



Case Study | Design For Innovative Learning

Roosevelt and Jackson Elementary Schools
Medford School District 549C, Medford Oregon

opsis architecture







Design for Innovative Learning

In 2007, major seismic deficiencies required the school system to close Roosevelt and Jackson Elementary Schools until more stable, safe structures could be found for the students. Opsis provided the district with a series of cost options ranging from full renovations to all new construction. The District chose to rebuild over 75% of each school in new construction and renovate each 1948 two-story classroom wing.

Opsis led a collaborative programming process with teachers, students, parents and staff to develop the planning models that address the fundamental teaching and learning strategies in the design of educational spaces for the 21st Century Learner.

The resulting programs create a series of small learning communities that cluster around project commons spaces and small group work rooms. Both schools have significant Title 1 programs that require a variety of specialized space. These communities are designed to facilitate a wide range of learning modalities with flexible furnishings and integrate the Title 1 programs into a common community of learners. The small learning community as a design strategy takes the “wasted space” of the corridor and condenses it into a Project Common space for a small group of learning studios. Additionally, the schools function as true community center. Both schools include free-standing gymnasiums and cafeterias that allow these spaces to function as community resources when the main school building is closed.

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Duration: 2007-2010

Project Type: New Construction / Renovation

Project Delivery: Design-bid-build

Construction Cost: \$25 M

Project Size: 108,000 sf

Award: 2010 Impact on Learning, Non Traditional Learning Space

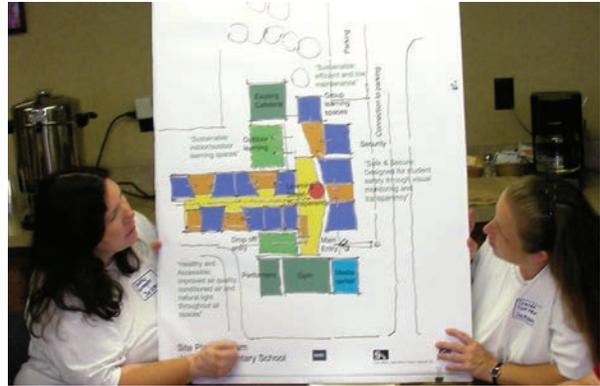
Collaboration

Our design approach is highly collaborative, working with community and client groups to find solutions that uniquely fit your needs. We use a workshop design methodology that brings together teachers, staff, parents and administration to develop student-centered teaching and learning spaces. On our school project work we understand the importance of delivering designs that are highly functional, efficient and use the community's resources wisely.

Incorporating input from building users is integral to the way that we organize the design process. We find the best design solutions by listening to the staff and community members who will use the facility every day. Opsis organized a very unique series of workshops over three months to introduce and discuss how new approaches to the learning environment could be incorporated into the designs for your new and renovated schools.



Our approach worked from the inside-out and the outside-in, in a fun and exciting series of sessions that had a significant impact on the resulting school designs. On visiting the completed schools, we are often approached by those who participated in these workshops with comments on how much they enjoyed them and how much they opened their view to the importance of design in making spaces that work for learning.



Design For Education The 21st Century School

Over the last 20 years education has changed dramatically to incorporate new technologies, establish global connections and form better understandings of how individuals learn. These changes have brought about many new educational paradigms that break out of the factory model previously dominating educational planning and the subsequent design for education environments.

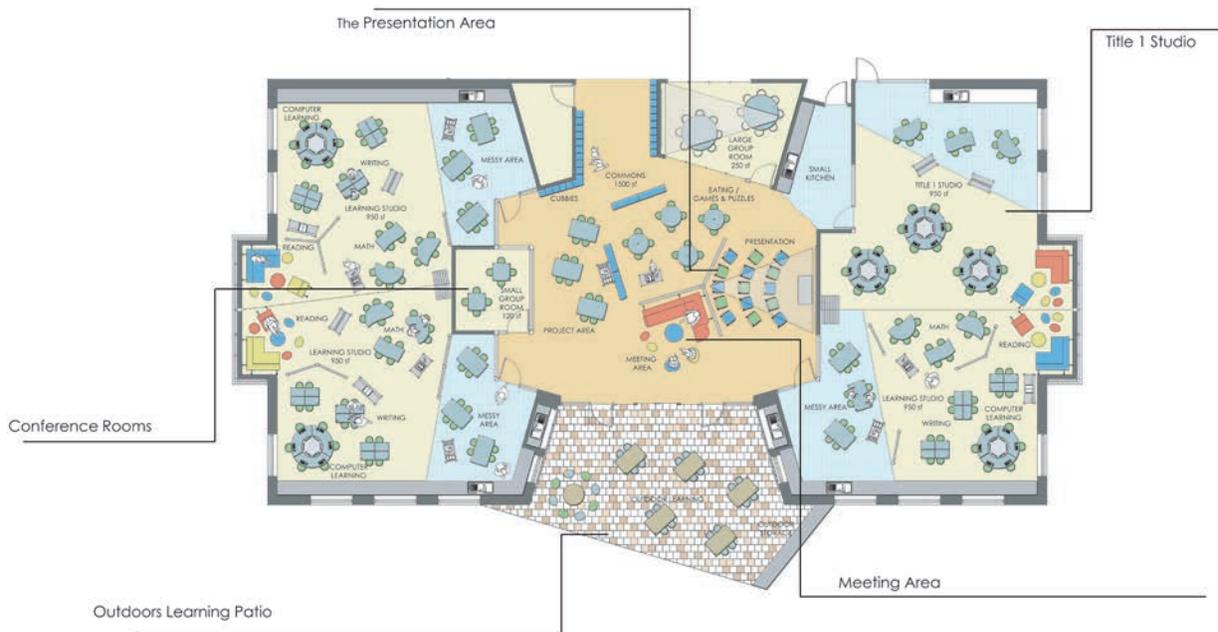
Our programming and design approach is “student-centered.” It begins with understanding the fundamentals of children’s needs. Today, educators understand that students learn in many different forms. Renowned psychologist Howard Gardner has defined these forms as the nine multiple intelligences:

- Linguistic (Word Smart)
- Logical
- Musical
- Bodily Kinesthetic
- Spatial
- Naturalist
- Interpersonal (People Smart)
- Intrapersonal (Self Smart)
- Existential (World Smart)

Small Learning Community Spaces That Support Programs

While working to meet individual needs, a school is also a crucial link in creating and reinforcing the idea of community. Many schools have instituted a small learning community model around specialized programs, team teaching and other delivery methodologies. However, the tradition of the double loaded corridor with classrooms in a row does nothing to reinforce these ideas of creating a sense of belonging and home for students.

A key to the Roosevelt and Jackson Schools design are the Project Commons spaces that are the heart of each small learning community. The small learning community as a design strategy takes the “wasted space” of the corridor and condenses it into a Project Common space for a small group of learning studios. Importantly, this larger group space can also support small group rooms and other specialized spaces that are traditionally distributed in other parts of a school. This arrangement, with a high level of visual transparency between the spaces, allows for the visual supervision needed when students break out for individual or group work. Where possible these Project Commons Spaces can open to outdoor learning spaces that provide places for working with messy materials and natural environments.



Learning Studio

The Classroom Redefined

Step into almost any classroom today and one sees a variety of activity happening at one time, not including the specialized work that has been moved to other places within the school. Yet, the traditional rectangular classroom with desks facing the front chalkboard only works for a few teaching methods.

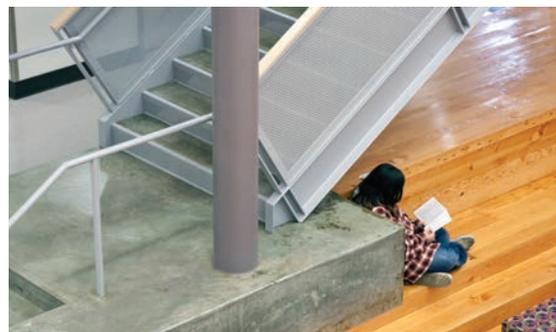
Each learning studio is designed to allow the class to break out within the room to sub-spaces that support a wide range of learning modes. Bay windows create reading nooks and computer corners bring technology directly into the classroom. Walls are covered with tack surfaces, marker boards and storage. With storage for common materials located in the project commons, the classroom space is freed up for learning spaces. Each studio is open through transparent, but acoustically isolated walls to the shared project commons spaces that is the heart of each small learning community. The project commons eliminates the need for corridors and maximizes the use of space immediately outside the studio, allowing students to move freely back and forth. Windows on two sides of each classroom and indirect natural light from the project commons bring abundant and even natural light into the learning studios. Studios are equipped with smart boards and internet connections.

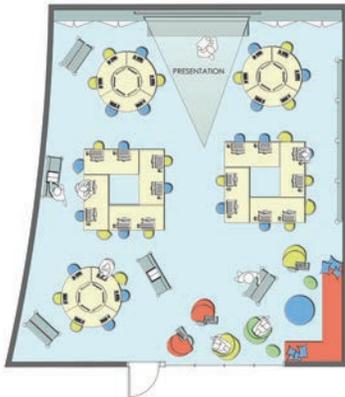


School Commons Heart and Hearth of the School

The School Commons is a place just inside the front door that brings the whole school together into a single community. As more schools are becoming increasingly important centers of their communities, by hosting events in the evening, they become hubs of activity. For Jackson and Roosevelt Elementary Schools, the main entry way of the school serves as a meeting place for students, parents and staff.

Movable display panels and flat screens create places for students to show their work. Tiered risers create informal seating or a stage for small school events. A coffee corner provides a place for parents to meet and talk, while also servicing evening activities. The main office is strategically located to supervise the space and provide important security at the main entrance.





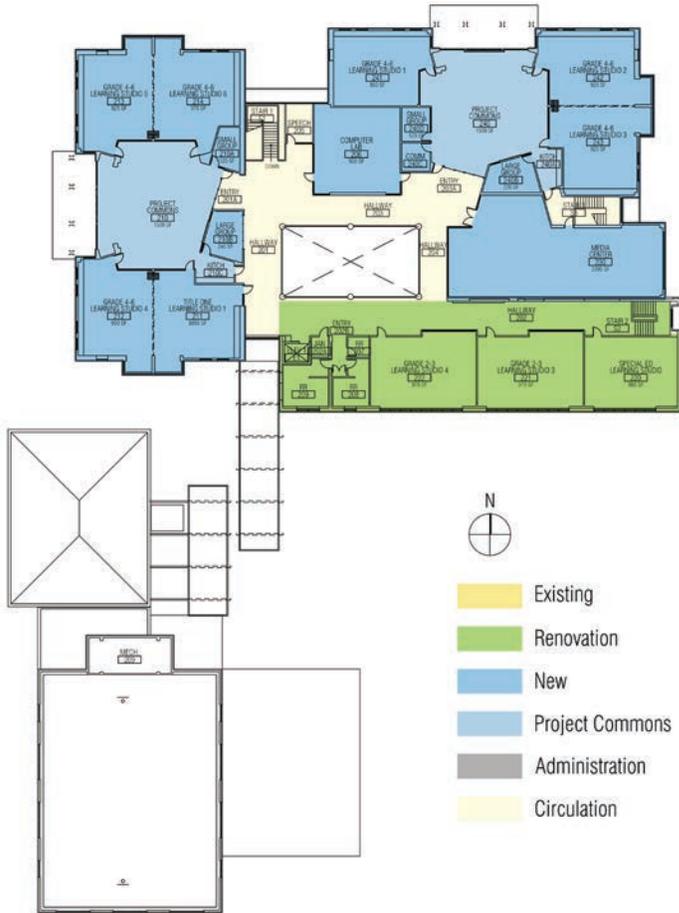
The **Computer Lab** needs to accommodate a full class of 28-30 students. It's used all day so the furnishings will be as comfortable as other spaces in the school. The furnishings can be repurposed if there comes a time when personal computers are replaced with wireless laptops.

Media and Technology An Integrated Hub

Media and Technology Centers are the fastest changing learning and resources spaces in schools today. The Roosevelt and Jackson Schools' media centers were programmed with a wide variety of study and group learning spaces. With limited staffing, it was important to keep the spaces open and all areas visible. An abundance of natural light combined with student scaled reading places create places for individuals and small groups to feel comfortable and focused. The technology/computer teaching classrooms are arranged to allow instructors to move through the space and work individually with students. The schools were planned with extensive data ports in classrooms and commons spaces and equipped for future wireless conductivity.

The **Media Center** is the "townhall" of the school. It is furnished with a variety of tables and ample soft seating such as a sofa, lounge chair, love seats, beanbags, swivel chairs and soda pop cans.

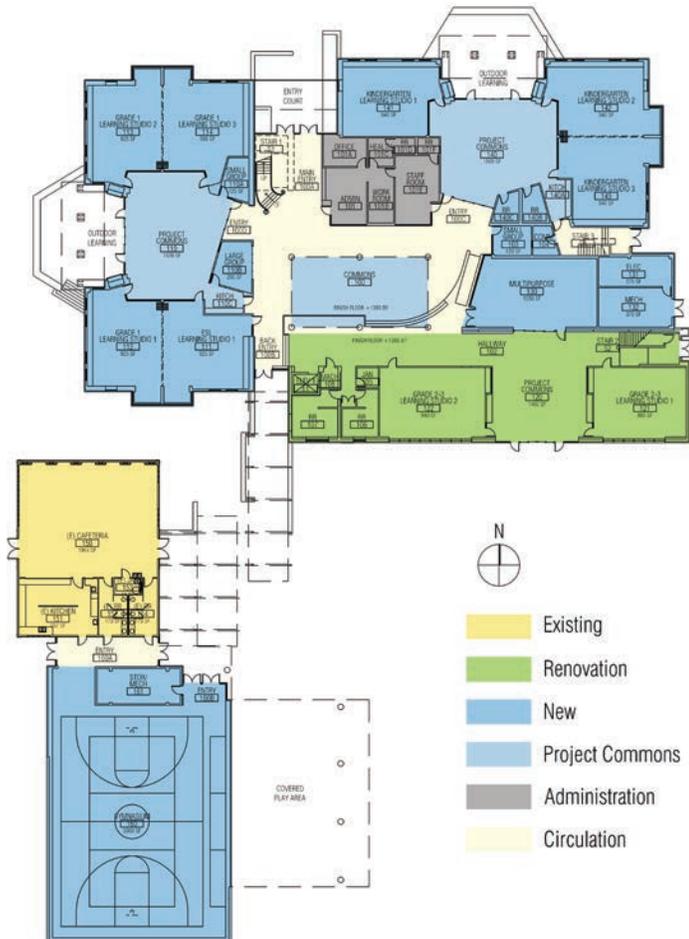




Roosevelt Elementary Level Two

- Existing
- Renovation
- New
- Project Commons
- Administration
- Circulation

Roosevelt Elementary Level One



- Existing
- Renovation
- New
- Project Commons
- Administration
- Circulation

Connecting To The Community

Roosevelt and Jackson were true community centers within their neighborhoods. The community was invited into the design process and were active advocates for the retaining the original schools' open and inviting atmosphere. The site plans for both schools include free-standing gymnasiums and cafeterias that allow these spaces to function as community resources when the main school building is closed. The schools' massing and roof forms were broken down into smaller elements to reflect the surrounding small scale residential architecture. Brick details, precast and metal trim and bay windows create an intimate texture and civic quality that recalls the feel of the original historic schools that occupied the site.



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