

2016 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Girdwood K-8 School Renewal

Category: Lee J. Brockway Renovation/Addition

Anchorage School District

Girdwood, Alaska



SIGNATURE PHOTO

GIRDWOOD K-8 SCHOOL RENEWAL





Community Environment: With a population of less than 2,000, the community of Girdwood is situated in a picturesque mountain valley that is home to Alaska's largest ski area, Alyeska Resort. This tight-knit community shares common values that focus on learning environments that encourage active learning and academic exploration that extends outside the boundaries of the school building. The school is part of the Anchorage School District, but it feels worlds away.



Community Environment: As a community, Girdwood began as a gold mining center in the late 1800s. The gold rush to Alaska touched most of the coastal areas in southcentral Alaska and opened up transportation corridors for future access. The rugged independence of the mining mentality still exists in Girdwood. The community has an independent spirit and a unique sense of identity that is fostered by its 40-mile separation from Anchorage.



Physical Environment: The original school was a hub of activity for the community. The photo above shows that the original school has had technical issues with heavy snowfalls and heat loss/icing damage over the years. The Four Valleys Community School program shares an office in the administration area and uses the building 7 days a week when school is not in session.



Community Environment: The renovated facility and 2-story addition bring the power of the Alaskan landscape and the community together. Aesthetically, the community demanded that the building fit appropriately in the context of the site. The use of timber framing, wood ceilings/accents, and organic materials in earth tones, foster a strong sense of pride and purpose that the community has invested in the school design. The new building forms and clerestories mimic the existing building.

Community Environment:

The Girdwood School functions as a full time K-8 school facility. The school is the primary public building in the community. It is used for after-hour educational programs, fitness activities in the gym, as a community theater venue, and by the active Four Valleys Community School program.

The transition from the original school to the addition is energized at its intersection where the elementary and middle school age groups come together in the large central commons.





Learning Environment: Designed for interaction between grade levels, the flexible central commons allows younger students to get a glimpse of life as a middle school student. The middle school students interact with the younger students as mentors in reading activities and social interactions. The commons also serves as the multi-purpose activity area and is an excellent after-hours venue where large gatherings can be seated for stage performances.



Learning Environment: Particularly popular with middle school students is the 2nd floor commons where informal learning spaces overlook the common areas. There are a variety of informal learning areas and small group teaching spaces in the facility. The small group flex areas allow teachers to vary instruction methods in order to support different learning styles.



A vibrant artist community, it was integral to the planning process that locally-made artwork, such as the art tiles shown here, were incorporated into the school design.



Learning Environment: Agile instructional spaces are essential to the educational concept. The flexible instructional spaces support individual, small, and large group learning. Operable partition walls give teachers and administrators the ability to change classroom layouts and subdivide classrooms based on current needs and changing future enrollment numbers. Project-based learning is enhanced by the flexible options within the different learning environments.



Learning Environment: The tilt-up commons seating is easily moved to the side for instruction and impromptu events. Behind the stage curtain, the stage becomes the music classroom. The music classroom can be arranged so the stage area is unobstructed and can be used for theater/performance practice.

Physical Environment:

The design response that allows the middle school to have a separate identity, yet be connected to the elementary wing is the 2-story Commons area that is anchored by the open Media Center. The visual connection and physical interaction between students at this central hub of activity bring the energy of the students and staff to the forefront.

The 'waves' of color on the commons floor have reflective zinc shapes embedded in the colored concrete. The sparkling waves draw a direct connection to the ocean tides in nearby Turnagain Arm that sparkles in the sunlight as you drive to and from the Girdwood Valley.



Planning Process:

The unique needs of the school and its community were met by fulfilling these goals:

Flexibility:

Multiple space uses

Agility to accommodate day-to-day changes

Adaptable to future program changes

Accommodate future growth

Effective and Functional Organization:

Make administration part of school family

Efficient operations

Safety and Security:

Support security procedures/lock-down

Good passive supervision

Image and Aesthetics:

Promote student spirit and pride

Inspire creativity

Reflect local values

Take advantage of site features

Family atmosphere

Art and natural materials, such as locally-harvested cottonwood, inspire creativity. Local artists were commissioned to install art that connected to the values of the Girdwood residents.





Technology instruction happens in every classroom and through individual instruction in the tech lab.

Planning Process: The unique needs of the school and its community were met by fulfilling these goals:

Teaching and Learning: student-focused, collaborative, engaging, recognize student value, learning hub, multiple learning options, support extra-curricular activities; **Community:** welcoming, linking to community roots, after-hours use; **Sustainability:** environmentally-friendly, indoor air quality, effective lighting, views and sunlight, energy-efficient.



Learning Environment: Girdwood is the hometown of many U.S. National ski team members that have gone on to win Olympic medals in downhill skiing and snowboarding competitions. Serving a dual purpose as school gym and community fitness center, the local heroes are celebrated with a decorative acoustical mural. The colorful climbing wall was originally crafted for the old school and reinstalled in the new gym.



Learning Environment: The stage is the focal point in the multi-purpose commons. Bounded by artwork on the sides of the proscenium and on the floor, the commons is the primary place where community events will share the facility with students. With seating for 300, the commons is used for musical and theatrical performances by students and the community.



Planning Process: The architects facilitated workshops that explored the existing educational specification in light of national educational trends in order to provide broad input for the design of the new facility. Participants included representatives from the following groups: school district maintenance and management, teachers and administrators, the Four Valleys Community School president, and members of the local artist community.



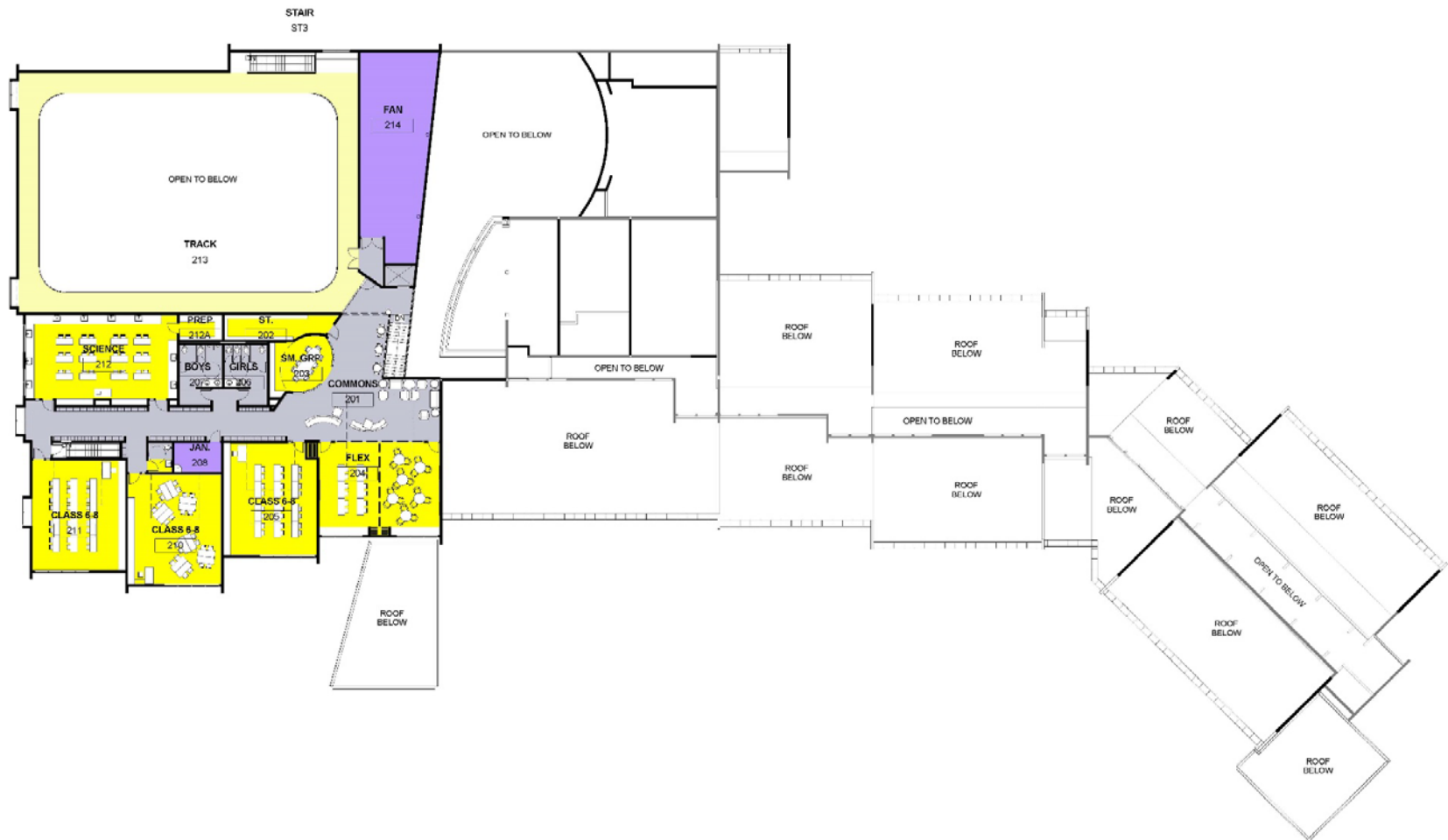
WELCOMING COVERED MAIN ENTRY

GIRDWOOD K-8 SCHOOL RENEWAL



Physical Environment: The addition seamlessly integrates with the architecture and learning environments of the existing school. Aesthetically, the sloping roof forms and clerestory windows help unify the interior and exterior.





Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Data

Submitting Firm:	McCool Carlson Green Architects
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Scott Brodt
Title	Principal Architect
Address	421 W 1 st Ave Suite 300
City, State or Province, Country	Anchorage, Alaska USA
Phone	907-563-8474

Joint Partner Firm:	BrainSpaces
Project Role	Educational Facility Planner
Project Contact	Amy Yurko and Peter Brown
Title	Educational Planners
Address	1100 N. California Ave.
City, State or Province, Country	Chicago, Illinois USA
Phone	773-531-3221

Construction Firm:	Watterson Construction Company
Project Role	General Contractor
Project Contact	Jim Watterson
Title	Vice-President
Address	6500 Interstate Circle
City, State or Province, Country	Anchorage, Alaska USA
Phone	907-563-7741

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Project Details

Project Name	Girdwood K-8 School Renewal
City	Girdwood
State	Alaska
District Name	Anchorage School District
Supt/President	Mr. Ed Graff
Occupancy Date	August 2015
Grades Housed	K-8
Capacity(Students)	260
Site Size (acres)	28.5
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	56,748 GSF
Per Occupant(pupil)	218
gross/net please indicate	1.4
Design and Build?	No
If yes, Total Cost:	
Includes:	
If no,	
Site Development:	\$900,000
Building Construction:	\$18.5 M
Fixed Equipment:	\$400,000
Other:	
Total:	\$19.8 M