

A4LE - MACCONNELL AWARD SUBMISSION

# LITTLE RAVEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

LITTLETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little Raven Elementary School is more than the sum of its walls, classrooms, and corridors—it is the story of a community coming together to build a place of belonging, growth, and purpose. The final of three new elementary schools designed for Littleton Public Schools, Little Raven was born from a moment of transformation: two school communities—East Elementary and Ralph Moody Elementary—merging into one. What followed was a process grounded in listening, learning, and shaping a vision for a shared future.

From the beginning, the design process was guided by a **Learners First** approach—the recognition that students are not just the reason for the school’s existence, but the inspiration for every square foot. Through inclusive workshops, community design sessions, and a deeply collaborative Design Advisory Group (DAG) process, parents, educators, district leaders, and the design team came together to create a school that reflects the hopes, cultures, and dreams of its students. That same spirit of unity carried through from concept to completion, as the DAG brought together an extraordinary mix of voices—each contributing to a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Through shared decision-making, visioning exercises, and ongoing dialogue, the school emerged as a true reflection of its people—a product of **Collaboration, Collegiality, and Connection** that transcended disciplines, roles, and backgrounds.

As a prototype adaptation of Dr. Justina Ford Elementary, the community called for something uniquely theirs. This led to meaningful evolution, informed by real-world lessons from the first iteration and tailored to a new site and a new population. With each design decision, the team embraced bold **Innovation**, challenging the boundaries of repetition to craft something distinct yet familiar—something rooted in the success of the past while shaped by the promise of the future.

**Diversity** was not an afterthought—it was the foundation. In honoring the neighborhood’s cultural richness, the school design proudly integrates stories from around the globe. A vibrant mural of a tree with roots formed from world maps welcomes families in the entry lobby. Each classroom wing explores a different global biome, introducing students to the natural wonders of deserts, oceans, and grasslands. The school’s name, chosen in partnership with Indigenous leaders, pays tribute to Little Raven, a respected Arapaho peace chief, and the design includes thoughtful acknowledgments of Arapaho and Cheyenne culture. This intentionality reflects the project’s commitment to diversity and **Respect**, where every identity is honored and every voice valued.

Ultimately, Little Raven Elementary embodies the powerful truth that **Place Matters**. Every corner of the building is crafted to inspire learning, celebrate culture, and support connection. It is a school where students find not only education, but identity. Where families feel seen, heard, and welcomed.

Little Raven is a testament to what is possible when architecture, education, and community are united by shared purpose and values. It is, quite simply, a place where every learner belongs.







## SCOPE OF WORK

The Little Raven Elementary School project involved the design and construction of a new, ground-up elementary school serving 700 students. The school brings together two previously separate Little Public Schools elementary communities into one unified, future-focused learning environment. The program includes a range of educational spaces designed to support flexibility, inclusion, and creativity—such as adaptable classrooms, dedicated special education rooms, and specialized spaces for art, music, and physical education. A central Maker Space further enhances hands-on, exploratory learning. In addition to these core academic areas, the school includes a variety of shared and support spaces that foster collaboration, accommodate diverse teaching methods, and reflect the district's commitment to 21st-century learning.

## BUDGET

\$36,000,000











## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

At the heart of Little Raven Elementary is a story of thoughtful collaboration, rooted in community identity and guided by a shared commitment to educational excellence. While the project began with the successful prototype of Dr. Justina Ford Elementary, the distinct needs of its students, staff, and site required a new vision—one shaped not by replication, but by relevance.

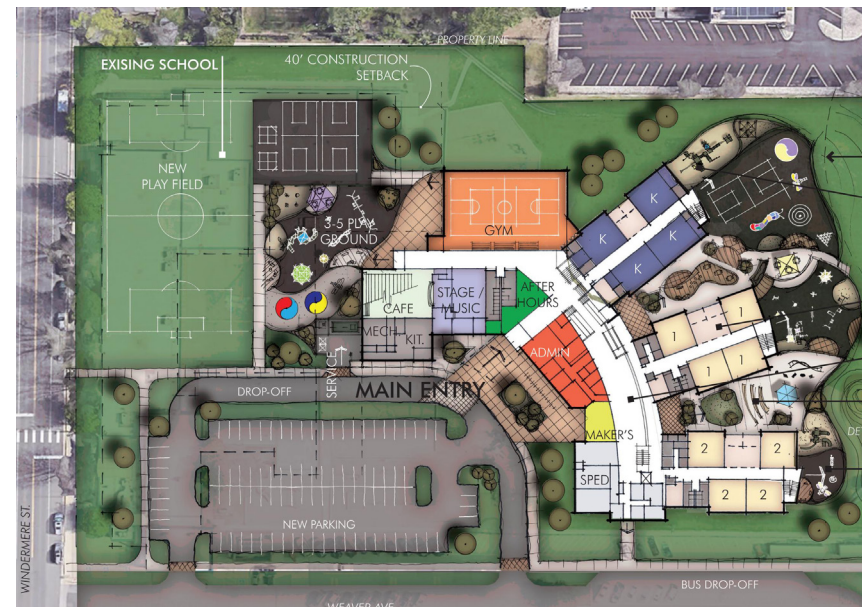
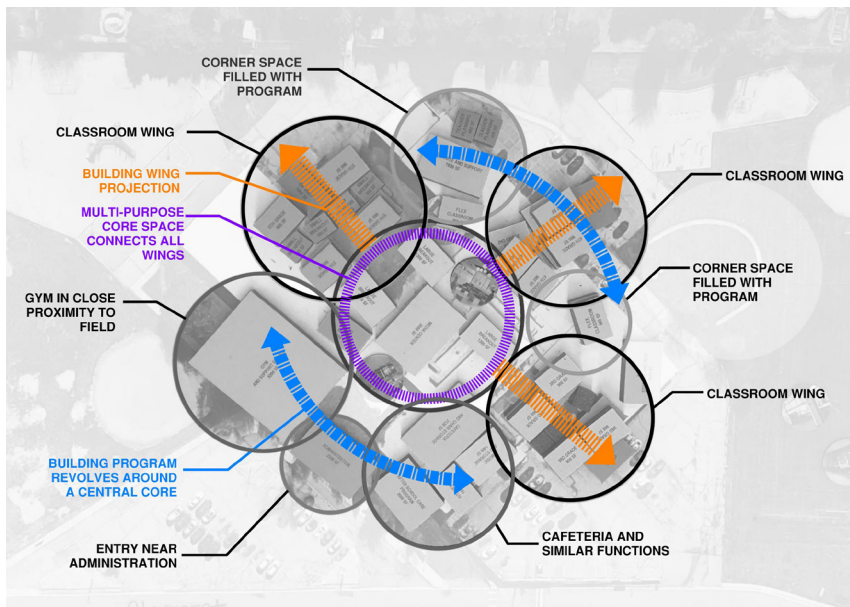
To meet this challenge, Littleton Public Schools formed a Design Advisory Group (DAG)—a diverse collective of parents, teachers, district leaders, operations and maintenance staff, community members, and the design and construction teams. This group became the voice of the project. From early visioning sessions through the final design phase, the DAG worked closely to identify what aspects of the prototype should be preserved and where changes were needed. Interactive workshops, community design sessions, and creative engagement tools helped ensure every voice was heard and valued.

Together, the DAG reshaped the prototype to better suit the unique conditions of the new school. Revisions included compressing the building's arc to accommodate a tighter site, bringing classroom wings closer together, and adding program-specific spaces such as a dedicated after-school entrance, a full special education suite, and expanded outdoor gathering areas. Every change reflected a deep listening process—respecting the needs of students, honoring the lived experiences of families, and anticipating long-term operational success with direct input from district maintenance and facilities staff.

This inclusive approach ensured that Little Raven would serve not only as a place of learning, but also as a catalyst for community connection—supporting shared use, intergenerational engagement, and a deepened sense of place. The design process fostered a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion, beginning with who was invited to the table and continuing through every design decision. From cultural storytelling in public spaces to universal design strategies in learning environments, the building reflects the values and voices of its community.

The name Little Raven holds deep cultural significance, honoring Chief Little Raven of the Arapaho Nation—a historical figure known for his advocacy, diplomacy, and peacemaking. His legacy is embedded in the school's identity and celebrated through ongoing collaboration with the Arapaho and Cheyenne Nations. Cultural advisors from these communities contributed to storytelling elements in the architecture, while also joining students, families, and school district leadership for both the beam "topping out" and ribbon-cutting ceremonies—affirming the school's role as a place of connection, celebration, and respect.

Guided by Littleton Public Schools' vision of "Extraordinary learning, exceptional community, expanded opportunity and success for all students," Little Raven Elementary stands as a testament to what can be achieved when design is driven by listening, shaped by many, and created for all.







MAX OCCUPANTS  
263

102  
MEDIA CENTER

EXIT

EXIT

MISSION

At Little Raven, together, we promise to create and develop positive relationships. We intentionally celebrate our diverse roots and traditions. We are committed to continuous social-emotional and academic growth for all students, growing high quality, rigorous instruction that serves each unique and evolving student.

Corridor C100  
→ ROOMS 130-173  
↑ CAFETERIA  
↓ GYMNASIUM  
↘ MEDIA CENTER  
← MAIN OFFICE



# The Significance Of Trees

Native Americans have been expressing their gratitude for nature - specifically trees - for centuries. The Cherokee call trees the Standing People. A tree symbolizes permanence, longevity and its firm base symbolizes the concept of 'roots' and an ongoing relationship with natural surroundings.

The tree at our entrance uses maps from around the world to signify the roots of the Littleton community coming from cultures around the world and the permanent impact that this community draws from.





# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

At first glance, the building rises gently from the landscape—bold and grounded, yet utterly welcoming. Its textured concrete blocks cast shifting shadows that dance with the daylight, while ribbons of colored metal panels mimic the ever-changing sky. This is a school designed not just to house learning, but to inspire it—to cultivate a sense of wonder, well-being, and belonging in every student who steps inside.

Three classroom wings extend like branches from the heart of the school, each one rooted in its own ecological theme. Wood-look soffit panels echo the warm wood ceilings inside. In every direction, natural light pours through large, thoughtfully placed windows, connecting students with the rhythms of the day and the beauty of the landscape beyond.

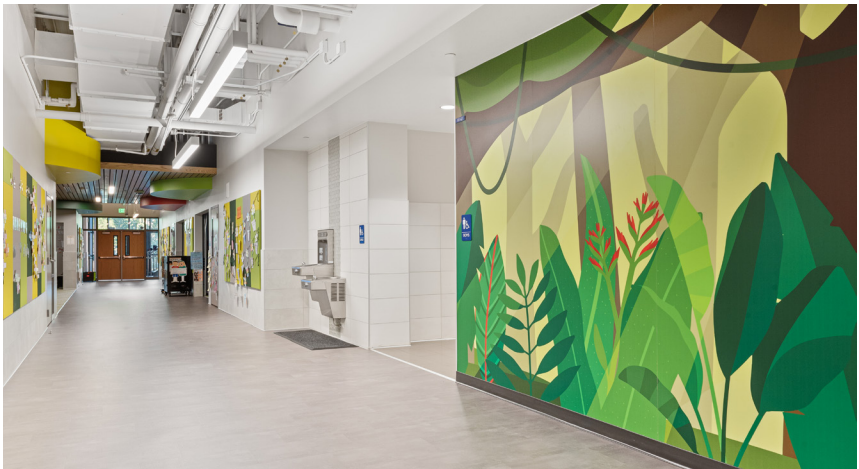
Safety and security are layered with quiet sophistication—from tall perimeter fencing to rock-covered groundscapes that deter intrusion. Entry is controlled through a secure vestibule clad in bullet-resistant glazing, with monitored keycard access and facial recognition technology supporting a safe, watchful learning environment. Within the building, finishes were chosen not just for their aesthetics, but for their resilience—ensuring peace of mind for those who walk these halls each day.

Every material, system, and surface has a purpose that reaches beyond function. Operable windows let students breathe fresh air. High-efficiency, tunable lighting adapts to the learning task and the time of day. And smart mechanical systems operate quietly behind the scenes, reducing energy use while exceeding performance standards. This building models sustainability not as sacrifice, but as stewardship.

Within the classroom wings, bright tackboards line the walls anticipating student expression and creativity. Custom wall graphics serve double duty as protection and aesthetic, reinforcing each wing’s ecological theme and inviting curiosity with every glance. Rock-shaped cutouts in the media center become cozy caves for reading, reflection, or imagination. And outdoors, amphitheaters, courtyards, and learning gardens turn the act of learning inside out—bringing curriculum into contact with clouds, trees, and sky.

Inclusion is embedded here—not just as an intention, but as a physical reality. Every detail, from intuitive wayfinding to flexible furnishings, ensures that every student—regardless of ability, background, or learning style—can navigate, engage, and thrive. The school welcomes diversity by creating spaces that adapt to its students, rather than the other way around.

This school is a vital thread in the fabric of the community. The design honors local identity and responds to regional needs, offering shared spaces that are open and accessible beyond the school day. The cafetorium doubles as a performance space for community gatherings. Outdoor learning areas serve as flexible venues for events and celebrations. Even the building’s ecological themes extend a hand to the broader world—helping young learners build a sense of place, responsibility, and connection to their local and global communities.







Lower Level



Upper Level





## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

At Little Raven Elementary, learning doesn't begin and end at the classroom door—it flows, unfolds, and evolves across every square foot of the campus. Designed around a “four-round” model serving approximately 650 students, the school embodies a dynamic learning environment where space and curriculum are inextricably linked. Every corridor, every courtyard, every color-soaked surface is a canvas for curiosity, interaction, and discovery.

The heart of the school beats with collaboration. Clusters of classrooms encircle flexible breakout zones—spaces of small, medium, and large scale—where students gather for hands-on projects, focused study, or spontaneous moments of shared insight. Overhead doors roll open, erasing boundaries and connecting learners across disciplines and age groups. Tunable lighting adjusts to mood and task, while tech-rich teaching walls support both digital fluency and traditional instruction. These aren't static rooms—they're adaptive ecosystems that shift with the needs of the day, the class, and the child.

The school's theme—drawn from Earth's diverse ecosystems—is more than decorative. It anchors students in a sense of place and purpose, shaping classroom pods that feel both playful and grounded. These environments speak to learners at every level: textured wainscoting guides young hands along hallways; wall graphics support visual learners and assist in intuitive wayfinding; vibrant colors energize and inspire. Every material choice, every detail, was made with the learner in mind.

Inside the media center, cutout reading nooks and flexible furnishings invite students to curl up with a book or collaborate on a digital project. The Maker Space and Art Room, extensions of the core academic pods, fuel innovation with tools for creation and expression. Outdoors, learning extends into nature. Courtyards double as classrooms, with amphitheater-style seating where science meets sunlight and storytelling echoes into the breeze. A climbing wall in the gym, a retractable-seated cafetorium that moonlights as a performance venue—these are spaces that push past the expected, making room for movement, music, and meaningful connection.

This school was designed for today's students—and tomorrow's. Its flexible framework anticipates change: evolving instructional approaches, growing programs, and emerging technologies. It empowers educators to teach how they teach best and supports students in learning how they learn best. From solo quiet zones to bustling group areas, from indoor sensory-rich alcoves to the open-air wonder of the outdoor classroom, Little Raven Elementary is a place where all learners belong and all paths to success are honored.

Here, innovation is not a feature—it's a philosophy. Learning is not confined—it's cultivated. And every space is alive with possibility.

























PERIOD	GUEST
FOULS	PLAYER FOUL
SCORE	MATCH
	SCORE





## RESULTS

From the very beginning, the district challenged the design team with a powerful vision: create a school that not only supports academic excellence but also reflects the cultural richness and unity of its community. The result is a vibrant learning environment rooted in flexibility, discovery, and connection. Classrooms open to shared huddle rooms, breakout spaces, and outdoor courtyards. Color, nature, and story weave throughout the building, honoring students' identities while nurturing new possibilities. Safety—an essential foundation—was seamlessly integrated through thoughtful features that protect without ever feeling harsh.

Community was not a box to check; it was the heart of the process. Inspired by the cherished “Big Table” of the former school—a makeshift gathering spot born during the pandemic—the new design embedded gathering into its very DNA. Indoors and out, people come together: to talk, to play, to grow. Symbols of unity and nature stretch across walls, floors, and fields. A global canopy tree at the entry speaks to shared roots, while the playground and fields welcome neighbors in on weekends, transforming the school into a true neighborhood hub.

The design team worked closely with the district to balance high performance and long-term durability with a vision that didn't compromise on inspiration. Every dollar was stretched to create an environment where students would not only learn, but thrive. By prioritizing program needs and then layering in flexibility, beauty, and identity, the project found a way to honor both budget and ambition.

Sustainability and wellness are interwoven into the school's DNA. Natural daylight floods every classroom. Operable windows, healthy materials, and efficient mechanical systems ensure clean air and comfortable spaces. Outdoor learning areas encourage movement and play, while the use of real wood and tactile surfaces brings a sense of calm and connection. The design supports not just academic growth, but whole-child wellness.

Some of the most meaningful results weren't drawn in plans or calculated in spreadsheets—they were lived. During a late walkthrough, as students filed past at the end of the day, each one smiled, waved, said hello. In that quiet moment, the years of design work found their purpose. And during milestone events like the beam topping-out and ribbon cutting, representatives of the Arapaho and Cheyenne Nations stood with the community to honor Chief Little Raven and all that his name carries.

In the end, Little Raven Elementary became a story of how design, guided by values and shaped by voices, can build something lasting—not just in brick and mortar, but in spirit.

