



Minerva Park Middle School

PROJECT NAME

Minerva Park Middle School

CLIENT

Westerville City Schools

LOCATION

5002 Farview Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43231

AREA

120,361 sqft

SUSTAINABILITY

LEED Silver Certified

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Minerva Park Middle School project represents a significant addition to the educational infrastructure in the heart of Minerva Park, serving as a beacon of accessible, innovative, and community-centered learning for the neighborhood's students. This new school aims to bridge the gap between students in the Minerva Park community and the need to travel further to access educational resources within the expansive Westerville City School District.

BACKGROUND

The Minerva Park Middle School is the companion to the recently completed Minerva France Elementary School, which opened its doors in 2022. Together, these state-of-the-art facilities strengthen the educational foundation of Westerville City School District and underline the district's commitment to providing quality education within reach of every neighborhood.

MISSION

Amid the challenges brought on by the COVID pandemic, the architecture and interior design of Minerva Park Middle School began in spring of 2020 and emerged as a symbol of resilience and unity. In a time marked by hardship, our design mission remained clear: to create an environment that transcended barriers and fostered togetherness. Our goal was to craft a school that not only engaged students but also invited them to actively participate in their learning journey. Anchored in this vision, we aimed to create an atmosphere that nurtured not only the intellect but also the physical and emotional well-being of students, staff, and the wider community. Through thoughtful design and careful planning, we endeavored to provide a sanctuary that would heal, inspire, and empower—a testament to the enduring strength of human connection and the power of design to bridge divides.

Designing with Diversity in Mind

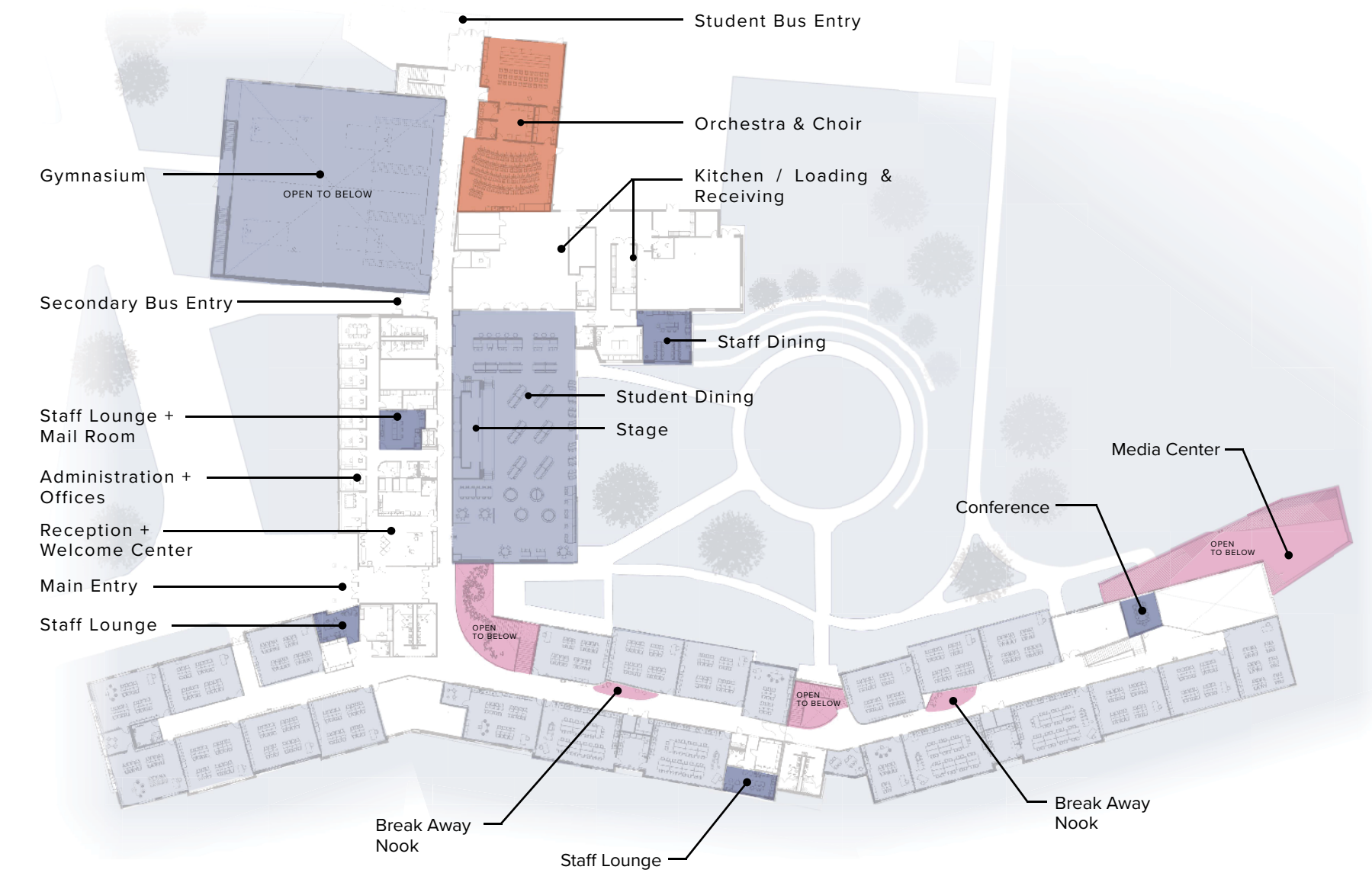
Minerva Park Middle School features a diverse population within its student body, staff, and the broader community it serves. Throughout our design engagement process, inclusivity was a cornerstone of our approach.



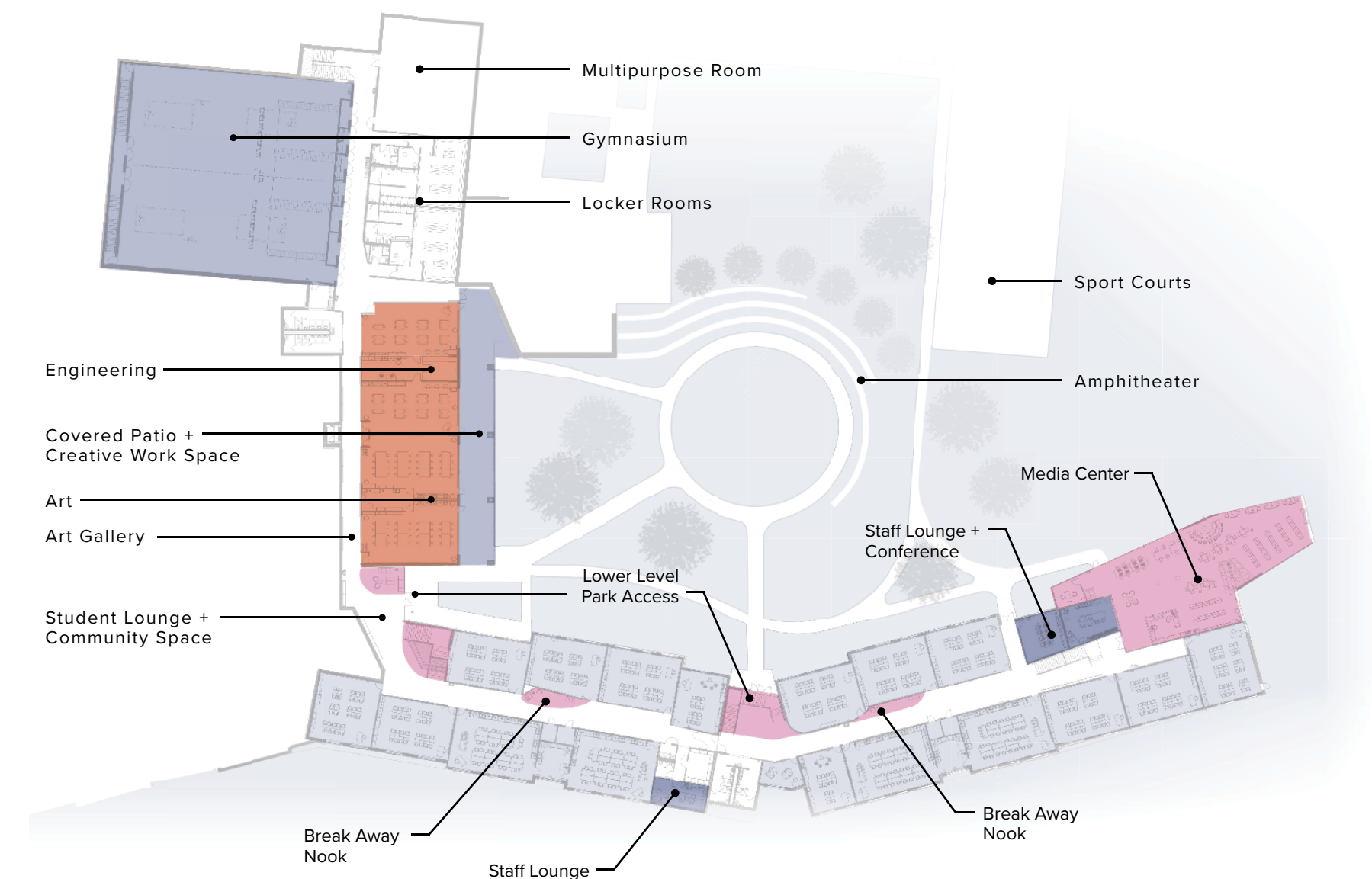
Context

Located within a residential neighborhood in Minerva Park, Ohio, the site contains dense woodlands and a notably steep gradient that becomes an integral element of the design. Embracing the topography, the front façade of the building presents itself as a single-story structure, reducing the visual impact of its substantial size. As you move further into the site, the back of the building takes on an industrial style with large windows. This view contrasts with the natural surroundings as the parkland cascades down to the lower entrances, creating a harmonious blend of nature and architecture.

This integration continues inside the building, where the landscape becomes part of the interior design, connecting indoor and outdoor spaces. The design allows for open spaces on the ground level, providing glimpses of the gymnasium and student social areas and connecting the energy inside with the outdoor environment.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



COLOR KEY

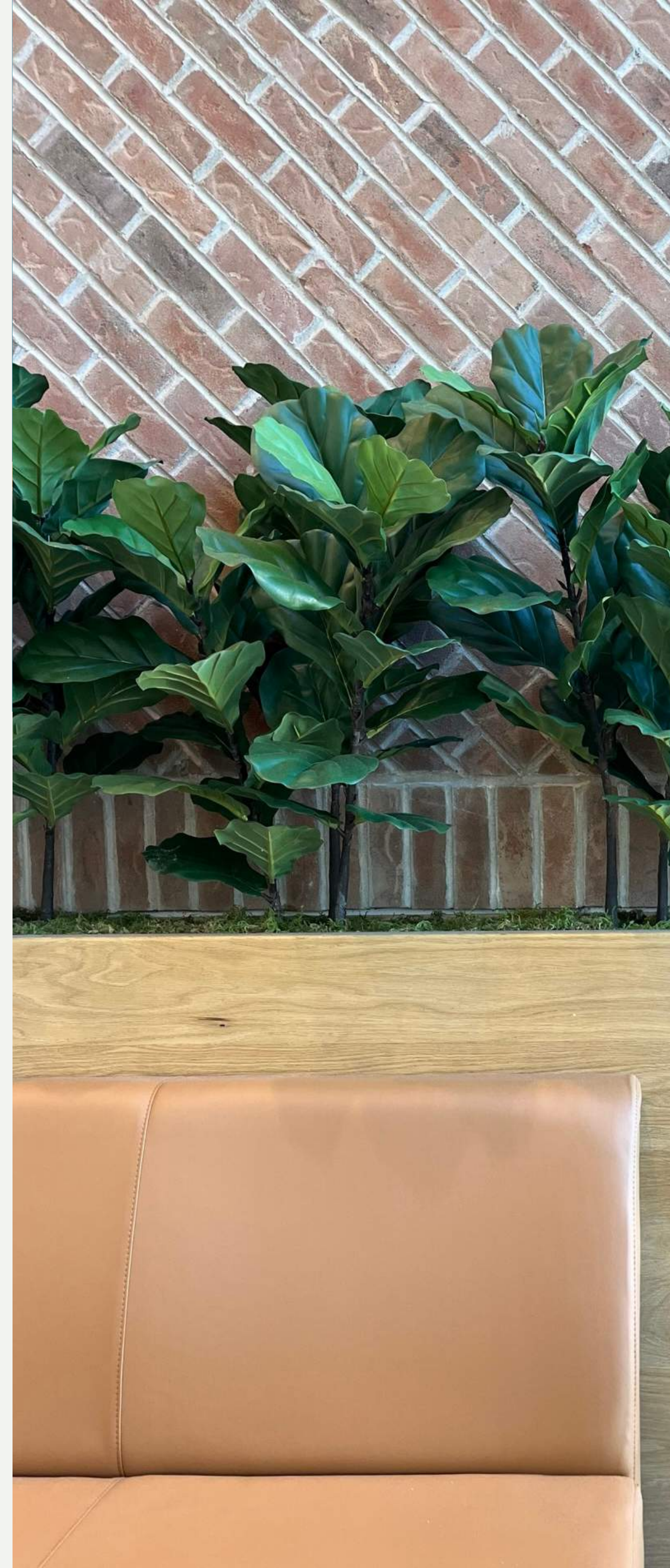
- Unity
- Wellness
- Learning
- Creating
- Staff

LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN



Vision

To foster an environment that transcends traditional boundaries, reflecting warmth while sparking inventiveness and imaginative thinking.

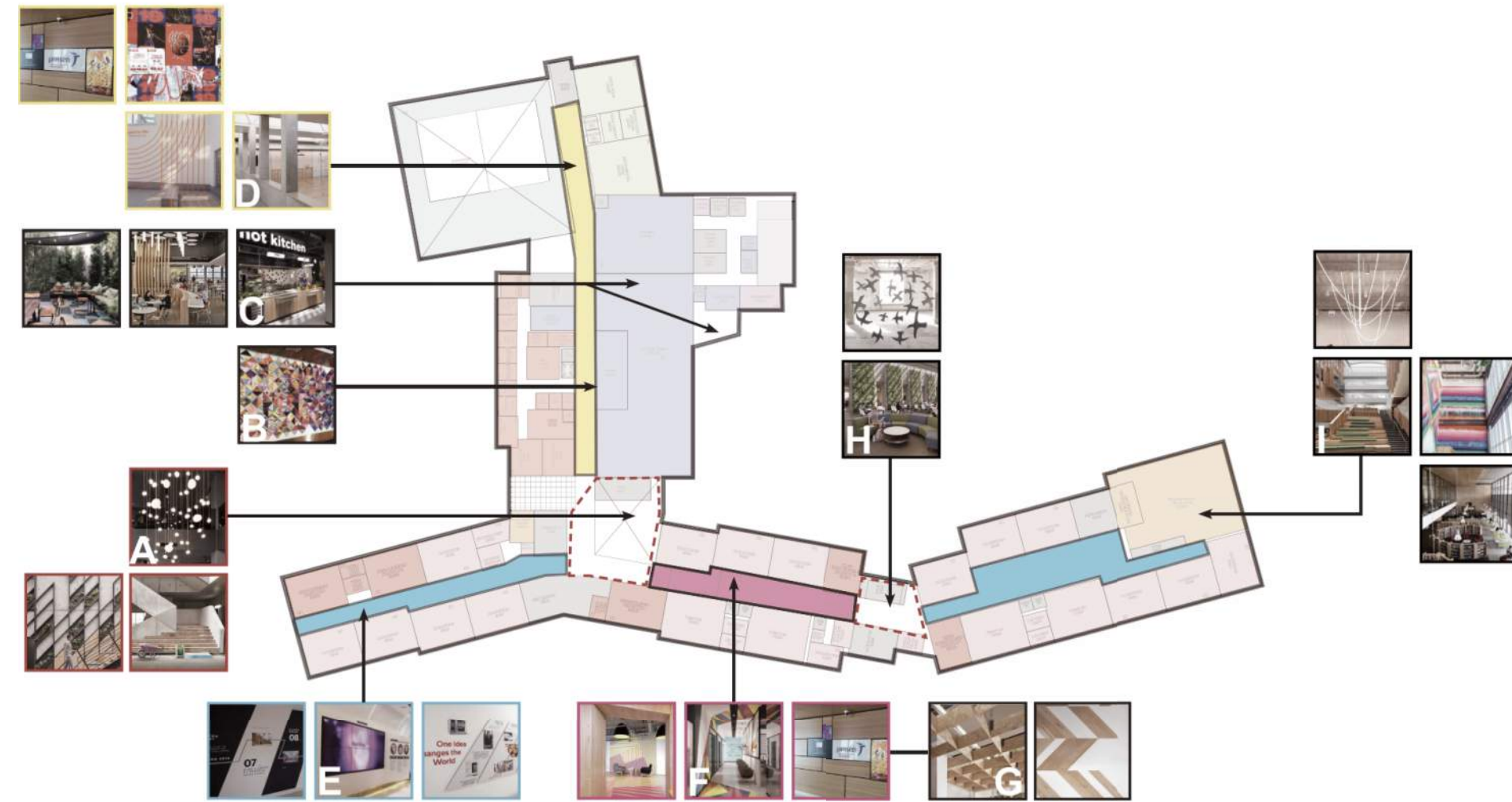


Concept

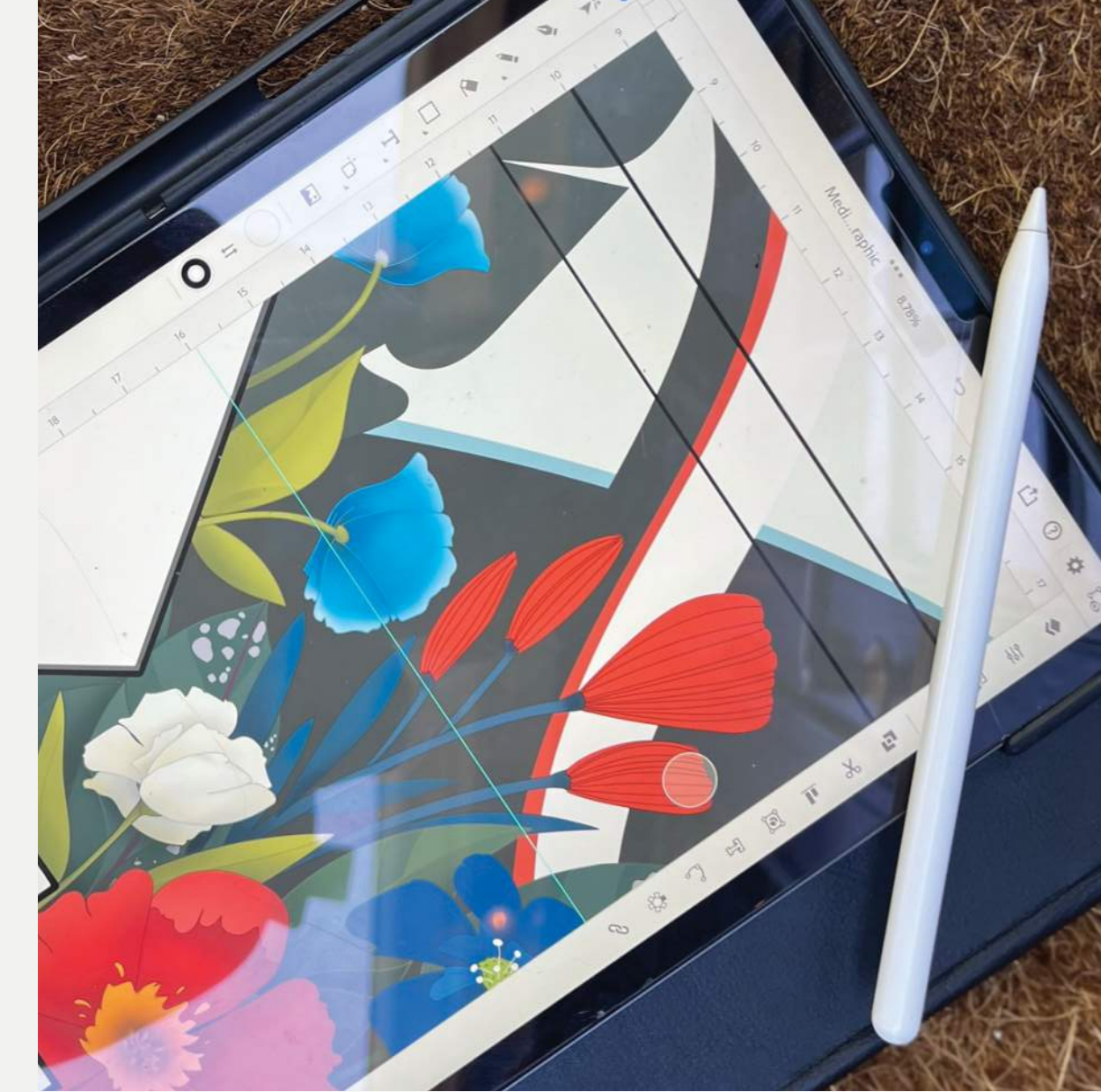
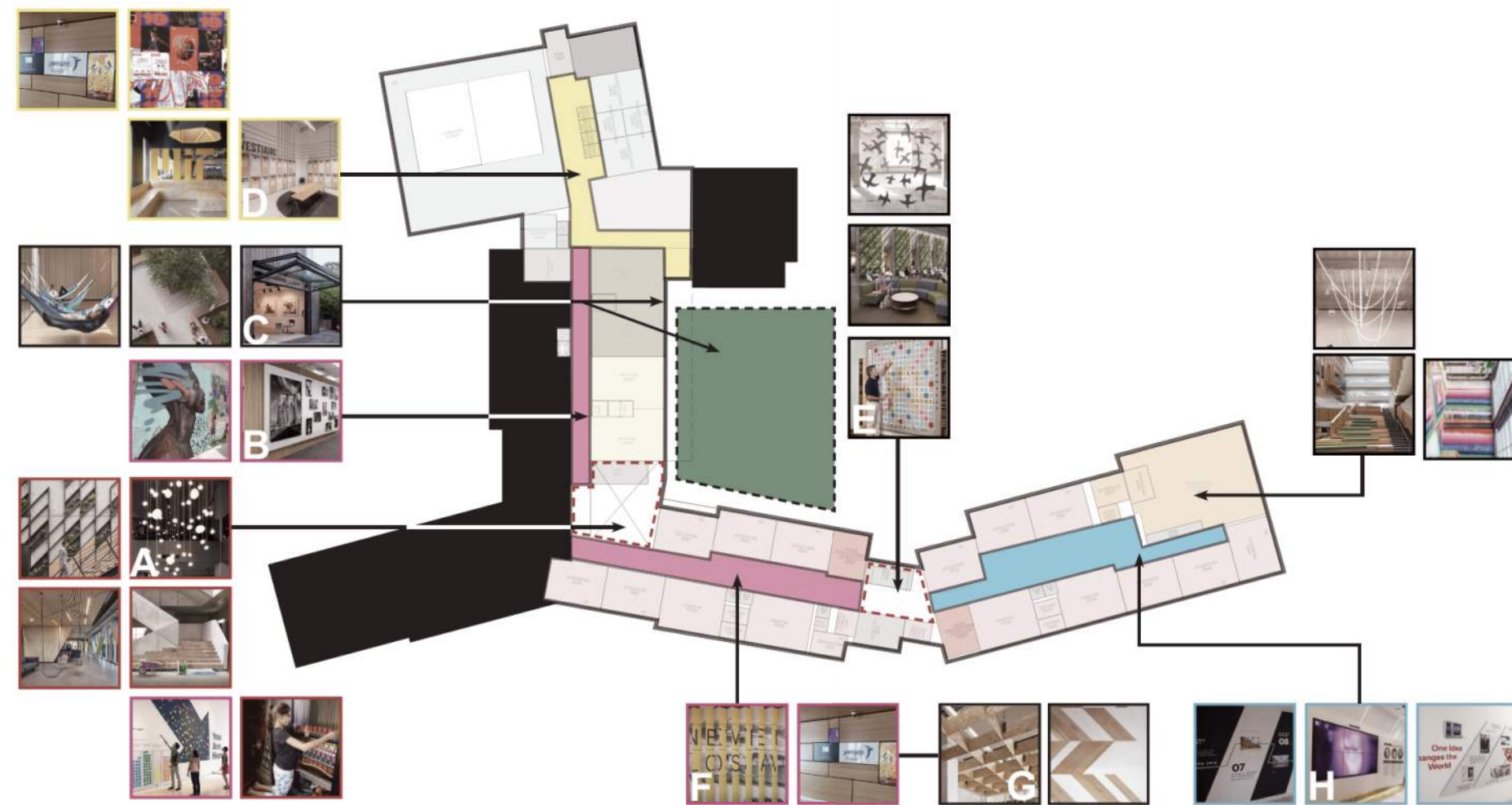
Our goal was to craft an environment that felt inviting and familiar, serving as a second home that nurtures a strong sense of belonging and fuels collective aspirations. Grounded in the pursuit of fostering creativity, proactive thinking, and a profound connection to the surroundings, our design comes to life through the incorporation of cozy, natural materials and textures. Biophilic elements blend indoor and outdoor spaces, forging a seamless relationship between the built environment and nature. Interactive wall displays encourage curiosity and engagement, while an extensive array of artistic elements, spanning murals to suspended installations, infuse the space with inspiration.



FIRST FLOOR DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PLAN



LOWER LEVEL DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Design Process

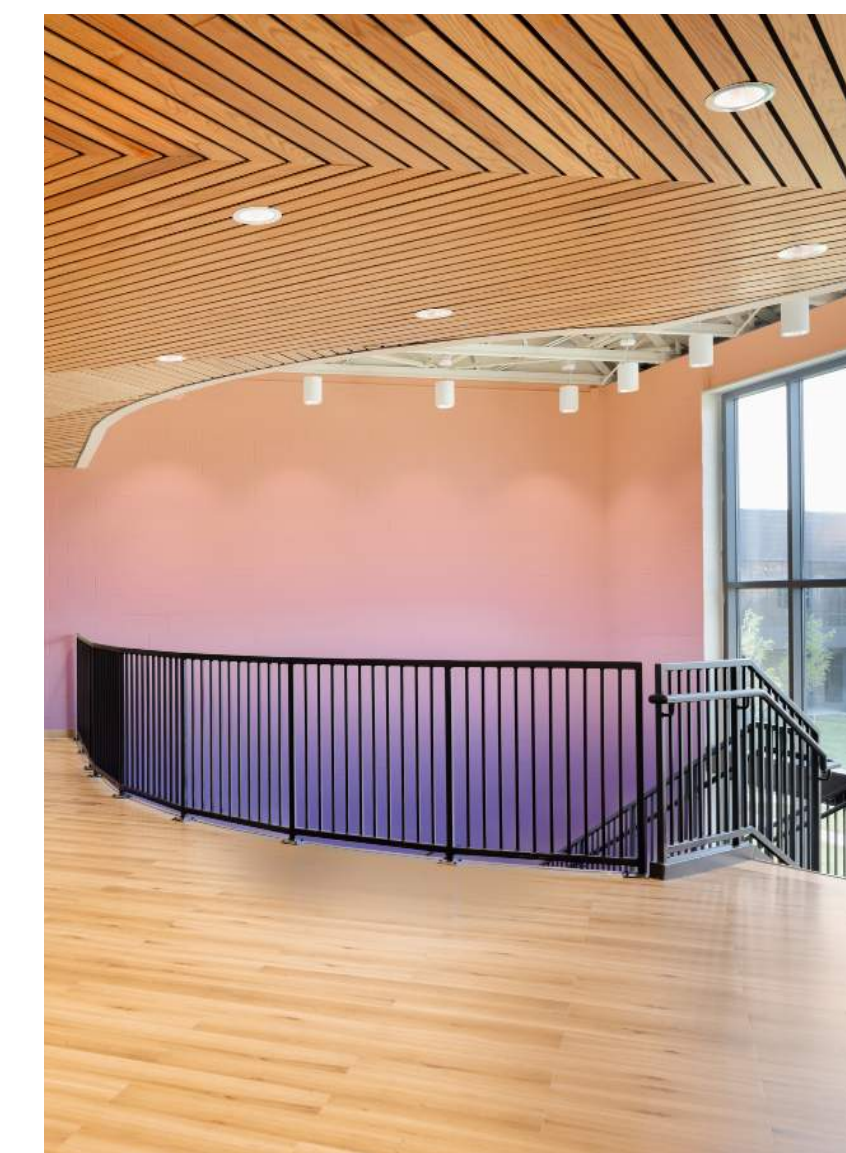
Our design process focused on making our concept a reality by emphasizing functionality, inspiration, and seamless integration with the building's architecture. Our goal was to create an environment where all students and visitors, regardless of their educational level, felt a unique yet unified connection to the overarching concept of unity.

Working closely with the school district, engaging in exercises, and actively involving students and staff played a crucial role in bringing together different perspectives to create a school that gives a sense of ownership and pride to those who call it their educational home.



Community Connection

Diverse seating arrangements, flexible event spaces, interactive wall games, and an overall playful atmosphere thoughtfully cultivates connections and fosters a sense of community. These elements come together to encourage interaction, collaboration, and a vibrant social environment within the building.



Let the Landscape In

The landscape design features an amphitheater that embraces the surrounding park, and this concept is mirrored in the interior with student lounge areas incorporating tiered seating. Materials selected to echo the natural landscape, combined with artworks that evoke the sensation of being immersed in nature, create a holistic design that transcends visual aesthetics.

Our commitment to the environment goes beyond the visual, as evidenced by the building's LEED Silver Certification. Every material and design decision was meticulously considered to attain this distinction, ensuring that our creation not only harmonizes with its surroundings but actively safeguards them. This approach highlights our dedication to not just replicating nature's beauty, but also to preserving its integrity for future generations.

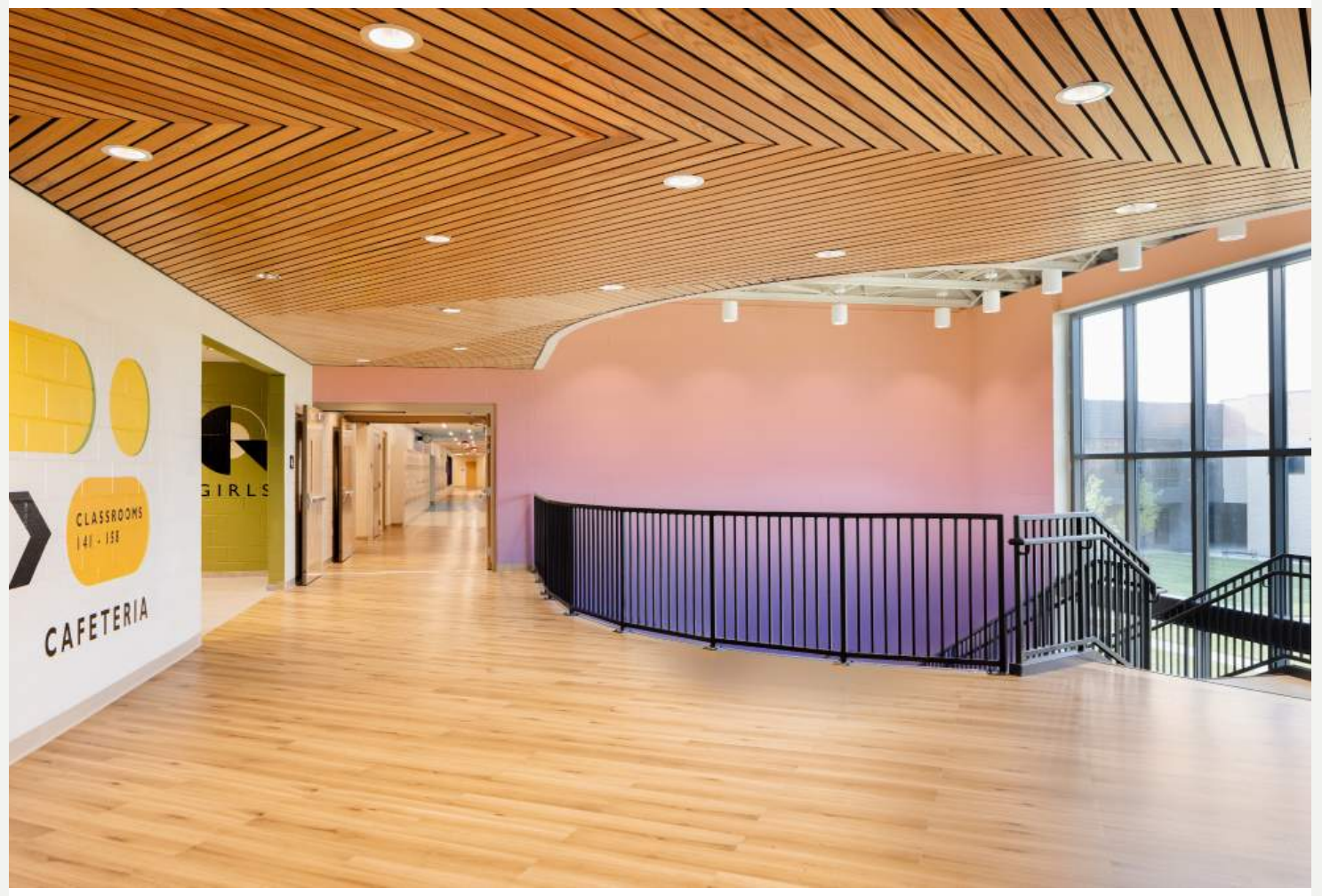
Empowering Expression

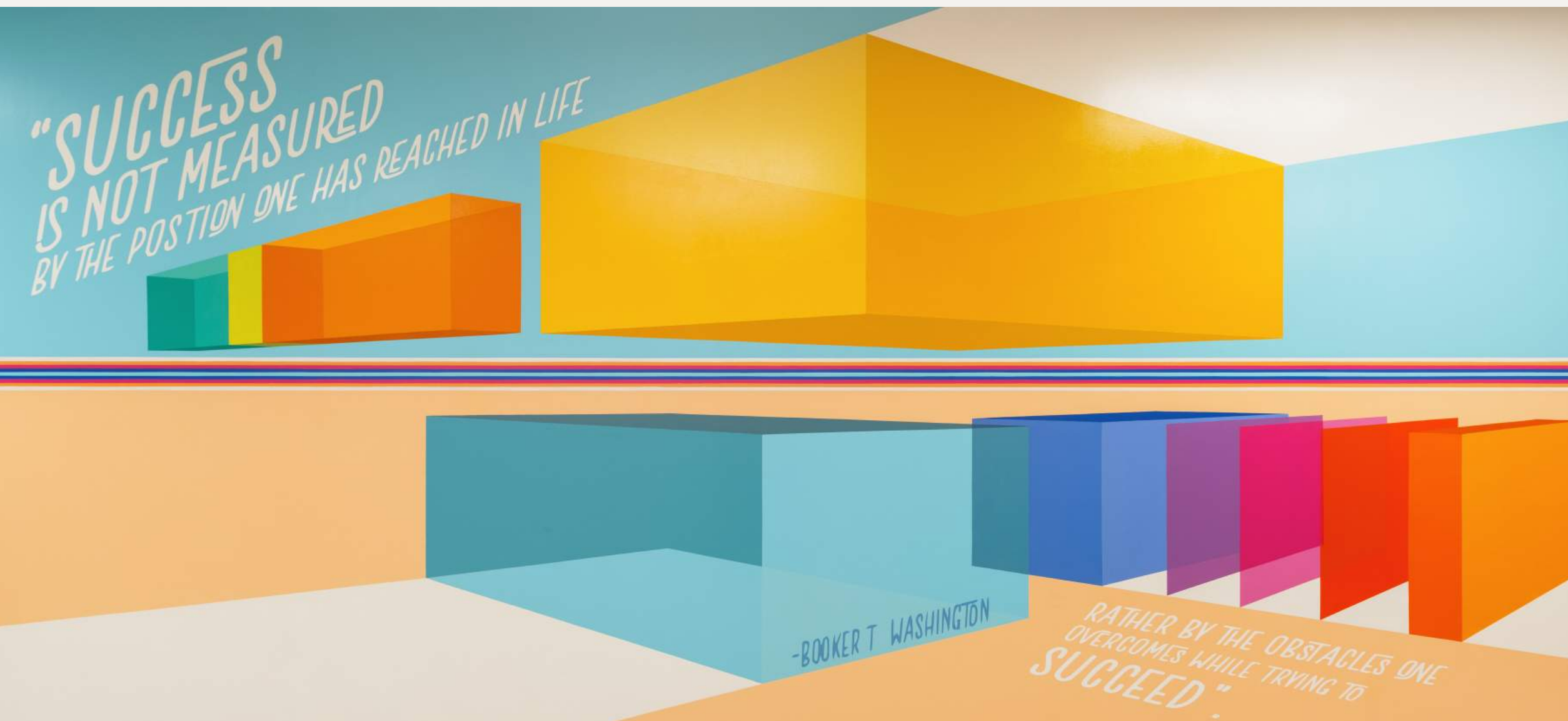
Corridor seating nooks located throughout the building are filled with bold color, soft seating, and interactive TVs, fostering engagement and variety in the overall learning environment. Each, with a distinct identity and markerboard prompt, invites students to actively participate in the design process, allowing their creativity to shape the building environment in their own image.



Navigating the Journey

The integration of artwork with inspirational quotes harmonizes with the wayfinding graphics throughout the building. Each artwork piece carries a distinct identity and serves as a symbolic marker, transforming the vast structure into an engaging journey with recognizable destinations. Together, these elements imbue the building with a sense of purpose and direction, making it more manageable for students and visitors to navigate.







Panther Pride

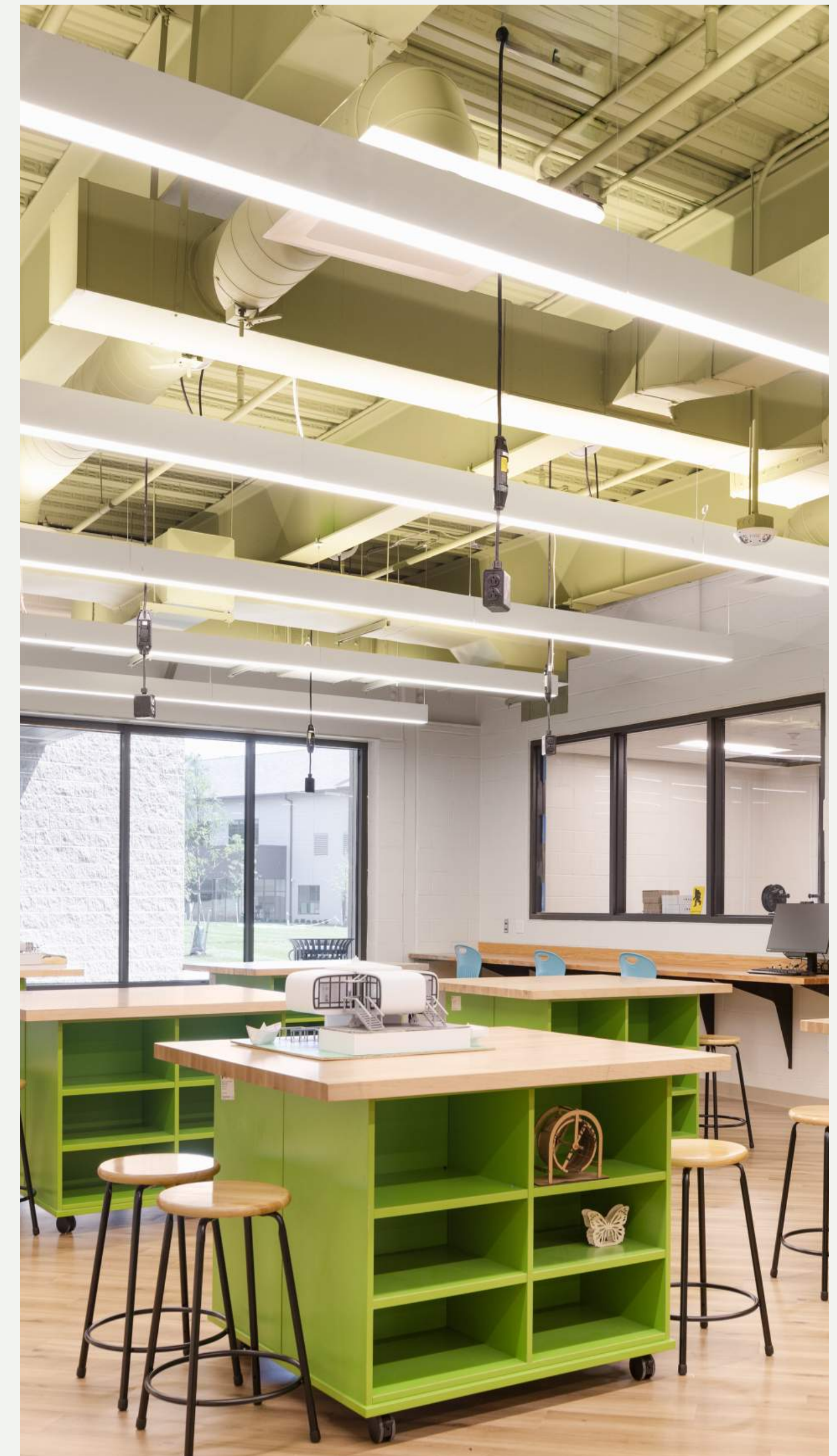
School pride is an emotional connection that empowers students to identify with their institution and actively engage in its success. By designing spaces that embody the school's identity, colors, and values, we inspire a sense of belonging. These environments serve as daily reminders of the collective achievements and aspirations of the school community, motivating students to support each other and work together towards common goals.





Designed for Innovation

Our lower-level learning spaces, dedicated to art and engineering, are designed to promote creativity and innovation. These rooms provide students with direct access to the park, offering a constant source of inspiration from the natural world around them. Students have access to a fully equipped shop, complete with cutting-edge tools such as CNC machines, 3D printers, laser cutters, woodworking equipment, and various other resources. Both spaces are designed to empower students with the resources they need for design freedom and to cultivate their skills as innovators, encouraging them to push the boundaries of art and engineering.



Inspirational Learning Environments

Our classroom design features warm materials enriched with vibrant hues, floor-to-ceiling glazing, and industrial finishes that extend the architectural expression into the learning environment. These spaces are purposefully designed to not only keep students alert and focused but also to ignite their creative thinking and foster serenity in the classroom.





Living Well

Designed to nurture a peaceful and healthy spirit, the use of natural, materials, panoramic views of the park, and soft, comfortable seating all come together to create an inviting student dining atmosphere. A wide variety of furniture styles accommodates all students, fostering an inclusive environment where they can gather, socialize, and enjoy their meals in an organic and harmonious way. This space encourages connections, relaxation, and a sense of well-being, making it a vital component of our school's holistic approach to education.

Sharing Resources

The cafe also serves as a valuable community resource, featuring a versatile stage, easily movable furniture, and carefully designed acoustics, allowing for various events and gatherings to take place during and beyond school hours.



Immersive Environments

The media center is located in the rear of the building, surrounded by woods. It has large angled windows that offer spectacular views of the surroundings, making students feel connected to nature. Inside, there are cozy seating areas and a variety of places to work and learn. The design includes eclectic lighting, detailed ceilings, built-in tiered seating, and artwork on the walls. All of this creates a peaceful and immersive atmosphere that encourages students to engage in reading and learning.



Elegant Lines of Site

The design incorporates views into the adjacent teacher workspaces, conference room, and corridors, offering dynamic panoramic views both inside and outside the building. This design not only connects the various spaces but also provides staff with a clear line of sight to the students, ensuring a safe and supervised learning environment while maintaining a sense of openness and connectivity throughout.

