

2014 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Renton School District
Renton, Washington

Meadow Crest Early Learning Center



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center



Responsive to Community Need

Community Environment

Voters in the Renton School District approved a bond referendum in 2008 that made provision for the development of a state-of-the-art early childhood education center that would support the needs of early learners and, importantly, their families. The facility was viewed as part of a larger urban redevelopment initiative by the City of Renton, and a first, important step toward revitalization of the neighborhood and surrounding area.

Because it is sited in a diverse, socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood that is home to a significant immigrant and non-native English speaking population, project planners envisioned a facility that would provide an open, welcoming environment and encourage families to access services.

Photos: Meadow Crest Early Learning Center (top)
Adjacent Inclusive Playground



A Welcoming Family Resource

Community Environment (cont'd)

In addition to early learning programs, Meadow Crest also seeks to improve the lives of families living in the community through provision of referrals to community services, counseling and English as a Second Language classes. The public access and community services portion of the building is located adjacent to the reception area, and provides an open, inviting form to visitors upon entry. Family counselors' offices are also directly accessible from the reception lobby.

The administrative office has clear views of the building entrance and is adjacent to the family services offices, making the initial experience safe and welcoming for visitors. A small play area is provided for families with younger children or siblings not attending the school, lending a friendly atmosphere to the reception area while visitors wait for and access services.

PHOTOS: Main Entry Lobby (top)
Reception and Waiting Room Play Area



Small Learning Communities

Learning Environment

The early childhood education model is given primacy at Meadow Crest. The facility was designed to support the range of developmental needs of early learners, offering Head Start, ECEAP, Extended Day, Inclusive Preschool, Child Find and an inclusive playground. Meadow Crest also hosts parenting classes and an ESL program for parents of attending students. Classrooms, meeting spaces and play areas are grouped into small wings, which allow children to move between spaces easily and experience surroundings at their scale. Learning spaces are organized around interior play areas encouraging creativity and active learning. The intimate nature of the wings creates a small school environment within the larger context, enhancing supervision and classroom management by staff members, and feelings of safety and security in children.



Personalized Educational Environments

Learning Environment (cont'd)

MCECLC serves many students with physical and psychological disabilities. The classroom wings provide tailored learning environments for students with special needs including an Extended Day program for students with autism that minimizes distraction and associated student discomfort; occupational and physical therapy rooms in which staff work with individual students to improve fine motor skills and mobility; a speech language pathologist and ESL classroom to support both students and their families with speech therapy and English language learning; and observation and assessment spaces for professional evaluations of student behavior. Classrooms were designed to be flexibly interchangeable for fluctuation in enrollment and changes in program offerings. Multi-purpose rooms and meeting spaces were likewise designed to be adaptable for a variety of group sizes, school functions and public events, and are segregated from student areas to preserve facility security.



Engaging Young Learners

Physical Environment

Providing a physical environment that engages all of the senses informing a child's world - sight, smell, touch, taste, hearing - and to enhance those sensory experiences for children of every age, size, and ability was a core design goal.

Each of the classroom wings has its own insect mascot and color theme, and embodies the facility's nature theme with grass and other environmental accents in the carpet and digital wall coverings. Floor patterns offer spontaneous learning and play opportunities, and one-way mirrors and the extensive use of glazing assist in maintaining transparency and providing opportunities for observation. Multi-density fiberboard is used throughout the interior in multiple colors and shapes, creating imaginative and captivating patterns. LED lighting, recycled interior materials, rain gardens and a high performance filtration system contribute to a healthy interior environment for learning, play and exploration both indoors and out.



Views to the Outdoors

Physical Environment (cont'd)

Students have views to the outdoors at almost every moment of the school day. Individual classrooms and hallway spaces connecting the classroom wings feature tall windows with child-size nooks, designed to create small discovery opportunities for children along their path.

Viewing portals and small platform seats near windows encourage students to get close to the glass and explore the outside. The indoor play courts feature floor-to-ceiling windows that fill the learning environment with natural light.

Operable glass garage walls on the east side of the play courts fully open, integrating the interior and exterior environments and providing access to the inclusive playground which is adjacent to the classroom wings.



Realizing a Vision

Planning Process

The culmination of years of grassroots planning between the community, the school district and non-profit agencies, Meadow Crest Early Learning Center brings together school district and community-based early learning programs to facilitate early childhood education, community interaction, and family engagement. The design team facilitated a broadly inclusive planning and design development process that included a planning committee comprised of educators, administration and staff, maintenance, and operations personnel, parents, facility neighbors and community residents to discern project needs and priorities.



Designed to Serve Multiple Needs

Planning Process (cont'd)

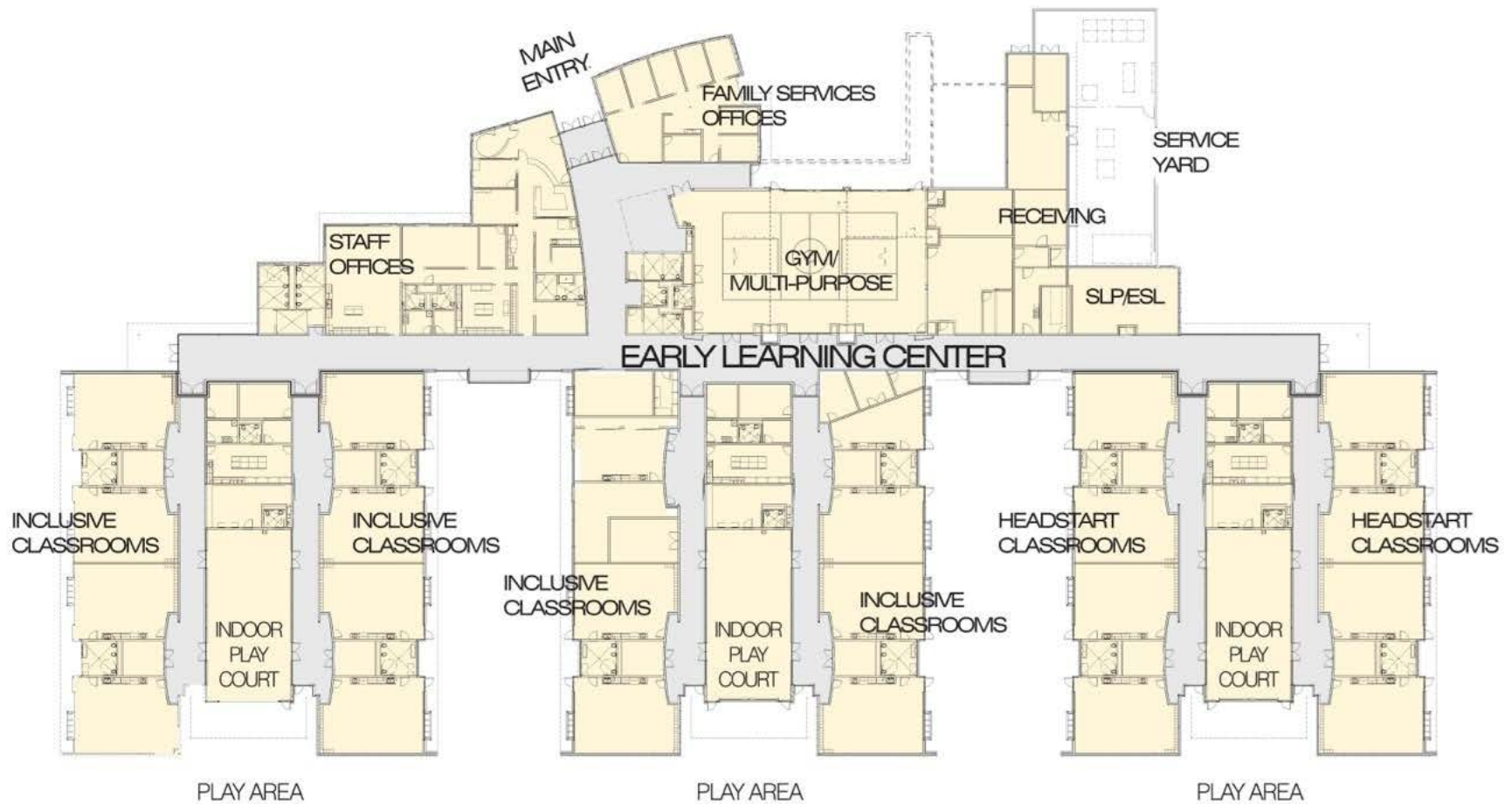
As a part of this process, multiple community forums were held and broadly advertised. The inclusion of translators ensured participation and feedback from the ethnically diverse population this facility serves.

Several priorities emerged through the planning process. Supporting the physical and early learning needs of a diverse student population ages three to five was paramount. Because it also serves adults and is located in an urban setting, facility security and student supervision were primary drivers. Finally, to encourage access by residents who have historically been marginalized, development of a non-threatening, welcoming environment that invites participation was determined to be an imperative.



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Floor plan



Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture Project Data

Submitting Firm :	BLRB Architects
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Joint Partner Firm:	NONE
Project Role	
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Other Firm:	Greene Gawaway
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Construction Firm:	Porter Brothers Construction
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Address	2222 Meridian Avenue East
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Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture Project Details

Project Name	Meadow Crest Early Childhood Learning Center
City	Renton
State	Washington
District Name	Renton School District
Supt/President	Dr. Merri Rieger
Occupancy Date	September 2013
Grades Housed	Pre-K (ages 3-5)
Capacity(Students)	450
Site Size (acres)	7.46 acres
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	68,760 SF
Per Occupant(pupil)	152.80 SF/student
gross/net please indicate	gross
Design and Build?	No
If yes, Total Cost:	
Includes:	
If no,	
Site Development:	\$3,845,483 (site + landscape)
Building Construction:	\$15,397,066
Fixed Equipment:	
Other:	
Total:	

Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Supplemental Image 1/5

PHOTO:
Each classroom wing opens via glass garage door onto
an exterior shared play court.



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Supplemental Image 2/5

PHOTO:

A light-filled, colorful lobby welcomes students and their families.



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Supplemental Image 3/5

PHOTO:

Each wing is themed to provide easy directional recognition and a sense of place for students.



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Supplemental Image 4/5

PHOTO:
Whimsical windows preserve transparency & supervision,
while providing an imaginative play environment.



Meadow Crest Early Learning Center

Supplemental Image 5/5

PHOTO:

The inclusive playground provides active learning opportunities for children of all abilities.

