

# 2012 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

## Whatcom Middle School

Bellingham, Washington  
Lee J. Brockman Award-Renovation  
Middle School  
Dykeman, Inc.

# Whatcom Middle School

From Ashes to Opening: New Life for Whatcom Middle School



# ASHES

## Community Environment:

Devastated by fire in 2009, the Bellingham community expected that Whatcom Middle School would be closed for years, or worse yet, never reopened. The school was built in 1903, a beloved fixture in the hearts of the community for over a century. The School District embraced a bold vision that included three goals many thought were impossible; recreate the historic school exterior, replace the interior with the same historic look while updating the learning environment, and reopen the doors one year ahead of schedule.

Dawson Construction, a local contractor, took on the task of opening the new school a year ahead of schedule.





# Celebrate a New Life

## Community Environment:

The synchronization and parallel work of teams was seamless. The construction site buzzed with highly orchestrated activity. There were as many as 150 construction workers on site at any one time, working day, night and weekends as needed.

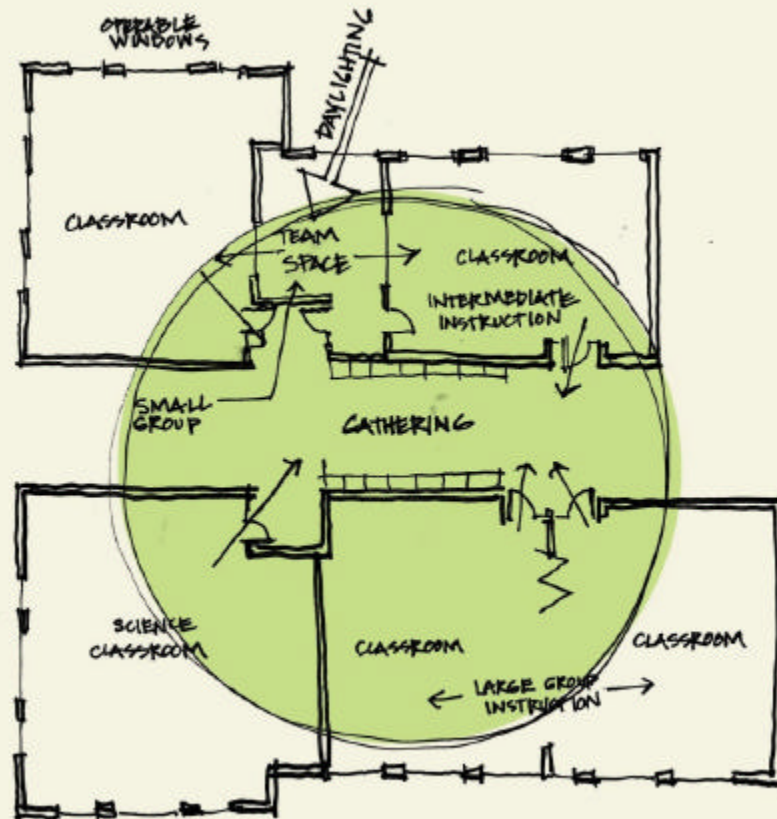
The payoff came on September 1st , 2011. Thousands gathered, alumni, community members, parents, staff and most importantly, pre-fire 6th graders returning to graduate as 8th graders. The ribbon was cut and the doors reopened to a new life for this community. With teamwork/partnerships, Whatcom Middle School continues to celebrate the unique attributes of the community and will serve as a community center for the next 100 years.



# Learning Community

## Learning Environment:

The School District embraced a bold vision that included three goals many thought were impossible; recreate the historic school exterior, replace the interior with the same historic look while **updating the learning environment**. Challenge – Reconcile the restrictions of the existing footprint while laying out a new program that would functionally respond to the District's curriculum. Could a collaborative/flexible learning model be integrated into a 19<sup>th</sup> century building structure? It was the responsibility of the Educational Specification Committee to develop the framework, and subsequently the design team to produce their 21<sup>st</sup> century vision in a safe and respectful environment.



**“Watering Holes”**, preservation of the 1903 entry provided a serendipitous opportunity to create a window seat above the original entry.

### **Learning Environment:**

The program included six teaching pods, or learning communities, that needed to be stacked on all three floors and included four general classrooms, a collaborative team space and a science room. The classrooms were equipped with moveable partitions and glazed walls to support transparency and flexibility. In conjunction with program layout these adjacencies enable staff to arrange individual instruction; small, intermediate and large-group instruction; and whole-school gatherings. In addition, “watering holes” and “Vistas” were created to support “learning anytime anywhere” philosophy.





# Support Spaces

## Physical Environment :

Flexibility and program layout were the key design elements of the learning communities that relate to the learner/user and supports the learning environment. In addition, to the library, Whatcom Middle School's campus includes a large auditorium and 21<sup>st</sup> century computer lab that can be used by the entire district and community.



# Restore History

## Physical Environment :

Although there was an opportunity to demolish Whatcom Middle School, it was determined that the existing structure needed to be restored, which is a true statement of sustainability, and thus a teaching tool for the students. The reconstruction was funded by insurance and WSSP was not required, however it was a team priority to design a substantial envelope with state-of-the-art mechanical and electrical systems.





# Community Consensus

## Planning Process:

In order to ensure the realization of a clear vision the collaborative efforts of the students, teachers, parents, neighbors and School District was assembled as the *Educational Specification/Design Committee*. The learning environment was developed by the committee's ability to identify key issues, and creating consensus/ownership with the core team and all stakeholders, providing them the opportunity to shape the needs and expectations specific to Whatcom Middle School and the Bellingham community.

The committee remained involved through the design up to the construction documents. Garnering their perspectives on learning and the educational environment was proven priceless.



# Reopening the 1903 Entry,

a goal set by the committee to create a community gathering space

## Planning Process:

Dykeman embraced the community design process and used a broad based team approach and rigorous communication to ensure the final environment would align with the Vision and Goals set during the planning phase.



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## Project Data

Submitting Firm :	DYKEMAN Architects
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	K. John Jones
Title	Principal In Charge
Address	1716 West Marine View Drive
City, State or Province, Country	Everett, WA 98201
Phone	425-259-3161

Joint Partner Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
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City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Other Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
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City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Construction Firm:	
Project Role	Contractor
Project Contact	Pete C. Dawson
Title	President
Address	405 32 <sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 110
City, State or Province, Country	Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone	360-756-1000



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## Project Details

<b>Project Name</b>	Whatcom Middle School
<b>City</b>	Bellingham
<b>State</b>	Washington
<b>District Name</b>	Bellingham Public Schools
<b>Supt/President</b>	Greg Baker
<b>Occupancy Date</b>	September 2011
<b>Grades Housed</b>	6-8
<b>Capacity(Students)</b>	700 Students
<b>Site Size (acres)</b>	3.16
<b>Gross Area (sq. ft.)</b>	83,155
<b>Per Occupant(pupil)</b>	119
<b>gross/net please indicate</b>	83,155/78,997
<b>Design and Build?</b>	
<b>If yes, Total Cost:</b>	
<b>Includes:</b>	
<b>If no,</b>	
<b>Site Development:</b>	\$1,330,000.00
<b>Building Construction:</b>	\$32,311,810.00
<b>Fixed Equipment:</b>	\$150,000.00
<b>Other:</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	\$33,791,810.00