

2013 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Sycamore Middle School

Sycamore, Illinois

Sycamore Middle School



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SITE PLAN / AERIAL

1 | BUS LOOP 2 | FACULTY PARKING 3 | PARENT DROP-OFF 4 | VISITOR PARKING



Parent drop-off creates a new front door facing main street into town.

Parent and bus traffic separated for safety and better site circulation.

Transformation

Physical Transformation

Junior High School to Middle School
Philosophy

The school district engaged the architect to help address the rapid growth throughout the community (50% population increase between 1990-2000). A master plan was developed that involved stakeholders from the school district, students, parents and community members. Two middle schools were planned to replace the existing junior high school to accommodate future growth. Then the economy plummeted slowing growth and reducing the immediate need to only one middle school.

A detailed analysis of the existing school and a creative reuse of the existing building focused on creating grade level team areas transformed the existing junior high school into a middle school featuring a grade level house concept for 750 students.



The school was transformed from the inside out.
The new middle school is an asset for the
community with the new exterior reflecting the
educational transformation.

Before



Transformation

The district's new middle school philosophy created a school for future generations of learners. The design team also planned for a possible addition due to the unknowns created by the economy's effect on demographics.

Built as a traditional elementary school in a quintessential Midwestern agricultural community, growth, proximity to a neighboring State University and a booming ag economy triggered tremendous growth and elementary school became a Junior High School.

The original 1980 building and the 1998 addition housed a junior high educational strategy divisible by subject with narrow corridors and minimal natural light. The maintenance loading area faced the main road in town.

The new library flooded with natural light welcomes new generations of learners.



Before



Learning – Anytime, Anywhere

Learning Environment - The new middle school concept includes (6) 125 student learning communities. Each grade level has two student learning communities which share an extended learning space. A variety of learning styles and methods for instruction delivery are supported. The transformed school promotes a 'learn anytime, anywhere' philosophy. Spaces are highly flexible and adaptable to future changes in pedagogy. Locker bays are in the central core and science labs are on the perimeter so that all interior spaces can be easily restructured in the future.

Student success is enabled by the changes in the school. Each grade level is divided into two learning communities and shares an extended learning area where teams of teachers and students can meet as learning communities. Learning communities for core curriculum subjects are clustered in teams providing a school within a school and include new science lab spaces. 7th and 8th graders have classrooms directly across from the library.

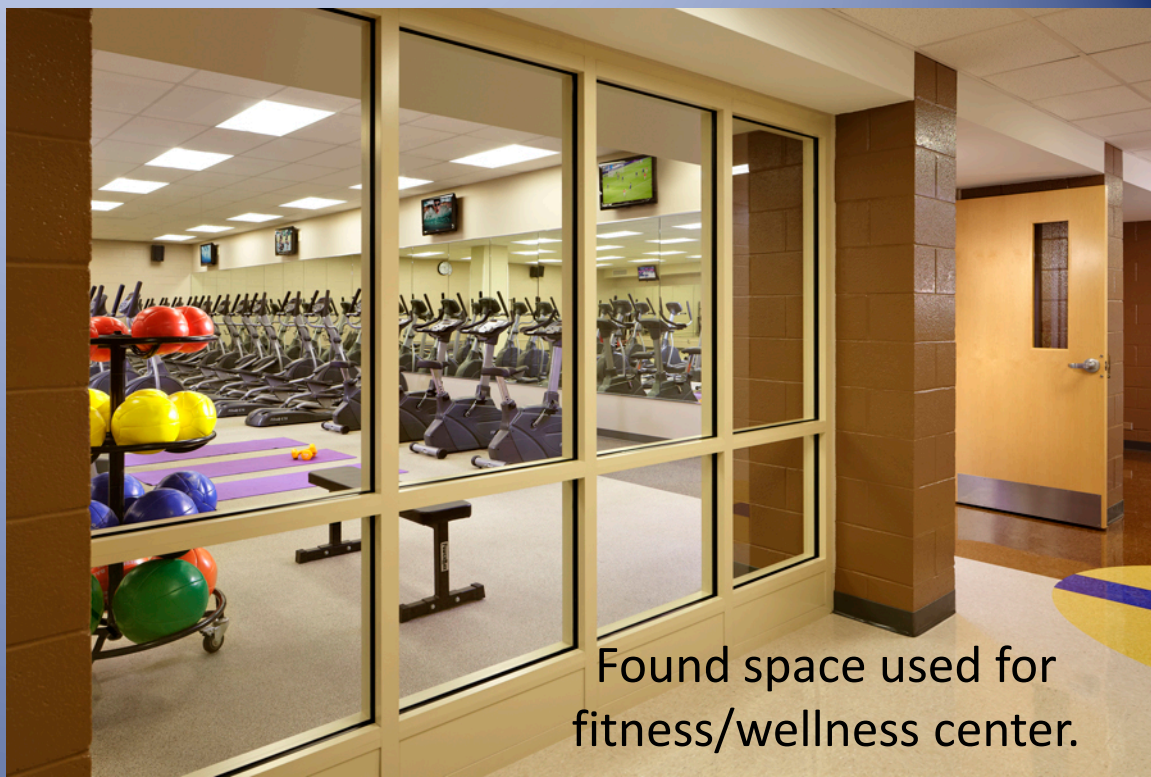
The shared extended learning space promotes learning anytime, anywhere.



Learning – Anytime, Anywhere

Learning Environment - Exploratory areas for fine arts, technology and extended learning area upgrades were included which meant renovating and updating the existing spaces and providing additional learning spaces for the middle school. The design team addressed the school's need for additional exploratory spaces to include fine arts spaces by transforming one of the two existing gyms into a music and choral space and the library was transformed into the school's "Project Lead the Way" tech lab. This conversion introduced challenges in acoustics and safety but the team successfully addressed the issues. Public spaces, including a fitness/wellness center were also created.

Changes in color and patterns were utilized to identify major spaces and reinforce way finding.



Found space used for fitness/wellness center.



Grade level areas identified by distinct colors and patterns.

Community Asset

Physical Environment: The school was transformed into a building the community is very proud of. This building was transformed from the inside out. Every square inch of the school was analyzed and was entirely renovated.

The design team worked with the District to create an addition that matched seamlessly with the existing school. The project involved a two-story addition to the existing building with 25,000 sf on each floor. A new secure entry now faces a main road into downtown, providing a front door to the community and a secure entry point. Architects maintained the exterior use of brick, though they selected a palette that contrasted the original dark monochromatic original building and brought interest to the original 1980s building. The site was reorganized to separate parent cars and buses. The renovation turned the school into a community asset.

Contrasting brick and patterning were used to break up the original monolithic and monochromatic exterior.



Vibrant Learning Spaces

Physical Environment - Three colors were selected to identify (each grade level house). Public spaces use a balance of the three colors. The original monochromatic space was transformed into a vibrant new middle school that energizes, motivates and encourages students' learning. Partitions were installed between classrooms to allow for change and flexibility education delivery methods.

The building reuse in and of itself is a tremendous boost for the sustainable elements of the project. Energy efficiency and lighting controls and were included in the project. Architects punched windows in every perimeter classroom to maximize daylight. Skylights flood open central areas with light and push daylight to interior spaces.

The transformation created a shift in the student/teacher relationship with the creation of spaces that are more conducive to learning. Smaller group learning environments have helped create a sense of community. A progressive and flexible middle school met the district's goals for today's students and future generations.

Team area colors integrated into carpet pattern in shared spaces.



Transformation Timeline

Planning Process: Once it was determined that the existing JHS would be transformed into a middle school, architects suggested that the district engage the services of a well-respected national education planning firm to develop goals and vision for the new middle school. 50 teachers, Administrators, Community representatives and the architectural team participated in the planning firm's planning lab process to prioritize space needs outside of individuals own program areas.

The first lab included a small program group and whole group work on how a middle school of the future might be organized. Presentations on demographics and middle level program delivery options were included. The second lab included program groups and heterogeneous groups to refine the program and discuss safety and security, technology, site, sustainability and aesthetics.

PLANNING TIMEFRAME				
	DISTRICT WIDE MASTER PLAN	MIDDLE SCHOOL CONCEPT	STAFF DEVELOPMENT	DESIGN PROCESS
OBJECTIVE	Create a district wide master plan	Solidify district decision to move to the middle school concept	Determine plan/ goals/ vision for middle school	Design transformation of JHS into MS
FACILITATOR	Architect and Superintendent	Architect and District Staff	Architect and National Educational Planner	Architect and Superintendent
PARTICIPANTS	Community Wide Participation	District Staff	District Staff	Invited Stakeholders
TIMEFRAME	9/2005 - 8/2006	8/2006 - 12/2006	2/2008 - 1/2009	5/2009 - 8/2011
OUTCOME	District Wide Master Plan	Move from JHS to MS concept	Development of EdSpec	Sycamore Middle School Transformation!

Planning Process: Five key areas were discussed in the process:

- Essential Educational Concepts and Detailed Facility Needs
- Community Values
- Current and Future Educational Strategies
- Impact of Technology on Education
- Cost Constraints

This process was tantamount to the success of the project. Stakeholders were engaged and built consensus for the middle school concept. The national planning firm and the architects helped the district develop their path forward for their shift in educational delivery from a junior high concept to a middle school concept. Extra time and planning was put forth by both the architect and the district to ensure that design requirements for all district middle school projects (now and future) were defined.

The district plans to build an additional middle school in the future and this upfront planning will help them move forward.



Community process involving all constituencies.

FIRST LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

1| ADMINISTRATION / STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES 2| CAFETERIA / COMMONS 3| 6TH GRADE LEARNING COMMUNITY 4| 7TH GRADE LEARNING COMMUNITY 5| 8TH GRADE LEARNING COMMUNITY 6| LIBRARY / INFORMATION COMMONS 7| EXPLORATORY PROGRAMS: ART, MUSIC, TECHNOLOGY LAB, FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES 8| PHYSICAL EDUCATION 9| SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION

LEGEND

MIND

- CLASSROOM
- SCIENCE / SPECIALTY LAB / LIBRARY
- SUPPORT

BODY

- GYMNASIUM / CAFETERIA
- SUPPORT

SPIRIT

- CLASSROOM
- SUPPORT

ADMINISTRATION

- ADMIN / STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
- SUPPORT
- SERVICE
- CIRCULATION



Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Data

Submitting Firm :	FGM Architects Inc.
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	James G. Woods, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, REFP
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Address	1211 W. 22 nd Street, Suite 705
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Joint Partner Firm:	NA
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Other Firm:	NA
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Construction Firm:	Shales McNutt Construction
Project Role	Construction Manager
Project Contact	John Shales
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Address	425 Renner Drive
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Project Details

Project Name	Sycamore Middle School Addition & Renovation
City	Sycamore
State	Illinois
District Name	Sycamore CUSD 427
Supt/President	Dr. Kathy Countryman
Occupancy Date	August 2011
Grades Housed	6-8
Capacity(Students)	750
Site Size (acres)	15 Acres
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	119,810
Per Occupant(pupil)	133.12 gsf/student
gross/net please indicate	gross
Design and Build?	No
If yes, Total Cost:	NA
Includes:	NA
If no,	
Site Development:	1,097,160.30
Building Construction:	15,415,067.00
Fixed Equipment:	
Other:	
Total:	16,512,227.30

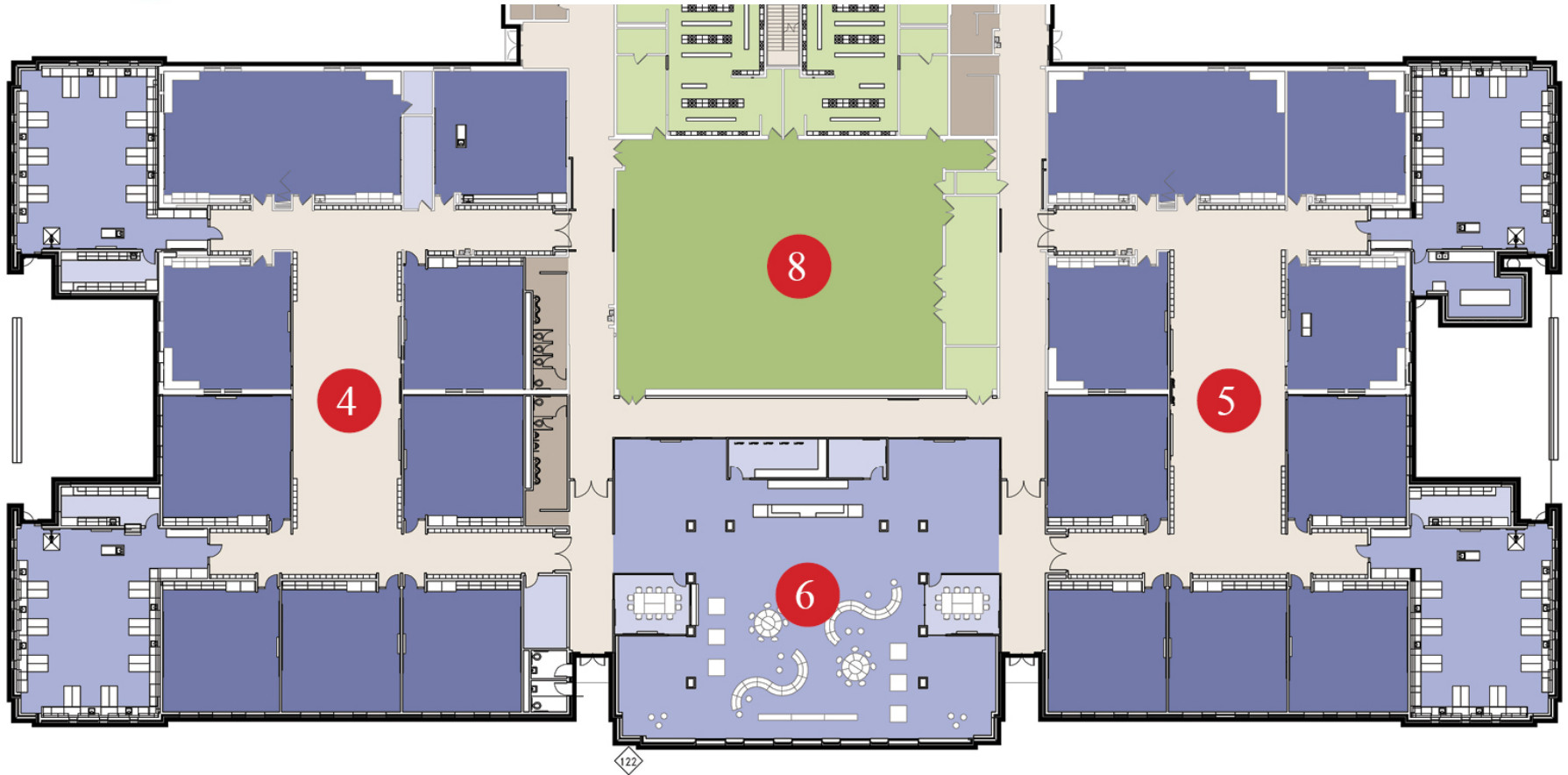
A variety of seating options
provided to appeal to individual
students' needs.





Flexible science labs for middle school curriculum.

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7th and 8th grade team areas clustered around new library with potential expansion for another team.

The use of glass to provide transparency and put learning on display.



Transformation Complete.



Before

