



Avenues the World School Founding Class Program at Mission College

Santa Clara, California

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal was to open up a temporary location for a year or two to initiate the Founding Class Program for the Avenues Silicon Valley campus. The core leadership team had already been hired and was ready to open up the school, however the pandemic effects continued to delay the construction and opening of the long-term campus. Through some mounting pressure, it became imperative to open even a small school sooner than later but location and available space to support a school was limited. After some creative problem-solving, the idea of using an available facility at the local community college was proposed and ultimately approved. By then the clock had run out and the school was left with less than 3 months to develop a campus for 22 students from grades 6th to 9th. Hiring an architect or outside design consultant and following a traditional project path didn't seem feasible due to schedule and budget constraints. Avenues' was fortunate to have their own internal design team under the R&D group. With this team the project forged on by embracing the challenging existing condition of dilapidated and neglected classroom buildings and flipping it into an intentional and strategic circumstance.

With the global and regional programs' focus on project-based curriculum and innovation, the idea of employing themes for each of the rooms provided a vehicle for delivering inspiration and high-impact design which in turn focused attention away from the unremarkable buildings they were located in. The fast-track design process was shaped by what was feasible within the available time-frame, as well as what would create the most memorable backdrop for the students to be inspired in, forging their own ideas and passion projects. Practical considerations around refreshing a 40-year old space meant spend on new flooring, paint, and light bulbs. Furniture procurement in the first year was a combination of new purchases but also re-use of existing furniture from another campus due to cost and unprecedented lead times.

At Avenues for past design projects, a term "the last 5%" was coined referring to what many often refer to as 'the finishing touches'. Special attention was drawn to this level of detail for the furnishing of the spaces by adding framed artifact visuals complete with title cards, placing artifact objects meant for student interaction, and even with the careful placement of books around the rooms which would carry on Avenues' mantra of 'school as library'.

The Year 1 rooms were incredibly successful in not only instilling a sense of uniqueness to the experience of the starter school, but due to the remarkably fast turn around and much lower cost of design and construction. So much that it began to shift the paradigm of what a typical project process for future Avenues projects. So when the program was projected to grow and remain in its current location for at least another year, there was no doubt that following the same general approach as the previous year would be the way to go. Only this time, there was more time and understanding about what to expect. Due to the longer runway, the design team engaged directly with the school leadership team and discussed what it would look like to have authentic student input in the design process. The idea of pitching room theme ideas was offered which immediately seemed worth trying.

The impact of the Year 2 process and having the project team design with students based on their selected themes created such a unified ethos amongst the entire school community that its impact permeated much deeper and further than anyone expected. The goal was to provide an opportunity for the founding class students to have a literal stake in how their school was created – and with this project, that was made possible.

SCOPE OF WORK

Phase 1: Interior Retro-fit of 2,500 sq. ft. including new electrical outlets, new flooring, new paint on walls, select millwork, furniture, and signage. Exterior work including cleaning, fencing, limited painting. Budget: \$450,000

Phase 2: Interior Retro-fit of 6,100 sq. ft. including new electrical outlets, select demo, select interior partitions, new flooring, new paint on walls, select millwork, furniture, and signage. Exterior work includes cleaning, select landscaping, playground surfacing, limited painting. Budget: \$1.1 million

SCHOOL COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT

A Community of Innovation

The immediate community of the Avenues Silicon Valley Founding Class Program project was a lean, focused start-up type group of administrators, faculty, students, and highly invested families. Surrounding and supporting this was a complex network of Avenues global leadership and team members as well as a handful of other connected campuses.



The layers of community contributed to a rich and diverse framework of support and inter-dynamics:

1. Global Community – Avenues the World School is a global private school network predicated on delivering transformative world-focused learning experiences. The educational community is driven by a culture of constant innovation. This global ecosystem was started in 2012 with its inaugural campus in New York City now supporting over 1,600 students. Since then, brick-and-mortar campuses have opened in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Shenzhen, China. The admissions protocol is that when a student is admitted into one Avenues campus, they are admitted to all of them.
2. Online Community – In 2018, Avenues Online (AON) was launched supporting students across six continents in more than 20 countries. The AON curriculum includes Great Works and Math Inquiry while the program offers the Flex program which allows students to use any of the Avenues physical campuses as a landing spot for support and connection.
3. Avenues Silicon Valley – The startup school for this campus location began with 22 students, grades 6-9 in year 1 and increased to 60 students, grades 4-10 in year 2. In addition to the students, their committed and pioneering families hail from the surrounding region. As part of the AON offering, enrolled students can use any of the Avenues campuses as their landing spot to work and interact with other Avenues students. At the temporary campus for Silicon Valley, they supported 2 11th grade students that were enrolled with AON.

While the primary stakeholders of the project were the students, faculty, administration, and families of Avenues Silicon Valley, the success of the project had an indelible effect and impact on the entire global community of Avenues the World School. Because of how the ecosystem of Avenues is structured, any student admitted into one campus, is admitted to all the other campuses, including Avenues Online. Opening up the Silicon Valley location was akin to establishing another portal into the entire network. Further to this, given the network of schools, Avenues had the unique benefit of a global leadership and support team including an in-house team of designers. While the project clearly started out as a more straightforward process of design professionals servicing the educators and school community, the incredible impact and success of the project was widespread and far-reaching in the most unexpected ways.

A global ecosystem of state-of-the-art campuses. Exceptional faculty united around a common mission. A unique curriculum brought to life by transformative world-focused learning experiences. An educational community driven by a culture of constant innovation.



The Challenge

The development for the long-term campus had been underway for a couple of years, but when the pandemic hit, long-term campus plans stalled, and the collective team had to pivot into contingency planning mode. Through creative out-of-the-box thinking, temporary spaces at a nearby community college were identified and would enable the school to open in less than a year. Once the space was secured, there was only six months to design and renovate the spaces to open in time for the first day in August 2022.

In addition to the tight schedule, the location was intended to support the program for a maximum two years, so there was pressure to limit the budget spent while still achieving a high level of quality and finish. The visual and experiential brand standard that had been established globally for Avenues was at the highest level especially within the education market.

Further complicating the project parameters was the fact that the spaces secured for the Founding Class program were located in 40+ year-old temporary buildings intended as swing space to support the community college's long-term capital construction. The simple classroom pavilions were dated, drab, and maintenance-wise neglected. Not only did they not match the pedagogical approach of Avenues program and curriculum, but aesthetically, the spaces both inside and outside needed considerable renovation to line up with the established quality expected of an Avenues campus.

Another gauntlet added to the mix was that it was a Founding Class program, and the first year's performance would serve as real-time marketing to grow the school community further so both expectations and stakes were high.

The Assets

With the global Avenues program in its 10th year, the Silicon Valley campus had the benefit of a more developed organization, vision, and curriculum to support from the get go. As an institution based firmly in the idea of 'not leaving well enough alone', Avenues had in its repertoire an unwavering mission, a recently updated vision, a global intended curriculum, an online learning platform to augment with asynchronous learning, a passionate campus leadership team, and now a potential physical location to launch the Founding Class Program.

While the school and organization as a whole had the benefit of financial support through its equity shareholders, there was tremendous pressure to open the temporary campus using a more economically minded approach. Another atypical aspect of the project was utilizing the internal design team at Avenues as the designers for the whole project instead of external consultants. Not only would this save money, but it would potentially allow for a faster, more direct and nimble process. The Avenues design team included individuals trained and educated as architects, interior designer, industrial designer, graphic designer, and electrical engineer.

The temporary classroom building that would house the Avenues' program was an asset as well, despite its existing condition. Some existing furniture and the exterior monument sign could be shipped over from another temporary program born out of the pandemic, that was now closing. Working closely with a furniture dealer, the balance of the furniture needed could be shipped and moved-in on time. A local general contractor eager to establish the working relationship, was willing to make the scope work within the tight schedule.



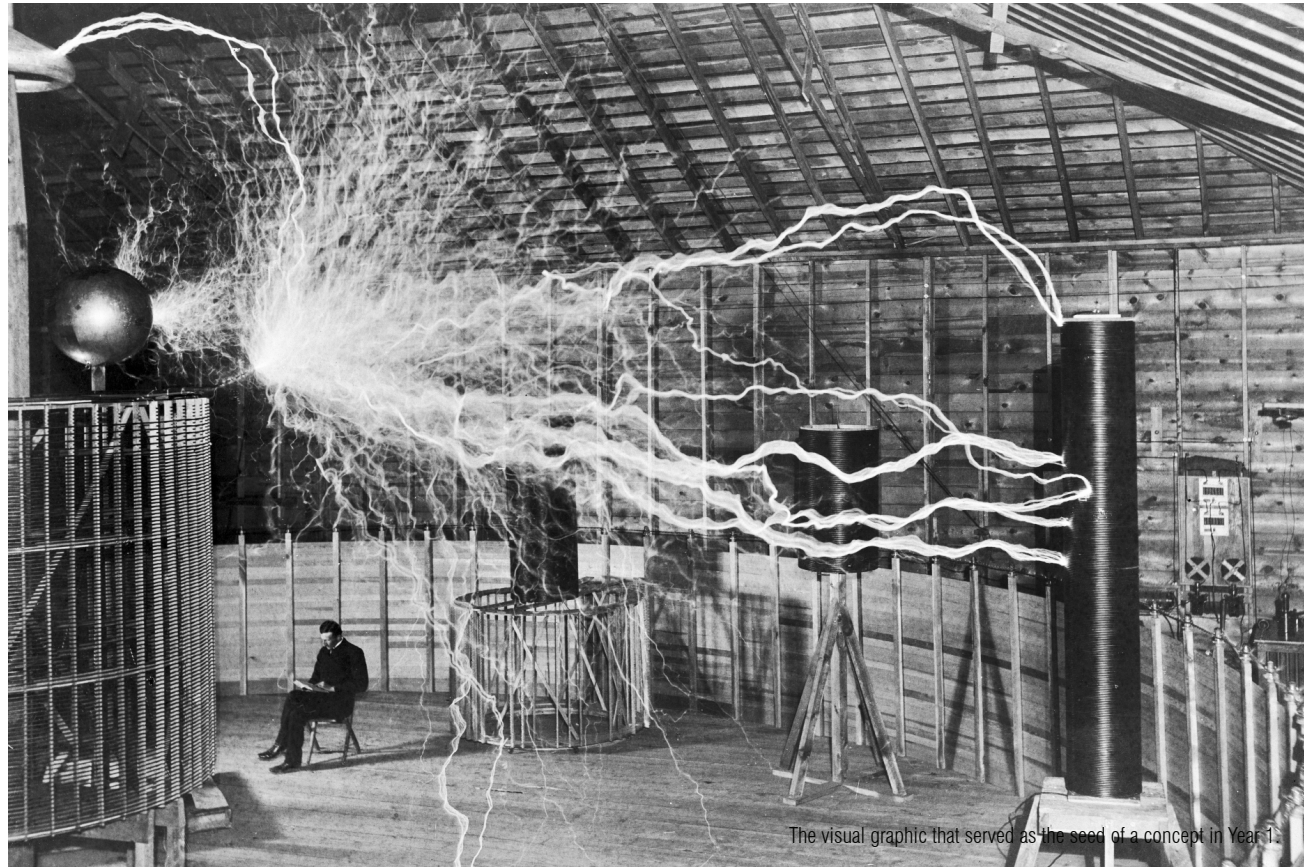
The Process

The project was phased over two years to remain consistent with the growth trajectory of the start-up campus. Each of the two years differed in terms of process due to differences in schedule, but still functioned iteratively building upon what worked. Due to time constraints, the visioning process in year 1 was much more introverted within the global design team with limited engagement with the site leadership team (head of school, head of secondary and primary programs, director of operations). Also, as a start-up campus, there were no students or faculty yet to interact with other than global academic deans (faculty at a global supervisory level). The visioning process in year 2 was much more dynamic and extroverted by increasing the opportunity for input and feedback and widening the role that users played in the direction of the design solution. The collective team also had a live case study using Year 1 spaces to actively learn from.

In year 1, the design team quickly realized the name of the game was executing an interior retrofit project for three rooms that would distract from the otherwise unremarkable 'off-brand' location (within the temporary swing space campus for a community college), and not take a considerable amount of time and budget to get done to a level of finish and quality expected of a top-tier education environment. While the rooms needed to remain as flexible in use as possible due to the small population, new campus dynamics, and range of grades it would support (6th-9th), designing them generically and minimally would not achieve the impact needed as a start-up school looking to attract more students within the market.

Through the guidance of global leadership and ideation amongst the site leadership and design teams, a new nomenclature was born to aid in the visioning and branding of the Founding Class temporary spaces. Instead of referring to the teaching spaces as classrooms, they were donned 'innovation labs'. The rationale was two-fold: one was again guiding away from convention since the spaces at their starting point would never reach the expected top-tier overall experience other Avenues campuses would offer, but more aptly, it was connecting regionally to the often meager environments and spaces that a number of the now top tech companies were started in – whether they were in their own personal home garage or in a back often forgotten space.

Complementing the new naming was identifying the rooms with themes both giving each room a distinct identity, but also



The visual graphic that served as the seed of a concept in Year 1.

focusing the design task to be less about being everything for everyone, but providing inspiration through centers of innovation through history. The process for identifying either important events or figures in the world of innovation and invention was at first a daunting task initiated by the following shortlist of suggestions:

1. Lockheed Skunkworks (Johnson)
2. Xerox PARC (Kay)
3. Wardencllyffe Lab (Tesla)
4. Menlo Park "Idea Factory" (Edison)
5. Bell Labs (Bell, Shannon, Turing)

Accompanied by the striking visual depicting Tesla in his Wardencllyffe Lab (above).

When the shortlist was circulated amongst the global and site leadership teams, the list was scrutinized and criticized for lack of diversity in areas of study as well as gender representation.

After several more rounds of ideation and iteration, the new final shortlist was:

1. Wardencllyffe Lab (Tesla)
2. Idea Factory (Edison)
3. NASA West (Vaughn, Johnson, Jackson)

The reasoning and decision-making on how the three final themes were ultimately included the following:

1. Can the fit-out design of the room be executed within the time and budget constraints?
2. Is the theme striking, impactful, and inspiring?
3. Does the theme hold interesting aesthetic potential without being challenging to implement?
4. Do the themes loosely work together as a whole both conceptually and visually?

The Process (cont'd)

The fact that Tesla and Edison were rivals and had some interaction within their respective careers was also a compelling point to showcase as it alluded to healthy competition and drive in the world of innovation and making.

While the themes were finalizing, there was an effort around assessing existing conditions in relation to level of renovation aiming for high quality finish both visually and experientially, while ultimately supporting the likely program and functions within the space. As year 1 was a bit of a proof-of-concept stage, some furniture solutions were limited to what was inherited from another temporary campus that was closing. Therefore, making those pieces work within the overall design concept was essential.

While refinishing the outdated and musty carpet and repainting and replacing bulbs were a given, some budget needed to be reserved for feature moments within the rooms. Since the themes were just loosely connected through the overarching topic of 'innovation', creating a repeating rhythm of how the intervention was implemented in each room became important. The following 'template' for room design features was established as a response:

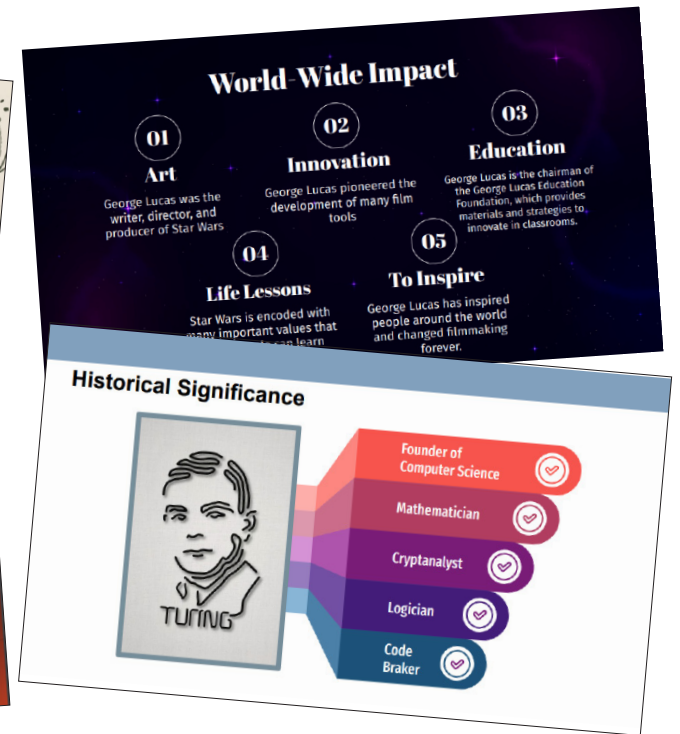
- Feature graphic wall
- Artifact wall
- Artifacts

Setting up a consistent design application to the framework of each room allowed the details to be explored more freely and authentically to the style and content of the celebrated moment in history.

Once it was confirmed the school would remain another year at the Mission College location, the team went right back to work ensuring that the timeline leading up would be optimized and taken full advantage of. Now the area that were the unknowns the previous year were knowns and there was room to expand not only in size (breadth), but in engagement (depth) with the active student and faculty community. The benefit of having the in-house design team work on the project was the accessibility for real-time feedback on how the space was or was not supporting the needs of the community. That feedback was immediately cycled back into the process and responded to.



PowerPoint slides from the student pitches . Top to bottom, left to right: Wen Fang - The Study, Pokemon, George Lucas / Star Wars, Alan Turing.



Working directly with the site leadership team at the start of year 2, it was discussed that the students would benefit from having a meaningful level of contribution to the upcoming design of expansion project. The argument was that the gesture would empower the students and give them a stake in the creation of their built environment. An immediate suggestion was for students to pitch room theme ideas for consideration. The suggestion was a bit concerning for the design team as they were not sure how many of the ideas would work for the overall vision, but agreed to move forward. A 6th-7th grade cohort and a 8th-9th grade cohort developed their theme pitch presentations over the next month. Here is an excerpt from what was included in the assignment process sent to the students:

Proposal Elements

Please make sure to include the following elements in your proposal.

1. Background information: Give a general summary of the person, place or era. This should provide both the historical context and discuss the impact of the name that you have chosen.

2. Sample Artifacts: What are some artifacts that would be important to showcase in the room?
3. Large Visual: What is a possible large visual representation that could be on one of the interior walls that would capture the spirit of the name for the room?

The proposed themes by students included the following: Lucas/Star Wars, Maya Angelou Room, Wen Fang – The Study, Pokemon Room, Trinity, Turing, Library of Alexandria, 80's themed/Atari, The Nils Bohlin Room, Davinci Room.

The process started off with the students presenting their theme ideas, the design team provide immediate feedback (both good and bad), and then the design team would review the proposals to select some to use. Initially right after the presentations were given, the instinct of the design team was to select a few of the student themes which would make up around half of the rooms that would be fit out in that second year. After further consideration, the following suggestion set the course in a new direction: "What's the worst that could happen if we make all the new rooms a student theme?" This pivotal shift in the design team's mindset and overall process led to a profound impact.

Value of Process to Community

The way in which this temporary campus for the Founding Class Program for Avenues Silicon Valley was tackled, inherently changed what could, should and ultimately would be done to meet the community goals. Having the project designed, managed and executed by the in-house design team using a smaller, local contractor established a nimbler and direct process from user to end result that would typically not be possible on a larger-scale, traditionally run project. The same team that designed the concept from soup to nuts would be the same team that arranged the furniture on move-in, set up the artifacts in person, and ensured every last detail was done right. This hands-on approach was contagious and was met with willing participants across the entire school community team including a head of school that was planting flower pots, to a director of operations delivering and putting together furniture, to a design team member weed-whacking the grass in the 11th hour.



The Avenues Design Team meets with students to discuss their room themes.



The Avenues Design Team was responsible for the staging and finishing touches.

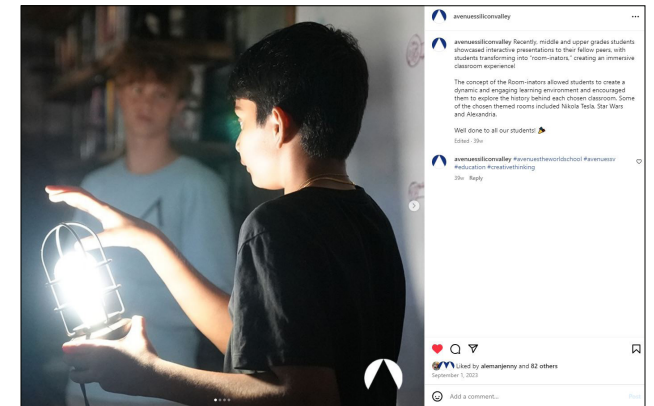
Students had an opportunity to not only pitch room ideas, but seven students had the opportunity to have their themes come to life in fully-outfitted and conceptualized spaces for the opening day of school in the school's second year. The rooms took cues from their presentations and in most cases, took it to a deeper level: the Endor/Star Wars room featured lenticular prints depicting the on-set visual effects from Industrial Light and Magic team, while a full wallpaper graphic of Maya Angelou made up of her own written words in the Rise room, and a laser cut and assembled Ornithopter mobile hung in the corner of the Atelier DaVinci.

Needless to say, the faces of the faculty and students upon entering the room on the first day of their return to school that following year was priceless. The sense of ownership, inspiration, and pride in each of those students was exactly what the team had been hoping for. As the Founding Class Program, those students could now say their voices mattered, their ideas were good ideas, and that the school was there to listen and support them in a way that truly mattered.

“Designing the Endor room was an awesome experience. I was able to come up with an idea, pitch it, and then work with the design team to make it come to life. Whenever I walk into the room, I think, if George Lucas can create Star Wars, then I can create something cool too.”

-Miranda Dieck, Grade 9 student

On a more pragmatic level, the team also of course took the opportunity in the second year to improve on aspects of the room we could either not afford for the first year, or did not have the user feedback to better inform including: chairs with backs instead of stools as the main seating option, soft seating and a variety of seating within each room, phone booths for faculty in the support space, more outdoor programmed opportunities directly outside the room to name a few.



Instagram post showcasing the student's efforts around room co-design

Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Through some intentional planning, it happened that the design team involved with the project also scheduled an off-site team-building get-together in Silicon Valley during the design phase of the year 2 phase of work. It gave the team an opportunity to meet with the students to provide feedback on their ideas in person, but also gave the team a chance to ideate and connect with each other on site within each of the spaces and with the site leadership team who were based there. During the team's off-site, a thematic goal titled "Better Together" was established for that current year acknowledging that while the strength and speciality of one team member was important, the benefits of tackling projects and challenges together and simultaneously through faster, collaborative iteration, allowed for not only faster results in most cases, but a sharing of ideas and thoughts that built trust and support. This same spirit was the bases that permeated the project, reinforced by the interactions with students and their ideas, as well as with the site leadership team.

The level of commitment demonstrated by each individual involved in the project echoed this theme of "Better Together" whether it was meticulously painting FAR UV devices to match the custom wall paint for each room, threading calligraphy artifacts within box frames for the Wen Fang – The Study room, or gathering old 80's photos of the site leadership team and faculty to be framed and featured within the Arcade room. The care and extra effort within each of the spaces showed and was felt by the school community upon entering. That care and intention served many purposes including honoring the time students spent developing their ideas and putting them out there, to working hard to truly transport users to the time and place that the innovation featured was taking place, to demonstrating to students and faculty the level of care the school would go to in order to inspire and support them through the built environment.



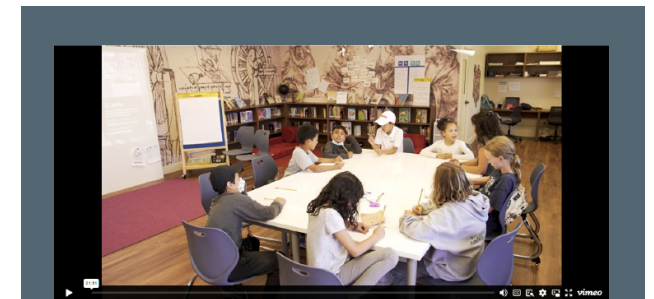
Capturing the moment when faculty were shown the finished spaces in Year 2.



Design strategy of keeping the exterior as is and only focusing on the interior resulted in a striking contrast.



The Avenues Design Team timed a team-building off-site trip to the campus during the design phase of Year 2.



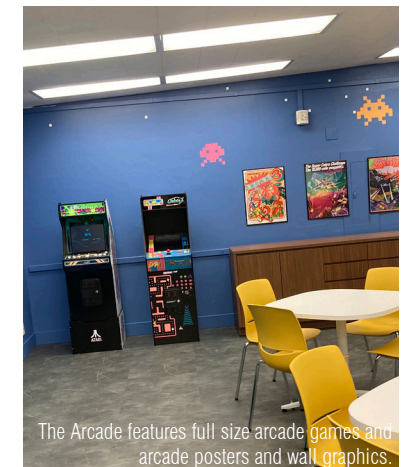
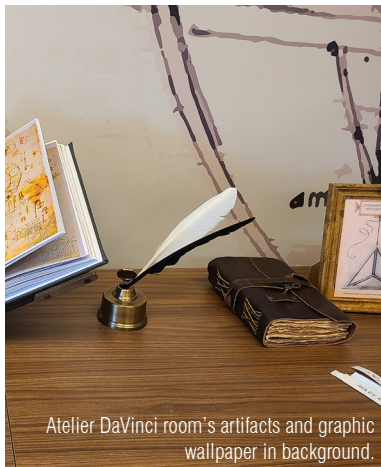
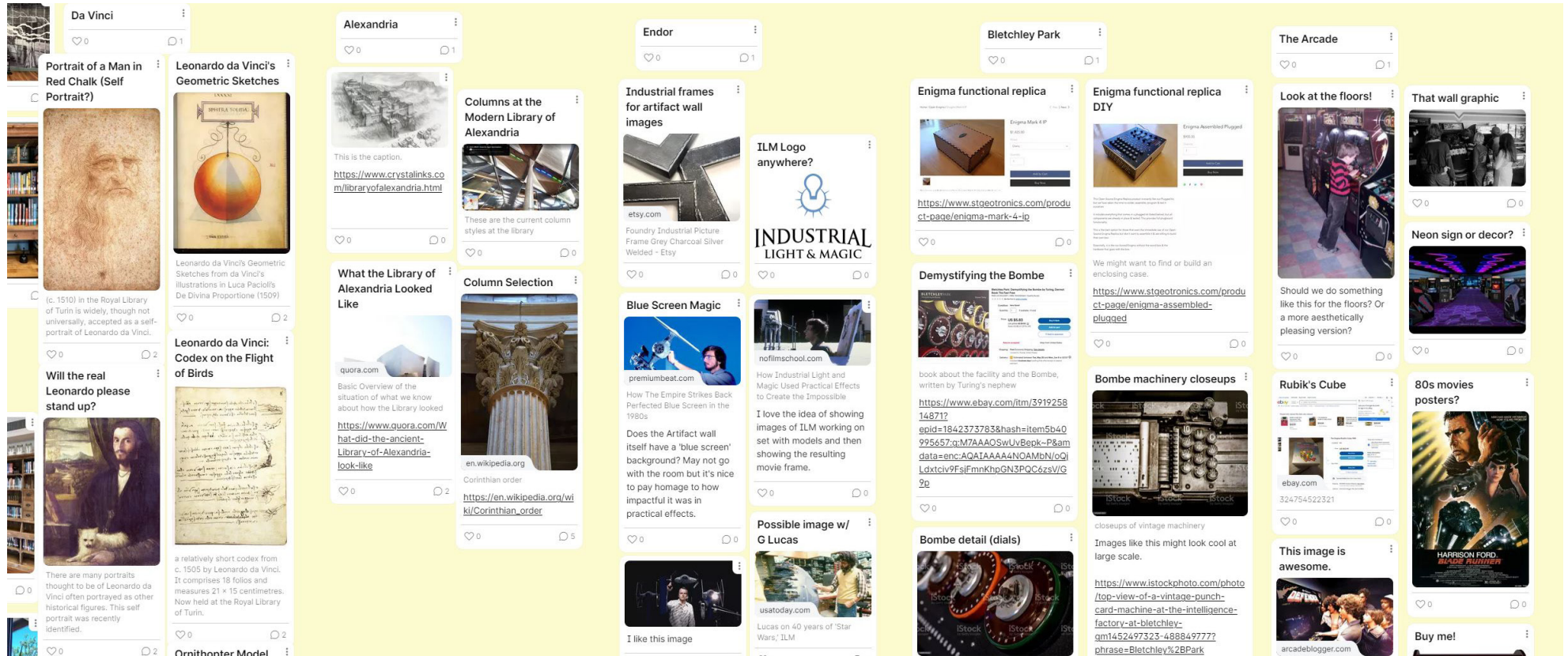
"Not Your Typical Classroom"

<https://vimeo.com/869318179/1b114c8252>



An Inclusive Design Process

A fast and transparent ideation process was facilitated by using applications like Padlet. A six-person design team allowed for a divide, share, and conquer approach where each room theme or two was owned by a member. Potential artifact objects as well as artifact wall images and content were searched, posted, discussed, and ultimately in some cases, purchased and then placed or installed.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Context

The innovation labs designed and retrofitted by the project team are located within over 40-year old temporary classroom buildings built at a time when the surrounding community college was just beginning to embark on a long capital campaign of building brand new facilities. The temporary buildings themselves are simple one-story bar buildings containing rows of standard classroom spaces lined up and emptying directly to the outside which serves as the corridor connection. Campus locale-wise the project location is on an annexed portion of the community college campus site functioning very much on the outskirts of the larger college ecosystem. This relationship is further punctuated by the contrasting appearance of the temporary buildings against the new gleaming modern buildings just beyond.

The temporary campus is a simple courtyard configuration with more than half the spaces facing into an open, landscaped courtyard area. The other half are facing out either to a fenced portion looking to the outside world, or to the majority of the newly built community college.

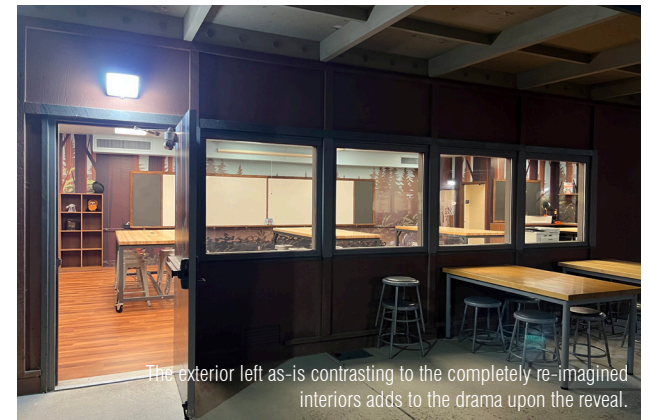
Contextually, the project team arrived at a solution that would aim to preserve what was existing on the exterior of the buildings. This was driven mainly by schedule and budget constraints but also led to a design strategy that would feed into a dramatic and unexpected reveal. While there were plans to invest in the landscaping and hardscaping mostly to level-set the outdoor experience which had suffered from decades of neglect, the limited budget and schedule did not allow for as much



Temporary structures in brown were slated for demolition with the completion of a many decade-long capital campaign construction program at Mission College.



One of the assets of the existing arrangement is an outdoor courtyard that is formed amongst the buildings.



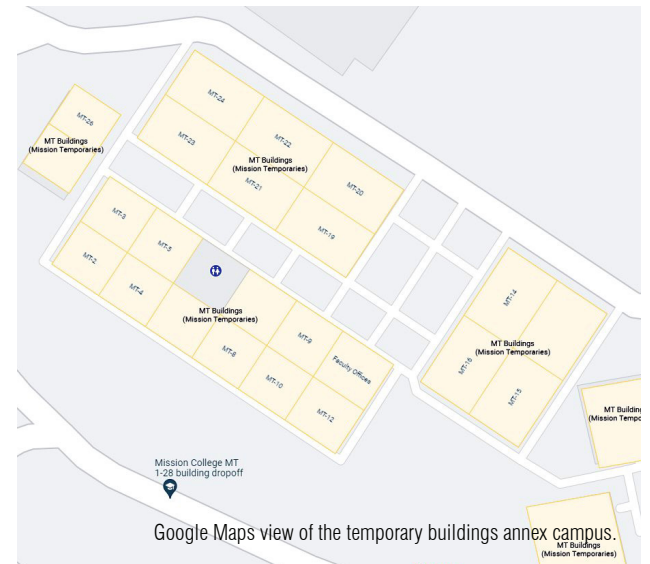
The exterior left as-is contrasting to the completely re-imagined interiors adds to the drama upon the reveal.

beautification but was instead reserved for program-driven needs. Also, given the campus was intended to be a temporary location for the school, the decision was made to selectively renovate which meant that most of the improvement would be reserved for the interior finishes and furnishings.

The strategy was not to 'let on' and perhaps even treat it as a covert operation that only those who gained access to the space would truly understand and appreciate what awaited them behind the doors. The benefit of this was two-fold: one was creating a sense of 'discovery' upon the reveal and a sense of identity with regularized access. The second was to protect and preserve not only the new Founding Class identity that was created, but simultaneously the established brand identity of the global school network. From the outside looking in, unless you knew what was within the long brown unsuspecting buildings, only newly minted graphic room signs, the Corten steel monument sign, and the intermittent post flag would hint at what was happening inside.



Exterior room signs are the only signal from the outside on what is within.



Google Maps view of the temporary buildings annex campus.

Response: To Inspire, to Motivate

The impact of having the room themes come directly from the students was perhaps the biggest inspiration and motivator the project could have offered. During a particular event where students were asked what the best thing about the Founding Class Program, a number of them mentioned the opportunity to co-create the learning environment. In addition to this, other wonderful moments have occurred within the spaces that no one could have predicted at the start of the project.



Tesla vs. Edison

Students had a three-week unit - they could select between a unit on Tesla and Edison and how their rivalry inspired creativity. Students both read a book on their relationship and also studied the science behind their work. This unit was held in Invention Factory and in the Wardencllyffe Room. At the end students created an artifact to contribute to one of the room's story.



Flight Path

Notable guest speakers visit the campus and in one particular synergistic moment, a helicopter pilot was giving a talk to students standing in the DaVinci room fully suited in his flight gear, standing under the laser cut Ornithopter model hanging above.



Rise and Rhyme

In Year 2, as part of their first project cycle there were impressive showcases of learning from all students. The 10th graders ended their "Why War?" unit with a spoken word performance, delivering powerful poems and perspectives on war to an audience of their peers, teachers and parents.

The setting for the impromptu performance was the Rise Room where students rigged lighting and reconfigured the room as a small theater with the Maya Angelou word graphic as the backdrop.



Get a Room

During a New School of Thought Institute summit, students were asked about how the spaces inspired them and which room they liked the best. More than one student shared that they liked to be in Invention Factory when they had to start creating something new because of the wallpaper with all of the patents. Other students shared that they liked to be in Rise when they had to do writing or something introspective. They did not have a favorite per se but rather found different rooms were good for different moments. They also said that when they first saw NASA West they thought it was the teachers' lounge because at other schools they had been at rooms "that nice" were only for adults, not students. They felt valued because the spaces were created for them.



Play to Win

During the school's Big History Board Game unit, the students used the Arcade as inspiration to design their board games aligned with important historical themes. They hosted game designers in the space and gleaned inspiration from the way in which 80s arcades functioned as spaces to play and build community.

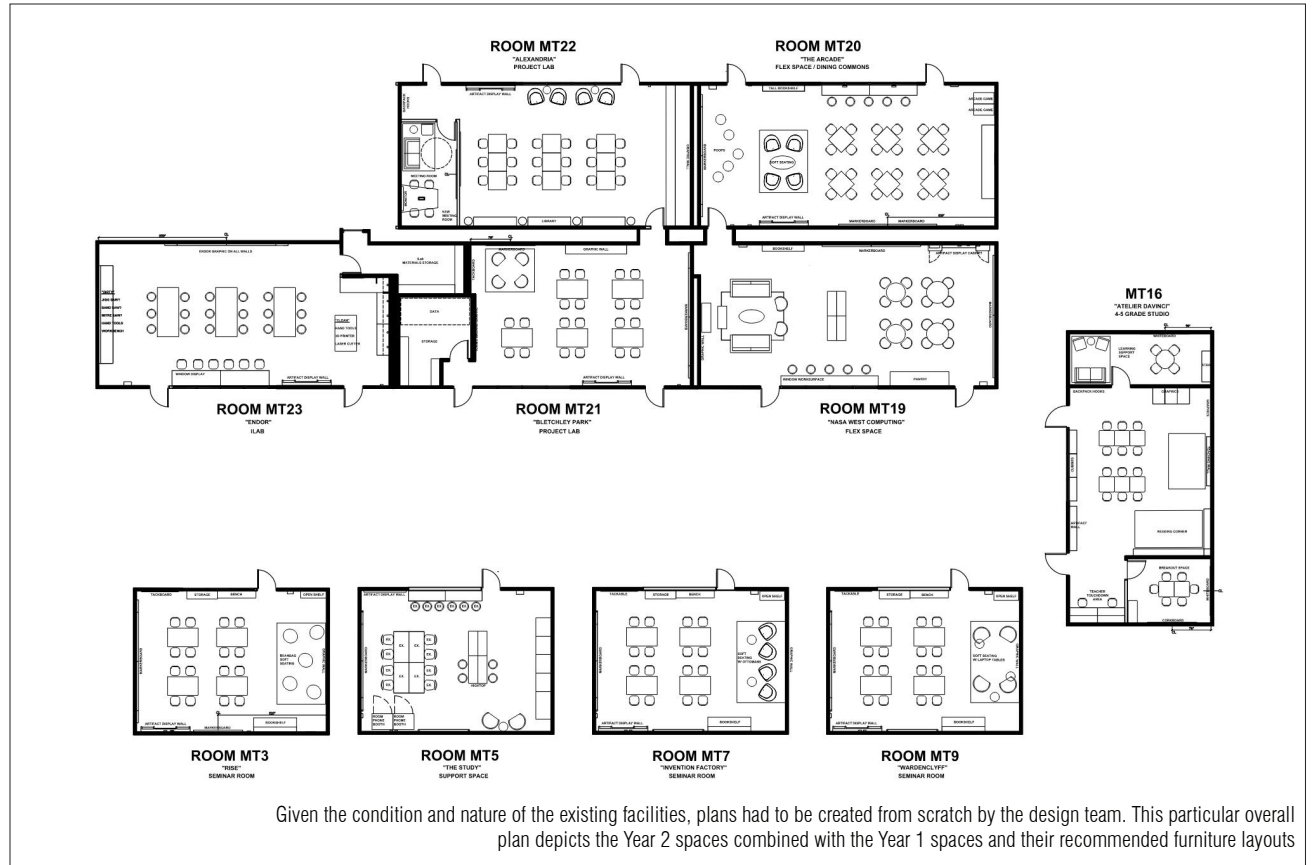
Innovative Aspects

1. Capturing and empowering student voice directly into the design and construction of their own learning spaces.
2. Employing low cost design interventions but resulting in high-impact spaces to inspire and motivate.
3. Using a design strategy that capitalizes on the stark contrast of a dated, unremarkable exterior to a completely re-imagined interior.
4. Relying on room themes that energize and engage rather than dictate and deaden.
5. Designing rooms to a level of museum-like detail but that encourages active participation.
6. Immersive, time-period-inspired spaces that transport users into a moment in time when innovation and inspiration was taking place.
7. Rehabilitating a facility slated for demolition and transforming it into top-level education spaces for a new school.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The diversity of room themes at first were daunting as it was not clear how the rooms could relate to each other and would make sense as a whole. But once the design developed and the ideas began to mature and take seed, the differences became whimsical and joyful, transporting users and immersing them into different worlds. One design team member observed that because of the way the building was constructed with outside functioning as the 'corridor', going out and coming back into another space actually worked as a neutralizer or 'palette cleanser' of sorts. The diversity of themes was a direct reflection of the diversity of the student voices.

Having all the rooms be student themes was a shift towards equity by broadening the recognition to more students, and by essentially level-setting the ideation process and demonstrating to students that their ideas were equally if not better ideas than some developed by the adults, designers who were working professionals. By showcasing their proposal and bringing it to life, this was in a sense the ultimate form of inclusion through recognition. Being able to point to an area of the room and to be able to say 'that was my idea' and I had a lot to do with how it turned out was powerful and affirming.

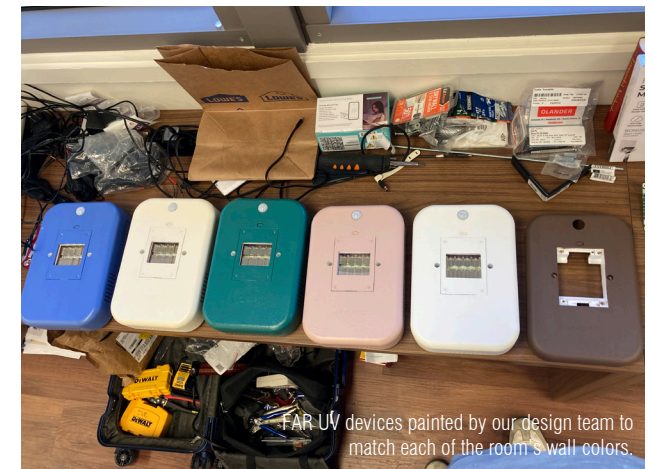


Sustainability and Wellness

A number of constraints prevented the Founding Class Program project from establishing significant sustainability goals including the temporary nature of the campus, as well as limited budget and funds to invest into the temporary set-up. However, by utilizing existing buildings that were slated to be torn down and removed in a few years was perhaps one of the most sustainable things the school could have done. As well, using existing furniture from another program within the network instead of buying all new was an act of reducing the project's footprint.

In terms of wellness, following on the coattails of the pandemic, Avenues had globally adopted a notably high standard for indoor environment, with a strong focus on ventilation and air quality. As a part of the design and construction, FAR UV devices were carefully positioned in every room to disinfect, while HEPA machines supplemented the filtered air that occupants were

breathing. The impact was not only a cleaner, fresher environment within the older buildings, but an improved factor of safety related to the transfer of airborne viruses and contagions.





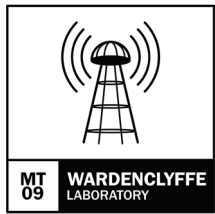
View of the Wardencllyff Lab in Year 2 with soft seating area in front of the infamous wall graphic



The artifact wall in Wardencllyff Laboratory showcases Tesla and his inventions



Students sit at the front of the room to discuss and present.



Wardencllyff Laboratory

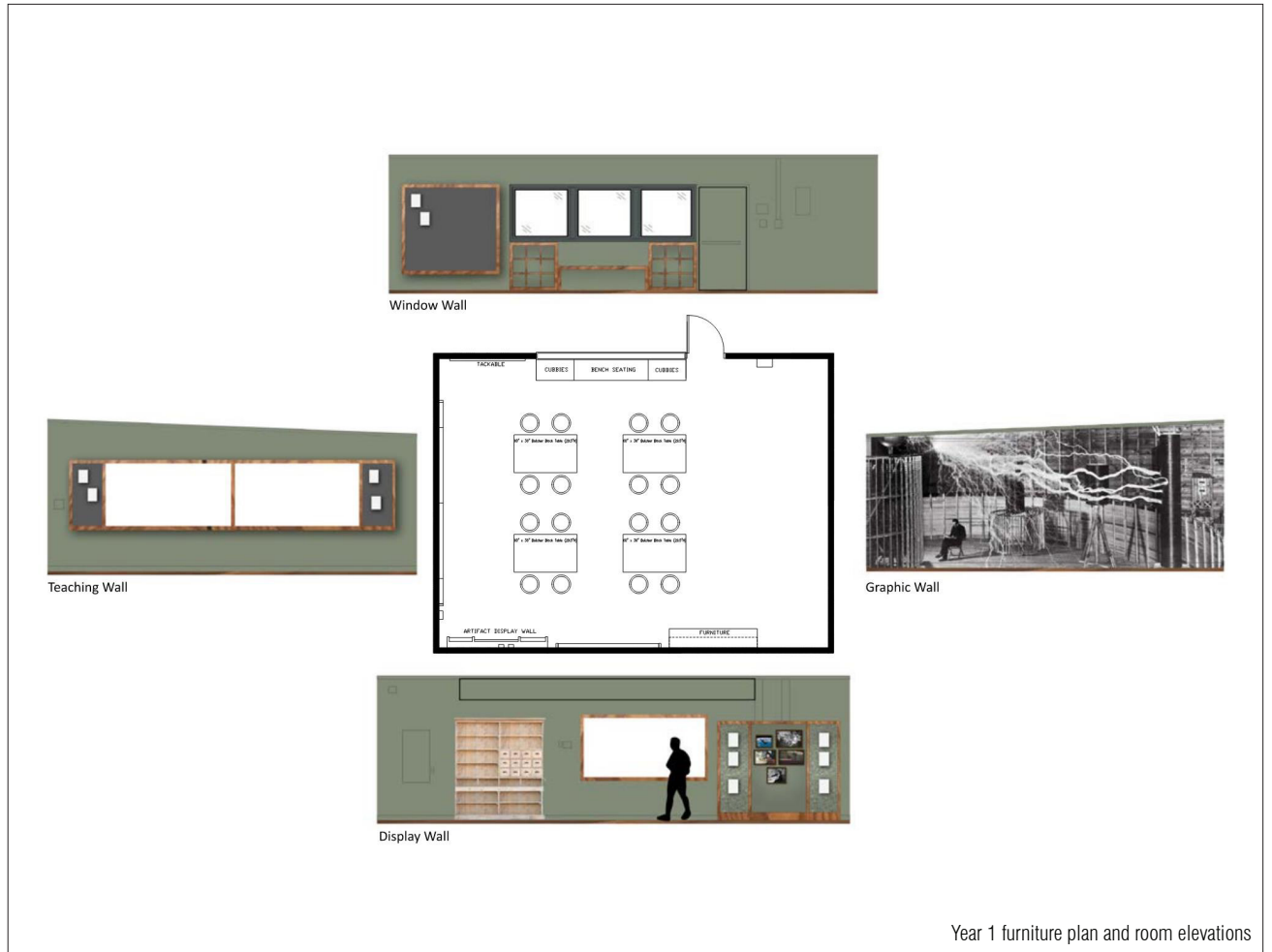
One of the rooms opened in Year 1 to support the founding class cohort of students grades 6th-9th. In Year 2, a soft seating area was added closer to the graphic wall, and stools were swapped out for backed seats after

receiving feedback from students and faculty. The darker, moodier tones were intentional to contrast to its adjacent rival room - Invention Factory.

The room is used for a range of subjects but mainly physics and the sciences in honor of the theme.



Students with teacher in seminar-style configuration for project-based discussion



Year 1 furniture plan and room elevations



View of the Invention Factory in Year 1 with the large wall graphic of Edison's patents



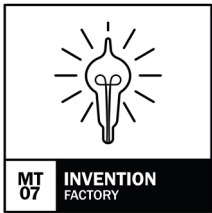
The artifact wall showcases Edison, his team, and their inventions



Artifacts are positioned to encourage interaction



Small details are added for staged effect



Invention Factory

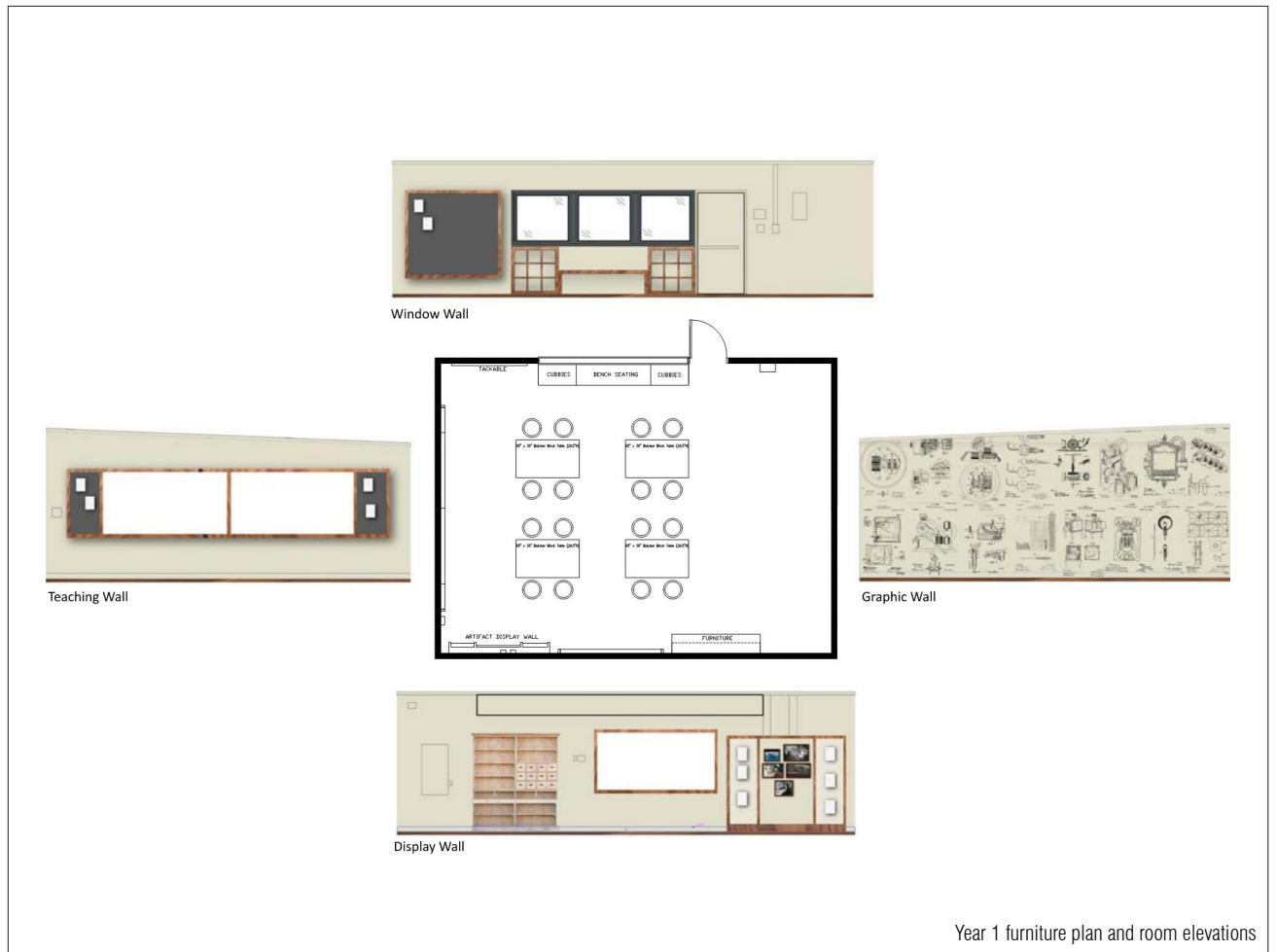
One of the other rooms opened in Year 1 to support the founding class cohort. In Year 2, a soft seating area was added closer to the graphic wall, and stools were swapped out for backed seats after receiving feedback from students

and faculty. The lighter, more natural tones were intentionally employed to contrast to its adjacent rival room - Wardenclyffe Laboratory.

A mix of subjects and activities take place in this room including the science project block, math, and humanities.



Rooms were used flexibly including impromptu performances and gatherings



Window Wall

Teaching Wall

Graphic Wall

Display Wall

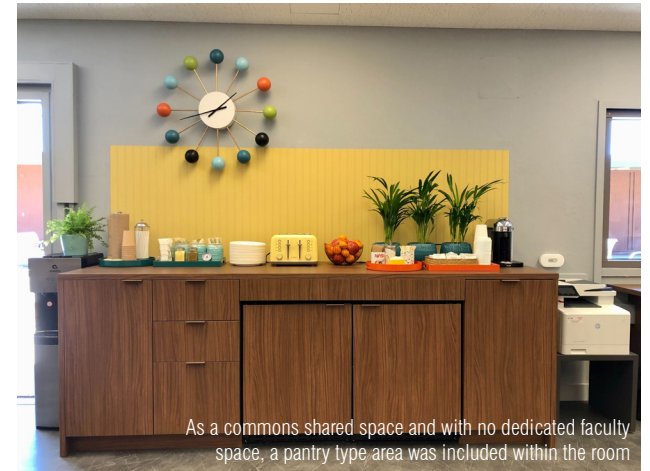
Year 1 furniture plan and room elevations



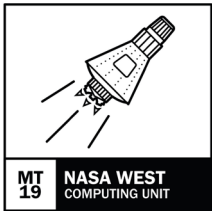
View of NASA West in Year 1 furnished in a mid-century modern feel and a chalkboard and map wall at the far end



A welcoming, soft seating area frames the feature wall.



As a commons shared space and with no dedicated faculty space, a pantry type area was included within the room



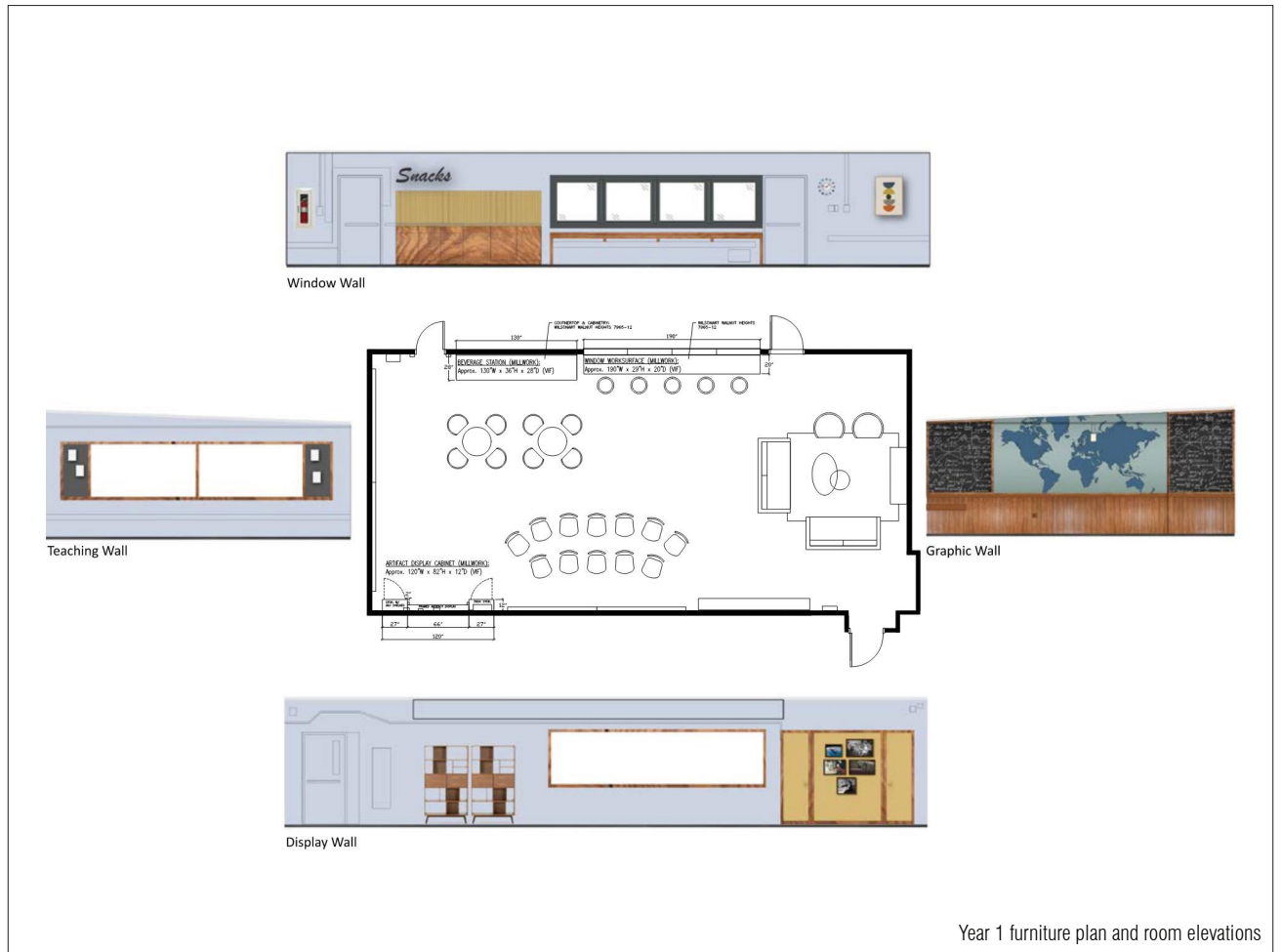
NASA West Computing Unit

This particular room was opened in Year 1 as a flexible commons type room for gatherings, meetings, presentations and learning-teaching. In Year 2, some modifications were made including additional millwork.

The geometry and size of the room as well as its location within the site teed it up well as a shared space for the entire school community. In Year 2 an additional commons-type space was located directly behind NASA West with a internal door that directly connected the two spaces.



The mixing of student and faculty support space is at the heart of Avenues



Year 1 furniture plan and room elevations



View of The Study which served as the central support and resource area for the whole community



"A thousand miles begins with a single step" - Laozi



Wen Fang - The Study

This room came online between Year 1 and 2 but found its final set-up in Year 2. Functioning as a resource space for mainly staff and faculty, the theme for this room was 'The Study' due to the quieter nature of activities within. Phone

booths were added at a later date to provide a space for faculty to make private video or phone calls.

The combination of some necessary functions (private meetings, faculty personal storage, general storage) blended with a theme that warranted a serene atmosphere.



Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



The artifact wall in Wen Fang was comprised of framed canvases replica Chinese art as well as framed calligraphy tools



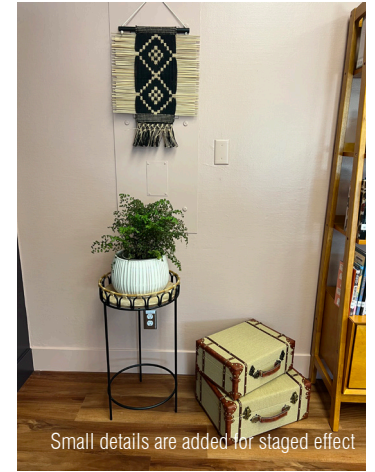
View of the Rise Writing Space anchored at one end by an original word art mural designed by an Avenues Design team member



Small touches including a full set of Maya Angelou texts



A desk served as a main piece in lieu of a bookcase like most other rooms



Small details are added for staged effect



Rise Writing Space

Inspired by the legendary author, poet, and civil rights activist, this room supports courses in the literary arts and was often branded by students as a space well-suited for introspective activities like writing.

Warm, natural finishes along with residential scale furnishings help create a cozy, intimate space for students and faculty. The word art graphic was a design created from scratch by the design team requiring each word specially modified and placed.



Faculty and students strike up an intimate discussion in the soft seating area as Maya Angelou looks on

The architectural drawings include three room elevations showing wall treatments like markerboards and storage, a furniture plan with labels for 'TACKABLE', 'STORAGE', 'BENCH', 'OPEN SHELF', 'MARKERBOARD', 'ARTIFACT DISPLAY WALL', 'MARKERBOARD', 'BOOKSHELF', 'BEANBAG SOFT SEATING', and 'GRAPHIC WALL', and an inspiration board featuring photos of Maya Angelou, a book cover for 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings', and a grid layout.

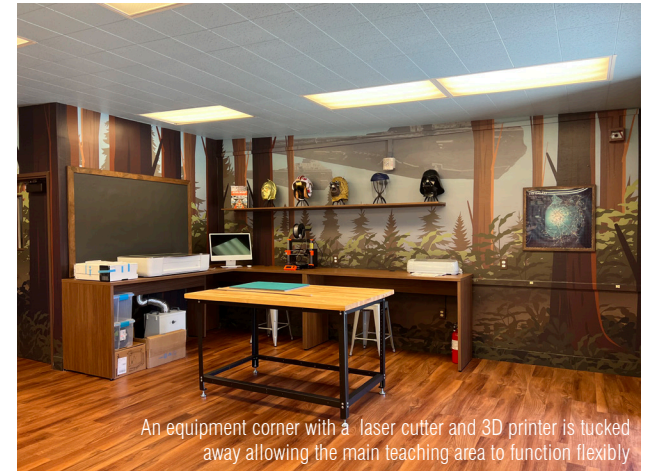
Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



View of Endor Studio which serves as the school's maker space features a fully immersive wall graphic



Various Star Wars masks greet students as they work on their projects



An equipment corner with a laser cutter and 3D printer is tucked away allowing the main teaching area to function flexibly



Endor Studio

Since the start of the Avenues program in 2012, a maker-type space called the I-Lab, has been an essential program space given the project-based curriculum. In Year 2 of the Founding Class Program, one of the larger spaces was slated to be transformed into the I-Lab or maker space.

Pairing this program with the Star Wars theme seemed like a natural pairing especially given the visually creative effects of the movie franchise. Instead of focusing only on George Lucas, particular attention was given to the large team behind him.



A custom french cleat wall anchors one end of Endor just above the workbench intended for hand tools

The composite image includes:

- Three horizontal room elevation renderings showing different views of the Endor Studio's interior design, featuring wood paneling and forest wall graphics.
- A detailed furniture plan showing the layout of the room. Labels include: "ENDOR GRAPHIC ON ALL WALLS / CENTER MARKERBOARD", "DIRTY" (with a list: JIG SAW?, BAND SAW?, MITRE SAW?, HAND TOOLS, WORKBENCH), "CLEAN" (with a list: HAND TOOLS, 3D PRINTER, LASER CUTTER), "WINDOW DISPLAY", and "ARTIFACT DISPLAY WALL".
- An inspiration board with various images related to Star Wars, including characters, scenes, and technical drawings.

Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



A view of Bletchley Park. A large wall graphic of a Turing machine wraps an IT support room that could not be relocated



The artifact wall honors not only Alan Turing, but the large team of code-breakers who worked with him



Students have an active dialogue across tables in Bletchley Park



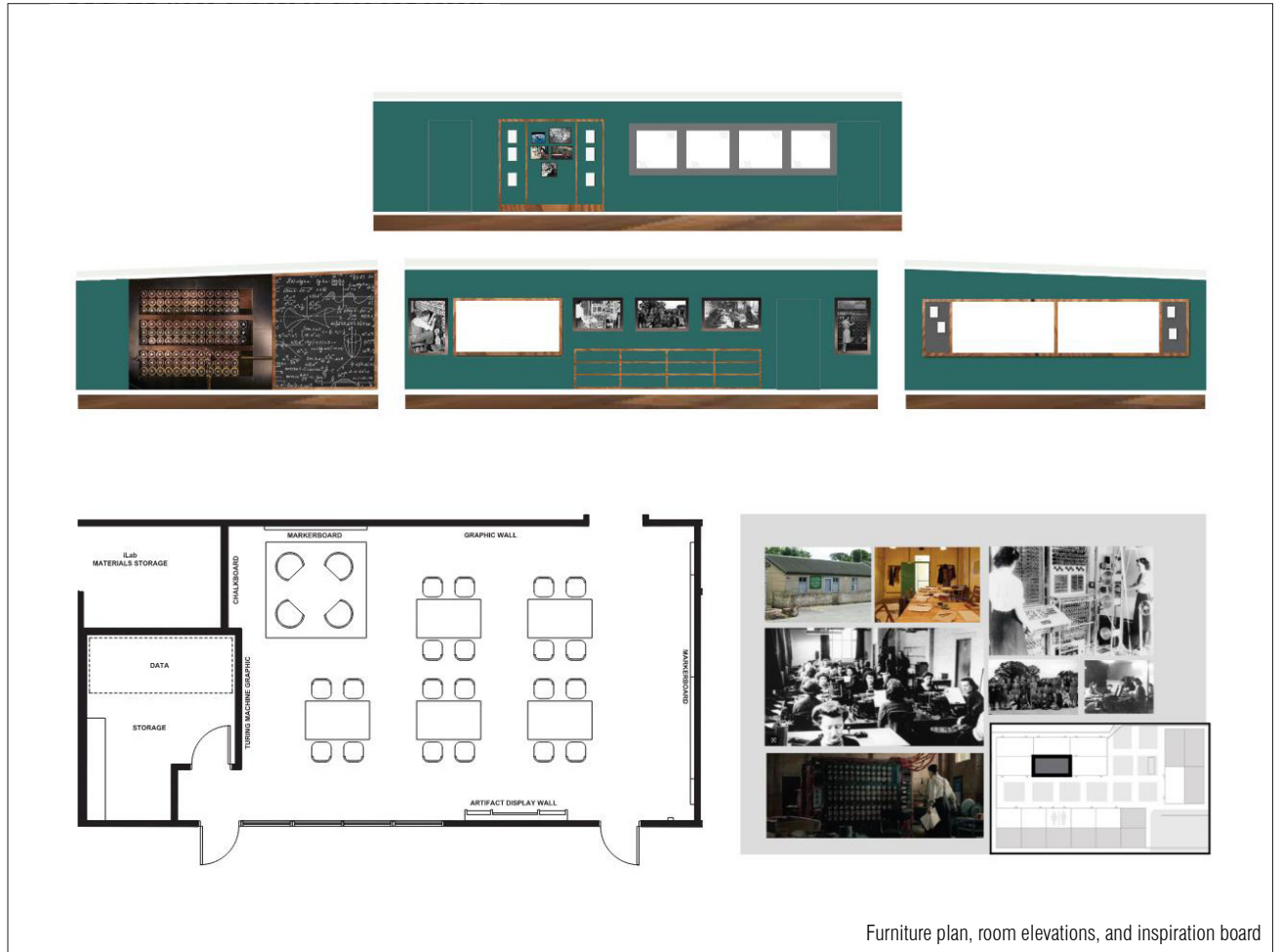
Bletchley Park

A theme centered on the work of Alan Turing seemed serious in nature especially given the connotation with code-breaking and the war. However as the father of computer science, the opportunity it would present to introduce such a significant figure in history was interesting.

Aesthetics leaned into the more somber nature of the theme but elegantly honored not only Alan Turing and his ground-breaking work, but the large team behind him. The correlation between the wall graphic of a Turing machine and the IT room it wrapped seemed quite appropriate.



A student works independently with the artifact wall in the distance



Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



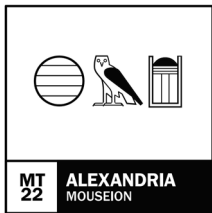
To emulate a library-feel, furniture was arranged in a more traditional set-up while columns are installed for visual effect



Avenues Director of Library and Media Services visits the campus and presents within the Library of Alexandria



Anchoring one end of the room is a built up mini-amphitheater with a modified graphic of a famous School of Athens painting



Alexandria Mouseion

A couple of aspects of this room design was challenging. First was that the Library of Alexandria was mythical in nature with no real understanding or record of what it looked like. Second was that while it was called a 'library',

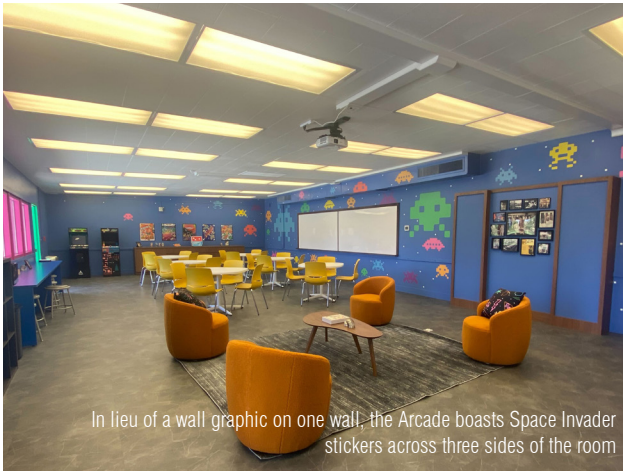
the space needed to function as a teaching space.

By developing a main wall of millwork with faux columns, the room's main tone was set. Another big moment would be a School of Athens-inspired graphic wall with mini-amphitheater providing quite a selfie-worthy moment.



The design team has a fun moment pretending to be contemplative

Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



In lieu of a wall graphic on one wall, the Arcade boasts Space Invader stickers across three sides of the room



The Artifact Wall in the Arcade draws on the more recent history of video games and the underground culture surrounding



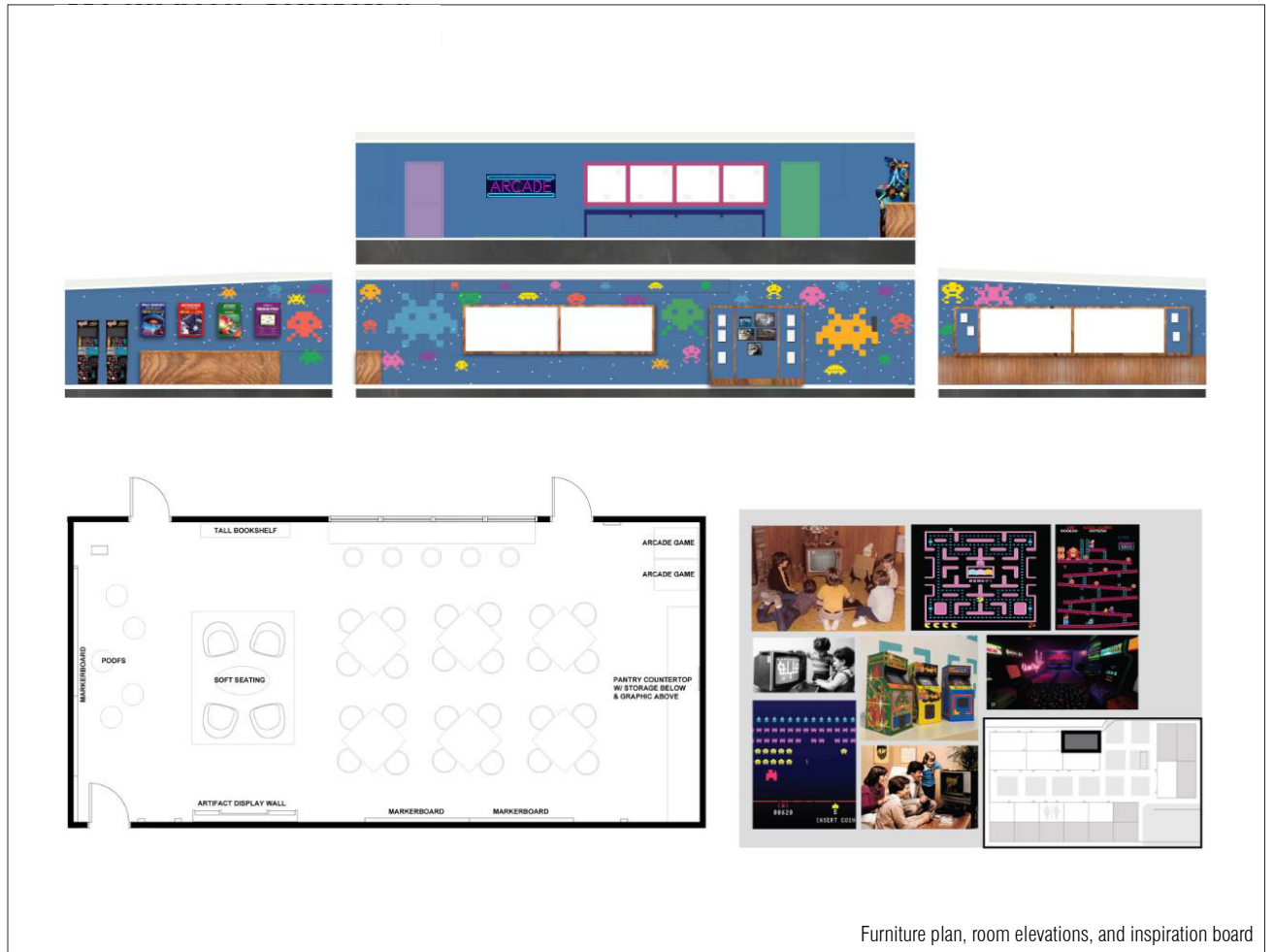
Middle school students reactions on the day of the room design reveal in Year 2



Arcade Room

With a growing school in Year 2, a second communal space was needed for flex use, formal presentations, and informal gatherings. Indoor food service was also a potential program need during parts of the year.

The pairing of this theme with the programmatic function was a good match allowing the arcade and video game theme to remain playful without much concern for it being too 'distracting' for students in a learning environment. Personal touches include old 1980's photos of faculty and administration through the space.



Students enjoying the Arcade and all the interactive artifacts

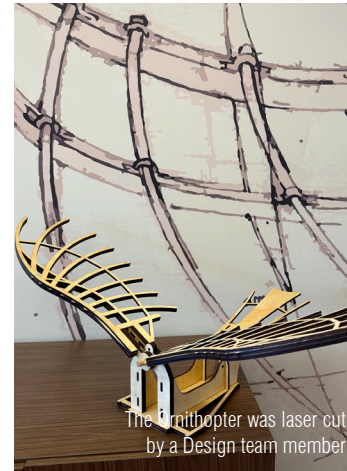
Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



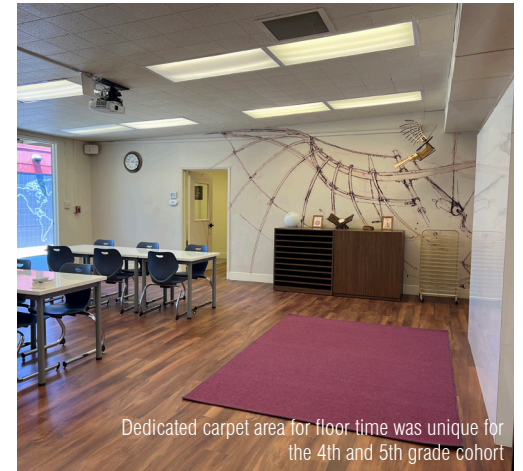
The DaVinci Room featured a reading corner for the 4th and 5th grade cohort as well as a faculty work area



The Artifact Wall in DaVinci was a bit different with 2D and 3D artifacts



The Ornithopter was laser cut by a Design team member



Dedicated carpet area for floor time was unique for the 4th and 5th grade cohort



Atelier Da Vinci

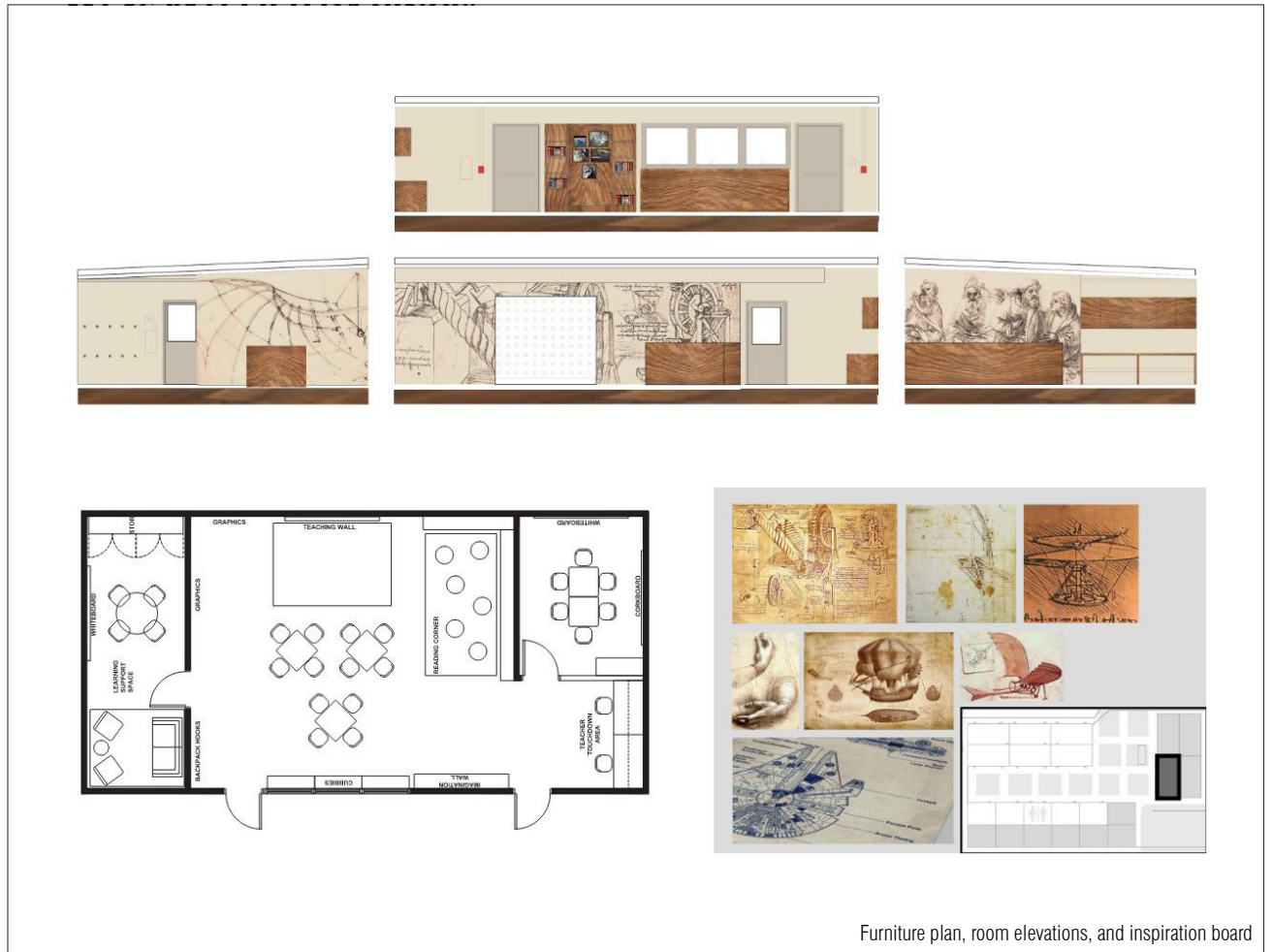
In Year 2, a 4th and 5th grade cohort was added to the campus requiring a self-contained classroom equipped with reading corner and small group rooms for language and math instruction.

The theme of DaVinci was matched with the youngest students due to the whimsical nature of his inventions as well as the imaginative and creative visuals so closely associated with the famous artist.

Another all-school meeting and resource room was programmed within an existing small space.



The students and teacher gather around the carpet and teaching wall



Furniture plan, room elevations, and inspiration board



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Avenues Goals and Vision

Avenues Mission Statement

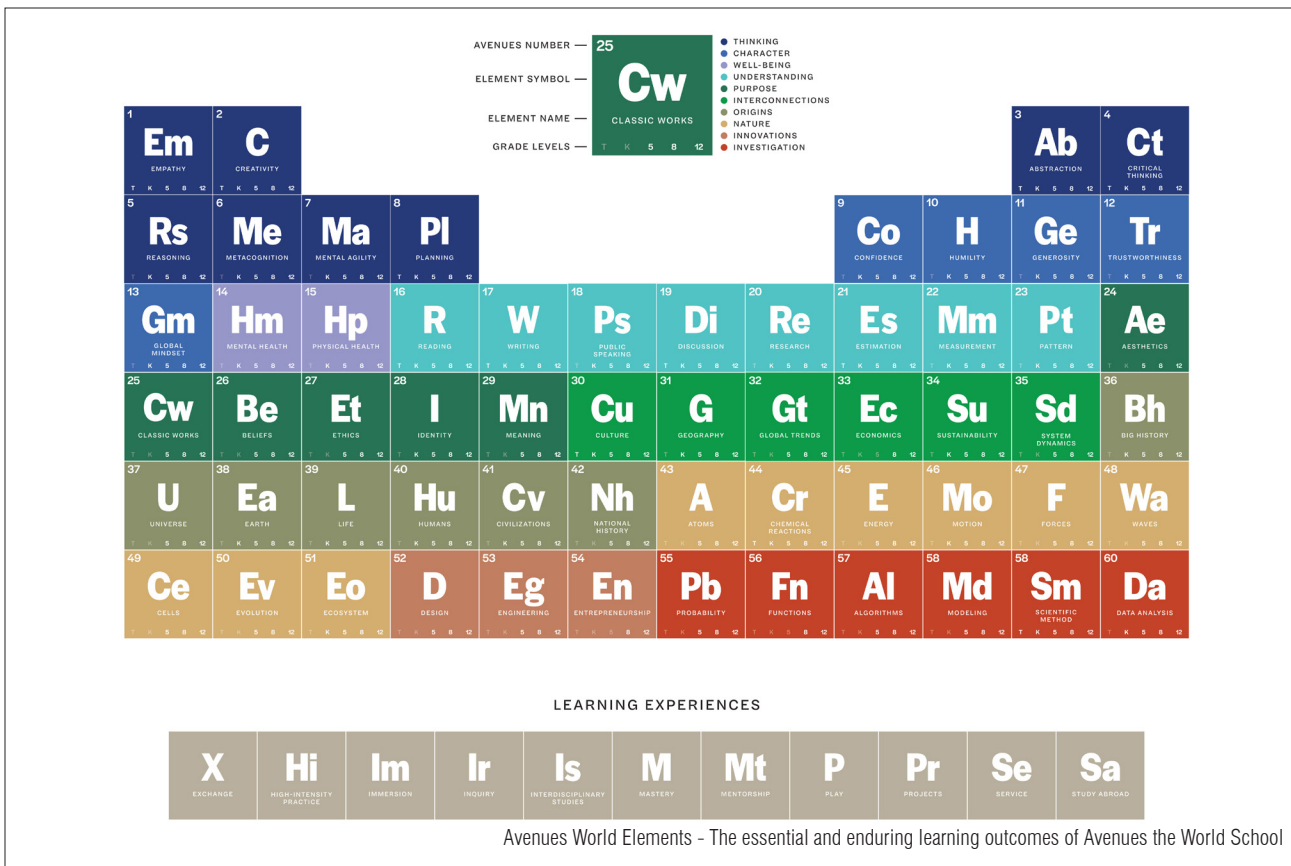
We will graduate students who are accomplished in the academic skills one would expect; at ease beyond their borders; truly fluent in a second language; good writers and speakers one and all; confident because they excel in a particular passion; artists no matter their field; practical in the ways of the world; emotionally unafraid and physically fit; humble about their gifts and generous of spirit; trustworthy; aware that their behavior makes a difference in our ecosystem; great leaders when they can be, good followers when they should be; on their way to well-chosen higher education; and, most importantly, architects of lives that transcend the ordinary.

Academics

By encouraging students to think across, rather than within, traditional academic disciplines, interdisciplinary study invites them to practice the expansive thinking necessary to formulate solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

Interdisciplinary study is so thoroughly infused in our curriculum that it's sometimes hard to discern. For example, it might be an advanced seminar that integrates insights from history, philosophy and economics to ask hard questions about technology, society and humanity. In all cases, students are so absorbed in their learning that disciplinary boundaries fall away and their intrinsic motivation—to solve, to ask, to create—takes over.

At Avenues interdisciplinary learning is woven into our curriculum and we build our schedule around collaborative project blocks where science, social studies, arts, and English teachers are all available to plan and execute projects that have real impact.



Avenues Pocket Playbook

Why do we exist? To develop future world-wise leaders uniquely equipped to understand and solve global-scale problems.

How do we behave? We behave with humility and confidence.

What do we do? We provide transformative world-focused learning experiences in key cities and countries around the globe, enabling our graduates to thrive in desirable, selective postsecondary pursuits during a time of unprecedented complexity and accelerating change.

How will we succeed? We will execute the Avenues master plan and stay true to the Avenues mission and strategic anchors. When making choices, we will choose better before cheaper and revenue before cost.

What is most important right now? The thematic goal changes, but all thematic goals are pursued while also accomplishing our standard operating objectives: Academic Excellence, Innovation and Learning, Exceptional Talent, Engaged Parents and Students, Global Reach, Financial Strength.

What are our community values? Avenues community values are composed of three bedrock pillars. Welcome. Safety. Respect. These pillars are universally honored by students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff across all Avenues campuses.

Response

Supporting the Curriculum



FLEXIBLE – by carefully considering the effective capacity of the rooms, enough space and different types of furniture are provided for a variety of arrangements and work styles. The inherently interdisciplinary themes also allow for a less prescriptive approach to the room’s functionality which is at the core of Avenues’ approach and curriculum.



Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American poet, author, and civil rights activist. Her groundbreaking autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, revealed her journey from a traumatic childhood to literary greatness. Angelou’s powerful words and advocacy for equality left an indelible mark on the world, inspiring countless lives.

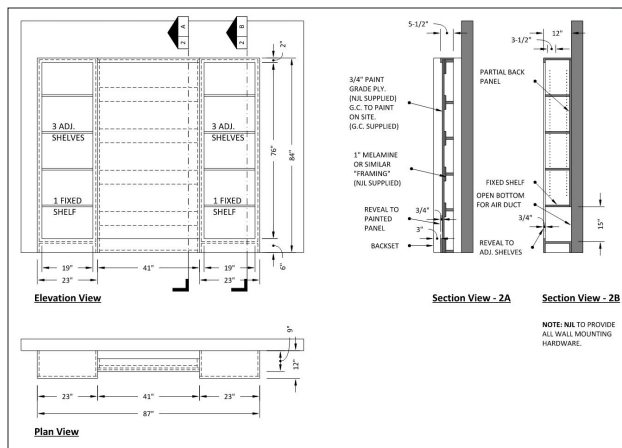
INSPIRATIONAL – by showcasing notable innovators, visionaries, and places in each of the rooms, not only is this inspiring through example, but provides students with a daily reminder of what it looks like to follow your passions. The interactive museum-like design approach immerses students in that moment in time.



DIVERSE – the range of themes implemented in both year 1 and 2 look to represent a broad cross section of areas of interest, population (gender, race, orientation), and culture. This diversity is celebrated and central to Avenues at its core as a global school.



ADAPTABLE – retrofitting these spaces to not only support flexible use and teaching and learning, but to contain such powerful themes and messages speaks to the concept of containing and showcasing. The project of translating the diverse set of themes within the spaces to make them work speaks to a level of adaptability that is promoted within the Avenues community.



SYSTEMATIC – Despite the disparate themes both subject-wise and aesthetically, the application of the content is done within a framework or template for each room to provide as much consistency room to room while still highlighting the unique nature of each theme. In a number of ways this is akin to how Avenues campuses and curriculum is realized in different parts of the world utilizing the framework of the Avenues World Elements.



RESPECTFUL – Appreciating something bigger than yourself is also core to Avenues values. Both from a cultural perspective but also as unique individuals. Having a theme like Library of Alexandria connects quite closely to an Avenues environment where individuals and cultures from around the world gathered to share texts, learnings, and stories through a lens of appreciation.

Supporting Learning & Teaching

In truth, the vacant rooms offered by the community college within the temporary buildings were a time capsule from the 1980's with very little updated within them since. The infrastructure, configuration and shape of the rooms presented a challenge for the design team given the limited time and budget available. Since a complete tear-down or extensive gut renovation was not feasible, the room bounds as 'shells' were treated as the constraint and the team worked within each one to provide the best possible spaces for a brand new program in the market. Adding power to the floors to allow for a range of seating configurations as well as to ensure support of the ubiquitous technology the school employed was deemed a must.

Thankfully a number of the rooms came with a good amount of whiteboard space which was just refreshed with new trim to aesthetically match the new design. An existing overhead projector allowed the school to plug into an existing setup which was helpful. Additional tack board space throughout the room provided proximal display and ideation surface area for students and faculty.

While in Year 1 the seating options were more limited, it was in Year 2 that the design supplemented the main table and chair seating in each of the room with soft seating to allow for a variety of set-ups for students to work, interact, and participate.

Flexible & Adaptable

Since the existing walls of the rooms were a given, the ability for the space to adapt and flex depended mainly on the furnishings selected. Within each room the team was careful to specify furniture in zones within the room to allow for students and faculty to shift how the room was used depending on the activity. While the perimeter was considered 'fixed', the center of the room was considered flexible and movable. The concept of adaptable and flexible instead ran cross-sectionally when considering all the rooms as available environments to be shared and rotated depending on what a cohort was doing. The beauty of the range of themes was that inherent in that range was different moods, styles, and formations of furniture and even interior architecture (ie.-Library of Alexandria mini-amphitheater).



Innovative Aspects

Artifact wall – this tripartite millwork panel does double duty. On one hand, it either conceals or envelopes the existing infrastructure which is unsightly and difficult to remove. On the other, it provides one central gallery wall of framed visuals representing the room's theme, and flanking tack board surfaces available for students to post their thoughts, ideas, projects up. The collocation of visionary work and images with student work and images is intentional and to encourage students.

Artifacts – the physical objects throughout each room relate to and highlight the theme of the room as interactive exhibits intended for student interaction. Most objects as replicas but in some cases original items were obtained adding authenticity to the installation and value to the student's experience. In a particularly special moment in Year 1, students were given an option to study a Tesla or Edison unit. At the end of the unit,

students were given an opportunity to develop their own artifact to add to one of the rooms.

Feature Wall(s) - while not necessarily innovative, this small design move accomplished so much within the room in terms of impact, mood, and immersive quality. In most rooms this was one wall, but in a few it was nearly the entire room which did most of the work to transport users to that place in time.

FAR UV devices - Avenues globally had adopted this device in a number of their campuses as a result of the pandemic and after significant research into the best and most effective strategies to combat against viral transmission. The device when positioned well, can efficiently inactivate pathogens, such as coronaviruses and influenza, in air and on surfaces.

RESULTS

Achieving Goals and Objectives

The foundation of the school's education is interdisciplinary learning—a robust project-based course combining studies in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) and World (humanities and social sciences). Students complete interdisciplinary projects that integrate coursework in English, history, science, and art & design.

The thematic rooms feature innovators and risk takers in history in a style meant to inspire, challenge, and encourage students and faculty through example, and more literally by immersing the users in relevant content within the décor of the space. Artifacts and visual references are featured within the rooms in an effort to transport users to that moment in history and also to allow for interaction with and amongst the elements that aid in that transporting experience.

The rooms were ultimately co-created with the students which was the most significant way to embody the mission and vision of the program. Reflecting on the Avenues mission statement, one part of a sentence correlates to this experience: “architects of lives that transcend the ordinary”. Giving students agency in the design process directly influenced how students designed their experience for the upcoming year at school. It reminds them of what is possible when they speak up, contribute, develop, and invest in an idea. It shows them the power of collaboration and their impact on something that is bigger than them.

Achieves School Network Goals

Avenues the World School is predicated on empowering students with skills and knowledge that allows them to be world-wise leaders. One of the stated goals of Avenues is to provide a physical setting for learning and teaching that is designed thoughtfully and at a level of quality commensurate with a top-tier user experience. While this particular campus project was atypical due to the existing conditions of dated, temporary classroom buildings, the goal of creating a quality experience all-around remained a priority.

This project turned the typical approach to previous campus and building projects within the school network on its head and created a new way of looking at how to achieve more connected, more meaningful design. The approach was value and user-driven, by concentrating mainly on the inside of the building. Because both time and budget were more limited than usual, the project team was forced to focus their effort and the result was a strategic design that prioritized the environment that the students and faculty would spend the majority of their time interacting with.

The emphasis on quality and qualitative experience remained consistent for this project as it does for all Avenues projects. Quality was not only achieved aesthetically, but experientially down to the smallest level of detail. Emphasis on occupant wellness also remained high with indoor air quality being addressed through air monitoring sensors, FAR UV monitors and HEPA devices.

Achieves Community Goals

Logistically, the greater community of the school network gained a significant addition with the opening of this temporary campus. But more than that, the community within this campus including faculty, staff, students, and their families, were impacted by the way in which the campus design was accomplished. The grassroots approach to establishing the temporary campus in a set of unsuspecting buildings in an unaffiliated college could have been disastrous for a brand new school to the market, but the mindset and result that was achieved through the project process had a ripple effect on the confidence and ethos of the school community. This ‘can-do’ attitude has propelled the school to pave pathways within the larger Avenues global community, leading by example, and empowering the students to do the same.

Achieves the Process and the Project

Aside from the amazing everyday stories of how the spaces impacted the school community, perhaps one additional point is worth considering. While the overall global organization lost its equity funding and was partially acquired late 2023, leaving Avenues Silicon Valley with no long-term future home, the magic that was created during the two years of the Founding Class Program at Mission College was so compelling and its community so committed, that it inspired a ground-up campaign to ‘save the school’ and to convert it into a spin-off studio school “powered by Avenues Online”. As this award submission is being drafted, the near term future of the school is confirmed to stay in its current location and the school community is in the midst of



its admissions season for the fall. While one cannot attribute the reason for this being solely due to the facility design and process, it is clear to all who were involved or were touched by the project that it did have some part.

Value and Financial Stewardship

Taking temporary buildings that were slated for demolition by the community college, and re-purposing them as state-of-the-art learning spaces for a new start-up school in the market was the start of a brilliant outcome that would comprehensively shift how the organization as a whole viewed their approach to developing campuses. In addition to the tremendous savings on not building new, the interior fit-out strategy was also budget-driven; taking what was available and thinking about how best to utilize ‘the bones’ of the spaces. Interior demolition was limited and finishes were selected favoring practical and maintainable while still aesthetically pleasing. Furniture and equipment in Year 1 was a combination of re-purposed items from a fellow network school to reduce cost and project footprint. Aesthetic choices were evaluated to achieve a high-impact while remaining budget-friendly and design choices were filtered through a user-centric lens to ensure what was purchased and installed was an effective and useful contribution for the end user – both visually and experientially. Spend was always questioned through “is this necessary to support the project and program goals, and is this the most cost-effective way to achieve it?”. In some cases, a higher quality item was favored because the design team believed the value of that investment was worthwhile from a messaging and experience standpoint. However, this approach was strategic and limited.



Cost/area-wise this project and scaling it to the impact and success a facility can offer a program and campus, provided the highest value in Avenues’ history across the organization’s 10+ years of development history. The project essentially took the organization’s model for development and flipped it on its head which surprisingly resulted in an even better outcome – one no one could have ever predicted.

Sustainability and Wellness Outcomes

Sustainability outcomes included:

1. Use of an existing facility, minimizing the project footprint and environmental impact through minimized construction.
2. Re-use of furniture and equipment from another campus instead of buying all new.
3. Keeping existing lighting fixtures but swapping fluorescent bulbs with LED bulbs.
4. Xeriscaping portions of outdoor existing landscaping to reduce reliance on irrigation.

Wellness outcomes included:

1. Optimal indoor air quality through the use of FAR UV devices to disinfect and HEPA machines to filter the air.
2. Improved indoor lighting through replacement of bulbs for even, consistent light levels.
3. Activation of outdoor program areas directly outside the facility encouraging use of table seating and recreational areas during breaks and recess.



“I cannot emphasize how important co-designing, co-creating innovative rooms alongside the students was for the

success of the Founding Class Program as a whole. Right from the start, students felt a part of the environment because they had been part of the design process. They had created design briefs, received and shared feedback and then seen that feedback incorporated into the rooms in real time and in real life. The very first day of year 2, those students proudly took new students and families on a tour of the space in which they walked them through the sources of inspiration and explained the various components of each room. They own these rooms like they own their learning.

-Robyn Chapel
Head of Upper Division