VCBO



2026 JAMES D. MacCONNELL AWARD SUBMISSION

DESERET PEAK HIGH SCHOOL

TOOELE, UTAH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GOALS & OUTCOMES

In the fall of 2018, our firm underwent a rigorous selection process and was fortunate to be chosen to program and design the new prototype Deseret Peak High School (DPHS) for the Tooele County School District (TCSD).

In 2018, Tooele (pronounced 'Too-il-ah'), a traditional rural farming community a short 30-minute drive west of Salt Lake City, suddenly found itself labeled one of the fastest-growing communities in the United States. Between 2010 and 2022, the community saw a dramatic 36.6% jump in its total population. For the school board and administration, this robust growth presented both a significant challenge and a unique opportunity to redefine what a high school should be for their students, staff, and community.

Two of their four existing high schools were built in 1967, their third in 2003, and their newest in 2009. All of these schools were built for a different time and a different economy. None of them truly addressed the digitally intensive, knowledge-based economy their students were now confronting, and the District wanted to make a dramatic leap forward for their community that would prepare their students for a vibrant future.

We were charged with questioning what had been done in the past and with adopting and adapting to today's contemporary learning environment. We were challenged to re-imagine optimal teaching and learning methods through the lens of the modern era, while incorporating strategies to facilitate student, teacher, and administrative growth. We were forced to go back to the drawing board, break down the current TCSD pedagogy, analyze their data, and create a new approach for the "school for the future," which culminated in Deseret Peak High School.

Deseret Peak High School is a unique and innovative comprehensive high school that stands on the shoulders of giants like Alexandria Area High School, Roosevelt High School, Canyon View High School, and Farmington High School. The DPHS stakeholder group spent significant time touring these wonderful schools to identify what is working, what is not, and what fits the Tooele student body's needs. Through a robust series of hands on, collaborative planning meetings, the vision for this new school centered on creating an optimal learning environment that promotes collaboration, communication, creativity, and flexibility, all in a passive security environment that avoids disrupting learning.

Through a series of strategic meetings with students, staff, and administrators, key design ideas came to fruition, including classrooms of varying sizes, flexible learning spaces and learning suites, separate shared teacher office environments that support both efficiency and professional collaboration, and compartmentalized learning communities that balance daylight, transparency, and security, ensuring the school remains adaptable to evolving educational models well into the future.

In conjunction with this input, we conducted a detailed study of class sizes at all four District high schools, which provided key data that drove the change in the high school design model to accommodate a 95% utilization rate. The design of the new high school uses data-driven assumptions about class size, accommodates project- and problem-based learning, and embraces a collaborative learning model that has become essential in a future-focused learning environment.



"In 2000, we built a school based on 1990s thinking. In 2010, we built a school based on 2000s thinking. All of these past schools suffered from a deficit of forward-thinking imagination. Today, if this endeavor is to be successful, we need you to design a future-proof school with the 2030s in mind!"

- Superintendent Scott Rogers

SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

PROJECT DETAILS

LOCATION

Tooele, Utah

TOTAL ACRES

58 acres

TOTAL SF

361,461 SF
new construction

TOTAL COST

$138,387,883
building + site

OCCUPANCY DATE

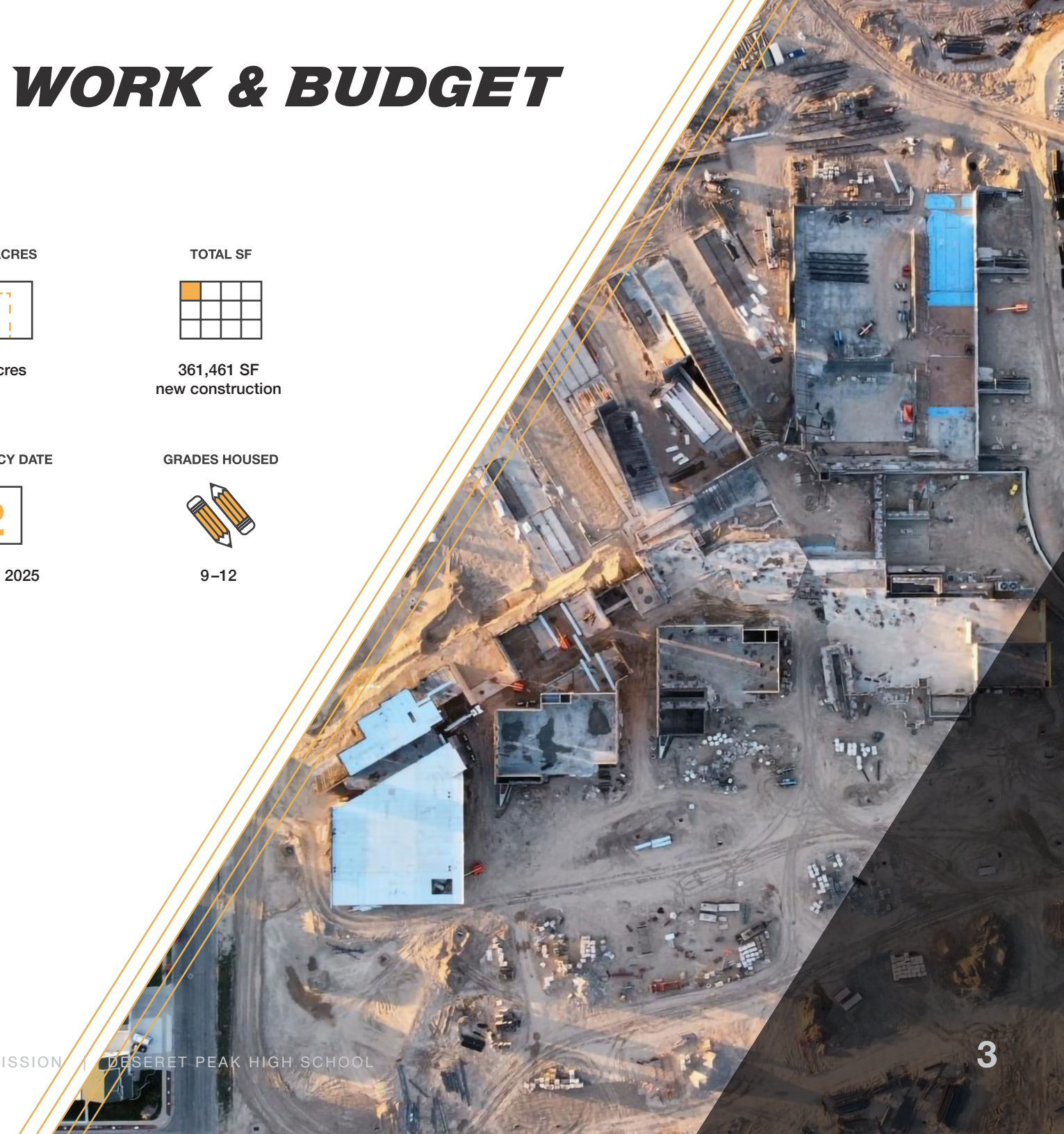
May 2, 2025

GRADES HOUSED

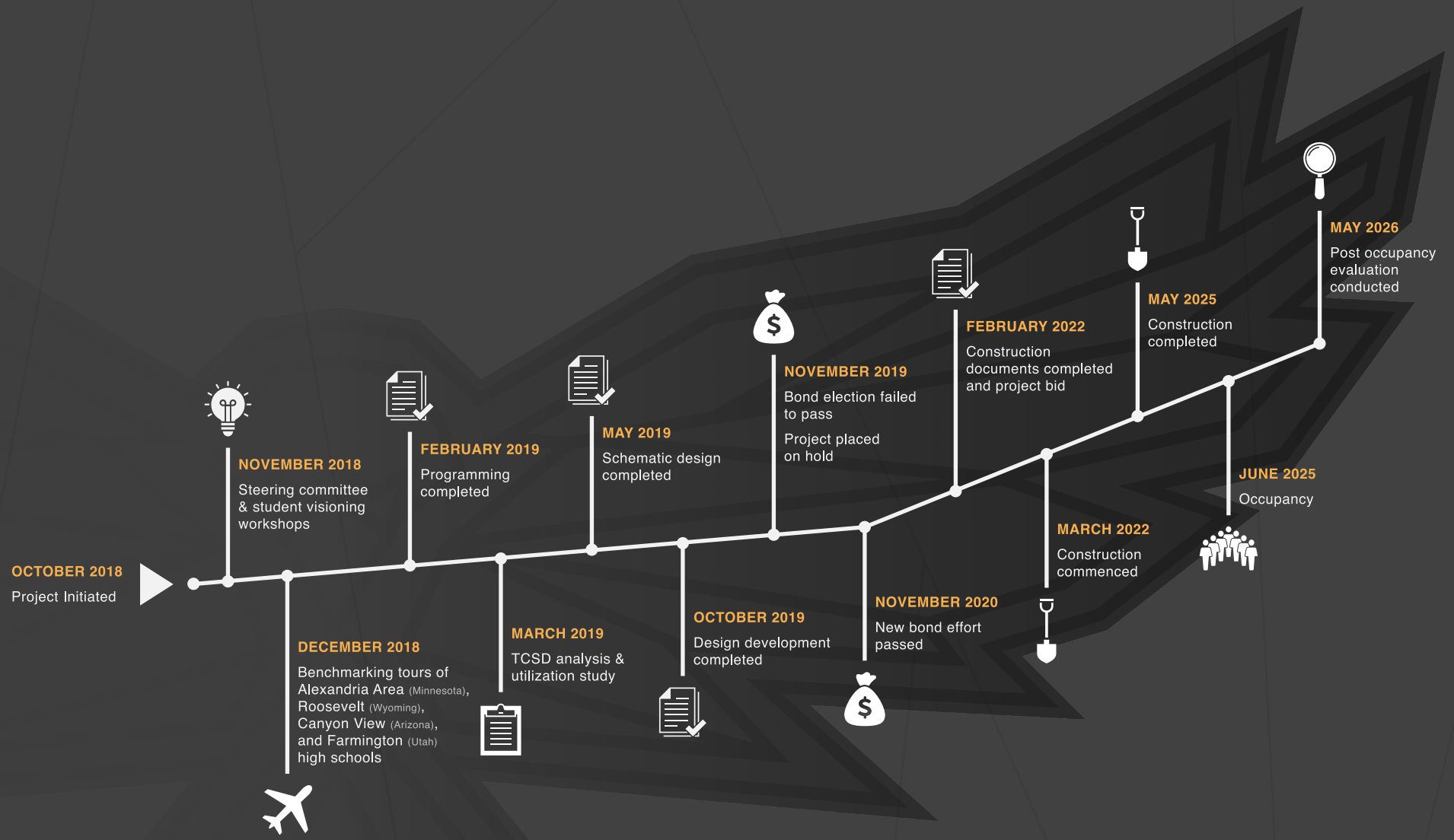
9–12

STUDENT CAPACITY

1,800 students
(25 students/classroom)
flex capacity 2,100
(30 students/classroom)
to accommodate
anticipated future
growth



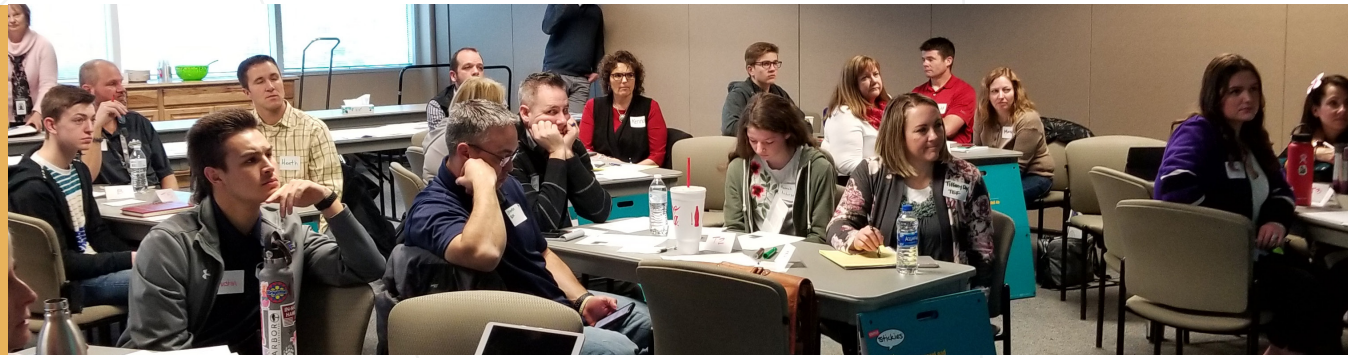
SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE COMMUNITY

Tooele is a growing and evolving county in Utah. Known for its family-friendly communities, the county has a young population, and a high percentage of residents who commute to Salt Lake County for employment. When programming and design began, Tooele County was experiencing rapid growth.



POPULATION

The population reached **72,110** in 2019, reflecting a **3.09%** annual growth rate

RACE & ETHNICITY

The population was mostly White **(84.2%)**, with about **17%** Hispanic or Latino residents

TCSD EMPLOYMENT

Tooele County School District is a major employer in the areas with upwards of **3,000 employees**

EDUCATION

92.1% of residents aged 25 orolder held at least a high school diploma, while **23.1%** earned a bachelor's degree or higher

The county has maintained a high homeownership rate of 81.4%

$396,100
median home price

AVERAGE HOUSEEOLD SIZE
3.29 persons

$76,737
median household income

32
median household age

79.4% of households were classified as families, and nearly 48% included children under 18

DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

The district's boundaries cover **7,286 square miles**, roughly the same land size as Massachusetts

DENSITY

Much of the land is arid desert or military-owned, as a result the population is concentrated in the eastern portion of the county

OPERATIONAL RANGE

The district manages **27-29 schools** in the area, including remote areas like Wendover, Dugway, and Ibapah

STUDENT BODY

The student body consisted of **17,227 students** during the 2018-2019 school year

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EDUCATIONAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES

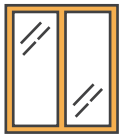
EXCELLENCE IN

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



DPHS needs to support and improve academic performance and proficiency through engaged and data-driven instruction. Key design strategies to support this goal include the incorporation of diverse learning and collaboration spaces to support personalized or blended learning.

SCHOOL CLIMATE



DPHS needs to foster a supportive and safe environment for students and staff. Key design strategies to support this goal include integration of windows for transparency and supervision, as well as an inviting student wellness center where access to mental health support is available to all students.

COMMUNICATIONS



DPHS enhances collaboration and transparency by creating spaces and environments that support professional collaboration and community engagement within the school.

THE STAKEHOLDERS

Administrators, faculty, students, board members, and community representatives participated in a series of workshops designed to examine current practices and define a shared vision for the future of high school education in Tooele County.

This process intentionally brought together diverse perspectives to ensure that the resulting program reflected both district priorities and the lived experiences of its users.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Rather than beginning with predetermined solutions, the process focused on understanding the challenges facing students and educators. Stakeholders identified key pressures shaping the educational environment, including rapidly evolving technology, shifting instructional expectations, increasing demands on teachers, student well-being and safety concerns, and broader cultural influences.

At the same time, the district recognized the need to transition to a new facility model — one that could support flexibility, adapt to change, and better align with contemporary teaching and learning practices.

AVAILABLE ASSETS

Throughout the process, TCSD demonstrated strong leadership and a willingness to challenge conventional models. The district's collaborative culture — supported by engaged administrators, curriculum leaders, facilities staff, and students — created a foundation for meaningful exploration and innovation.

This alignment allowed the team to move beyond incremental improvements and toward a more comprehensive rethinking of the high school experience.

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PROCESS

VISIONING AND PROGRAMMING

TCSD undertook a comprehensive and inclusive visioning process to guide both the educational framework and physical design of the new high school. District leadership, faculty representatives, and students participated in facilitated workshops led by the Collaborative Learning Network.

These sessions explored emerging trends in education, examined precedent schools, and created space for reflection on current strengths and future opportunities. The process emphasized active participation, dialogue, and iteration—ensuring that ideas were tested, refined, and aligned with district goals.

A key outcome of this effort was the development of a program that integrates instructional priorities with spatial strategies. The process moved fluidly between pedagogy and design, allowing stakeholders to understand how decisions about space would directly influence teaching and learning.

This approach ensured that the resulting program was not simply a collection of spaces, but a cohesive framework shaped by shared vision and informed decision-making.



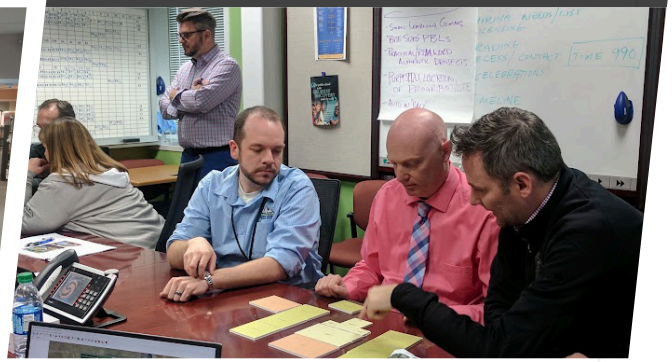
VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY

The visioning and engagement process positioned the school as more than an educational facility. Community voices helped shape priorities around accessibility, identity, and shared use, ensuring that the school reflects the character and needs of Tooele County.

Design considerations such as controlled entry, adaptable shared spaces, and the ability to independently access key program areas emerged directly from these conversations. These strategies support both daily school operations and broader community use, reinforcing the school's role as a civic asset.







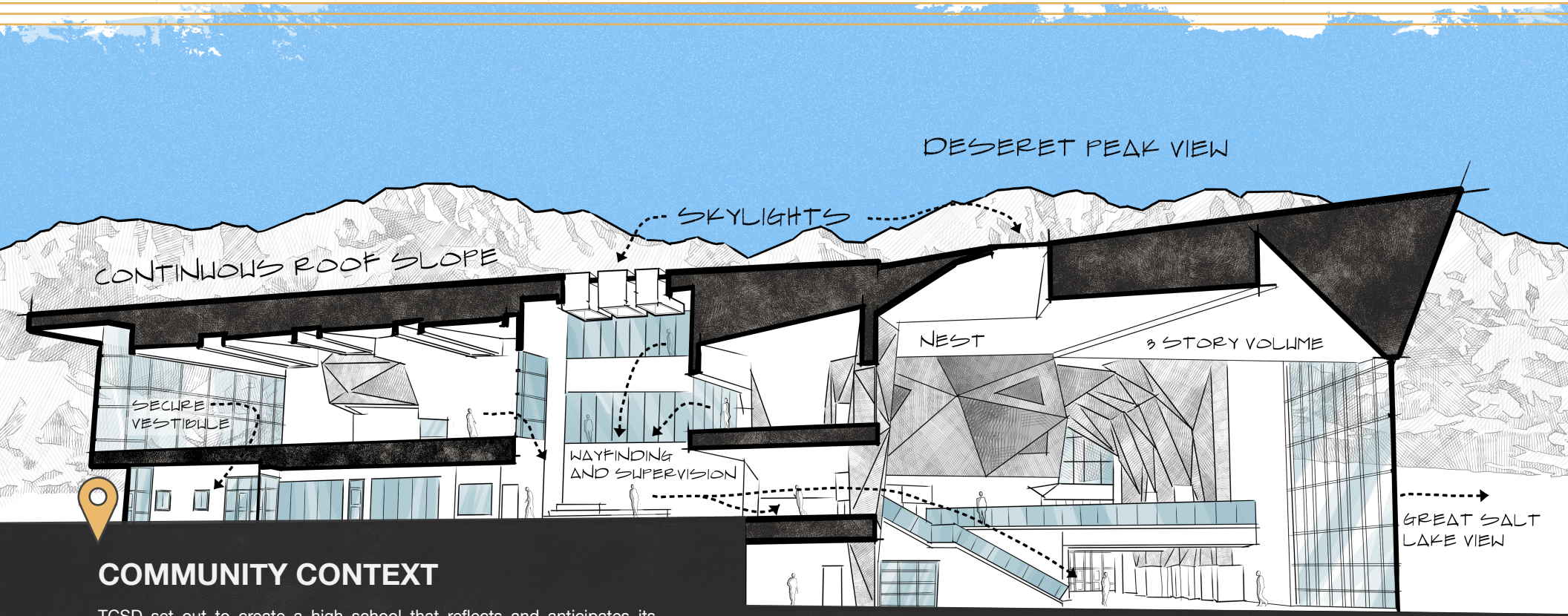
HOW ENGAGEMENT FOSTERED DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Equity and inclusion were embedded in the process from the beginning through broad stakeholder engagement and intentional dialogue. The district's geographic and demographic diversity—including rural and suburban populations and a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds—was a central consideration in programming decisions.

Stakeholder input emphasized the importance of equitable access to programs, services, and opportunities across all district schools. As a result, the planning process incorporated space for district-wide support services, community programs, and resources that address barriers related to access, language, and economic challenges.

The inclusion of a dedicated teen center and expanded support spaces emerged directly from these discussions, reflecting a commitment to meeting the needs of all students.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

TCSD set out to create a high school that reflects and anticipates its future. Located in a transforming area in Tooele, the building's site presence, architectural design, and visual identity — along with its flexible, community-oriented spaces — were intentionally crafted to express a forward-looking vision. Together, these elements position the school as a symbol of transformation, ensuring it evolves alongside the community it serves.

The project site, located at 2244 N. Berra Boulevard in Tooele, Utah, is a greenfield parcel acquired by Tooele County School District (TCSD) in 2016 in anticipation of the community's need for a new high school.

The unique site design embraced the challenge of a steep, 60-foot drop sloping to the northwest. Rather than fighting the natural grade, the design strategy broke the site into seven distinct elevated "plates." To integrate with the slope, the main building mass was rotated 30 degrees, nestling naturally into the topography.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE

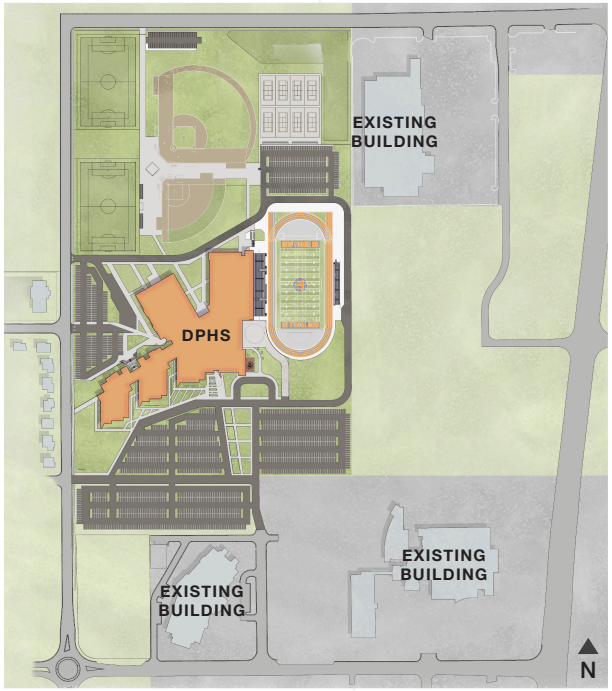
Deseret Peak High School is intentionally crafted to inspire curiosity and motivate students by providing engaging, flexible, and effective learning environments. Classrooms provide shared access to natural daylight, abundant writable surfaces, and adaptable layouts that equip teachers with a variety of instructional delivery configurations. This flexibility supports diverse teaching styles and encourages active, student-centered learning.

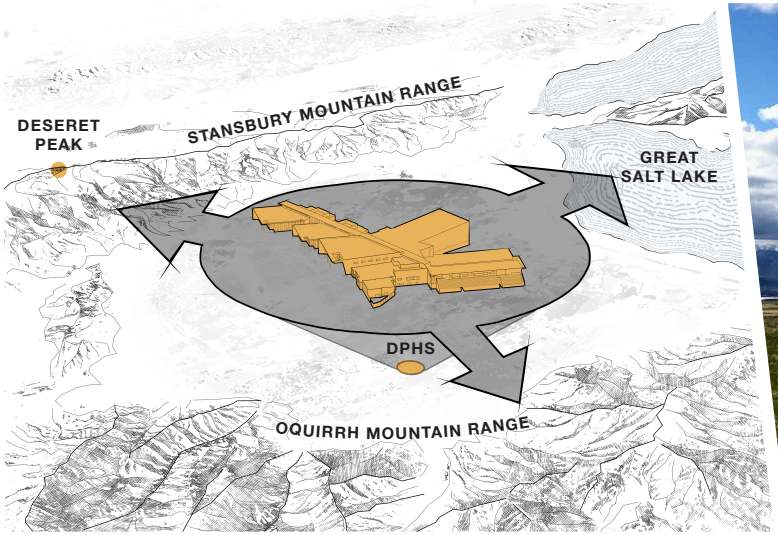
Beyond the classroom, collaborative learning suites extend opportunities for engagement, offering flexible spaces for group work, independent study, and informal interaction. Additional study and collaboration areas are thoughtfully integrated — along corridors, within the commons, and in the media center — ensuring that students can find spaces that best support their individual learning needs.

Integrated graphics add another layer of inspiration, bringing visual energy, school spirit, creativity, and a sense of fun. These elements draw from the surrounding community and natural environment, reinforcing a strong sense of place and identity.

Connection to the landscape further enhances the learning experience. Expansive views of Deseret Peak, Stansbury Island, and the Great Salt Lake provide a powerful, ever-present backdrop, grounding students in their local environment. Specialized spaces take full advantage of this connection. For example, art classrooms are oriented to capture consistent north light and striking views of Stansbury Island. Science labs overlook the same landscape, offering a daily visual connection to the natural geology, meteorology, and ecology of the Great Salt Lake Basin, an invaluable teaching tool that represents critical habitat to millions of migratory birds. Over 250 bird species have been recorded here, including rare and endangered species, providing unique opportunities for students to make meaningful connections with their surrounding environment.

Together, these design strategies create a dynamic and inspiring environment that supports exploration, creativity, and engaged learning.





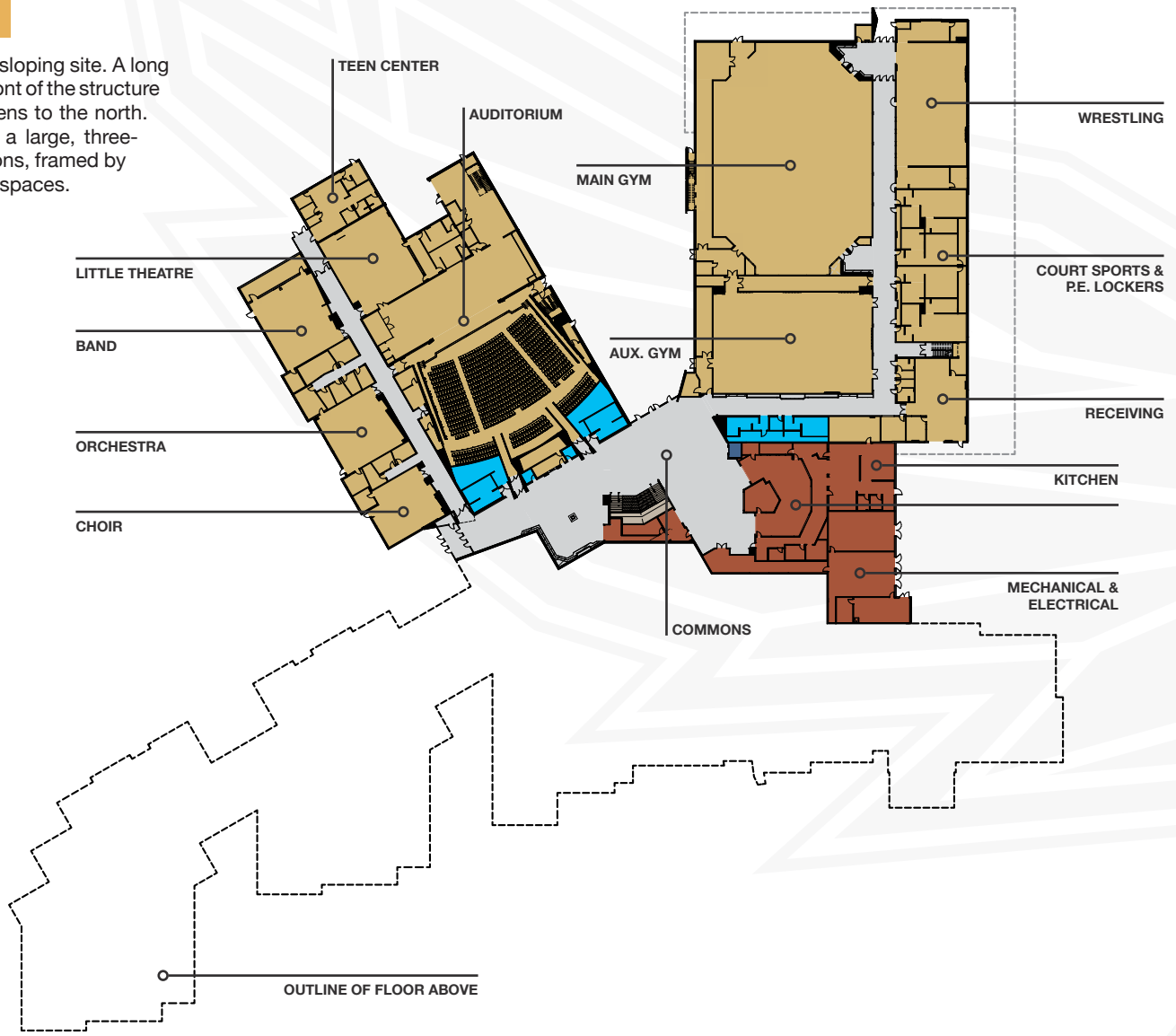


VIEW OF STANSBURY ISLAND FROM DPHS SITE (PRE-DEVELOPMENT)

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

LOWER LEVEL

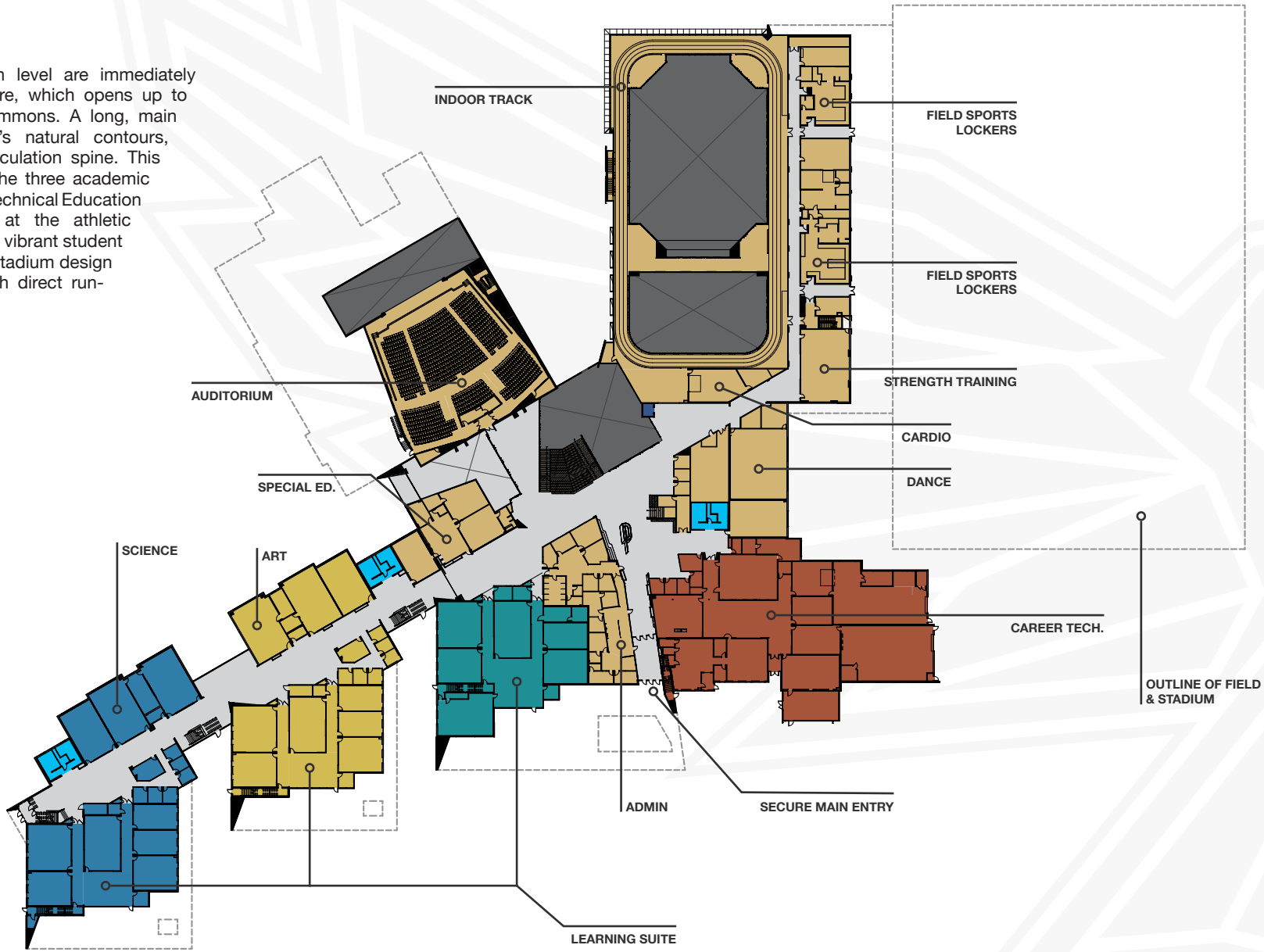
The building is situated on a sloping site. A long retaining wall supports the front of the structure at the lower level, which opens to the north. This orientation establishes a large, three-story central student commons, framed by performing arts and athletic spaces.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

MAIN LEVEL

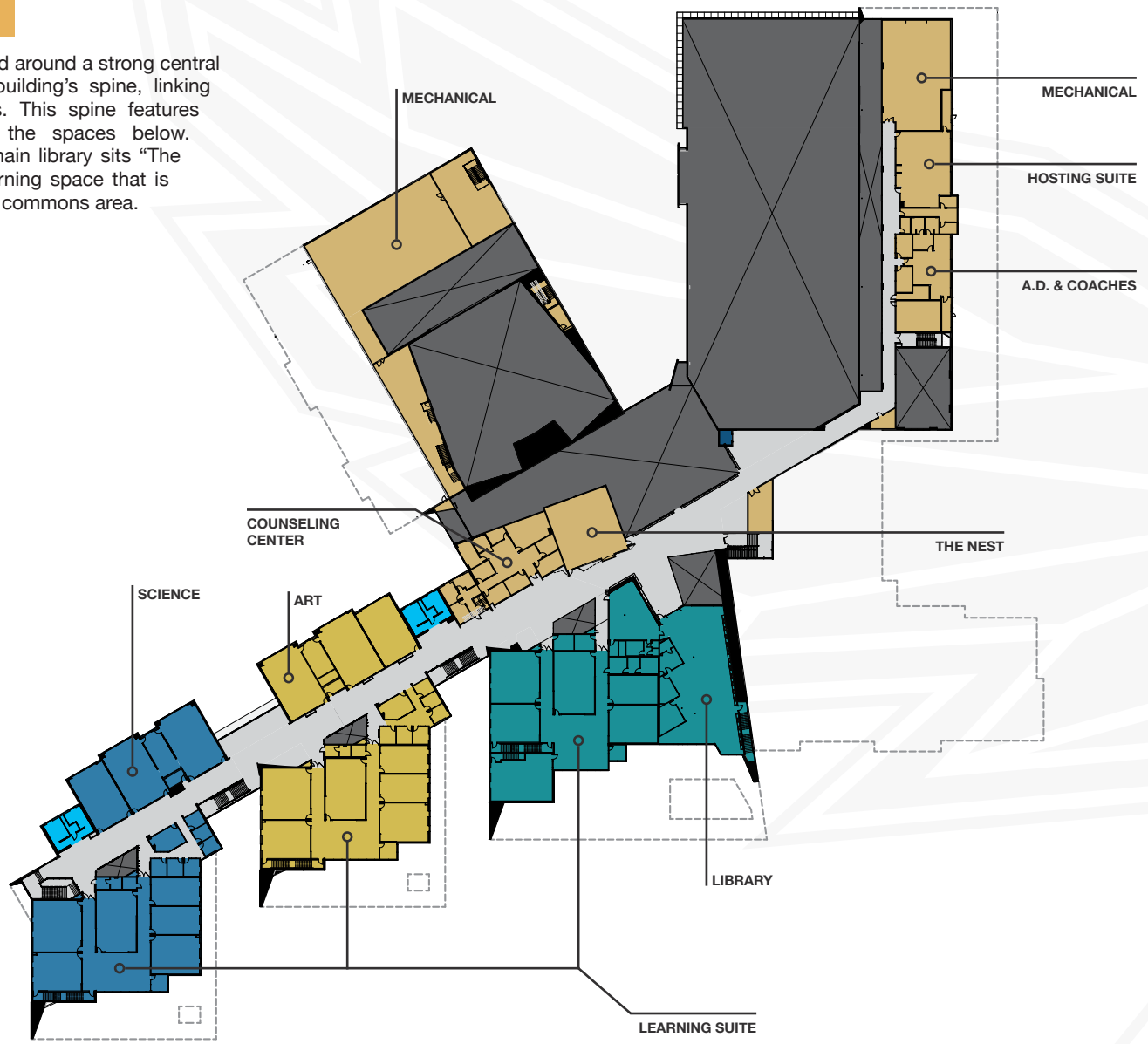
Visitors entering the main level are immediately drawn into the central core, which opens up to the expansive student commons. A long, main corridor follows the site's natural contours, serving as the primary circulation spine. This corridor seamlessly links the three academic suites and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) zone, culminating at the athletic facility wing. Enhancing the vibrant student experience, an integrated stadium design includes locker rooms with direct run-out tunnels.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

UPPER LEVEL

The upper level is organized around a strong central axis that serves as the building's spine, linking all the surrounding wings. This spine features dramatic overlooks into the spaces below. Notably, adjacent to the main library sits "The Nest," a large, flexible learning space that is suspended high above the commons area.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

DPHS is defined by adaptability and thoughtful integration of space to support both current and future educational needs. Classrooms are right-sized and highly flexible, enabling teachers to configure spaces that best support their instructional approach. This adaptability ensures that both students and faculty feel comfortable, supported, and fully engaged in the learning process.

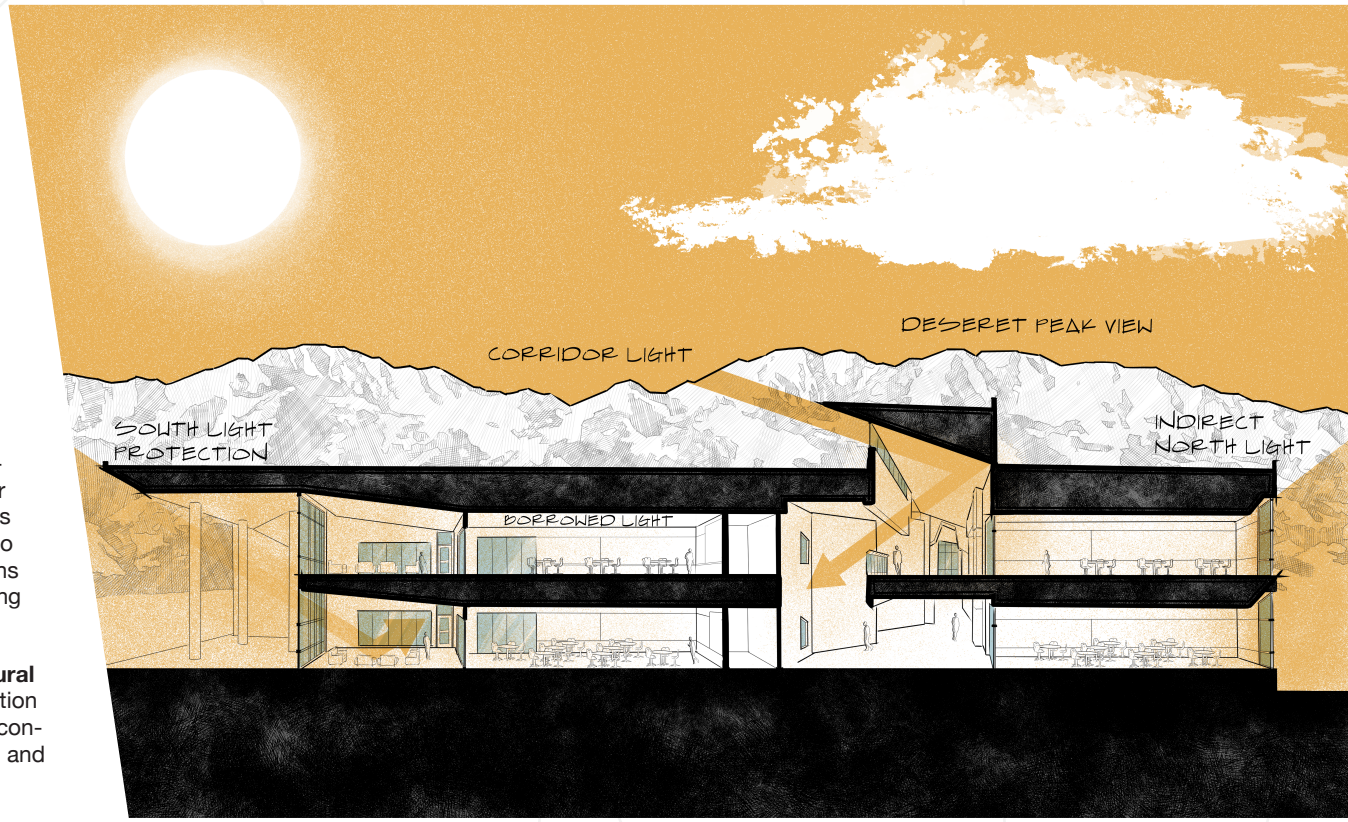
The interior structure reinforces long-term innovation by **enabling learning spaces to evolve over time**. This forward-thinking approach ensures the facility can respond to changing educational models, enrollment shifts, and programmatic needs without requiring significant structural modification.

Daylighting is strategically integrated throughout the building to enhance both functionality and experience. Exterior windows bring natural light directly into collaboration spaces within learning suites, while shared daylight extends into adjacent classrooms. This approach reduces glare, maintains access to views, and supports passive supervision by providing clear lines of sight.

The design also **responds innovatively to the site's natural topography**. A multi-level commons creates a seamless transition across the sloped site, organizing the building into three interconnected levels. This configuration promotes intuitive circulation and provides clear, efficient access to learning spaces.

Safety and security are embedded as fundamental design principles. Clear, visible corridors enhance supervision, while learning suites are designed as compartmentalized environments equipped or secure lock down or individual evacuation in emergencies. Distinct educational, athletic, and performing arts facility zones with independent access support safe and appropriate community use of the building while maintaining the security of learning spaces.

Together, these strategies demonstrate a holistic and innovative approach to school design—one that prioritizes flexibility, safety, and long-term adaptability in support of student success.





Large overhanging canopies provide passive solar protection for south-facing learning suites, reducing solar heat gain and creating comfortable, glare-free environments that support focus and sustained learning. These suites are organized around courtyards and landscaped spaces, bringing natural light into the building's core and connecting students to the outdoors. This design enhances well-being, engagement, and environmental awareness while supporting high-performance sustainability and an optimal learning environment.

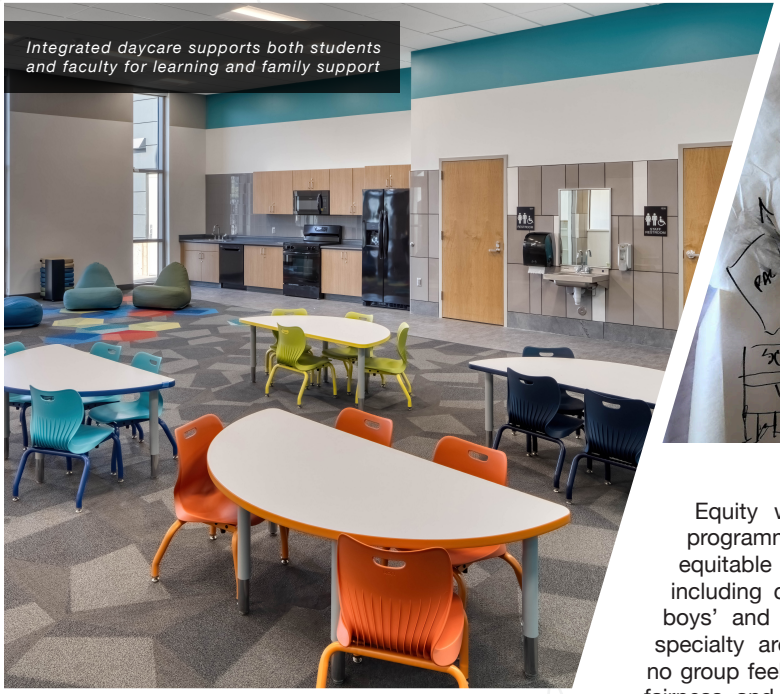
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

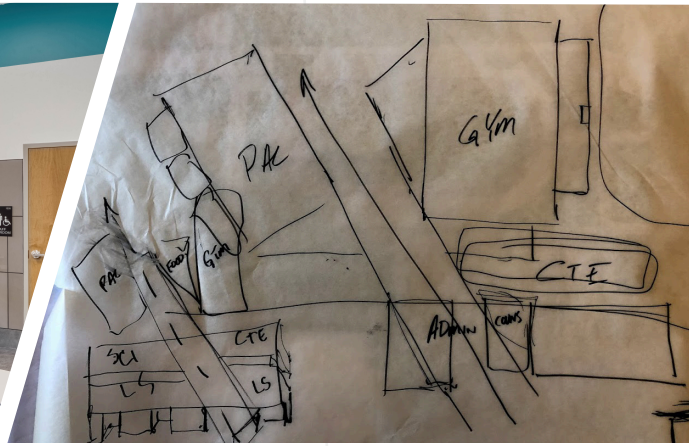
The school was intentionally designed to be welcoming, engaging, and accessible to all students and community members. The physical environment promotes inclusion by creating visibility and awareness across programs — interior windows into learning spaces and activity areas enable students to observe a wide range of classes and experiences, encouraging exploration and participation in opportunities they may not have otherwise considered.

Specialty program areas are designed with ample space and flexibility to ensure that all students who wish to participate — whether in athletics, arts, or other programs — have the opportunity to do so. This approach removes physical barriers to participation and reinforces the District's commitment to equitable access.

Transparency throughout the building — across learning suites, commons, and activity spaces — not only fosters a sense of openness and belonging, but also supports accountability and shared ownership among students and faculty. These visual connections create a safe, respectful environment where everyone feels seen and supported.



Integrated daycare supports both students and faculty for learning and family support



Equity was a guiding principle throughout the programming and design process. Balanced and equitable facilities are provided for all students, including comparable, high-quality spaces for both boys' and girls' programs and consistency across specialty areas. This intentional parity ensures that no group feels left out, reinforcing a culture of respect, fairness, and inclusion.

TCSD recognizes that socio-economic and family circumstances can create significant barriers to access and equity across the district. To combat this, DPHS has a teen center that provides wrap-around services for students experiencing homelessness and housing and food instability. This inclusive space supports students in their journey towards graduation and a brighter future. Located near the little theater with its own entrance, it offers a safe place to study, grab food, or prepare for the day ahead.



DPHS TEEN CENTER

An integrated daycare program within the school further supports both student and staff parents, helping remove barriers to educational and professional success.

Together, these design strategies create a physical environment that actively supports diversity, equity, and inclusion — not just in principle, but in everyday student experience.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



FOSTERING SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS

Located in a transforming rural/suburban area, the District approaches sustainability through a lens of stewardship — prioritizing durability, cost-effective operations, and high-quality experiences for students and staff. DPHS reflects this philosophy through thoughtful, performance-driven design strategies that balance environmental responsibility with long-term value.

A high-performing building envelope provides effective insulation and a continuous air and moisture barrier, reducing energy loss and enabling smaller, more efficient mechanical systems. An indirect/direct evaporative cooling system, coupled with the arid climate of the second-driest U.S. state significantly lowers energy consumption during warmer months, while a high-efficiency gas boiler delivers reliable, cost-effective heating in the winter. In addition, the school is designed to be solar-ready, positioning the District to incorporate photovoltaic systems in the future as community support and funding allow.

Material selection throughout the building reinforces both sustainability and wellness goals. Interior finishes are intentionally minimized and selected for durability to extend their lifecycle and reduce maintenance needs. Polished concrete floors at the ground level provide a resilient, high-impact surface, while long-lasting porcelain wall tile protects high-traffic areas from daily wear. Cradle-to-cradle certified carpet supports both longevity and future material reuse, aligning with responsible lifecycle practices.

Low-emitting and health-conscious materials were prioritized to promote indoor air quality and support the well-being of students, staff, and the broader school community. Together, these strategies create a learning environment that is not only efficient and durable, but also healthy, comfortable, and sustainable for years to come.

The prominent, expansive south-facing front entry canopy is a critical architectural element, offering both functional sun protection and a commanding aesthetic. Its monumental scale creates a dramatic first impression, transforming entry into a memorable, approachable experience. This feature also provides a prime, highly visible location for monumental-scale institutional branding.





The school's front elevation is designed to connect students to their surrounding environment, with views of the Great Salt Lake serving as a constant visual anchor. Exterior materials reflect the natural landscape, using deep grays inspired by local rock and shades of gold that mirror the sunlit terrain while reinforcing school identity. This intentional design fosters a sense of place, belonging, and pride, helping students feel grounded in both their community and their school, which supports engagement and a stronger connection to the learning environment.

The performing arts wing creates a bold architectural identity with a backlit eagle silhouette that wraps around the flyloft, a nearly 90-foot vertical element that signals the program's prominence and elevates student performance opportunities. Opposite the courtyard, the gymnasium and stadium form a central hub where the creative energy of the arts and the physical engagement of athletics converge, fostering connection, collaboration, and shared school pride.

The gymnasium re-imagines traditional athletic facilities by incorporating abundant natural light through skylights and north-facing windows, creating a welcoming environment that enhances student well-being, engagement, and performance while reducing operational costs. Together, these spaces are designed to expand access and break down traditional barriers, supporting a broader range of students. Flexible gym configurations support simultaneous use by athletics, marching band, ROTC, dance, and robotics, ensuring more students can participate, collaborate, and benefit from inclusive, high-quality learning environments.





The stadium is intentionally integrated with the main school building to support holistic student development, reinforcing the connection between academics and extracurricular experiences. This design ensures student-athletes have seamless, equitable access to facilities, reducing barriers to participation and maximizing time for learning and engagement. Direct access from interior locker rooms, including dedicated runout tunnels, enhances safety, efficiency, and a sense of belonging while fostering school pride. By embedding athletic spaces within the academic environment, the design promotes increased involvement and engagement, contributing to positive student outcomes in and out of the classroom.

The 1,100-seat auditorium provides a high-quality venue that supports student performance, creativity, and community engagement. Its acoustically-engineered panel systems, inspired by an eagle's wing, ensure exceptional sound quality, enabling students to perform and present in a professional environment. Combined with advanced lighting and stage technology, the space enhances learning in the performing arts, builds student confidence, expands opportunities for authentic, real-world experiences, and strengthens connections between the school and the broader community.





At the heart of the facility, the triple-height student commons serves as a vibrant hub for connection, collaboration, and engagement. The Learning Stair functions as both circulation and informal seating, supporting gatherings, study, and peer interaction. Above, "The Nest" provides a flexible, multi-purpose space for instruction, collaboration, and events, offering students and staff a dynamic environment that supports active learning, community building, and diverse instructional needs.

The expansive main axis corridor serves as the building's central spine, designed to support safe, efficient movement while enhancing the daily student experience. Generous glazing brings in abundant natural light, creating a bright, welcoming environment that supports well-being, focus, and positive interactions. This intentional design fosters a sense of openness and connection, contributing to a supportive learning environment while also reducing energy use.



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

CONTEXT

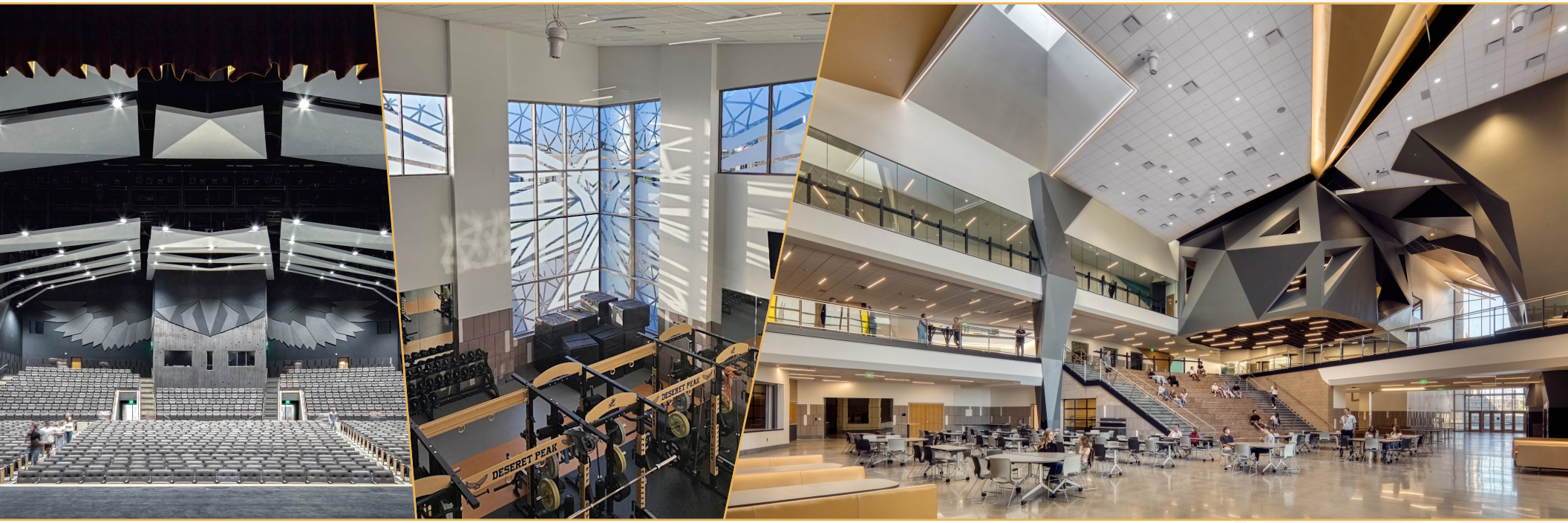
The educational vision for TCSD centers on creating inclusive, student-centered learning environments that support the whole child and prepare all students for college, career, and community success. The district prioritizes equitable access, personalized learning, and opportunities for students to engage in academic, technical, and extracurricular pathways that reflect diverse interests and needs.

The learning environment is intentionally designed to support this vision by aligning physical spaces with curriculum and instruction. Learning Suites organized around Collaboration Cores promote team-based teaching, interdisciplinary learning, and small-group instruction, enabling educators to adapt to varied instructional strategies and student needs. Access to natural light, views, and connections to outdoor spaces enhances student well-being, focus, and engagement, directly supporting academic success.

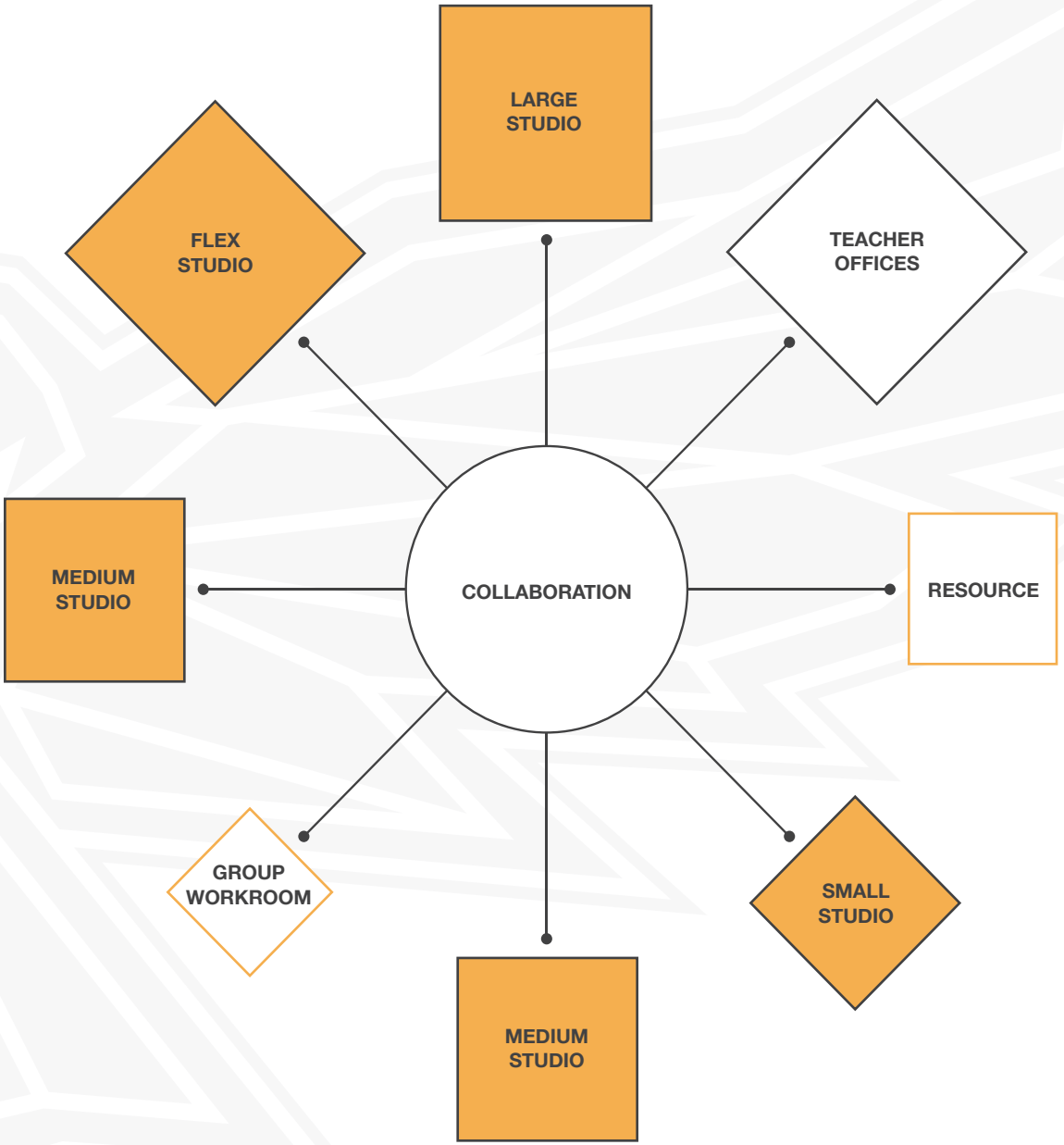
A wide range of flexible environments supports diverse learning and teaching styles. From large gathering spaces like the Student Commons and Learning Stair to specialized areas such as performing arts, CTE labs, and adaptable gymnasiums, students can engage in collaborative, independent, experiential, and performance-based learning. These spaces encourage active participation, creativity, and real-world application of skills.

Flexibility and adaptability are embedded throughout the design. Multi-purpose spaces such as “The Nest,” auxiliary gym areas, and reconfigurable classrooms allow for a variety of uses, from daily instruction to events, professional learning, and community engagement. This adaptability ensures the facility can evolve alongside changing educational practices and student needs.

Innovative aspects of the environment include integrating academic, athletic, and arts spaces to break down traditional silos and expand access to programs.



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



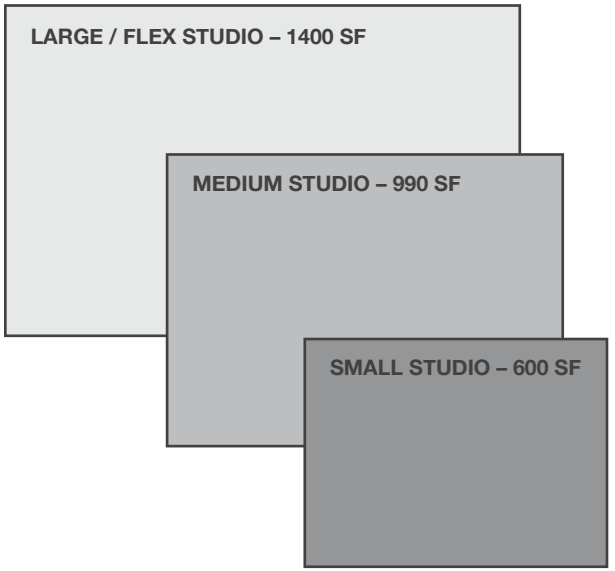
PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Key design features that support and enhance learning and teaching include:

While most secondary schools operate at an approximately 70% classroom utilization rate, DPHS has been designed to support 95% at full capacity of 1,800 students, with the ability to flex up to 2,100 students without adding portables. The school is not envisioned to hit this flex capacity for about 15 years based on recent master plan data, ensuring the facility can accommodate growth without portable classrooms.

RIGHT-SIZED LEARNING SPACES

Diverse classroom sizes accommodate instruction in spaces that are both comfortable and conducive to learning, based on class size, utilizing space more effectively and stretching limited District dollars much further than traditional design.



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

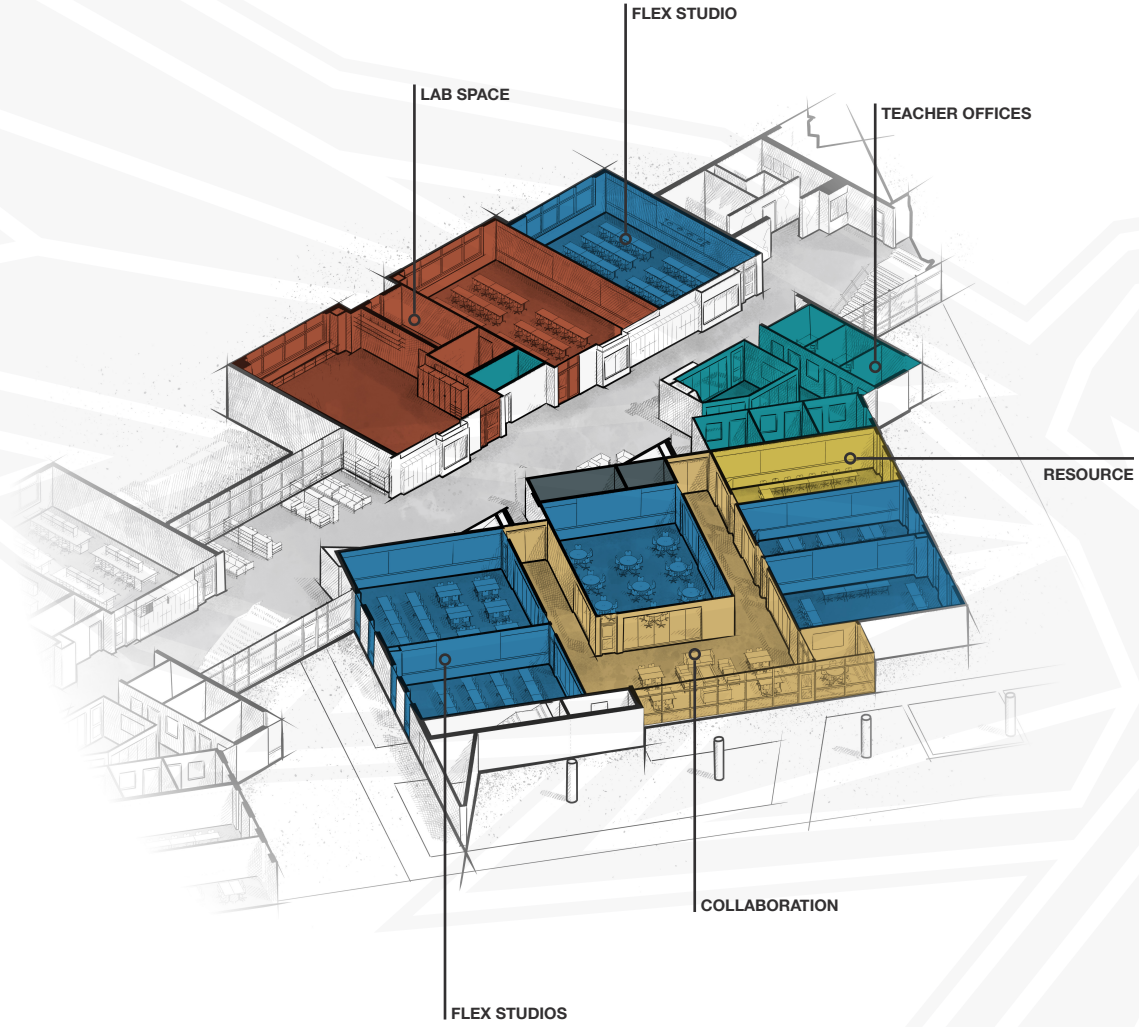
COLLABORATION IS KEY

Collaboration spaces for student-to-student, faculty, and community engagement are integrated into the learning suites, corridors, and common spaces to support community building across the school.

PROXIMITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Teacher workspaces are adjacent to their classrooms, and the common areas support individual work needs, access to learning spaces, and observation of learning throughout the school. Glass between the classrooms and collaboration spaces extends the classroom beyond the four walls and provides varied learning opportunities.





Each learning suite is organized around a central collaboration core, surrounded by flexible learning studios designed to support varied teaching methods, group sizes, and personalized learning. Full-height glazing along the south façade brings in abundant daylight and views of the mountains, while integrated shade canopies ensure visual comfort and optimal conditions for focus. This design enhances student engagement, supports diverse instructional practices, and strengthens connections to the natural environment, contributing to improved learning outcomes.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



SAFETY & SECURITY

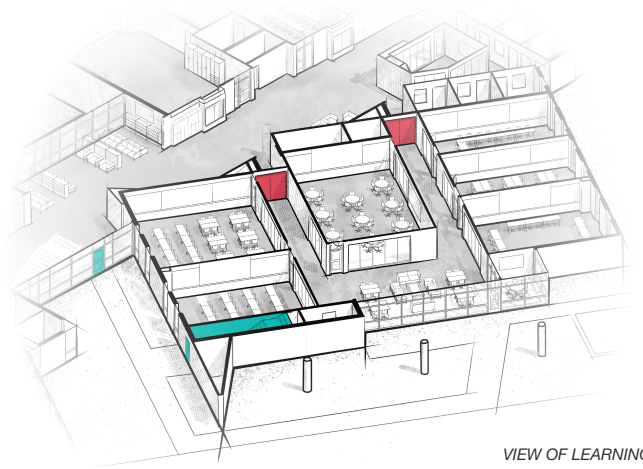
Each suite is equipped with added security that allows the area to be locked down and evacuated individually in case of an emergency. Automatic magnetic-locking entrance doors lead into the suite, and emergency exits within each suite lead directly to the exterior from both levels.

Transparent design enables full supervision of the learning environment and rapid, safe evaluation of interior conditions during a security event.

The main entry to the school has a secure vestibule that requires visitors to check in at the administration office. Transparency provides visual connectivity and additional surveillance while maintaining the inviting, open feel that a school should have.

ADAPTABLE CLASSROOMS

The primary circulation spine of the building is configured to maximize visual supervision over multiple levels from one primary vantage point, facilitating and streamlining the supervision of the entire facility by a limited number of administrators.



VIEW OF LEARNING SUITE

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

LEARNING HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

Central and open gathering spaces for presentations, lectures, lunch, and social gatherings are integrated throughout the building, promoting collaboration, informal gatherings, and individual/group study and interaction.









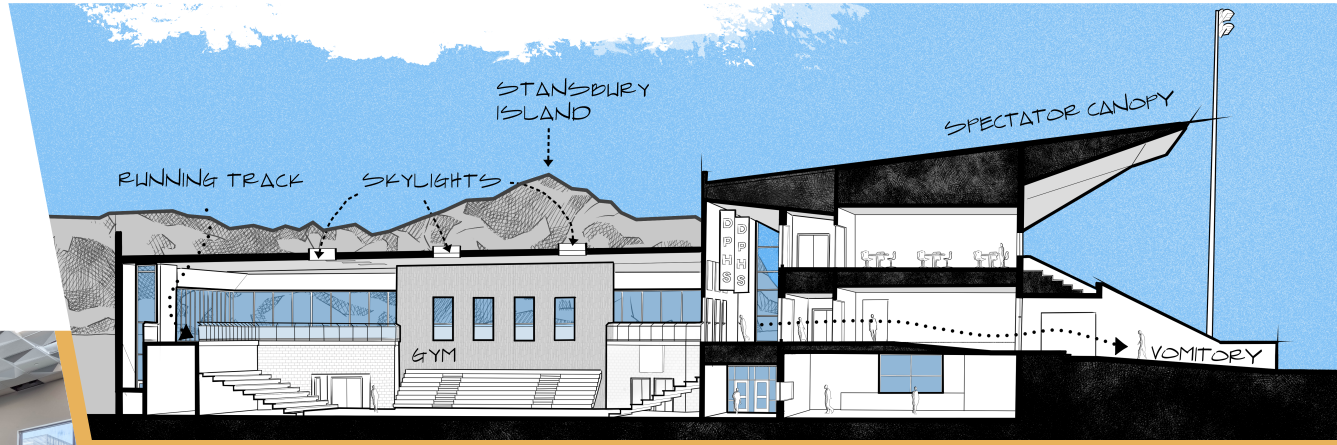
DISTRIBUTED MEDIA CENTER

Books are distributed throughout the school rather than in a single repository. Social reading areas allow students to interact and read together without the need to be particularly quiet, while the central media center remains a quiet research space. This configuration ensures students have equal access to resources and tools to support their learning needs.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

SPECIALTY PROGRAM SPACES

Athletics and fitness, performing arts, and CTE spaces are designed to reflect real-world environments, providing high-quality, technically advanced, and engaging settings that support students in pursuing their interests. These purpose-built spaces enhance relevance and authenticity in learning, increasing student engagement, skill development, and readiness for college, careers, and lifelong success.







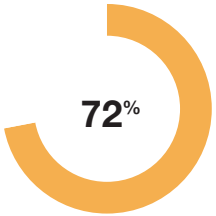


The main gymnasium is designed as a flexible hub that supports both physical education and whole-school gatherings. An elevated running track provides year-round fitness opportunities, while retractable bleachers accommodate the entire student body for assemblies and events, strengthening school community and engagement. Abundant natural light from north-facing windows and bright interior finishes create an inviting environment that supports student well-being and activity while significantly reducing energy use, aligning sustainable design with positive student experiences.

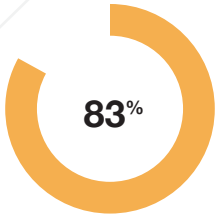
RESULTS

POST OCCUPANCY SURVEY

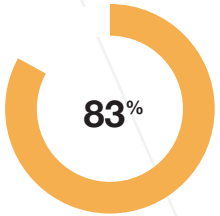
STUDENTS



Agree DPHS has diverse learning spaces that support individual learning needs

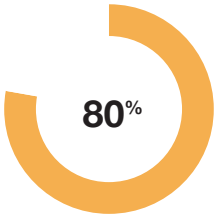


Feel safe in the hallways, common areas, and other shared spaces

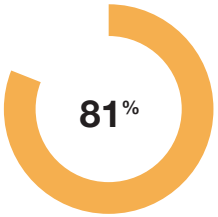


Note they can easily navigate the school and move efficiently between spaces

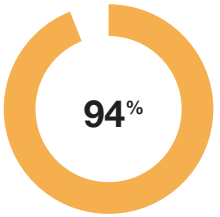
FACULTY



Agree the natural daylight in the school enhances learning



Feel safe in the learning space

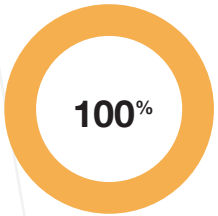


Are pleased with the interior design of DPHS

ADMIN / STAFF



Agree students actively use the central commons for socializing, collaborating, and gathering



Agree the building design supports flexible use of space



Agree the school's design makes it easy to supervise students

EDUCATIONAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The project advances Tooele County School District's educational goals by supporting a shift toward student-centered, collaborative, and future-ready learning. Flexible learning suites, varied classroom sizes, and integrated breakout spaces support project-based and interdisciplinary instruction, fostering more personalized learning experiences. This impact is reflected in post-occupancy data: 86% of students report that the school supports both individual and group learning, while 72% indicate that spaces effectively accommodate their unique learning needs.

For educators, the transition to shared workspaces and adaptable teaching environments has strengthened collaboration and instructional agility. 80% of faculty report that the layout supports both individual and group learning, and the same percentage note that natural daylight enhances the learning environment, reinforcing the connection between design quality and educational outcomes.

SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

DPHS fulfills the District's goal of redefining the high school model to reflect contemporary educational and workforce demands. The school serves as a prototype for future facilities, demonstrating how data-driven planning and pedagogy-informed design can be replicated across the District. The project's 95% space utilization capacity maximizes operational efficiency while maintaining flexibility.

From an operational perspective, the building performs strongly: 75% of administrators report that the school effectively supports daily operations, and all administrators agree that the design enables flexible and efficient use of space. Additionally, 100% of administrators report that the commons are highly effective for both academic and social engagement, underscoring the success of shared, multi-functional environments.

RESULTS

COMMUNITY GOALS

The school reflects and supports the evolving identity of Tooele as it transitions from a rural community to a rapidly growing population center. DPHS provides a welcoming, transparent, and accessible environment that fosters connection and community pride.

Safety and ease of use — critical community concerns — are strongly supported by the design. 83% of students report feeling safe in both learning and common spaces, and students consistently note that they can navigate the building easily, reinforcing the success of its intuitive organization and human-scaled learning communities.

VALUE & STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

DPHS demonstrates strong stewardship through a highly efficient, data-informed design approach. The 95% utilization rate ensures that nearly all programmed space actively supports learning, minimizing excess while preserving adaptability. The universal agreement among administrators that spaces are used flexibly and efficiently reinforces the project's operational value.

Standardized, repeatable planning strategies position the school as a scalable prototype for future District investments, maximizing long-term return. Durable materials, efficient systems, and thoughtful space planning contribute to reduced lifecycle costs, ensuring both immediate and sustained value.

UNINTENDED RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Beyond its original goals, the project has catalyzed additional positive outcomes. The collaborative design process strengthened relationships among District leadership, educators, and the community, creating a shared sense of ownership that extends beyond occupancy.

Notably, the shift to flexible, team-based environments has accelerated instructional change more rapidly than anticipated. Educators have organically adopted new teaching strategies, supported by spaces that encourage experimentation and collaboration. The high level of student-reported engagement and adaptability suggests that the building is not only supporting current practices but also enabling ongoing evolution.

SUSTAINABILITY & WELLNESS OUTCOMES

Sustainability and wellness are integral to the project's success. Abundant daylight, visual transparency, and connections to the outdoors contribute to a healthy and engaging learning environment — validated by 80% of faculty reporting that natural daylight enhances learning.

The design also supports emotional and physical well-being through smaller learning communities, clear wayfinding, and passive security strategies. High levels of perceived safety — 83% of students and 80% of faculty — demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches. Together, these strategies create an environment that supports student belonging, reduces stress, and promotes overall wellness while aligning with long-term environmental and operational sustainability goals.