

WoodsEdge Learning Center

*Advocating and Creating Unique Learning
Environments for Special Needs Students*



Speakers:

Angela Telfer, Program Director; Holly Norman, Deputy Superintendent; and Steven Hoekzema, AIA, Architect

*“We shape our buildings; thereafter
they shape us”*

– Winston Churchill



Outcome and Objectives

- Understand the challenges
- Promoting educational and social needs
- Mobilize your community
- Learn strategies for incorporating comfort, safety, flexibility and staffing efficiency.
- Learn design principles that work and increase independence

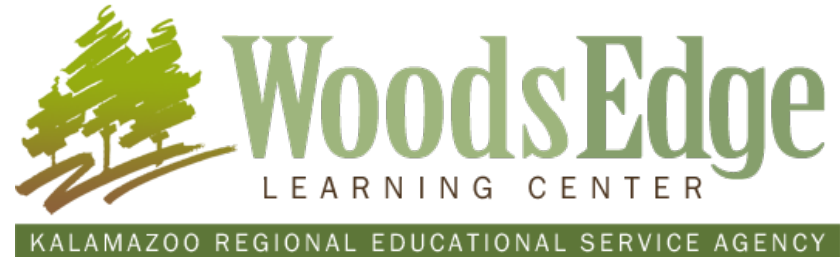


Timeline

Activity	Date
Facility Analysis	2004
Benchmarking Tours	May 2006
Programming	August 2006 – July 2007
First Bond Election	May 2007
Second Bond Election	November 2007
Donor Additions	November 2007
Benchmarking Tours	January 2008
Design	December 2007 – January 2009
Bidding	January – February 2009
Construction	March 2009 – July 2010
Move In	Beginning of August
First Day of School!	August 16, 2010

Who We Are

- 200 students ages 2-26
- Students with severe cognitive impairments, multiple impairments and autism

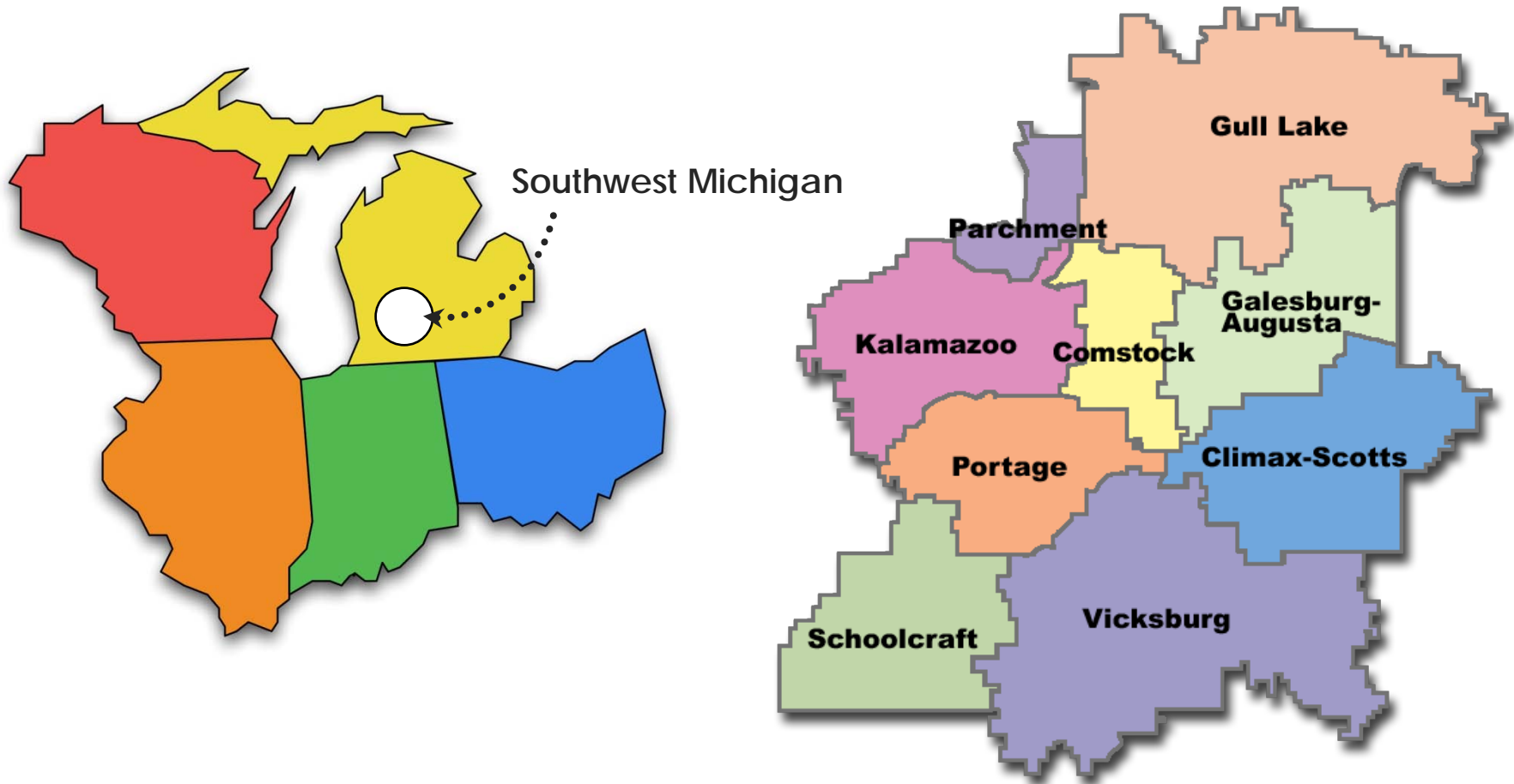


Our Staff

- 125 full-time staff;
30 part-time; 20 classrooms
- Partnerships with Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College
(60 students daily)



Where We Live



What's the Problem?

- Overcrowding
- 1970's "open classroom" concept – not appropriate
- Accessibility – 2 levels
- Inadequate, inflexible
- Safety concerns/control
- Lack of storage
- Minimal natural daylight



The Challenge

- Only effects 200 children in the County
- “Out of sight, out of mind”
- Multiple school districts to mobilize
- Lack of exposure to the program by public
- Anti-tax group



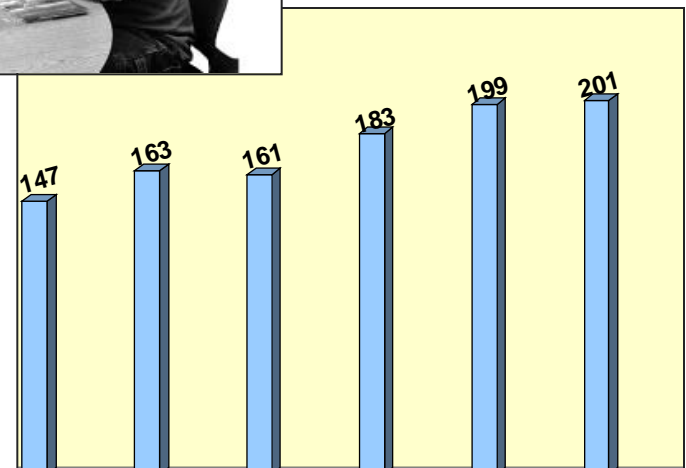
The GOOD News

- Huge support by parents
- Early “need awareness” data collection
- Excellent reputation
- Small millage increase:
0.39 mils for 14 years;
approximately \$20 / year.



Connecting with Community

- Produced program video
- News articles that tell our “story” – rising incidence of autism – timing.
- Letters to the editor
- Parent/student participation
- Neighborhood meeting
- Anti-tax leadership meeting
- Parent video



Initial Bond Election

- Narrowly defeated
- .39 mil. Increase; \$29,280,000
- Additions and renovations at the Service Center
- A little more effort!

Second Bond Election

- More parent involvement
- Dialogue and help from Boards.
- Anonymous donor
- Service Center omitted
- Lowered mileage to .29 mil
\$25,350,000



Kalamazoo RESA Bond Proposal

Answer community questions...

- Explain the program
- Concerns and benefits
- Overcrowded
- What will the new facility provide that cannot be accomplished now?
- Be specific – transparent!
- What will this cost me?
- What will you do with the old building?



Kalamazoo RESA Bond Proposal

"This modest bond proposal will allow Kalamazoo RESA to continue to offer important, collaborative and cost-efficient programs that serve all of the students and staff in Kalamazoo County for years to come."

- Dr. W. Craig Misner,
Superintendent



Education and Spatial Strategies

- Completely accessible
- Unique ways to teach mobility
- Building “models” a community:
 - Flexible spaces
 - Gradually increases independence
- Sensory-sensitive



Programming

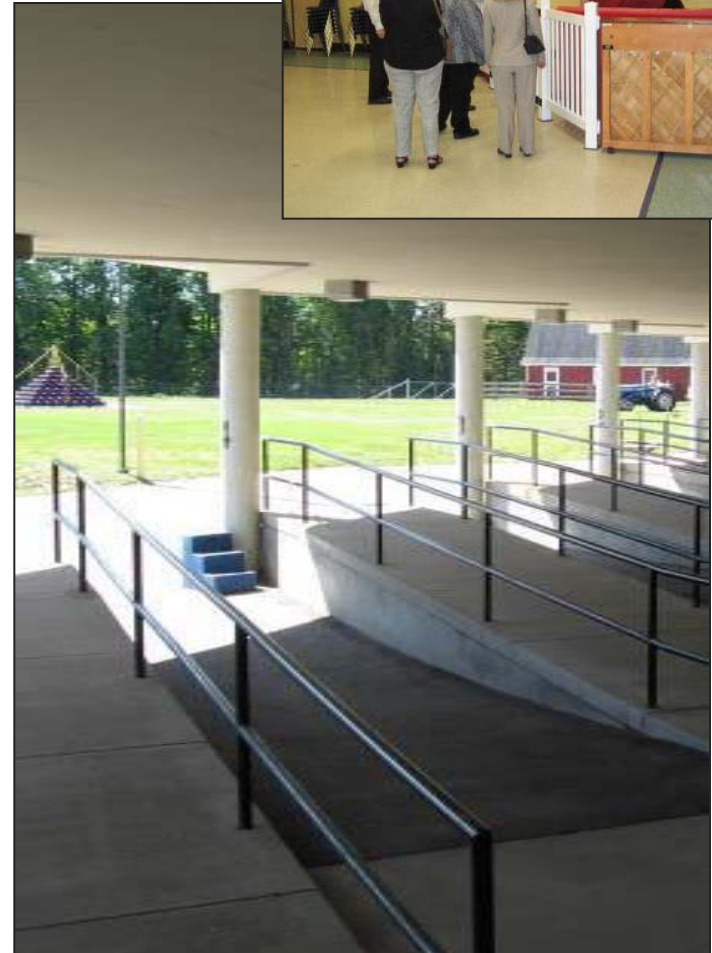
Preliminary Budget

PROPOSED PROGRAM

Description	Quan.	S.F.	Sub-Total	Area Total	Cost / SF	Extension
CLASSROOM						
Sm. classroom - type1	12	1,000	12,000		145	\$1,740,000
Lg. classroom - type 2	12	1,200	14,400		145	\$2,088,000
Toilet / change (shared)	12	300	3,600		175	\$630,000
Kit or sm group (shared)	12	160	1,920		160	\$307,200
Break out room (shared)	12	320	3,840		145	\$556,800
Supply room (shared)	12	160	1,920		120	\$230,400
REACH room (incl.)	-	1,200	-		145	\$0
				37,680		

Research

- Photograph the things that you like (and don't like)
- Create a "common understanding" first
- Draw something only when everyone can already visualize the idea
- Keep staff updated



Research

- Off-site workshops
- Materials
- Patterns and Colors
- Hierarchy of spaces and activities (parallels community experience)
- Encourage independence



Research

- **Site Visits:**
 - Ottawa Area Center ISD
 - Lincoln Campus, Kent ISD
 - Countryside Elementary
 - Van Buren ISD
 - Bloomfield Hills
- **Virtual Tours** – go online



Site Development Plan:



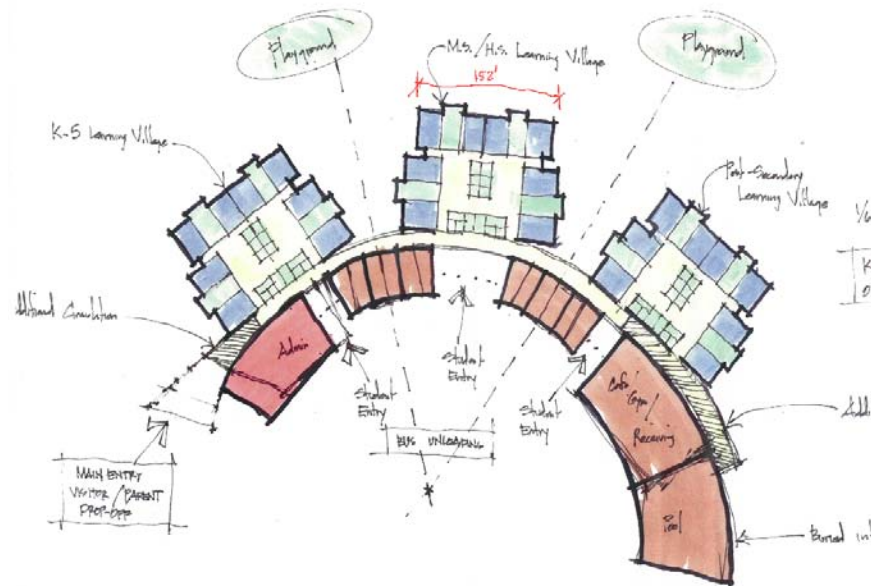
- Existing 70 acre site

Spatial Organization

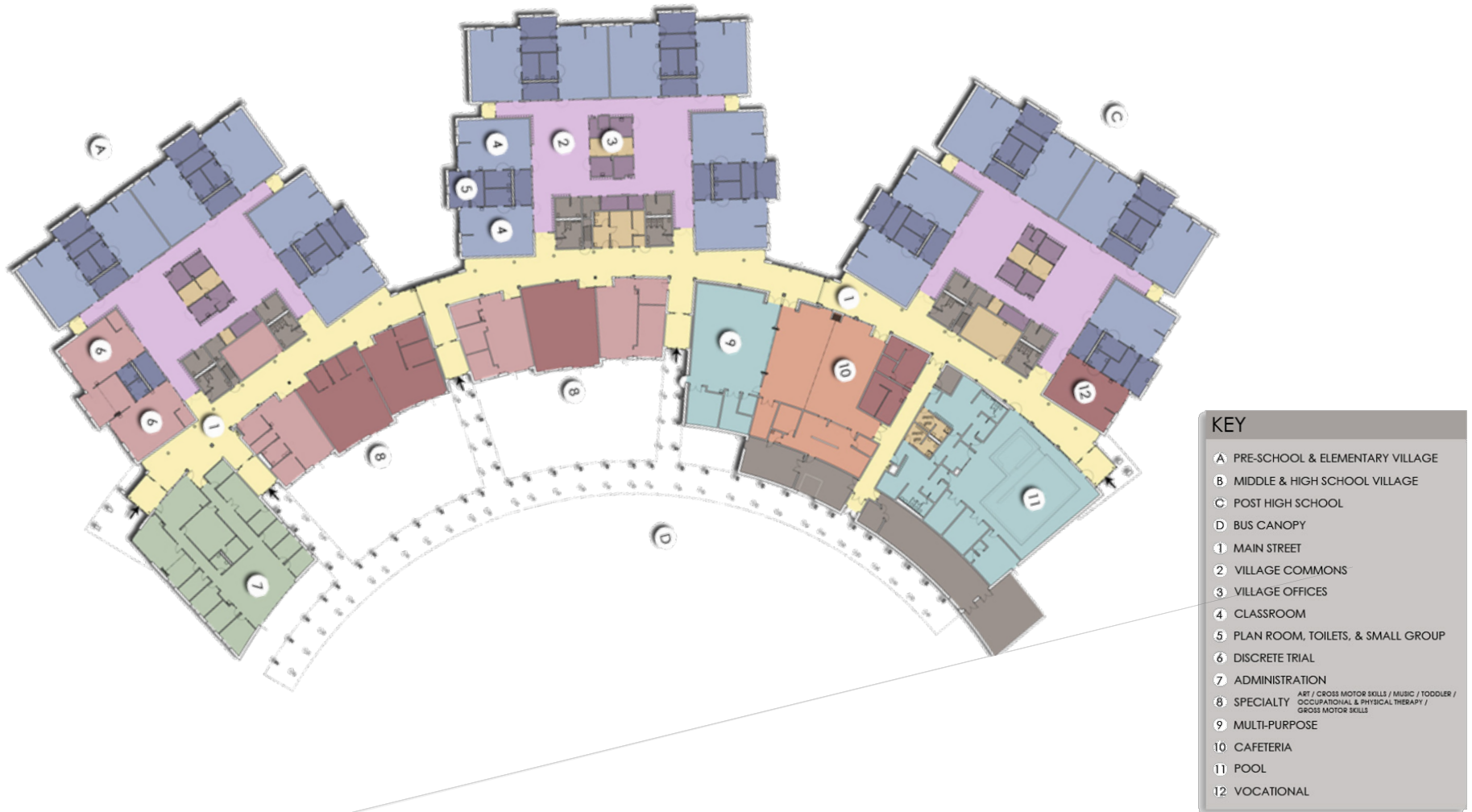
Learning Environment

Vision: A community without barriers.

- 3 intimate “villages”
- Specialty spaces, main street, village commons, classroom “homes”
- Simulates real world conditions
- Freedom & Security



Floor Plan



Villages

Learning Environment

Mission: We are an innovative school dedicated to developing independence in our students.

Each Village Has:

- 2 neighborhoods / 4 classrooms
- Color identity - wayfinding
- Usable circulation
- Natural daylight
- Flexible with controls!
- Paired classrooms with shared space (learning, office, storage)
- Village Square (office, kitchen, storage)



Exterior Materials

Physical Environment

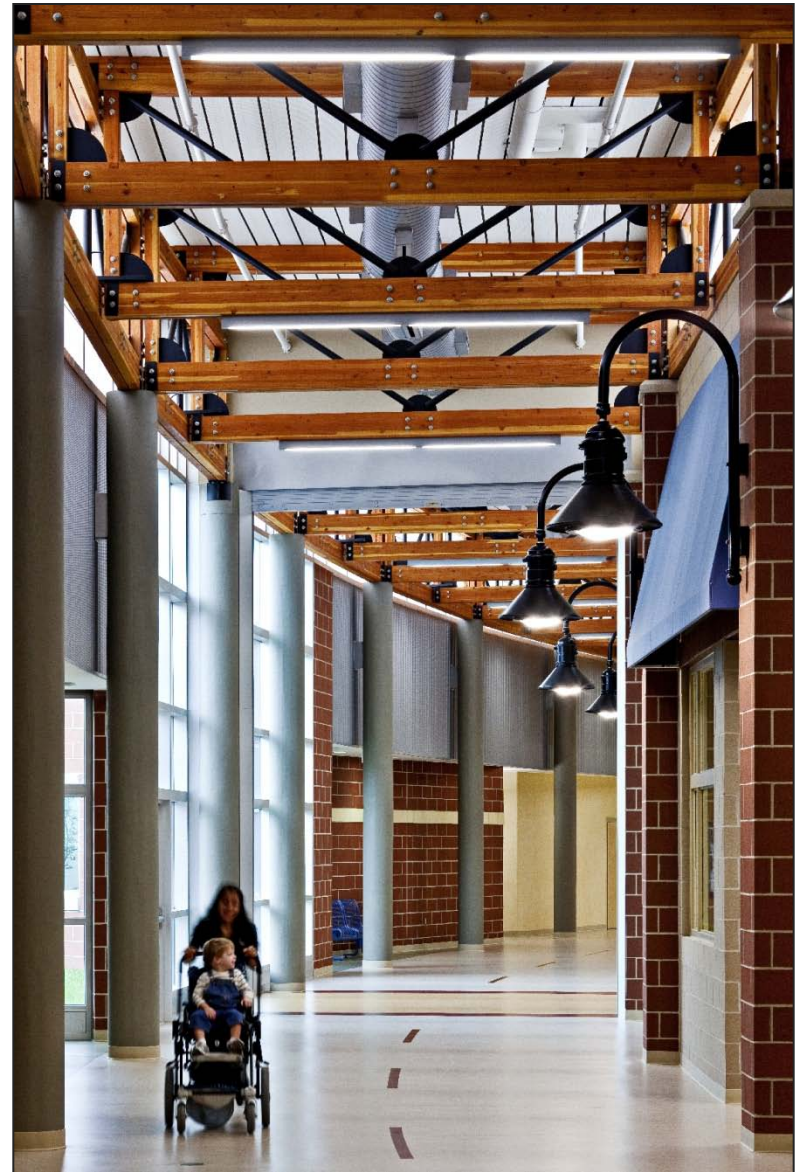
- Sensitivity to a variety of developmental needs
- Allows students to progress at their individual rates
- High quality, county-wide programs
- Source of pride
- Safety & Security



Material Selections

Physical Environment:

- Durable, tactile, visual
- Daylight clerestory
- Timber trusses, oversized brick, colorful panels
- Acoustics
- Easy wayfinding
- Linoleum flooring
- Gross motor activities
- “Storefronts” & “Main Street”





Village Commons



Overhead Rail System



Classroom



Motor Depot



Occupational Therapy



Exterior of Villages



Bus Canopy





Cost Summary

Site Work

\$1.9 million

- Signage, play equipment, earthwork, paving, concrete, fencing, landscaping, lighting

Building

\$16.7 million

Soft Costs

\$4.3 million

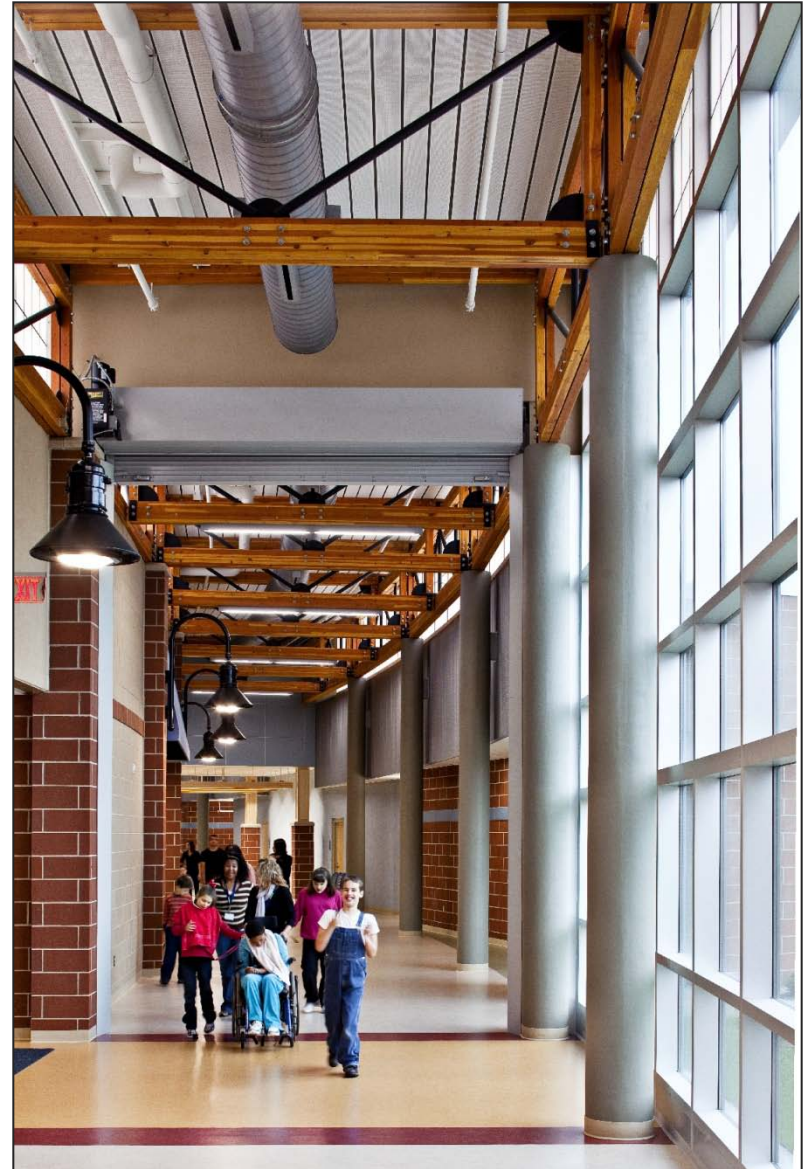
- Professional fees, reimbursables, furnishings, equipment, technology, election expenses, owner's representative

TOTALS

\$22.9 million

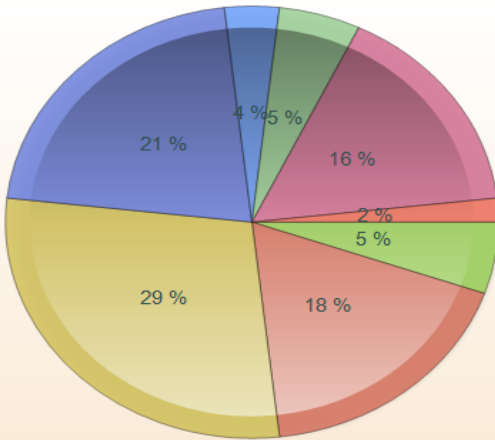
What We Learned

- Communicate and educate
- Mobilize parents
- Engage the community:
 - Donors, media coverage, school boards, voters
- “Learn from the kids”
- Owner participation



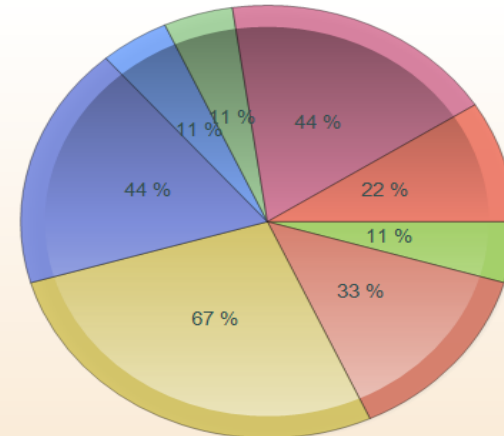
Building Features

Based on your observations, what feature of our building has had the largest positive impact on your students?



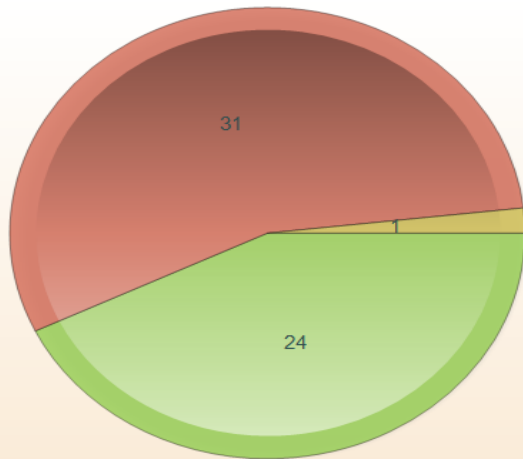
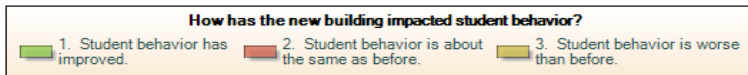
Faculty and Staff

What feature of our new school are you most excited about for your child/young adult?

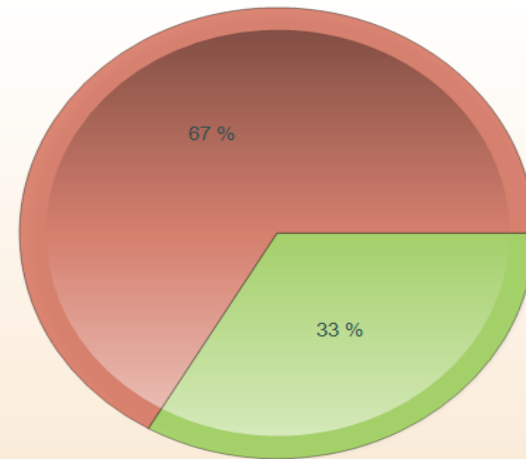
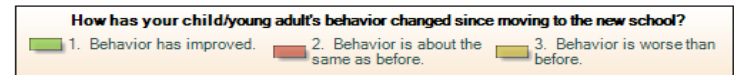


Parents

Impact on Student Behavior



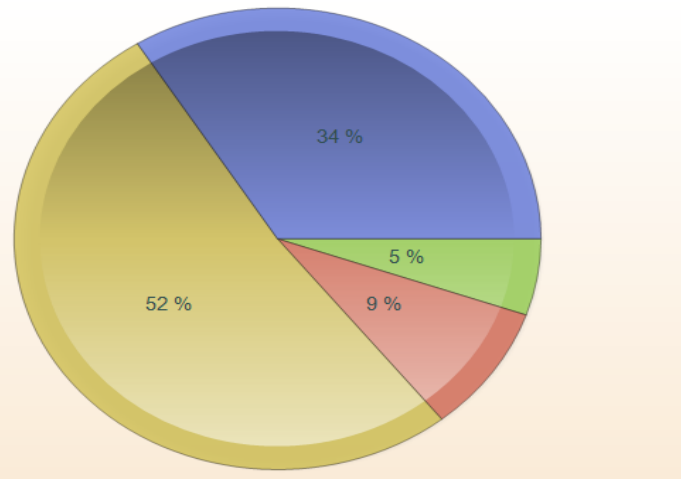
Faculty and Staff



Parents

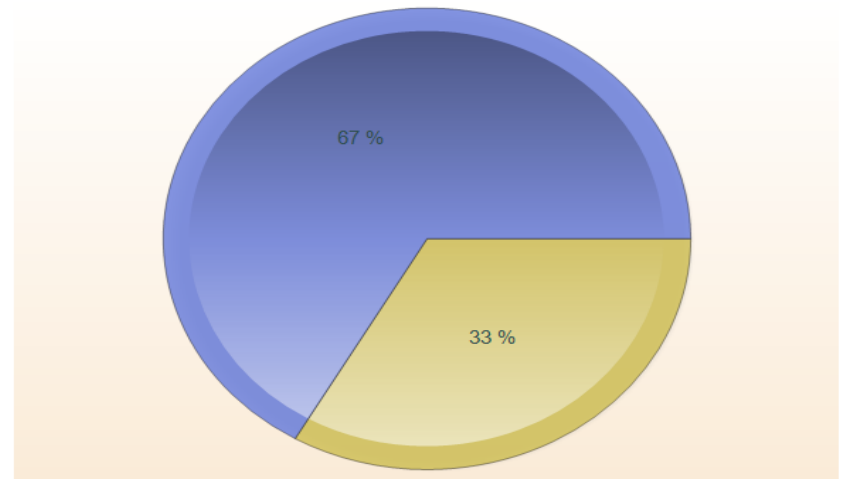
Flexibility

How would you rate flexibility of the learning spaces available to students?



Faculty and Staff

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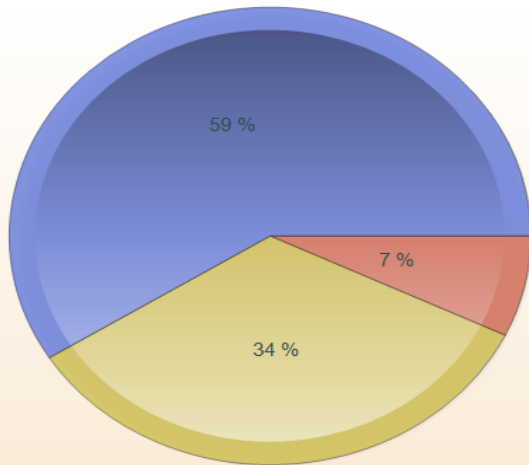


Parents

Track System

How would you rate the track system for students with physical impairments?

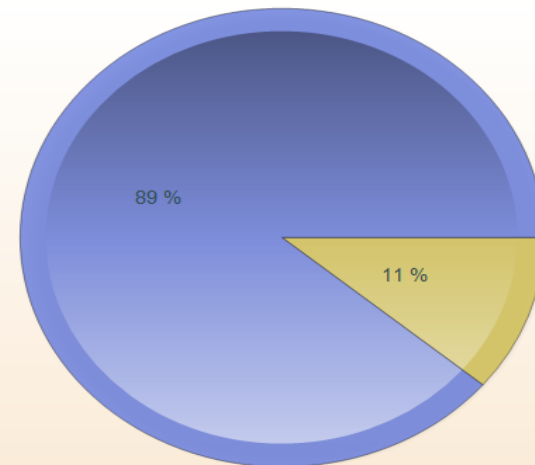
Poor Fair Good Excellent



Faculty and Staff

How would you rate the track system for students with physical impairments?

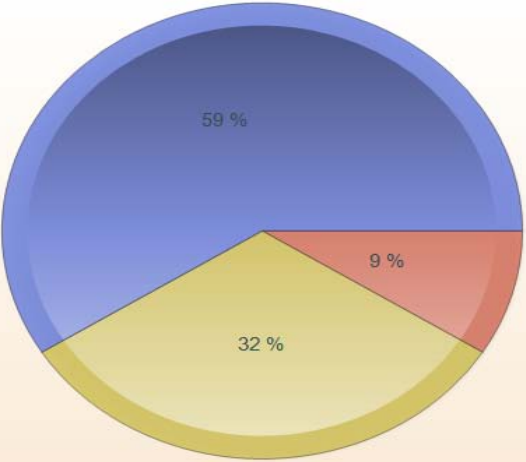
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Parents

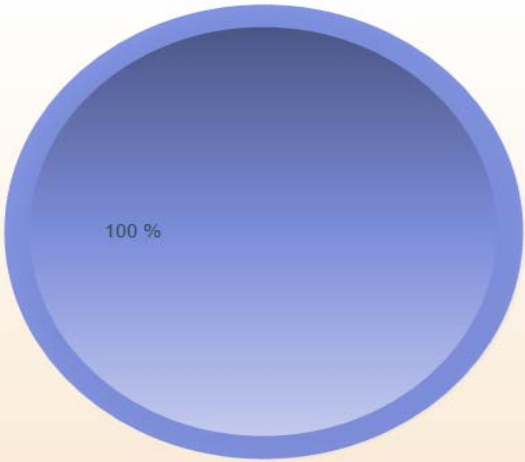
Technology

How would you rate the technology (student and staff)?



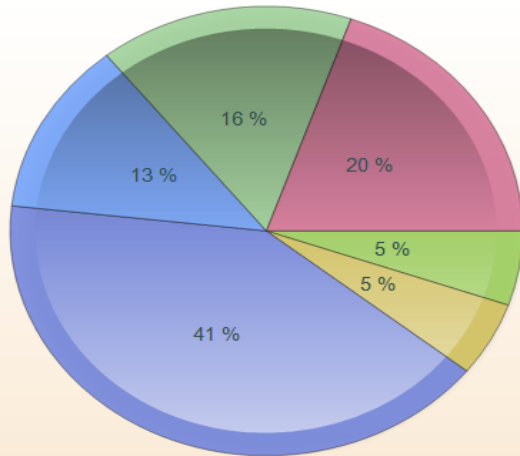
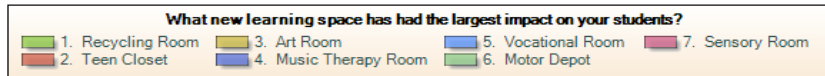
Faculty and Staff

How would you rate the technology?

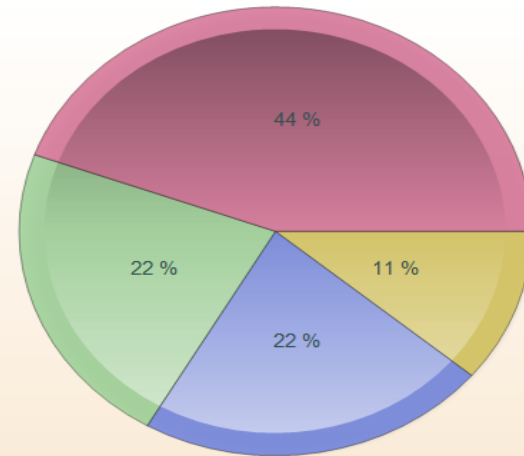
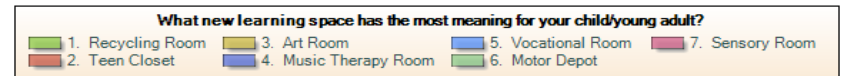


Parents

Learning Space



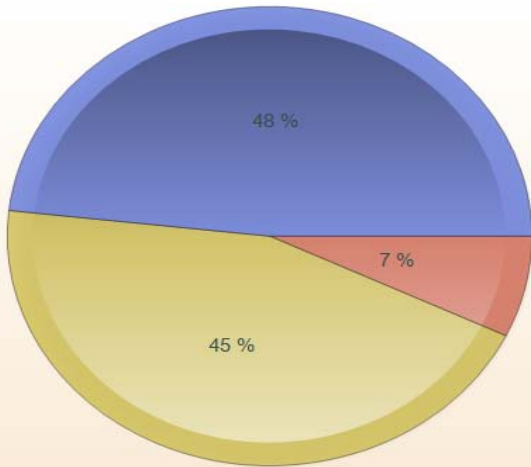
Faculty and Staff



Parents

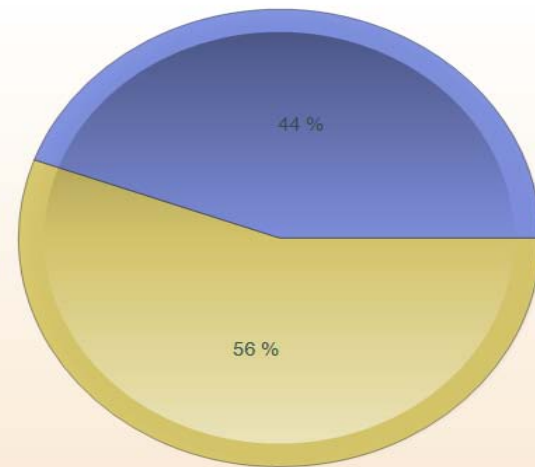
Acoustics

How would you rate the acoustics in the building?



Faculty and Staff

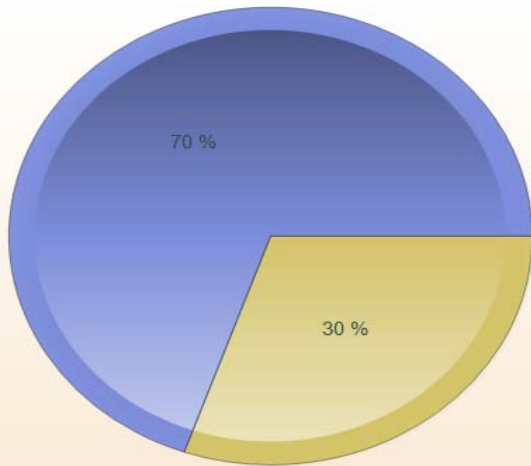
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Parents

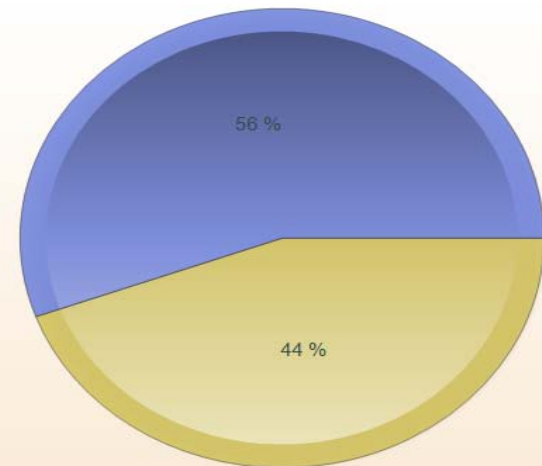
Lighting

How would you rate the lighting in the building?



Faculty and Staff

How would you rate the lighting in the building?



Parents



“Our family is very happy to be part of something so great...”

“Many students seem to be calmer...happier...”

“What a wonderful design and welcoming environment!”

Questions....

“....this experience has been, well, **liberating**...”

“I love seeing the kids that I used to work with walk freely, smiling and laughing...the track system is impressive.”