

2016 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

# Bellfort Early Childhood Center

Category: Renovation

Houston Independent School District

Houston, Texas





## Site Diagram





## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transformation

### Community Environment:

The Belfort Early Childhood Center is the home of the Belfort Bumblebees. Belfort ECC is a kindergarten, though its other function is as a Beacon for the Community and an oasis in a bleak urban landscape. The site design reduced the presence of asphalt and removed excess sidewalk and paving. The property fence was moved back to bring green space to the street and create a more park-like experience. The alley way easement between the two halves of the building became a courtyard. The under-utilized exterior porches were repurposed as outdoor classrooms.





# *A Warm Welcome*

## **Community Environment:**

The front of the building was brightened and showcased big letters that spoke both to the small children and to the greater community and reflected the changing colors of the sky from dawn to dusk. The entry canopy was sculptural and welcoming and created a presence on the street that engages the community.





## *Optimized learning*

### **Learning Environment:**

The renovation transformed the space into an innovative learning environment that encourages a love of learning everywhere by optimizing and maximizing the use of traditionally transitional spaces in the project. Exterior porches that were almost abandoned became great outdoor learning spaces and tied the in school community back to the local neighborhood. Interior hallways became like interior porches and were activated to encourage learning as children walked along counting out their numbers, identifying the shapes in the ceiling, stopping as a group to practice their letters on the marker boards, or admiring the latest artwork by their fellow students.





## *Innovation and play*

### **Learning Environment:**

Unique aesthetic features include a color palette that rejects the traditional primary color solution, and goes with one that represents the changing light of the sky during the course of the day.

The most significant improvement to the school's technology was the incorporation of Smart boards, though that is just one activity station in the classrooms. As an early childhood center, students receive and participate in the learning process in a variety of ways and technology is just one of the tools used in a typical day of learning.





# *Re-purposed and reimagined*

## **Physical Environment –**

To make the most of the materials present and utilize inexpensive solutions, the design made use of traditional chain-link fences and re-purposed outdoor porches. The fencing and posts are powder-coated to match the color palette. Additional posts were added at angles and flower icons were created out of fencing wire to minimize the traditional institutional look of chain-link fencing and build on the garden theme.

During construction, the occasional structural pipe column showed up when walls were removed and relocated. These columns were treated with a base detail that looked like a giant upturned flower pot.





## *New connections*

### **Physical Environment –**

The building was originally designed as two separate buildings linked by a fire corridor that crossed a utility easement. This utility easement became the entry for the school and became a courtyard into which windows were added to bring light into the classroom. The connected fire corridor was opened up by storefront glazing that visually linked the front courtyard to the rear courtyard.





# PLAYTheory

**Planning Process:** PLAYTheory, a word and image game developed by Kirksey, is used as part of the visioning process to encourage learners and users to think outside of the box when envisioning their new space. It is a way of asking the questions differently, relating images to concepts, and by encouraging people to think about what could be rather than what they do or do not have. It is a game that helps to focus on the qualitative aspects of programming rather than just the quantitative, encouraging communication and shared vision. The ideas and images were collected in a book that became part of the design process. These images and concepts were integrated into Schematic Design and Design Development documentation showing how the user input was actively being incorporated. This encourages ownership of the whole design concept and keeps everyone excited and engaged in the process.

## How does **PLAY**Theory® work?

It works when we **collaborate**. When we ask the questions in a different way and you arrive at the solutions. When **together** we create the story and build a vision



How does  
my  
classroom  
**play?**



## — SD



— RAMP VALUE  
ADJUSTMENT  
TO ACCORD  
OF PROGRAM  
FROM EXISTING  
DEEP CHANNEL



**Outdoor Classroom**

My classroom  
**feels like...**



## DD



My classroom  
learns like...

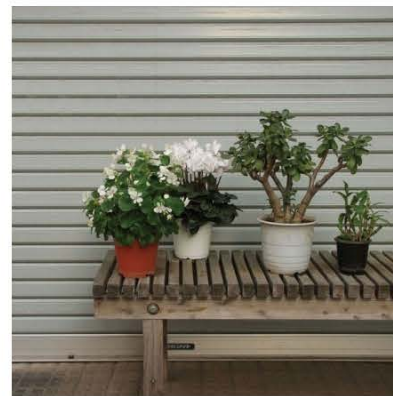


My classroom  
**teaches** like...





Play Theory  
**Design Process**  
**Gallery**





## *Floor plan*





HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Bellfort Early Childhood Center  
Houston, Texas | 44,000 sf

before & after



# Bellfort Early Childhood Center - *Before*



STREET FRONTAGE BEFORE

objective: **create an urban garden**



# Bellfort Early Childhood Center - *After*





## Main Corridor Before and After

*Objective: create entry and allow daylighting*





## Main Corridor Before and After

*Objective: create entry and allow daylighting*

After





# Classroom Corridors Before and After

*Objective: brighten and reduce scale*

Before





# Classroom Corridors Before and After

*Objective: brighten and reduce scale*

After





# Classroom Before and After

*Objective: articulate classroom activity spaces*





# Classroom Before and After

*Objective: articulate classroom activity spaces*

After





## North Alley Before and After

*Objective: activate alley as garden space*





## North Alley Before and After

*Objective: activate alley as garden space*

After





# Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture Project Data

Submitting Firm :	Kirksey Architecture
Project Role	Prime Firm
Project Contact	Nicola Springer
Title	Vice President
Address	6909 Portwest Drive
City, State or Province, Country	Houston, Texas
Phone	713 426 7510

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

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

Construction Firm:	
Project Role	Drymalla Construction
Project Contact	Ron Schneider (Formerly with Drymalla)
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	979 732 5731



# Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

## Project Details

<b>Project Name</b>	Bellfort Early Childhood Center
<b>City</b>	Houston
<b>State</b>	Texas
<b>District Name</b>	Houston Independent School District
<b>Supt/President</b>	Kenneth Huewitt
<b>Occupancy Date</b>	September 2011
<b>Grades Housed</b>	pre-K- K
<b>Capacity(Students)</b>	400 students
<b>Site Size (acres)</b>	3 acres
<b>Gross Area (sq. ft.)</b>	44,000-sf
<b>Per Occupant(pupil)</b>	110sqf
<b>gross/net please indicate</b>	69%
<b>Design and Build?</b>	No
<b>If yes, Total Cost:</b>	
<b>Includes:</b>	
<b>If no,</b>	
<b>Site Development:</b>	-
<b>Building Construction:</b>	\$3.1M
<b>Fixed Equipment:</b>	-
<b>Other:</b>	Project Costs \$1.9M
<b>Total:</b>	\$5M