

2012 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Early Childcare Center

Mt. Hood Community College, Gresham, Oregon
Early Childcare Center
Project of Distinction
Mahlum



Creating opportunity.

Community Environment

The Early Childcare Center is located in a high-poverty neighborhood. Eighty-percent of students attending Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) fall below the income threshold to qualify for Headstart. The center gives priority to children of MHCC students in order to allow parents to attend classes to improve their employment opportunities.



Community Environment (Cont.)

In addition to inspiring children to become curious, creative citizens, the homelike family center is organized around a fireplace with lounge seating. This forms an interactive resource center for parents where discussions with caregivers can take place, as well as observation of the children playing, and independent research through use of available computers. The college students enrolled in the childcare program form another type of lifelong learning which benefits the local community.



Get out and play.

Learning Environment

The center attempts to move away from a restrictive childcare ideology born out of fear of litigation towards an environment which provides opportunities for exploration, creativity, free thinking and interaction. The building presents invitations to “get dirty,” including a sandbox with hand-pump, or to float ducks in the wet-play area.



Learning Environment (Cont.)

In support of concepts identified by Richard Louv in his book *"Last Child in the Woods,"* the design promotes a strong connection to nature. Natural and man-made environments form a network of nature based playgrounds, eco systems, gardens and play areas where "getting dirty" is encouraged.



Responding to the natural environment.

Physical Environment

Spaces with varying degrees of openness and daylight inspire a multitude of activities, sensations and moods throughout the center. Employing patterns of daylight, weather and annual seasons, the environment invites poetic reflection, joyful play, and relaxation during the course of a day.

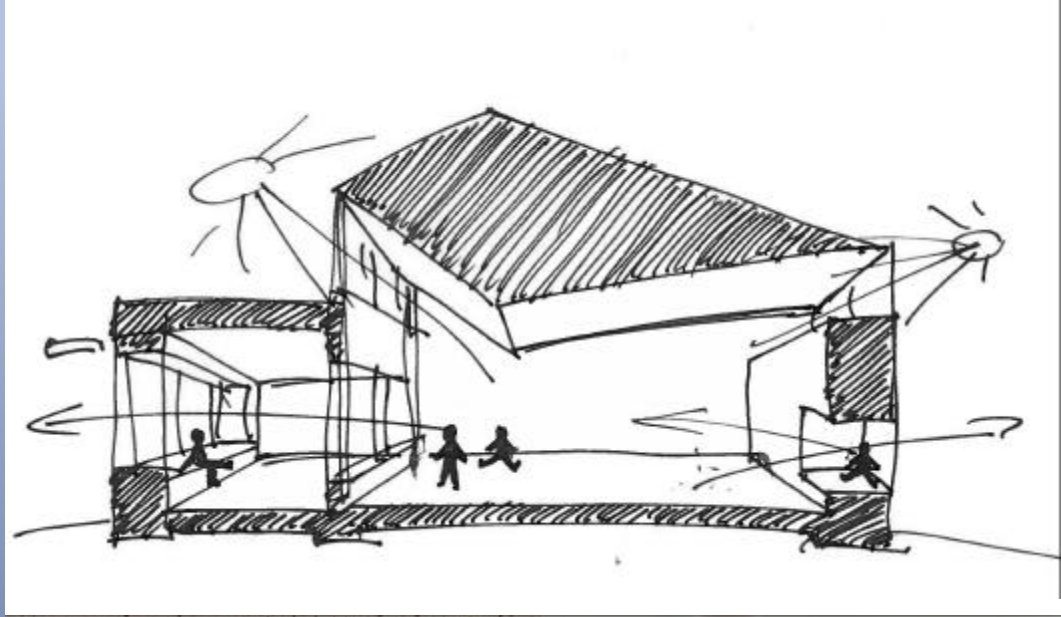
Deep walls in the play-learn spaces serve the dual purpose of providing spaces for children to claim for themselves by carving out caves, window niches and benches as well as meeting the need for abundant, directly accessible supplies in each room. Teachers roll art carts simply out of the walls.



Physical Environment (Cont.)

Each play-learn community is comprised of spaces with varying degrees of “indoor-ness” (to inspire mental creativity) and “outdoor-ness” (to encourage physical activity). Two play-learn spaces share one indoor activity space, indoor wet-play/clean-up area, covered outdoor play area, outdoor play and nature play.

Saving 50+ year old trees created forest-like nature play on opening day and a buffer to a busy street. Budget constrains focused efforts: Operable windows, daylighting, solar panels, high-efficiency envelope, and open storm water treatment. Natural materials and design elements dominate indoor, outdoor play elements.



Come together.

Planning Process Multiple collaborations during the fundraising, design and construction of the center had enormous impact on the project. The financially strapped college expanded an existing relationship with Headstart to finance the new childcare center. In addition, the college conducted ambitious fundraising, thus securing one of the most essential project features: the nature-based play environment. During the vision sessions, the idea emerged to create an environment which allows seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor learning and play.

OUTDOOR PLAY-LEARN

Wet



Activity



Activity



INDOOR PLAY-LEARN

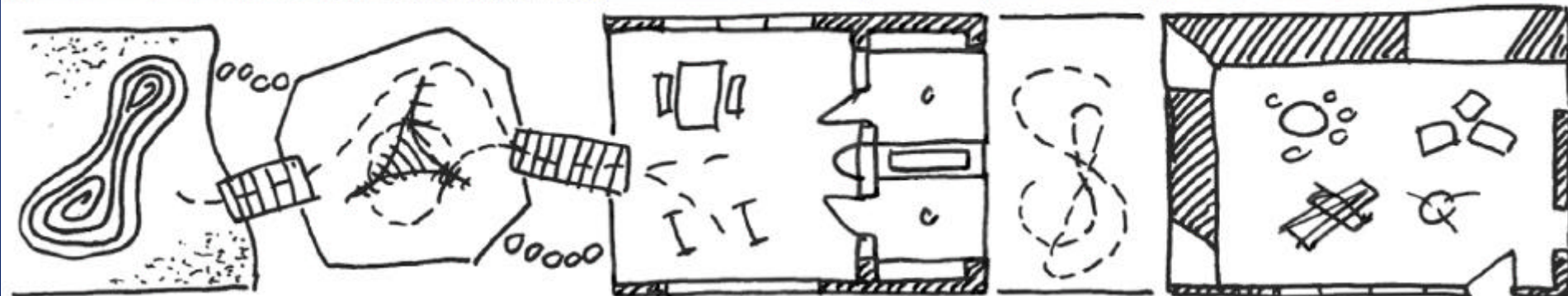
Wet



Activity



Play-Learn Rooms



Planning Process (Cont.)

A tight construction budget resulted in creative approaches and on-going collaboration between the college, the contractor and the architect. The college discovered large amounts of lumber boards in the basement of the main building, which were prepared and donated to the project to be installed as acoustic wood ceiling in the hallways. The wood ceiling contributes directly to the desired homelike warm atmosphere and became cost neutral to an institutional 2x4 acoustic tile ceiling. In order for built-in casework to be installed, the college collaborated with local high school students, who fabricated handcrafted benches and cubbies at material cost only.



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Project Data

Submitting Firm :	Mahlum
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Diane Shiner
Title	Principal
Address	1231 NW Hoyt, Suite 102
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Joint Partner Firm:	Not Applicable
Project Role	
Project Contact	
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Other Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
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City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Construction Firm:	Walsh Construction
Project Role	General Contractor Construction Manager
Project Contact	Scott Holstrom
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Address	2905 SW First Avenue
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Project Details

Project Name	Early Childhood Center
City	Gresham
State	Oregon
District Name	Mount Hood Community College/Headstart
Supt/President	Jean Wagner (Director Head Start and Early Head Start)
Occupancy Date	07 September 2011
Grades Housed	6 month – 5 years
Capacity(Students)	24 toddler/140 3-5 year olds
Site Size (acres)	2.75
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	22,740
Per Occupant(pupil)	135sf/child
gross/net please indicate	85%
Design and Build?	No
If yes, Total Cost:	
Includes:	
If no,	
Site Development:	1,083,000
Building Construction:	4,267,000
Fixed Equipment:	
Other:	
Total:	5,350,000