. The groups work together as they receive instruction and training. The variety of spaces in the STEPS Community support groups working together to meet many educational objectives. The STEPS Community has a various sized classroom spaces, a break-out conference room and a collaboration area to support a variety of group learning. The STEPS Community is conveniently located near the Town Center and shared Life Skills spaces.

MAPS

The MAPS Community supports the most fragile students. The learning community is organized to be self sufficient and flexible. Each studio conveniently connects to a restroom facility so the teachers or aides can easily help students, then quickly return to their learning activities. Three of the four learning studios have windows and natural lighting. One studio is designed without windows to provide a light-controlled environment for students whoneed dimly lit spaces. The MAPS Community is located near the main entrance so students with severe mobility challenges can move quickly to their class.

STRIDE

Because students in the STRIDE Community are easily overstimulated or distracted, it is located in a quiet corner of the school. The STRIDE Studio has a shared area for group learning, acclimation and instruction. Six individual cubes are located off the shared area. The individual cubes give each student a place to decompress and calm down from overstimulation. It also provides them a personal place to remove themselves from visual and auditory distractions and focus on learning. Natural daylight enters the space through windows above the individual cubes. This gives the space natural lighting and a view without the distractions of seeing activity in the outdoor learning and nature walk area.



SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAMS

The Davis School District had the desire for the VEC to become the hub of special education for the district. To create this special education center the school district is moving departments that serve the entire district to the new facility. The Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy (OT/PT) departments and the Nursing department are now housed in the new school. There is also a flexible training room that is available for district wide use for special education training and other professional development. Most of the school districts teachers who focus on students with special needs are dispersed in the neighborhood community schools. Bringing the district departments and training area into the new VEC solidifies the school as the heart of the district's special education community, because each of the special education teachers, paraeducators, aides, and administrators will come to the school for support and training.



PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND SUPPORT 21ST CENTURY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

There are many concepts which can support learning for students with special needs while encouraging 21st century learning activities. These concepts include creating a welcoming and stimulating environment with flexibility, collaboration, connection, lighting, acoustics, sustainability and technology to support the learning objectives.

FLEXIBILITY

The campus is designed to provide a flexible learning environment in order to empower teachers to engage their students in any activity they need with a variety of group sizes. The flexible design makes it possible to reconfigure spaces for groups of various sizes and intellectual levels, from one-on-one learning to large group activities. It provides room to move within the studio, classroom and community so several activities can take place simultaneously. As teachers and students are able to transform the space, they are more able to support diverse learning styles and activities and thereby achieve their individual educational objectives in a manner that is more meaningful to them. Flexibility is critical to a school for students with special needs because each student will have unique characteristics and a flexible space will empower a teacher to manipulate the environment to meet the individual needs of each student.

COLLABORATION

The Collaboration areas are equipped with support elements such as Technology, white boards and flexible furniture, to support a variety of learning activities. The collaboration areas support several different lessons or activities to occur simultaneously. As students practice working together in groups they learn necessary communication skills and become comfortable interacting with others so they are prepared to work and communicate independently.

CONNECTED LEARNING SPACES

A variety of connections are supported throughout the facility. Individual classrooms, studios, or individual cubes are connected to larger, shared collaboration centers to create a small learning community. Each learning community is connected to the shared Town Center. Transparency throughout the school allows a visual connection from space to space and contributes to a synergy that is developed as a variety of learning activities are seen. Most learning spaces and shared spaces have a window to provide a connection to the outside world. A robust wireless network runs through the school to connect the students to internet based information and instruction.

LEARNING SPACES THAT ARE WELCOMING AND STIMULATING

The design is intended to be comfortable, engaging and fun. As students feel comfortable and enjoy being in school they are more open to learning engagement. The environment is carefully designed to balance a stimulating use of color, pattern and texture (for students who need stimulation) without over doing it (for students who are easily overstimulated).

Nearly every teaching space has a window and a view to the exterior. Each space with a window has an operable portion to improve ventilation and give the teacher control of the natural ventilation flow.

STAR Community



PROPER ACOUSTICS AND LIGHTING

Acoustics and lighting are important in any educational facility, especially one that serves students with special needs. Thoughtful detailing was incorporated into the acoustical treatment of each learning space. Many of the students at the Vista Education Center have difficulty hearing completely, or are easily distracted. Sound absorbing materials on the walls, ceilings and floors of the learning spaces help to create a better quality of sound. Voice amplification systems are installed to help magnify the voice in a clear manner. Walls include sound isolation to reduce noise from outside the classroom to filter in. The simple measures to improve sound quality can have great benefits in helping students communicate with the teacher and each other more clearly.

The VEC uses full spectrum lightning for a better quality of light that is closer to natural sunlight. Many lighting fixtures irritate students with special needs, especially students in the Autistic spectrum. The students can see the flickering light, and hear the buzz that is imperceptible to most people. To support their learning environment lighting was carefully selected which does not flicker or buzz.

SUSTAINABILITY

There are many sustainable features that help support students with special needs. Most teaching and shared spaces benefit from natural daylighting and views. The windows in each room are used to create a pleasant environment which is adequately lit without the need to turn artificial lighting on. This sets a mood which supports the students without using unnecessary electricity. The windows in each office and teaching space have an operable portion to bring in natural ventilation and allow for temperature control without using the mechanical system.

The heat pump HVAC System is very efficient and it is configured to give each teacher the ability to support their students and their medical needs by controlling the temperature in their space. The heat pumps are located away from teaching spaces to reduce the noise and vibration that can be distracting to many students. The indoor materials all have low or no VOC content and were selected to not offgas unsavory odors or chemicals. The air filtering system and careful selection of materials helps the indoor air quality to be pleasant, clean and safe for each student, especially those who are medically fragile.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is seamlessly included throughout the VEC. A robust wireless network encourages faculty and students to utilize internet-based information as they engage in learning. As students get accustomed to looking online for answers to questions and daily routine information their ability to become self sustaining will increase and they will have a learning resource they can use throughout their lives. The use of technology helps their learning not become limited by time or place. The ubiquitous wireless network also helps movement become more seamless between spaces, as students could move from space to space and continue to be connected.

More teachers of students with special needs are realizing that applications on a mobile or tablet device are able to connect with students and hold their attention, they also can provide means for students with difficulty communicating to quickly share their ideas. Therefore, more teachers are using tablet devices to help engage their students in learning. The network infrastructure for the VEC is designed to support a one to one tablet initiative. Teachers appreciate the technology included in their teaching spaces, and utilize it seamlessly to enhance the concepts and ideas they are teaching. The technology includes smart board projection systems, voice amplification system, robust wifi, and multiple network cable jacks.

CONSTRUCTION PHASING STRATEGY



Phase 1 - Old Vista School



Phase 2 - Demolition of unused portion of building



Phase 3 - Construction of second level learning communities



Phase 4 - Demolition of remaining old school



Phase 5 - Construction to complete the new school



Phase 6 - New Vista Education Campus







PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

SYSTEMATIC REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING FACILITY

Because the school district mandated that the VEC would replace the old vista school on the same site, a phasing strategy was developed to systematically replace the existing school. The goal of the district and design team was to impact the student routine as little as possible. Because moving a department is inconvenient and can be challenging for students to readjust, each department moved a maximum of two times, the second move was into their final completed space. To reduce student distraction the moving periods were planned to take place during summer breaks.

The phasing strategy was developed to build as much as possible, without demolishing used teaching space. This was accomplished by demolishing an unused portion of the original Vista School and building the two story element in its place first. All of the original building functions were moved into the new first phase and the remainder of the original building was demolished. At that point the new school was

completed. To temporarily house some spaces that were part of the second construction phase, areas were planned to temporarily accommodate programs while the campus was completed. The library served as temporary offices, the training room housed the MAPS community. A restroom with an accessible shower is located near the PE area to serve any student using the PE area, and to serve the MAPS department while their final space was under construction.

Communication and coordination between the school and contractor was critical. To provide safe access to the school buses the contractor limited the construction access and staging to the back (north) side of the site. This allowed the buses to continue to pick up and drop off in the front of the school all throughout construction. The contractor coordinated disruptive activities with the school to minimize distraction or trauma. The result of the thoughtful planning and continual communication was that very few students were impacted by the construction, their routine was maintained and their old school was transformed to their new home.







DESIGNED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

One of the most rewarding challenges in planning and designing the new VEC was to consider the individual needs of each student while designing a school to support them. Every decision and detail is deliberately conceived to improve the learning environment for students with special needs. The layout of the school is simple and provides clear wayfinding, the corridors are wider than normal so two people in wheelchairs can pass someone walking. Niches are found throughout the school, especially surrounding the MAPS community, to accommodate wheelchairs and apparatus parking. Cabinets and storage areas are designed to provide a place for support materials and not have the clutter which is distracting to many students. The colors and materials are carefully coordinated to provide visual stimulation without over stimulating.

Restrooms are located throughout the facility to support students regardless of their needs. A traditional restroom is conveniently located in multiple locations for those who are able to independently use them. For those who struggle on their own the traditional restrooms give them the opportunity to practice, so they can transition to independence. Multiple unisex restrooms are located throughout the school so those who require assistance can conveniently use the facilities. An accessible restroom with changing area and shower is located neat the PE area to address emergencies for students on the lower level. A larger accessible restroom with a roll in shower, powered changing table, and a ceiling mounted student lift is located within the MAPS Community so it is near most of the students who need the support.



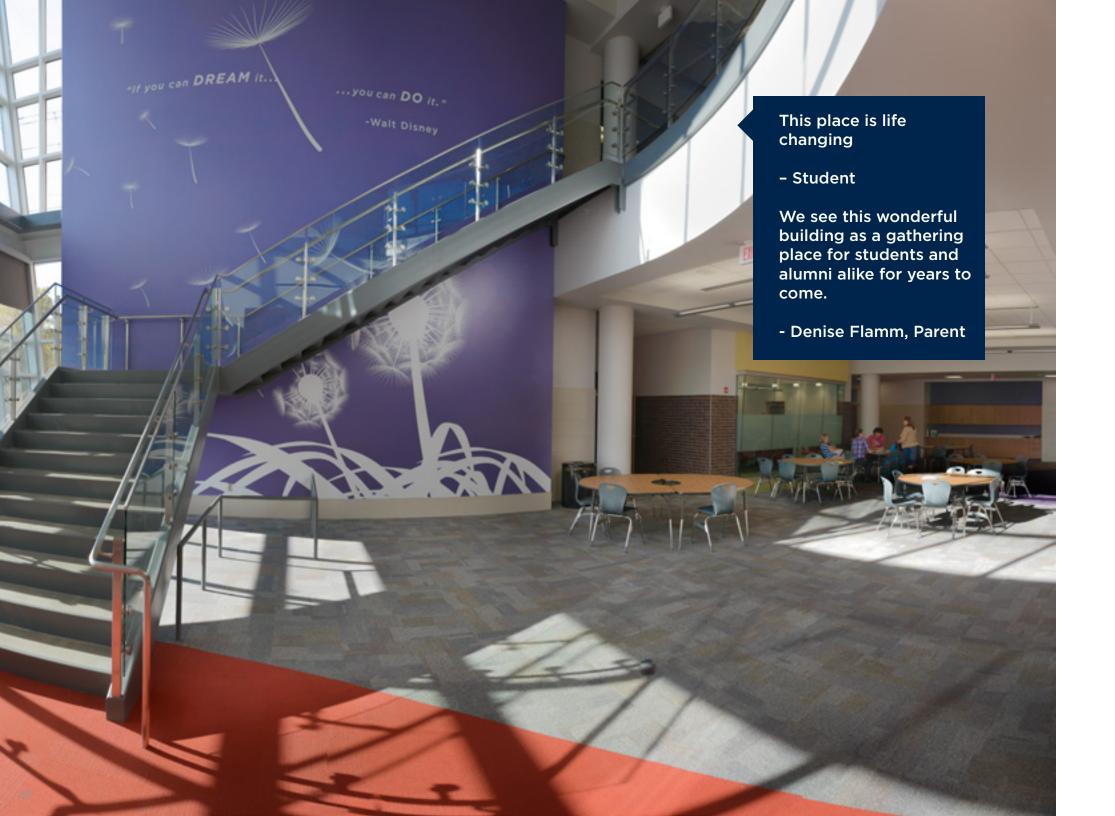




SETTING AND MATERIALITY

One of the challenges in designing the new VEC is the hillside site. The school is nestled into the hillside in a way that is respectful to the landscape and the neighboring houses. Rather than burying a portion of the lower level in the ground, a series of landscaped terraces was used to soften site retaining and to give the lower level windows the same opportunity for daylighting and views as the rest of the school.

The exterior form and massing of the new VEC is designed give the school a fresh, contemporary aesthetic that is inviting and conveys stability. The color and texture of the CMU exterior walls deliberately reflects the mountain backdrop. The cement fiber siding gives the appearance of wood with limited maintenance. It softens the facade of the school and gives it an inviting sense of warmth and human scale. The contemporary walls of glass and metal express current trends in design. The exterior presence of the school is warm and inviting while giving a sense of stability and permanence and respecting the surroundings.



RESULTS

The VEC more than achieved the four desired outcomes established by the stakeholder group. It reinforces 21st Century learning objectives through spaces that support flexibility and collaboration. The school supports a variety of learning activities for a variety of group sizes, from one student to many, so teachers can engage students in differentiated learning exercises. The school is welcoming and stimulating, it has proper lighting and acoustics. The school is energy efficient and supports current teaching technology. Each element that reinforces 21st Century engagement also contributes to supporting students with special needs.

The VEC creates a unique identity for each of the school district's four programs to serve high school students with special needs. The four learning community's are unified through the shared use of the Town Center, creating a cohesive campus culture with the benefits of small learning communities.

The engaging aesthetic of the Town Center and Collaboration Areas create an open, active, engaging environment that help students become comfortable in energetic settings like a shopping mall or student union. As students become comfortable in the facility they are more prepared to thrive in the active environments outside of school.

Above all, the VEC meets the educational, physical, behavioral and emotional needs of each student. It is a laboratory where students can learn how to function in both public and private spaces throughout their lives. The school offers many types of experiences and opportunities for students to learn self reliance and vocational skills which contribute to their transition to responsible independent adults.

Because the VEC serves students from many towns and communities the planning process focused on serving the special needs community for the district. The district OT/PT department, Nursing Department and training facility help bring educators from all the community schools together and foster unity and camaraderie.

The new campus has also had an effect on the local community of Farmington. In the past teachers and students would reach out to local businesses to develop relationships leading to employability and job skills training. The work relationship is changing for the school as employers in the community are reaching out to the school and inviting the work relationships. The local fire department took the initiative to raise funds for the school; they are seeing an increase in volunteers and community support. The reinvention of the Vista School has created a positive presence in the community which will lead to more community outreach and partnerships.

The VEC is an active learning environment that supports collaboration, interaction, learning by doing and discovery. It is integrated into a sloping site and has materials that reflect the colors and textures of the nearby mountain range. As a school it is impressive. As a school specifically designed to support students with special needs, it is paradigm shifting. Through careful understanding of student and teacher needs, each element in the school contributes to deliberately rethinking how a special needs facility can enhance the learning experience for each student, by so doing, The VEC reinvented what a school for students with special needs can be.





