



2016 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

River Terrace Education Campus

Category: Renovation

District of Columbia Public Schools
Washington, District of Columbia



Overview

River Terrace Education Campus is a very special building designed to support a historically-underserved student population.

Opened in the fall of 2015, River Terrace is a model school for students with profound intellectual disabilities, as well as medical complexities, visual or hearing impairment and autism. The highly-customized learning environment is located in a former traditional elementary school which, through careful planning and design, was renovated to meet the unique needs of River Terrace students and teachers.



The former River Terrace Elementary School was the unlikely home for a model special needs school. The campus required a full-scale renovation and a series of strategic additions to support the unique educational specification and curriculum requirements.





PUBLIC ALLEY

POROUS CONCRETE

54 PARKING SPACES

24 PARKING SPACES

C
D
C

EXISTING STRUCTURE

AMPHITHEATER

SMOKESTACK

COURTYARD

NEW ONE STORY
ADDITION W/
PARTIAL SECOND
STORY

ART/MUSIC AND
WINTER GARDEN

PLAYGROUND

HISTORIC
MARKER

WALKWAY

ANACOSTIA AVE. NE.

GARDEN

DIX ST. NE.

34th STREET



A large addition created a dramatic and welcoming new identity for River Terrace, while also enclosing the existing parking lot and allowing it to be transformed into a dynamic courtyard for sensory learning.



SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Community Environment:

The new River Terrace campus marks the first time that the District of Columbia Public Schools has combined students with intellectual disabilities and medical complexities in one location. The design team responded by creating a nurturing and supportive environment for all students, regardless of age or abilities.

The community environment of River Terrace is enhanced through a bright and welcoming commons and a high level of transparency, including a simplified circulation pattern with views across the campus from any point in the main corridor.



ENHANCING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community Environment:

Members of the River Terrace educational community are among the most passionate administrators, teachers and parents in the country. To enhance bonds between River Terrace and its stakeholders, the design process established the campus as a home for many different events. The courtyard and gymnasium host PTA meetings and cookouts (such as the one seen in the picture to the right), and dedicated space above the Workforce Development Center acts as offices and additional meeting space for community groups.



A SCHOOL UNLIKE ANY OTHER

Learning Environment:

The unique nature of the River Terrace Education Campus is a direct result of the unique needs of the school's students. Every facet of the modernized former elementary school had to be customized to meet the physical, sensory and mobility needs of the study body.

Instead of traditional classrooms, River Terrace has oversized classrooms with custom furniture to accommodate wheelchairs and restrooms with diapering stations and hoist systems. Instead of a traditional pool, River Terrace has a therapy pool with zero-depth entry, an ADA ramp for wheelchair entry, a hoist and a chair lift.



FOCUSED ON LIFE-LONG SUCCESS

Learning Environment:

The learning environment at River Terrace supports a curriculum designed to prepare all students for productive lives. The facility enhances services including technology integration, aquatic therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior therapy, life skills and career skills.

In addition to specialized classrooms, the campus includes a large Workforce Development Center for students to learn job skills. The Center includes a Horticulture Lab with an adjacent greenhouse, a Health Occupations suite and a Hospitality Suite.



SENSORY EDUCATION

Physical Environment:

The design of the physical environment is focused on providing multiple opportunities for students to experience their surroundings in a safe and stimulating manner.

A small addition near the courtyard establishes a Winter Garden with grow lights and low planting beds to allow students to see, touch and smell Nature all year round. Instead of a traditional courtyard, River Terrace has an exploratory space with Pagoda Bells, Chimes and Xylophones to stimulate senses.



BEFORE



AFTER

BARRIER FREE LEARNING

Physical Environment:

Instead of traditional ADA strategies, River Terrace features a barrier free environment with 1:20 slopes with railings, multiple hoists and accessible playground equipment.



A COMMUNITY PROCESS

Planning Process:

An extensive planning process included the development of an educational specification document completed by the internal planning staff of the District of Columbia Public Schools and informed by input from the District's Division of Specialized Instruction.

The planning process involved close collaboration with a School Improvement Team committee which included administrators, faculty and community leaders. Extensive input was also provided by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.



FORM FOLLOWING FUNCTION

Planning Process:

The input gained during the planning process led to several specific design interventions:

- Repurposing of an existing parking lot to create an enclosed courtyard for sensory stimulation
- Incorporation of a community meeting room on the second floor of the Workforce Development Center addition
- Application of cutting-edge special education environments, including the therapy pool
- Inclusion of a Winter Garden space to allow students to gain sensory stimulation from plant life all year round





GREEN HOUSE
HORTICULTURE
HEALTH OCCUPATIONS
HOSPITALITY
RESOURCE
RESOURCE

FOOD SERVICES
CAFETERIA
STORAGE
STORAGE
STORAGE
STORAGE
STAGE
RIVER TERRACE
GYM

CLASSROOM HIGHER GRADE
STORAGE
STORAGE
STORAGE
TEACHERS WORKROOM

CLASSROOM HIGHER GRADE
CLASSROOM HIGHER GRADE
LIFE SKILLS
CLASSROOM LOWER GRADE
CLASSROOM LOWER GRADE
MUSIC
ART
RESOURCE
WINTER GARDEN
MEDIA CENTER
TEACHERS LOUNGE

CLASSROOM LOWER GRADE
CLASSROOM LOWER GRADE

ADMIN
HEALTH SUITE
SENSORY
STUDENT SERVICES
OT/PT
THERAPY POOL



Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Data

Submitting Firm :	Fanning Howey
Project Role	Design Architect
Project Contact	William Payne, AIA
Title	Chief Executive Officer
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Joint Partner Firm:	Bryant Mitchell Architects, PLLC
Project Role	Architect of Record
Project Contact	Melvin Mitchell
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Other Firm:	
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Project Contact	
Title	
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Construction Firm:	GCS
Project Role	Contractor
Project Contact	Dan Waldo
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Address	1800 M Street NW, Suite 1050 South
City, State or Province, Country	Washington, DC 20036
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Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Details

Project Name	River Terrace Education Campus
City	Washington
State	District of Columbia
District Name	District of Columbia Public Schools
Supt/President	Kaya Henderson, Chancellor
Occupancy Date	8/2/2015
Grades Housed	K-14
Capacity(Students)	
	140
Site Size (acres)	
	4.0
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	
	72,810
Per Occupant(pupil)	
	\$226,428
gross/net please indicate	
	\$31,700,000
Design and Build?	
	Yes
If yes, Total Cost:	
	\$31,700,000
Includes:	
	All costs listed below
If no,	
Site Development:	
Building Construction:	
Fixed Equipment:	
Other:	
Total:	
	\$31,700,000

