

2012 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

The Odyssey School

Denver, CO

Design Concept

Other: K-8 Charter School

Bennett Wagner & Grody Architects, PC

The Odyssey School: Main Exterior View



Design Charrette

Community Environment:

This new facility is planned for doubling the Odyssey School's programs on a new site. The plans needed to reflect the unique "experiential learning community" of the school, where much of students' time is spent outside of the classroom on project-based learning, with strong connections to the natural environment. The new 64,250 GSF school for 500 students is planned in the Stapleton neighborhood in Denver, Colorado on a 6-acre site terminating on a green corridor oriented east-west.

The school community was fully engaged in the design of the new facility, as noted below under the planning process. They collaborated defining the concepts for the building and site.

Their vision was a facility translating their strong sense of community, their connection to the surrounding community and the natural environment. Their approach to education aligns with strong sustainable principles translated by the design team with a facility set to meet net-zero.

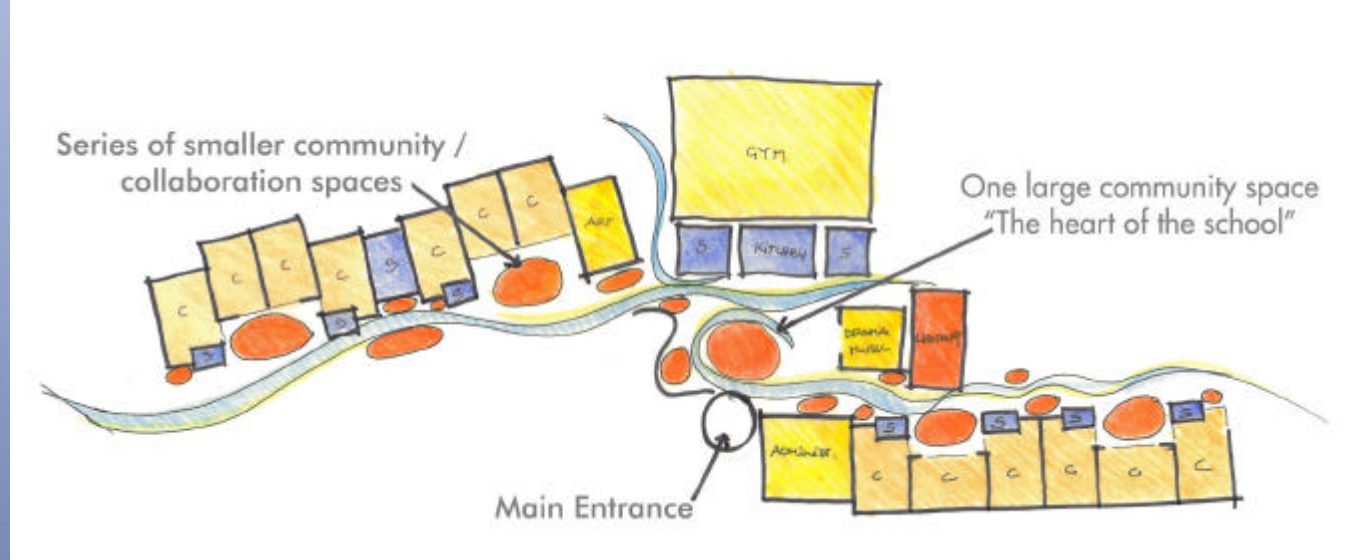


“The Quiet Pool”

Community Environment:

To get full buy-in from the community, the architect made a special effort to reach out by distributing an electronic presentation every week of the work completed with the Design Advisory Group (DAG).

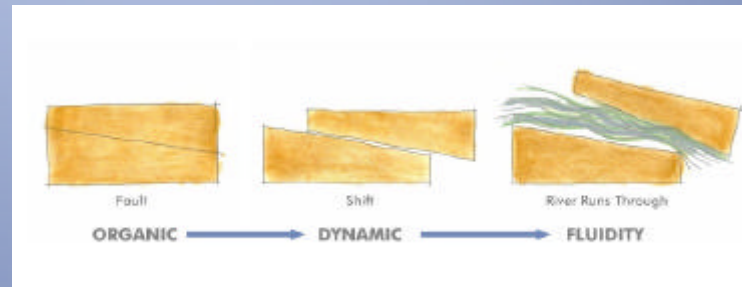
The vital concept shaping the building is to accommodate a community space in the heart of the school. Figuratively, the "river running through" swirl into an eddy in the center of the school providing a "quiet pool": the space for the community to meet. This space is the heart of the school and dictated the organization of the classrooms in two wings on either side of a large open space directly accessible from the entry, connected to both visual arts, music and drama classrooms. This space identified as Auditorium on the plans, forms with the Drama/Stage and the Cafeteria a 2-story volume which can be set up for the various school community programs.



Learning Principles Drive the Design Principles

Learning Environment:

The Odyssey School is designed around rigorous, project-based learning expeditions, including regular out-of-school fieldwork and adventures with environmental education. The architects, working closely with teachers and parents, envisioned a facility that breaks free of traditional school models, as well as providing an environment more conducive to curiosity, self-discovery and achievement — equally valuing the built and natural environment.



The mission for the design team was to provide spaces which foster the Odyssey School's Expeditionary Learning Design Principles:

- The Primacy of Self Discovery
- The Having of Wonderful Ideas
- The Responsibility for Learning
- Empathy and Caring
- Success and Failure
- Collaboration and Competition
- Diversity and Inclusion
- The Natural World
- Solitude and Reflection
- Service and Compassion



Using the Physical Environment to Nurture Learning

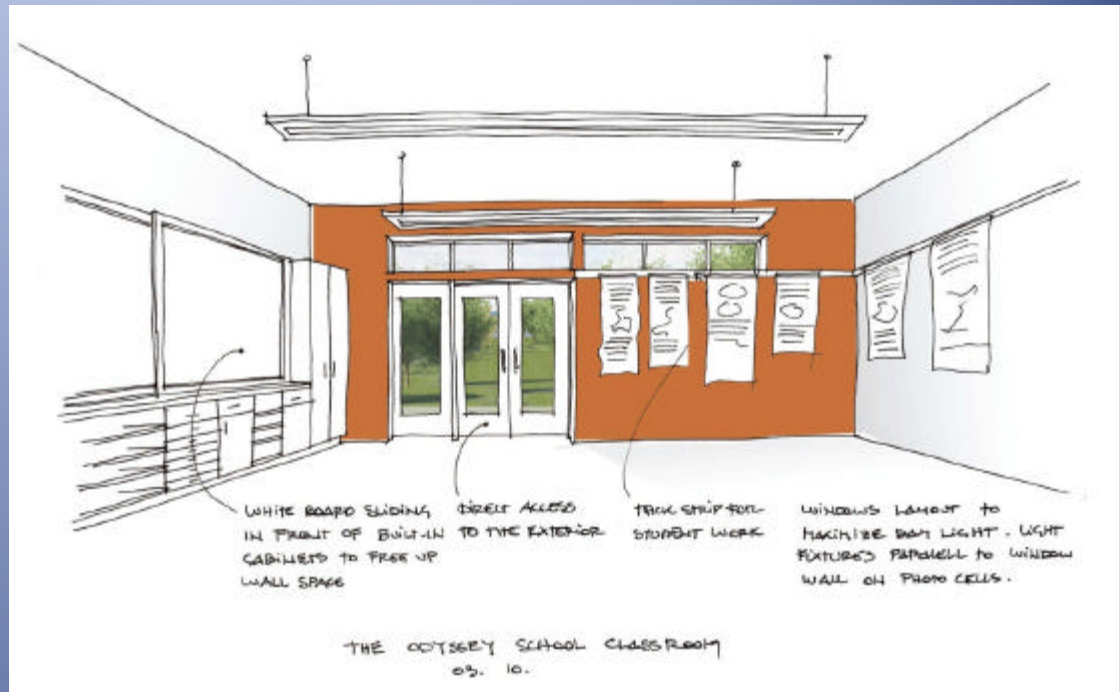
Learning Environment:

To further align with the school's philosophy of "everything they do support the learning process", the driving force of the design of each space was "every square inch of floor, wall and ceiling shall have an educational purpose".

The classroom space is carefully designed to allow for break-out spaces both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. Every surface is well thought: clear wall space is maximized for project pin-up, the outdoor space outside the classroom is designed as an extension of the classroom. Double doors, view windows and the extension of the interior concrete slab are all contributing to strengthen the connection. The classroom is filled with controlled daylight.

The classroom connects with the hallway with large windows allowing supervision of students working in small groups. The hallway is not just considered as supporting circulation within the school. It is organized as a series of educational spaces of different sizes and atmospheres to support various modalities of learning and students' varying moods. To reinforce the connection to the environment and nature which are dear to the program, the hallways are daylit and offer views to the landscaped site and onto the Rocky Mountains in the background.

Classroom organization is specific to the expeditionary learning program by pairing students of different ages. Fourth and Fifth graders are paired together with ECE and Kindergartners. Second and Third graders are combined in classes interacting with Seventh and Eighth graders on the second floor. The First and Sixth graders are transitional grades and have proven to be more difficult with collaboration, they each occupy their own space in one wing of the building.



Nature as Inspiration for the Building Concept

Physical Environment:

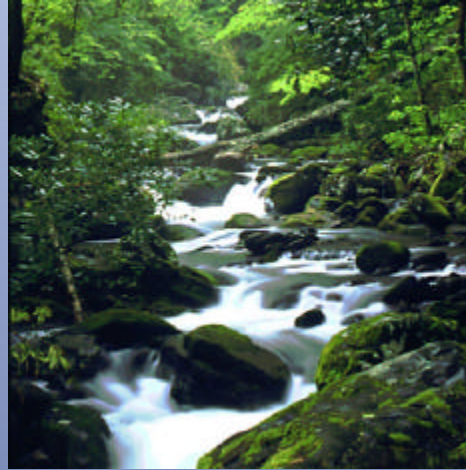
The outside beckons kids with rolling terrain for “sliding hills”; meandering pathways; edible berry patches; mud pits; art walls; tree stump seating and more.

The exterior environment of the Odyssey School is intended to be an integral component of the educational experience. The school landscape is designed to be a teaching tool, an exploratory environment, and a place to learn and to play.

Similar to the school building, the organization of the site begins with the idea of a river, and expands into a landscape order that reflects three of the principal landscape types of the Colorado Front Range: the riparian corridor, the arid high prairie, and the ponderosa pine and grass of the montane zone at the foothills.

The final driving force which governed the design of the facility was “every square inch of floor or walls shall have an educational purpose.” Every single space outside the classroom has overlapping functions, such as the hallways expanding into project areas or tutoring spaces for parents reading every morning with students, to individual reading in the nooks(caves).

The architect was challenged to meet the requirements of the expeditionary learning program while complying with the Colorado Department of Education's square footage constraints as well as tight school budgets. The projected student/SF ratio is 128.5 SF/student.

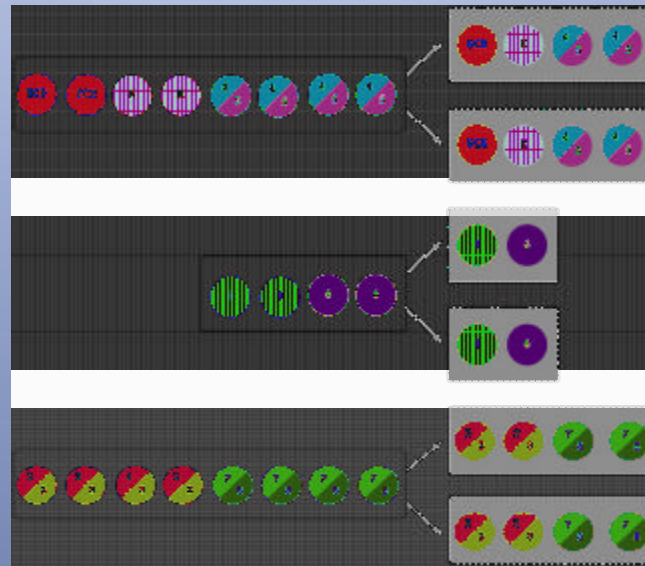


Student Focused Planning

Planning Process:

The design team had six weeks to come up with a design concept for the Odyssey School in order to complete a conceptual design and pricing for the application submission to the Colorado Department of Education's Building Excellent School Today (BEST). To produce a unique school design reflecting the program, the design team met with the school eleven times in six weeks including meeting with the Design Advisory Group, the teachers, the School Board of Directors and the parents.

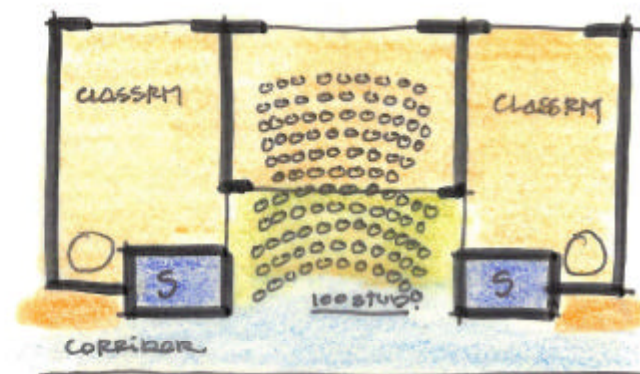
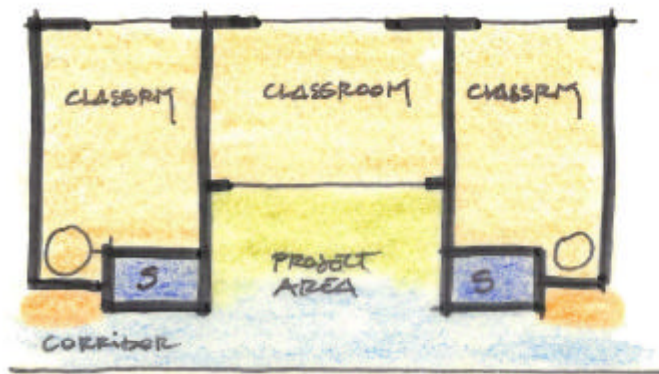
Optimal Grade Grouping



Kids First



Planning Process



World Café Discussion

Planning Process:

To fully engage the community, the architect collaborated with Marcia Fulton, the Executive Director and Donny Roush, the Advancement Director, by organizing an evening charrette called "World Café Discussion" with 5 workshop stations set up to discuss the following concepts:

- How does the design support community and foster K-8 relationships?
- How does the concept extend onto the site?
- Landscape: how does the site support the educational effort?
- How does the design foster teaching and learning at Odyssey?
- Sustainability goals



Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture Project Data

Submitting Firm :	Bennett Wagner & Grody Architects, PC
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Anne Weber-Williams
Title	Principal
Address	1301 Wazee Street, Suite 100
City, State or Province, Country	Denver, CO
Phone	303-623-7323

Joint Partner Firm:	N/A
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Other Firm:	Civitas, Inc.
Project Role	Landscape Architect
Project Contact	Todd Mead
Title	Principal
Address	1200 Bannock Street
City, State or Province, Country	Denver, CO 80204
Phone	303-571-0053

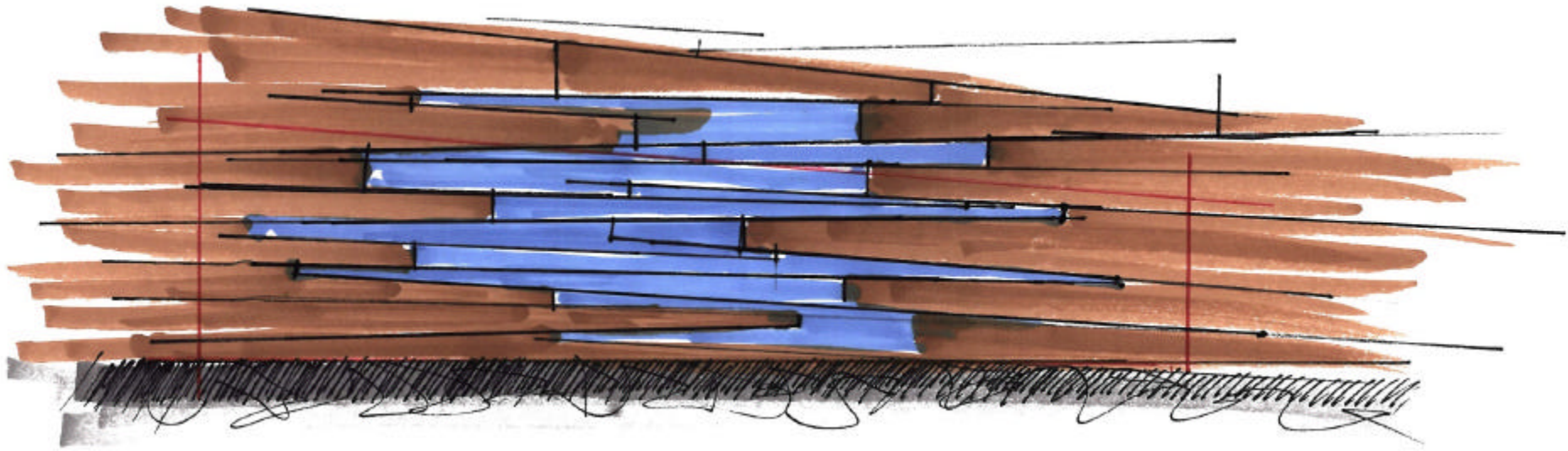
Construction Firm:	Pinkard Construction
Project Role	Cost Estimating
Project Contact	Kye Holtan-Brown
Title	Lead Estimator
Address	9195 West 6 th Avenue
City, State or Province, Country	Lakewood, CO 80215
Phone	303-986-4555

Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Details

Project Name	The Odyssey School
City	Denver
State	Colorado
District Name	Charter School within Denver Public Schools
Supt/President	Marcia Fulton – Executive Director
Occupancy Date	N/A, project awaits funding to complete the design & construction
Grades Housed	K-8
Capacity(Students)	Projected: 500
Site Size (acres)	6 acres
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	64,250 SF
Per Occupant(pupil)	128.5 SF per pupil
gross/net please indicate	Gross
Design and Build?	Design only
If yes, Total Cost:	
Includes:	
If no,	
Site Development:	\$907,200
Building Construction:	\$11,001,400
Fixed Equipment:	\$591,400
Other:	
Total:	\$12,500,000

Shifting Plate Concept Drives the Design of the Facade



Concept Sketch

Shifting Plate Concept Drives the Design of the Facade



Concept Sketch



Thank you to the entire project team!

PROJECT DATA SHEET	
Project Name:	The Odyssey School
Project Location:	Unbuilt
Specific Use:	K-8 Charter School, Expeditionary Learning School
Design Team:	
Architect:	Bennett Wagner & Grody Architects
Structural/Civil Engineers:	JVA Consulting Engineers
Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing Engineers:	MKK Consulting Engineers
Landscape Architect:	Civitas, Inc.
Contractor:	Pinkard Construction (Pricing Only)