

2025 MACCONNELL AWARD

Peperzak Middle School

Spokane Public Schools, Spokane, WA



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01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This dynamic middle school overlooking the Palouse wheatfields of Eastern Washington builds a community of belonging and celebrates its unique agrarian setting supporting 'learning happening everywhere.' Taking advantage of its unparalleled site, the school's innovative framework features open learning and community spaces, views, daylight, and outdoor learning opportunities. In shifting from a junior high to a middle school format, a district goal was to rethink the middle school experience emphasizing a culture of curiosity and community. The group

of teachers, staff, and administrators collaborating with the design team achieved innovative learning design solutions leveraging the community's unique 'spirit of place'. The site and building are woven into the context of an adjacent elementary school creating a cohesive campus with shared access. Building orientation directs attention to views—of courtyards, Palouse fields, and adjacent learning spaces maximizing outdoor connections and daylight. A dynamic new 'learning neighborhood' arrangement and a variety of adaptable spaces cultivate equity and a sense of belonging

throughout the building. An open library integrated into the cafeteria serves as a 'Learning Commons' embracing the whole building as a teaching and learning tool. The design incorporates sustainable practices, with durable materials and energy-efficient systems including shading strategies to protect views and alleviate glare. The building celebrates its 'spirit of place' while supporting active learning throughout and encouraging connection between students and teachers.

GOALS

- Site connections
- Foster community
- Expand learning opportunities
- Stewardship of resources

OUTCOMES

- Multi-scaled opportunities for collaboration & interaction
- Outdoor learning, filtered daylight & views foster community
- Transparency & exposure to programs, welcoming spaces that provide agency & encourage creativity
- Respond to site context, minimal & off-the-shelf building materials used in innovative ways

The main entry of the school is student scaled with areas of play and seating providing a welcoming front porch



02 SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET



OWNERS:
Spokane Public Schools

LOCATION:
Spokane, WA

SITE AREA:
16.5 acres / 718,740 sf

BUILDING AREA:
155,600 sf

GRADES SERVED:
6th-8th

STUDENT CAPACITY:
800

SQUARE FEET PER PUPIL:
195 gsf/pupil

OCCUPANCY DATE:
Fall 2023

PROJECT DELIVERY:
GCCM

CONSTRUCTION COST:
\$59,286,091 M

CONSTRUCTION COST PER SF:
\$381

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Public Entry | 7 Existing Forest | 12 Playfields |
| 2 Student Entry | 8 Bioswales | 13 Existing Mullan Road Elementary |
| 3 Playgrounds | 9 Parent Drop-off | 14 Public Entry to Gym |
| 4 Sensory Courtyard | 10 Bus Drop-off | 15 New Dog Park |
| 5 Outdoor Courtyard & Amphitheater | 11 Parent / Staff Parking | |
| 6 Outdoor Classroom | | |



03 SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

Located on the outskirts of Spokane, Washington, Peperzak Middle School overlooks the expansive Palouse wheatfields of Eastern Washington. With deep agrarian roots, the community values hard work, tradition and the beautiful natural surroundings. The process and outcome of its design approach sets a new District standard for middle schools.

The district design advisory team (DAT) was comprised of a newly formed team of teachers and one principal, many with no prior middle school teaching experience. The engagement process took place during the Spring of 2021 and the early meetings were exclusively virtual at the request of the district. As part of the effort in re-imagining the middle school experience, the District identified a set of Guiding Principles that served as a foundation for commonality between the six new middle schools.

To kick off the visioning process, a collection of images representing each principle was presented to the middle school team through an exercise titled, 'Love it or Leave it' in which participants were asked to identify images that resonated with them both positively and negatively, and to select their top three favored images to discuss with the group. The exercise was intended to give the middle school team visual representations of the Facility Design Principles. The selection of their favorite images enabled the architectural design team to see emerging themes in favored design strategies.

Over the course of two meetings, the middle school team was asked to respond to questions related to these emerging themes to further explore these relationships. The answers were submitted and presented in a 'word cloud' – with the most widely selected answers enlarged in the graphic. This provided a framework for deeper discussion around these themes. The exercise and discussions guided the development of guidelines specific to the physical and educational environment goals of the new middle school.



- 15 DESIGN ADVISORY TEAM MEETINGS
- 30+ DESIGN EXECUTIVE MEETINGS
- 2 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS
- 5 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

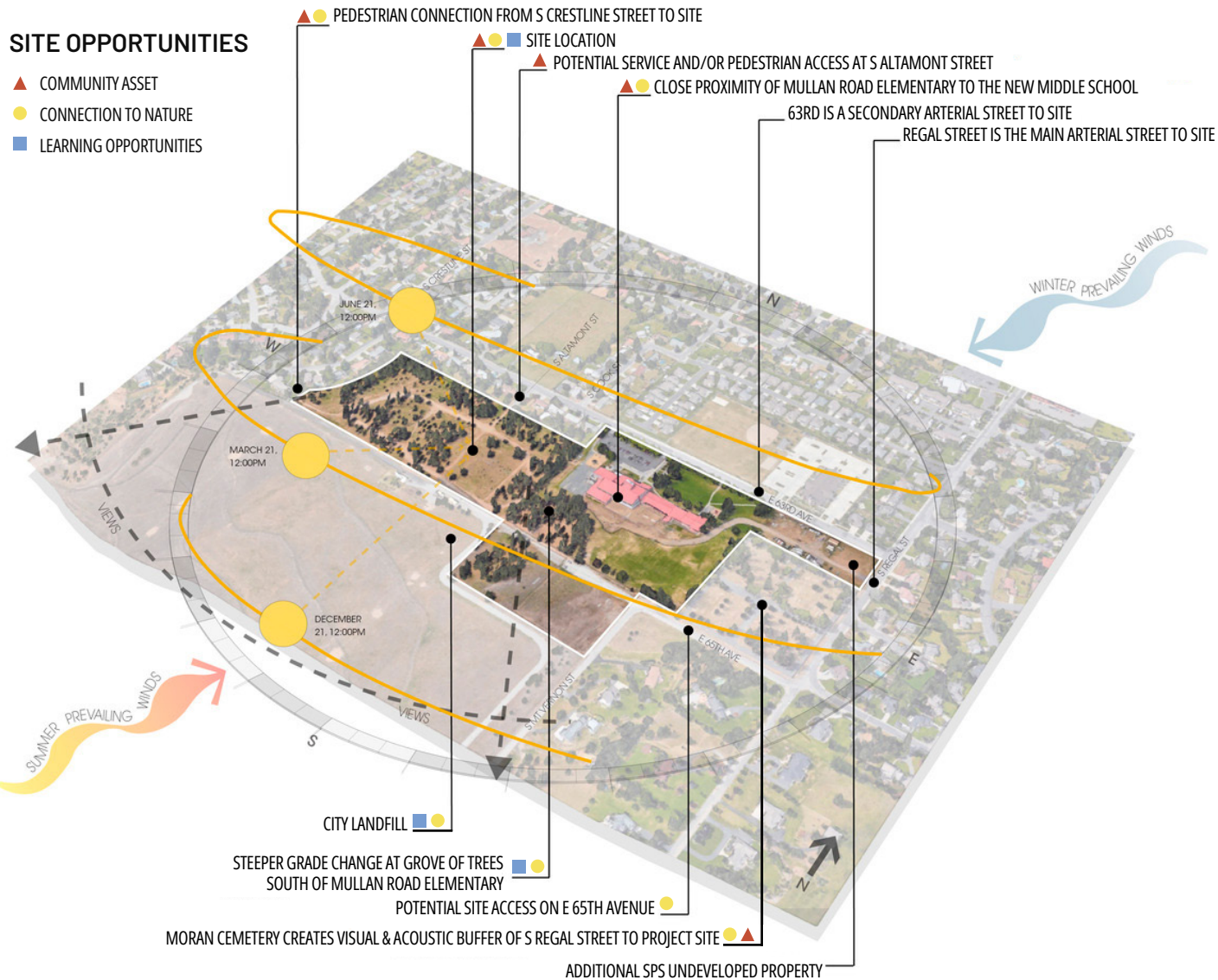


The design team relied on multiple virtual tools that allowed the DAT to effectively communicate their hopes, fears and vision for the project



SITE OPPORTUNITIES

- ▲ COMMUNITY ASSET
- CONNECTION TO NATURE
- LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



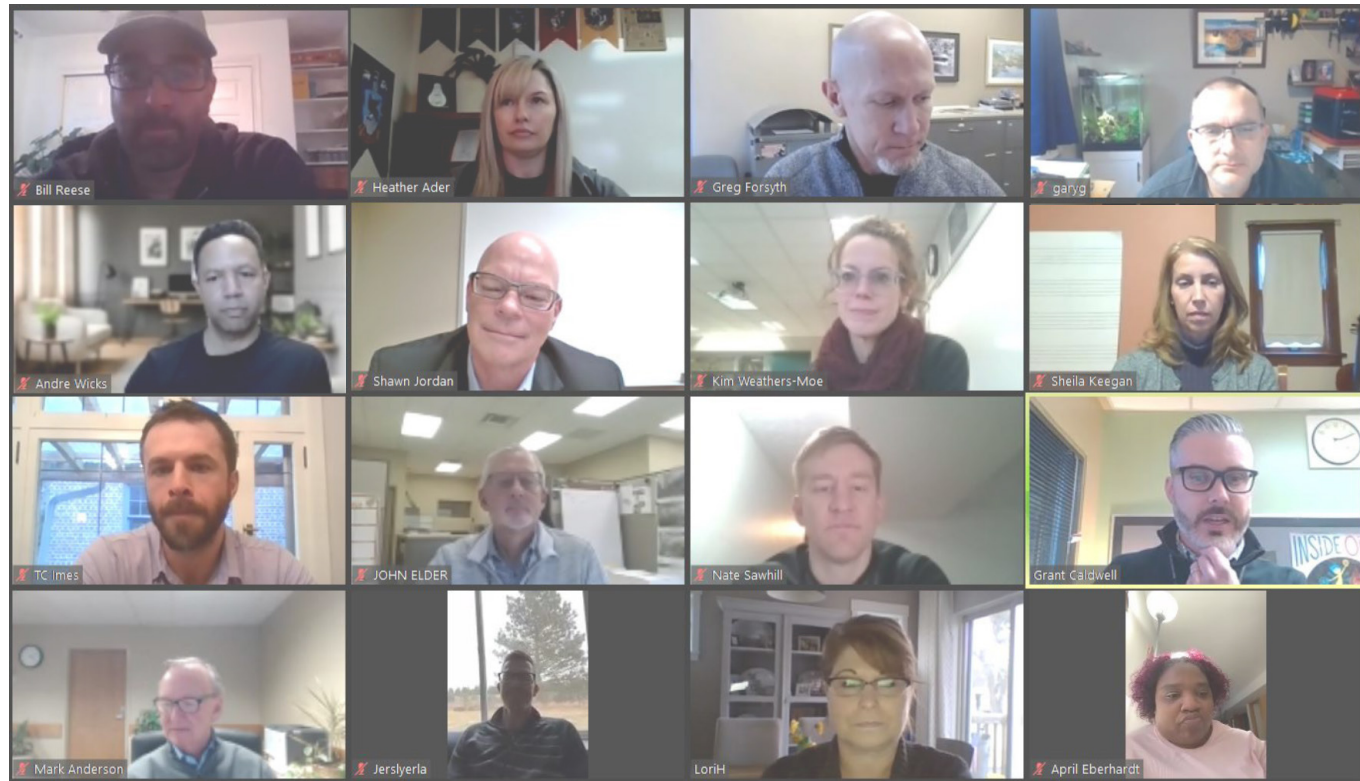
In considering the school's relationship to its surroundings, it was imperative to resolve various adjacency challenges. The planning phase determined it was important to create a buffer with the residential neighborhood. In context of the project's guiding goals to protect the surrounding forest, stands of ponderosa pine trees were preserved as a both a visual and acoustic buffer with the adjacent neighborhood and to allow for outdoor learning opportunities for the middle school.

With an existing elementary school close by, it was crucial to create accessible and walkable connections between the two schools for students, parents, staff and the neighborhood while also resolving an unsafe parent and bus drop-off. A separate bus drop-off integrated into the new campus design utilized by both the existing elementary school and the new middle school provides a safer and more efficient parent drop-off at both schools while minimizing congestion on nearby streets.

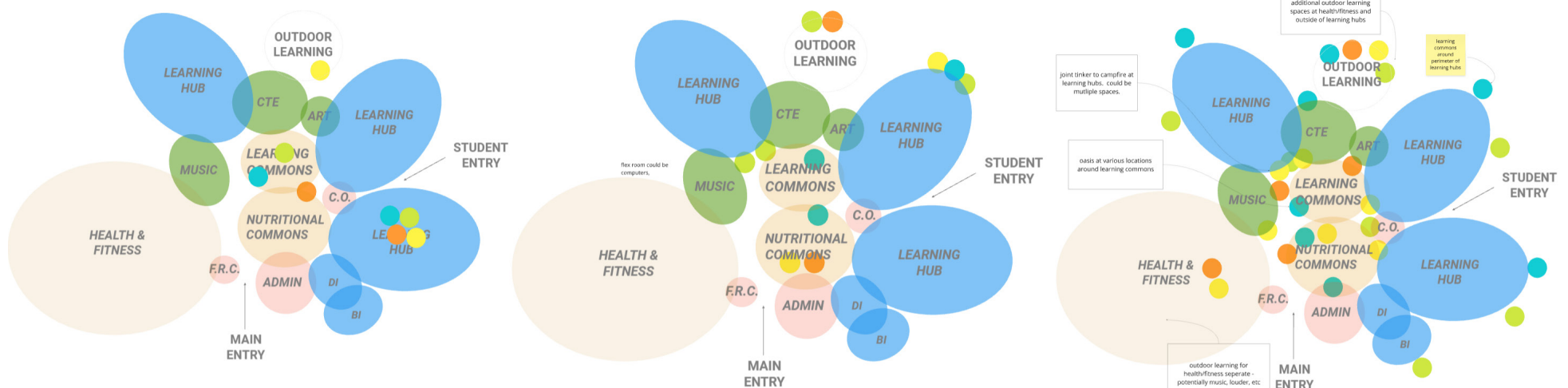


The challenge of engaging a diverse group teachers with no prior experience working together and suddenly having to interact in virtual meetings underscored the importance of building a sense of community and understanding. Both during the engagement process and in occupying the new school, the design team relied on multiple virtual tools that allowed the DAT to effectively communicate their hopes, fears and vision for the project. Many engagement discussions focused on how the physical environment could bring teachers and students together outside of the classroom and how the entire building and site could provide opportunities for teaching and learning.

During the design process, the team also actively engaged with the local elementary and middle school kids who would become future Peperzak students to discover their ideas about outdoor learning and play. Through workshops and surveys, the students themselves chose the final outdoor play structures based on their needs and desires.



Teachers and design team explored the type of learning spaces needed throughout the school during a typical day



CAMPFIRE

- Informal Instruction
- Small Group Work

TINKER

- Exploration
- Experimentation
- Collaborative Group Work

LAUNCH PAD

- Presentations
- Performance

OASIS

- Independent Study
- Reading & Relaxing



The school is named for an important community member, Carla Olman Peperzak, a local 100+-year-old Holocaust survivor and educator. She was chosen as the school's namesake for her noteworthy contributions to education and the community. Modeling strength and resilience, Carla speaks throughout Washington State and engages with Peperzak students to share about her experiences as a teenager working with the Dutch Resistance in Holland. She is committed to help people remember the past to prevent similar hate-filled violence from happening again. The Peperzak Learning Commons includes Holocaust education materials available to every middle schooler in the district, helping to educate and inspire next generations.

"The name of a school should reflect and represent its community. We made the choice with equity in mind, as we had 54 schools mostly named for white men, This was an opportunity to shift that dynamic to better reflect the demographic of the students that we serve. Carla's story is very powerful and is one that really needs to be heard, and we felt this name could be especially inspiring to middle school students."

--School board member Mike Wiser



"It's not about me. It's about the Holocaust. Hopefully people will be informed so it doesn't happen again."



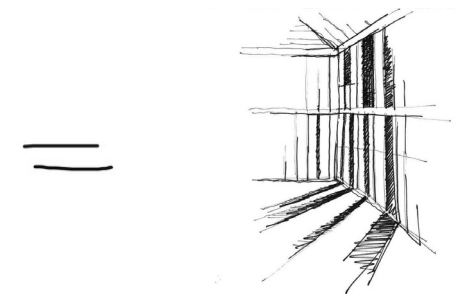
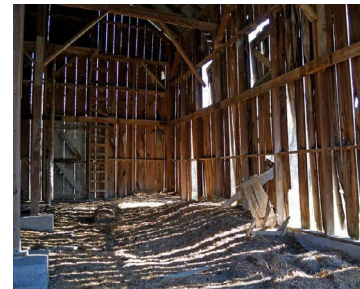
04 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In understanding the school's unique context in an agrarian community with sweeping landscapes, the teachers and students had a goal of celebrating nature with internal and external connections. Throughout the meticulous planning process of designing indoor and outdoor educational spaces, the dramatic site provided deep inspiration for creating meaningful placemaking. The building was thoughtfully located to orient the classroom 'Neighborhood Hubs' to the south with the 'heart of the school' Nutritional and Learning Commons intentionally elongated to the east and west to provide ample daylight to the southern outdoor courtyards.

Materials, and color choices reflect the utilitarian agrarian buildings and context.

The surrounding natural environment provides abundant indoor-outdoor learning opportunities for the students and staff. Careful consideration and planning went into creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. The restrained entryway, strategic use of natural light, and soft furnishings in transitional spaces all contribute to a comfortable and inviting atmosphere to address student needs for learning and well-being. Design choices were made to ensure students feel at ease and motivated to engage in their individual learning journey.

Durable zinc metal panels evoke the barns & silos of nearby farm, while the restrained masonry color & subtle texture variations of the brick masonry take cues from the surrounding site overlooking the Palouse wheat fields.



Guiding Principles - Physical Environment

GATHER & SUPPORT

“A place to belong”

Foster a sense of community through space that invite interactions & activities

Create a sense of belonging through opportunities for student expression & ownership of spaces

LOOK & FEEL

“Warm & inviting”

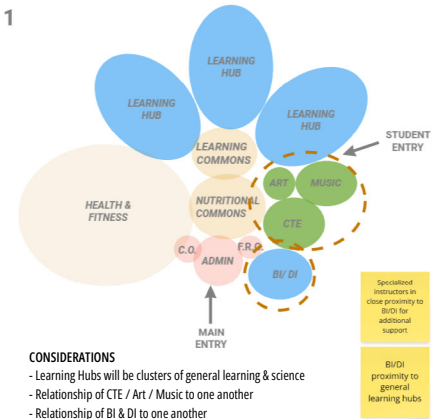
Create a sense of safety & comfort through transparency, material & scale

Celebrate nature with internal & external connections

A sensory garden in the southeast exterior courtyard supports outdoor education & invites equitable exploration for all learners to engage the five senses of the human body. Noteworthy features of this magical space include native plants, wood art posts, a metallophone, wind spinner, & therapy swing providing a soothing, quiet place of refuge. The sensory garden also provides a safe environment for neurodivergent learners.



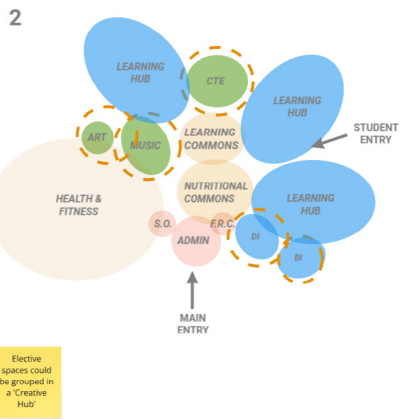
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- CONSIDERATIONS
- Learning Hubs will be clusters of general learning & science
 - Relationship of CTE / Art / Music to one another
 - Relationship of BI & DI to one another

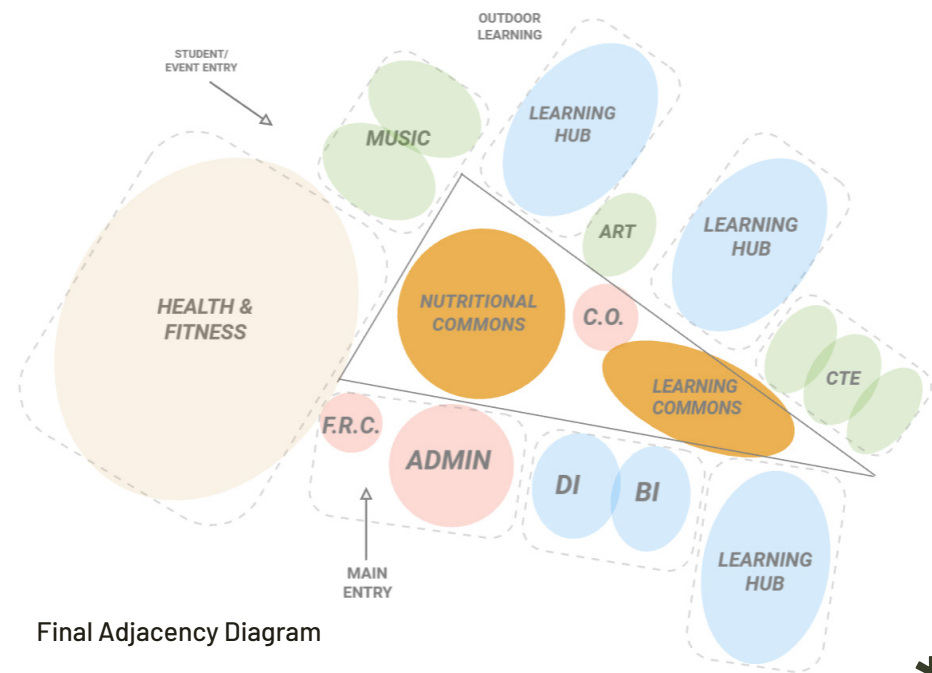
- Specialized instructors in close proximity to BI/DI for additional support
- Music suite close to gym and commons for performances
- Maximize transparency into fitness elective spaces
- Elective spaces could be grouped in a 'Creative Hub'

2



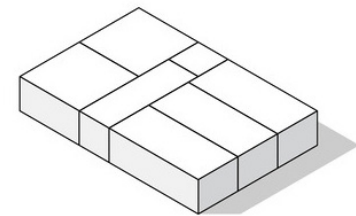
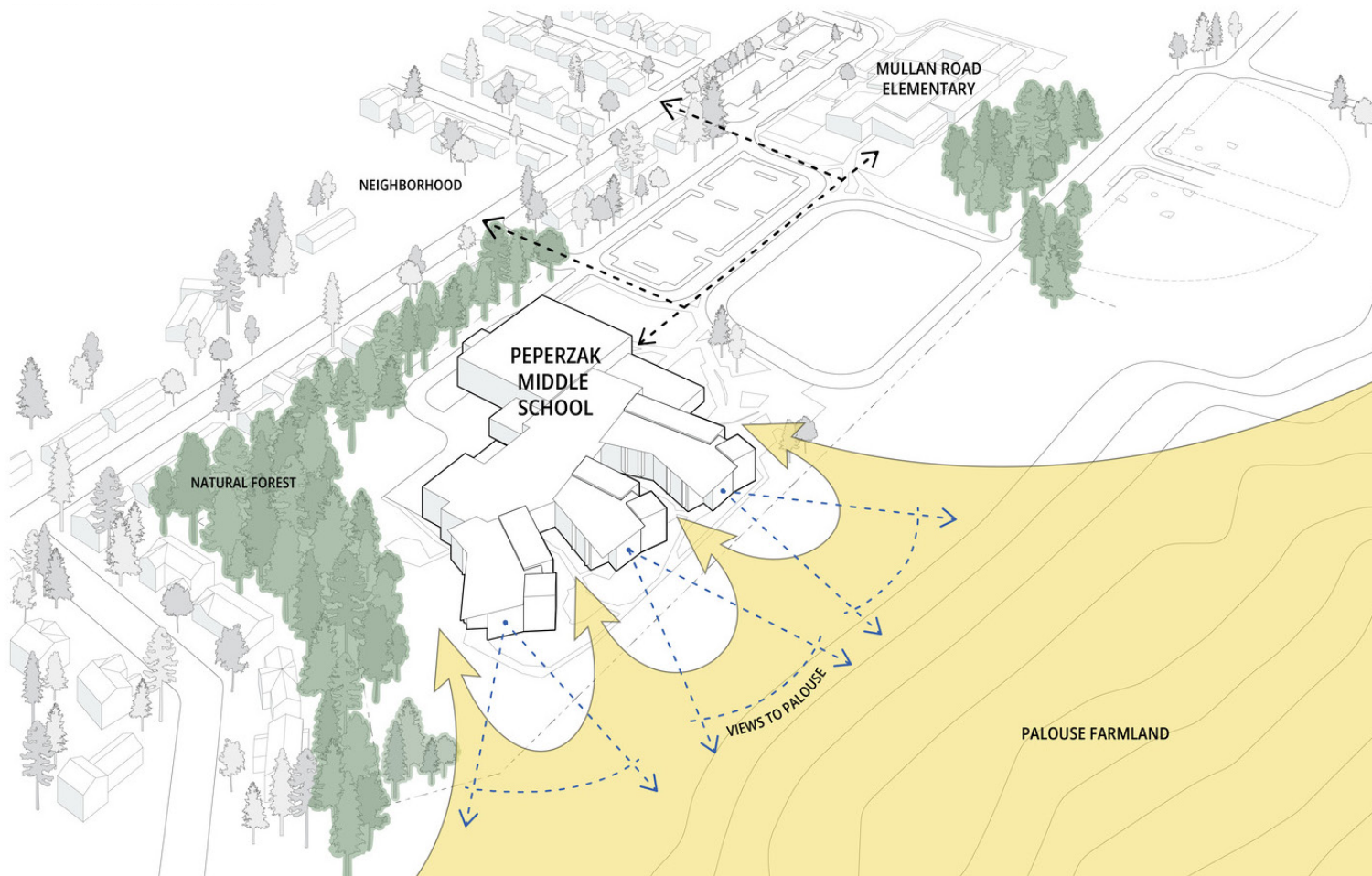
Concept Adjacency Diagrams

Adjacency Diagram studies based on engagement with the staff and administrators outlining the progression of the plan diagram.

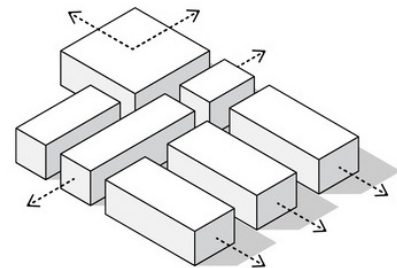


Final Adjacency Diagram





1. Educational Program

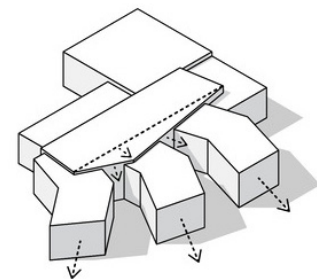


2. Form

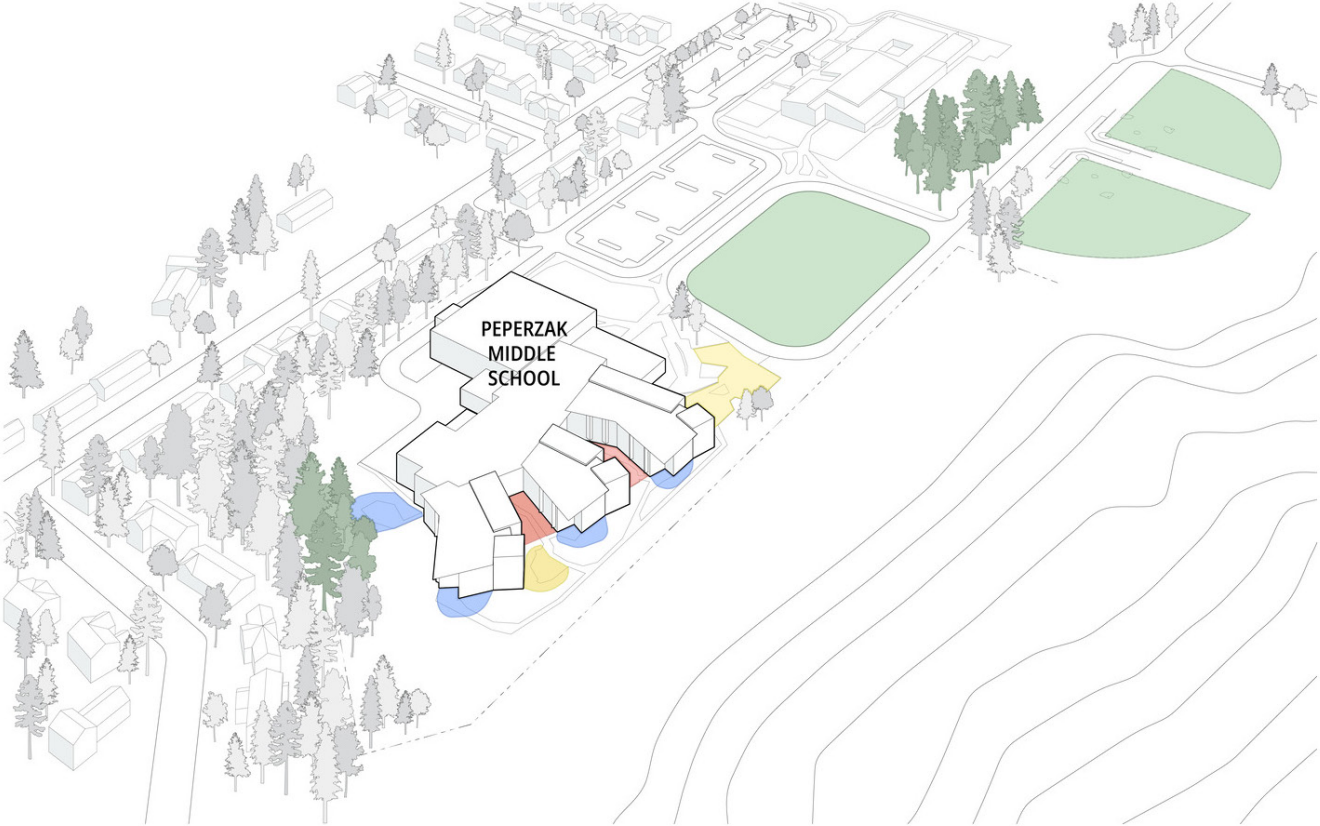
To take advantage of such a unique site, access to natural ventilation within each classroom, daylight, and views were paramount in the floor plan layout. Locating the 'learning neighborhoods' to the south with direct access to outdoor courtyards and learning spaces while maintaining direct southern views further enhances the learning experience.

Large roof overhangs and vertical perforated metal screens provide passive strategies to minimize glare while maintaining direct views. This avoids the 'pitfall' of large expanses of southern glass being covered by blinds or shades most of the day. The design team studied the sun angles through the various seasons of the year and times of day to find a solution that allowed students and staff to consistently have great access to views and daylight.

Once the middle school opened, it also became a neighborhood community center and park. On most evenings, the neighborhood utilizes the school as a public park where children play on the playgrounds, sports teams play field sports, neighbors walk their dogs and the parks department hosts sporting events in the gymnasium.



3. Site Response



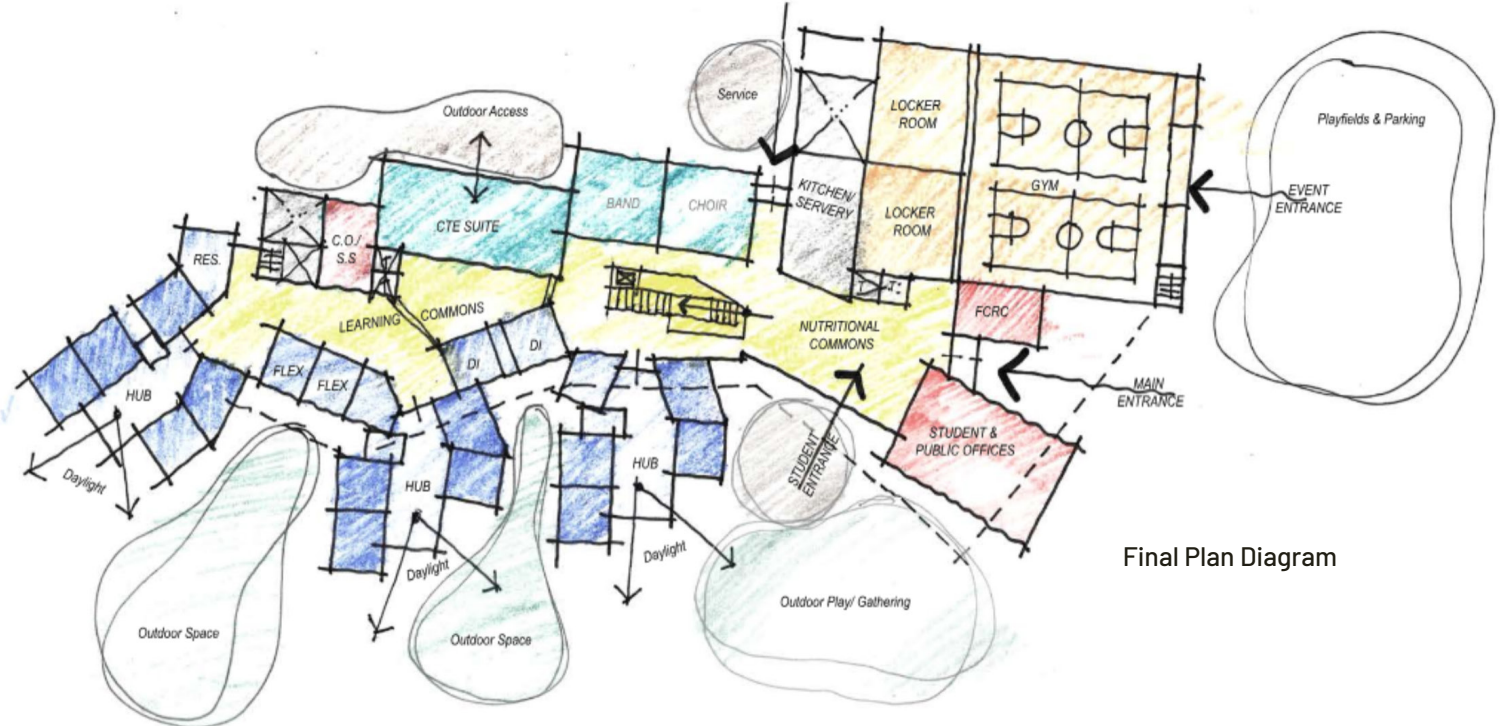
- OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
- COURTYARD
- SENSORY GARDEN
- AMPHITHEATRE
- OUTDOOR PLAY AREA
- NATURE PLAY AREA
- PLAYFIELD

GATHER & SUPPORT

The site provided deep inspiration for creating meaningful placemaking through the careful planning of both indoor and outdoor educational spaces. The surrounding natural environment provides abundant indoor-outdoor active learning opportunities for students and staff.

Opportunities for outdoor play & rest near the student entrance





Adjacency Diagram studies based on engagement with the staff and administrators outlining the progression of the plan diagram

Final Plan Diagram

Aerial view from the south of the Palouse grasslands running into the south classroom courtyards



LOOK & FEEL

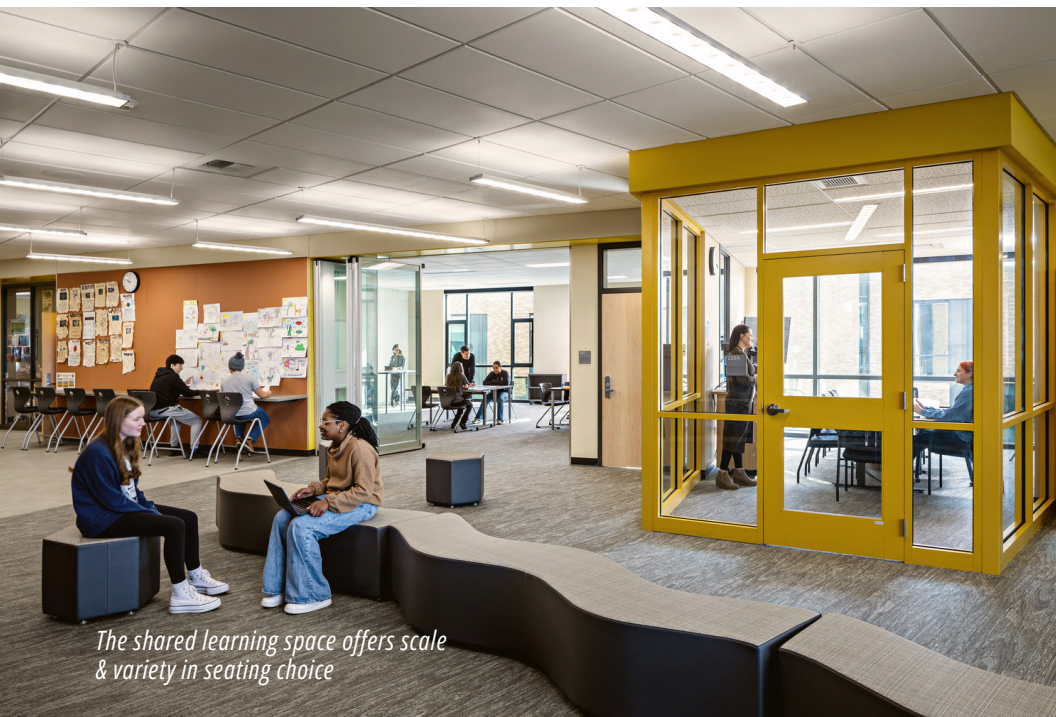
Given the location at the edge of Palouse farmland, the design team intentionally selected a palette of materials reflecting longevity of nearby farm structures, selecting both local and sustainably sourced materials that have a long service life. The local, exterior brick masonry and zinc metal siding have little to no maintenance and can be recycled at the end of their service life. The specific zinc panel for this project is a part of its manufacturing company's strategy for a decarbonized production, since zinc requires very little energy to manufacture and has a service life of 100 years.



Interior active learning spaces continue the language of durability, simplicity, and beauty with polished concrete floors, exposed steel structure and plywood wall panels. Exposure to the outdoor experience of the building design is brought into the interior learning spaces, a guiding principle for the building.



Students gather outside of the classrooms for small group learning



The shared learning space offers scale & variety in seating choice



Vibrant yellow stained birch plywood identifies the entrance to this learning hub



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



- 1 ADMINISTRATION & STUDENT SERVICE
- 2 NUTRITIONAL SERVICES
- 3 VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS
- 4 HEALTH & FITNESS CENTER / WELLNESS
- 5 GENERAL CLASSROOM
- 6 LEARNING / STUDENT COMMONS
- 7 SHARED LEARNING
- 8 SERVICE & SUPPORT SPACES
- 9 LEARNING LAB
- 10 SPECIAL SERVICE
- 11 EXPLORATION / CTE
- 12 FAMILY COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

05 EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Guiding Principles - Education Environment

INSPIRE & MOTIVATE

"Equity of experience"

Promote a culture of curiosity by maximizing exposure to programs

Create a variety of spaces that respond to extroverted & introverted preferences

FLEX & ADAPT

"Learning happens everywhere"

Welcome creativity through dynamic, inclusive spaces

Provide large & small scaled opportunities for collaboration & interaction

The outcome of the engagement process was a set of project specific principles centered around the educational and physical environments. Rooted in the Facility Design Principles these guidelines allowed the design team to fine tune the design to align with the specific vision and goals of the design advisory team.

One of the overarching goals was to create a caring and inclusive community that celebrates its unique site and context. Carla Olman Peperzak's active engagement with students, along with a dedicated library section on Holocaust education, enriches the educational experience, fostering a deep sense of history, empathy, and understanding among students.

The entry lobby serves as the junction between the main building and student entries

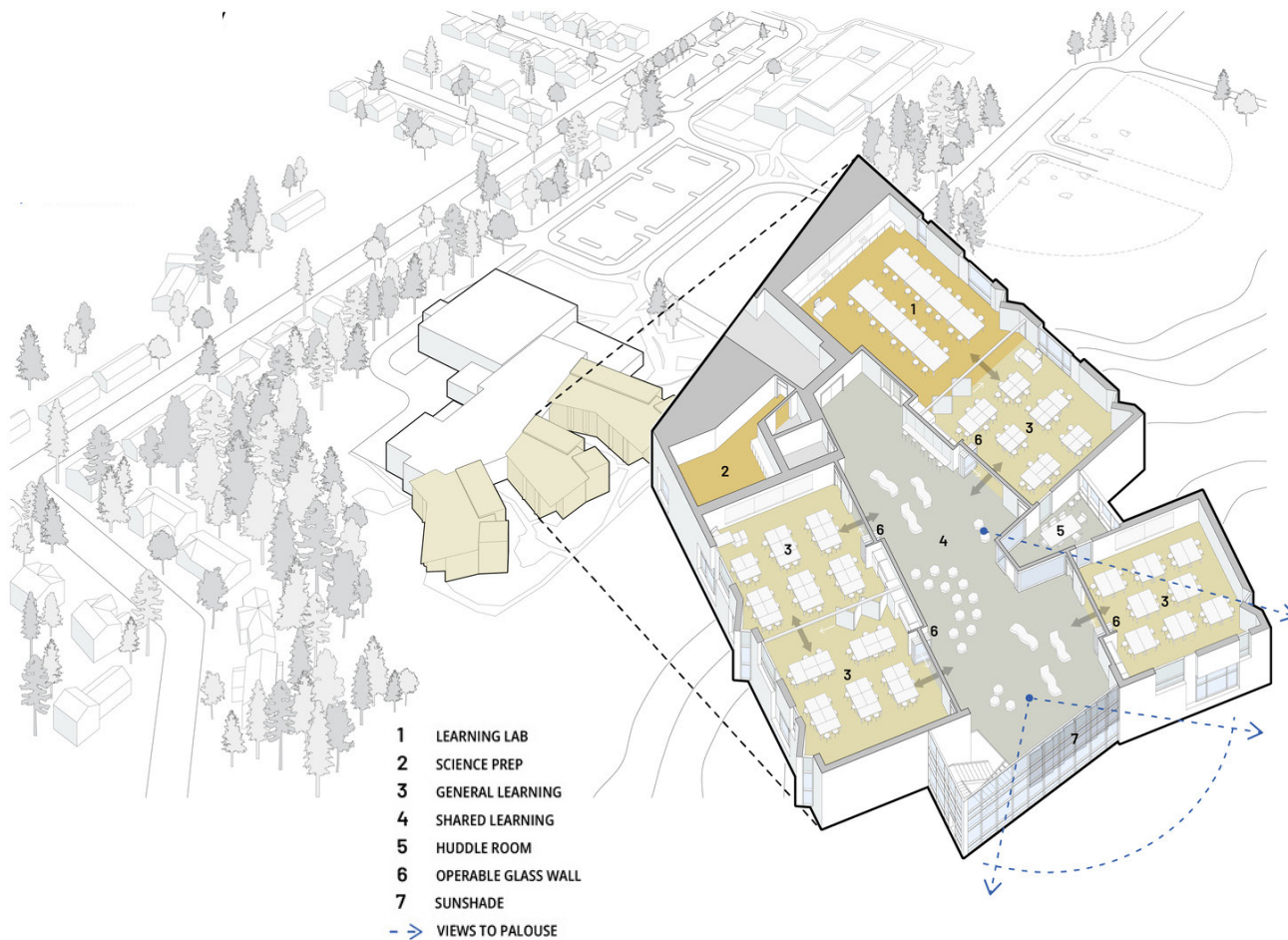


Ample daylight fills the nutritional commons



The central stair visually separates the learning & nutritional commons & acts as an activator for social interactions & teaching opportunities





INSPIRE & MOTIVATE

Through multiple engagement sessions with teaching staff, design of the Neighborhood Hub was intentionally configured to provide large- and small-scale opportunities for collaboration and interaction between teachers and students, with direct connections between the two floors and the outdoor classroom.

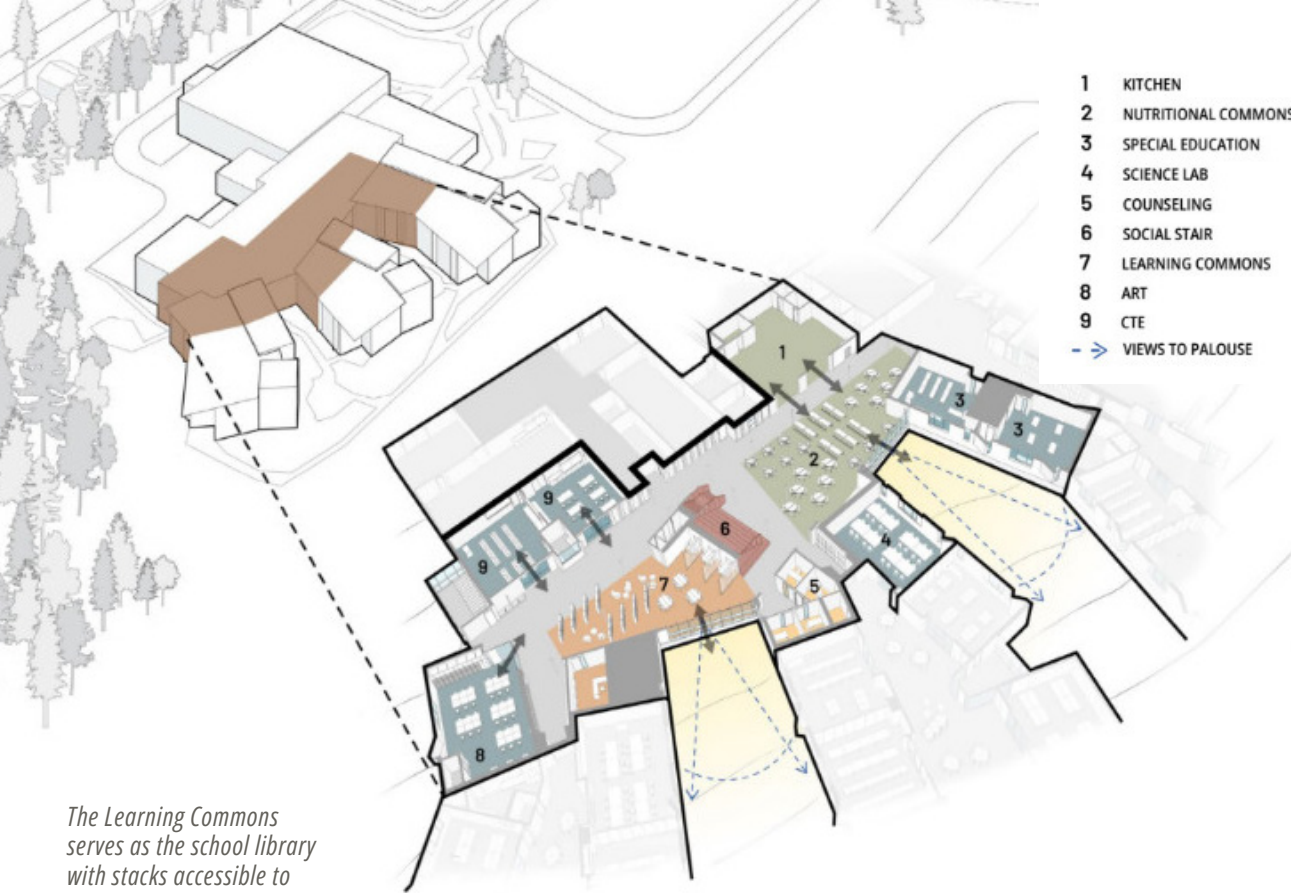
Classroom neighborhoods and the central Learning Commons (library) encourage collaboration and flexible learning experiences while maintaining strong outdoor connections, providing awareness of seasonal cycles of daylight, air movement and weather.



TOP IMAGE:
The internal connection between first & second floor learning hubs maximizes flexible use of all 10 classrooms



BOTTOM IMAGE:
The variety in the shared learning area responds to extroverted & introverted preferences



The Learning Commons serves as the school library with stacks accessible to students throughout the day

FLEX & ADAPT

In a departure from traditional middle school library and cafeteria models, Peperzak embraces a Nutritional Commons (cafeteria) and Learning Commons (library) that eliminates walls and allows the space to be utilized throughout the entire day.

The two spaces are linked by a social stair that connects to the second floor, becoming an informal presentation space and allowing for informal collaboration and interaction. The intentional location of these spaces promotes a culture of curiosity by maximizing exposure to various adjacent programs such as art, music, choir and CTE.

The Commons spine is the heart of the school and provides visibility to spaces such as CTE, art and music maximizing exposure to elective opportunities





Small group study rooms are tucked under the social stair and open to the learning commons

LEARNING HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

The Learning and Nutritional Commons encourage creativity and community with a variety of scaled spaces promoting collaboration, inclusion, and interaction. A dynamic culture of learning occurs when students visually connect to various discovery opportunities while walking to class or finding an equitable location that responds to individual learning styles.



06 RESULTS

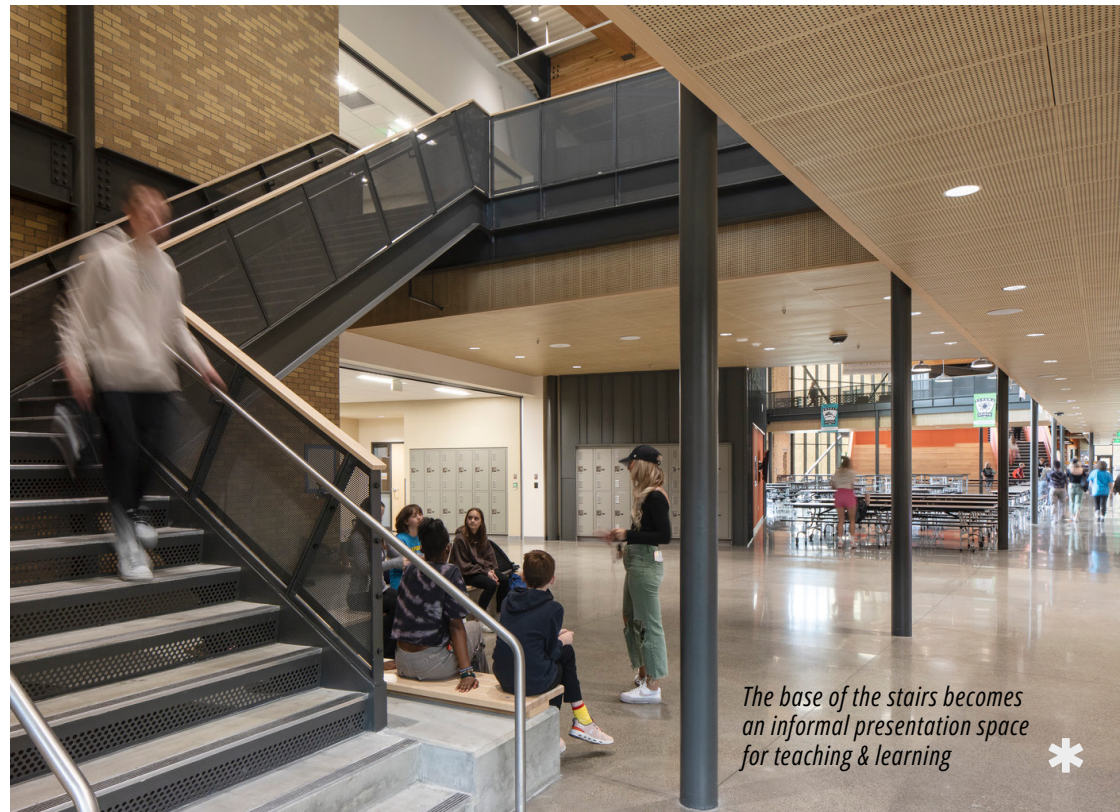
In designing Carla Olman Peperzak Middle School, thoughtful planning played a crucial role in discovering the goals and aspirations to be leveraged in a captivating physical setting to create an engaging environment supporting student learning, engagement, and well-being. In the context of considering a new standard for district middle schools with the added tension of a global pandemic, a disparate group of individuals who had not previously worked together united to develop an innovative, dynamic learning environment to support students on their learning journey.

Honoring its location, incorporating locally relevant materials and colors in bright, daylit spaces in open learning and interior spaces that connect to an outdoor setting with a perimeter of mature trees and grasses providing a natural playground for learning, the school's many elements artfully work together to meet the initial guiding principles. The design team intentionally selected a palette of materials to reflect the appearance and longevity of nearby farm structures with durable masonry and long-lasting zinc siding requiring minimal maintenance in a minimally articulated envelope expressing the hard-working nature of the materials. Interior learning spaces continue this language of durability, simplicity, and beauty with polished concrete floors, exposed steel structure and plywood wall panels. The outdoor experience of the building design is brought into the interior learning spaces, in keeping with one of the guiding principles. The building relies on simple, passive strategies to alleviate solar glare and heat gain by utilizing vertical perforated aluminum panels at the southern and eastern glazing. Large overhangs at the classroom neighborhood help control the sun's glare and heat gain. The surrounding landscape of trees and native grasses departs from the traditional 'office park' landscape to provide a natural laboratory for student learning showcasing regional ecology, and minimizing the need for irrigation and weekly mowing by maintenance staff.

The result of research and engagement with district stakeholders amplified the creative possibilities offered by the school's distinct cultural and physical setting, framed within a heightened understanding of the need for a dynamic and welcoming physical setting to support not just learning but student mental, emotional and physical comfort. In developing spaces aligned with both district educational goals and student needs, the school itself nurtures student curiosity and sense of belonging. This ultimately contributes to stronger academic outcomes and a more positive school experience for all learners and staff experiencing its supportive environment. The community's vision for a warm, welcoming learning community is realized in this bright new school providing students with an inspiring place to learn and grow, living up to its namesake's hope for universal understanding and acceptance.



Spokane Public Library has partnered with Peperzak Middle School by managing the library system & providing students access to the entire public library system for the City of Spokane.



The base of the stairs becomes an informal presentation space for teaching & learning



" The natural light and bright colors bring the morale and joy up for our staff and students. Each space, especially the shared neighborhood spaces and learning stairs fosters collaboration and growth. "

Justin Farley
English Teacher
Peperzak Middle School

" The design of the Peperzak Learning Neighborhoods is an essential piece of the middle school experience. The neighborhoods foster a sense of community and provide students with wonderful opportunities to work together. As a 7th grade math teacher, my students appreciate the flexible seating in the neighborhood as they challenge themselves to push beyond the standards. Creativity flourishes when they are outside of the classroom and are comfortable to think flexibly. Partnering with Integrus, my students were able to be part of a real-world experience on scale drawings. Reading blueprints and measuring classroom walls, the connections between classroom content and the real-world were well established. "

Kate Makinson
Math Teacher
Peperzak Middle School

The sensory courtyard provides an opportunity for quieter conversations & interaction





*Nature and the changing
seasons is celebrated
through internal &
external connections*



"Carla Olman Peperzak is our latest rendition of Middle Schools reimagined in Spokane Public Schools. When we took on the task of developing a new model of student interaction for our Middle Schools, the design team was an integral partner. This building is not only perfectly fit with the nature of the site, it is an energetic example of relationship building. This building encourages student to own their learning and grow toward a successful educational experience. Student to student and student to staff relationships are the goal of this building to bring forward successful young people in any educational area of their interest."

Greg Forsyth
Former Capital Projects Director
Spokane Public Schools



Careful consideration was made in preserving the natural forest west of the school as a buffer to the neighborhood & a learning opportunity for students

