

Arlington High School

Arlington, Massachusetts

HMFH ARCHITECTS

James D. MacConnell Award 2026

Executive Summary

Arlington High School embodies the town's commitment to educational excellence and the well-being of future generations while expressing its purpose as a center of its community. From the earliest planning efforts, it was conceived as **a school that would foster meaningful connections between people and place and strengthen the spirit of the Arlington community.**

The school developed through a deeply inclusive process that coalesced educational, environmental, and community goals.

The building helps forge **strong connections within the school community** by supporting the whole child and creating a culture of belonging. As a comprehensive high school, it prepares learners for college and career pathways with robust academics and a variety of hands-on programs.

AHS fosters **connections to its site and the environment** by extending learning well beyond the walls of the school to a variety of outdoor environments that enhance the curriculum and community-focused offerings.

And as a civic resource, Arlington High School reinforces **connections and partnerships with families and residents through the community programs it supports**.

Post-occupancy data demonstrates the building's success in strengthening a sense of belonging, facilitating a more robust interdisciplinary curriculum, and delivering deep community value.

> *This building represents Arlington's educational vision; to be an equitable educational community where all learners feel a sense of belonging, experience growth and joy, and are empowered to shape their own futures and contribute to a better world.*
>
> ELIZABETH HOMAN, SUPERINTENDENT, ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS





Scope of Work and Budget

Enrollment:
1,755 students

Building size:
408,590 sf

Site size:
22 acres

Construction:
4-phase

Construction cost:
$234 million

Completion date:
February 2025

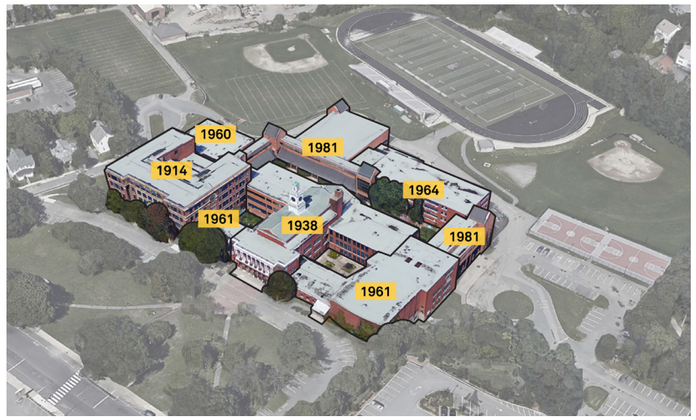
Sustainability:
LEED Platinum certified

A Community Deeply Invested in Education

The Town of Arlington, Massachusetts is located on land originally inhabited by the Massachusett tribe. Colonists settled in the village known as Menotomy in 1635, which was later given the name Arlington in honor of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery. It developed as a thriving agricultural and mill town; Mill Brook once had seven mills operating on it and Spy Pond was a center of the ice industry. **Education has been foundational to the community** since the town's founding as evidenced by the petitioning of the village's taxpayers in 1688 to build a school before they even had a meetinghouse.

Today, Arlington is a diverse community of about 46,000 residents located within Boston's metropolitan area, six miles northwest of the city. Its convenient access to job opportunities in Boston and Cambridge attracts large numbers of homebuyers and renters and its high-performing school district has consistently ranked among the top schools in the nation on the U.S. News & World Report and Newsweek.

In 1914, the 6-story high school, later known as Fusco House, was built on its site fronting Massachusetts Avenue. Throughout the 20th century, it underwent multiple expansions and renovations driven by increasing enrollment. The result was a rabbit warren of sprawling academic spaces, a mile and a half of corridors, 25 separate entrances/exits in the building, and 68 individual exterior doors, all of which hindered the ability of staff to monitor and ensure a safe and secure environment.

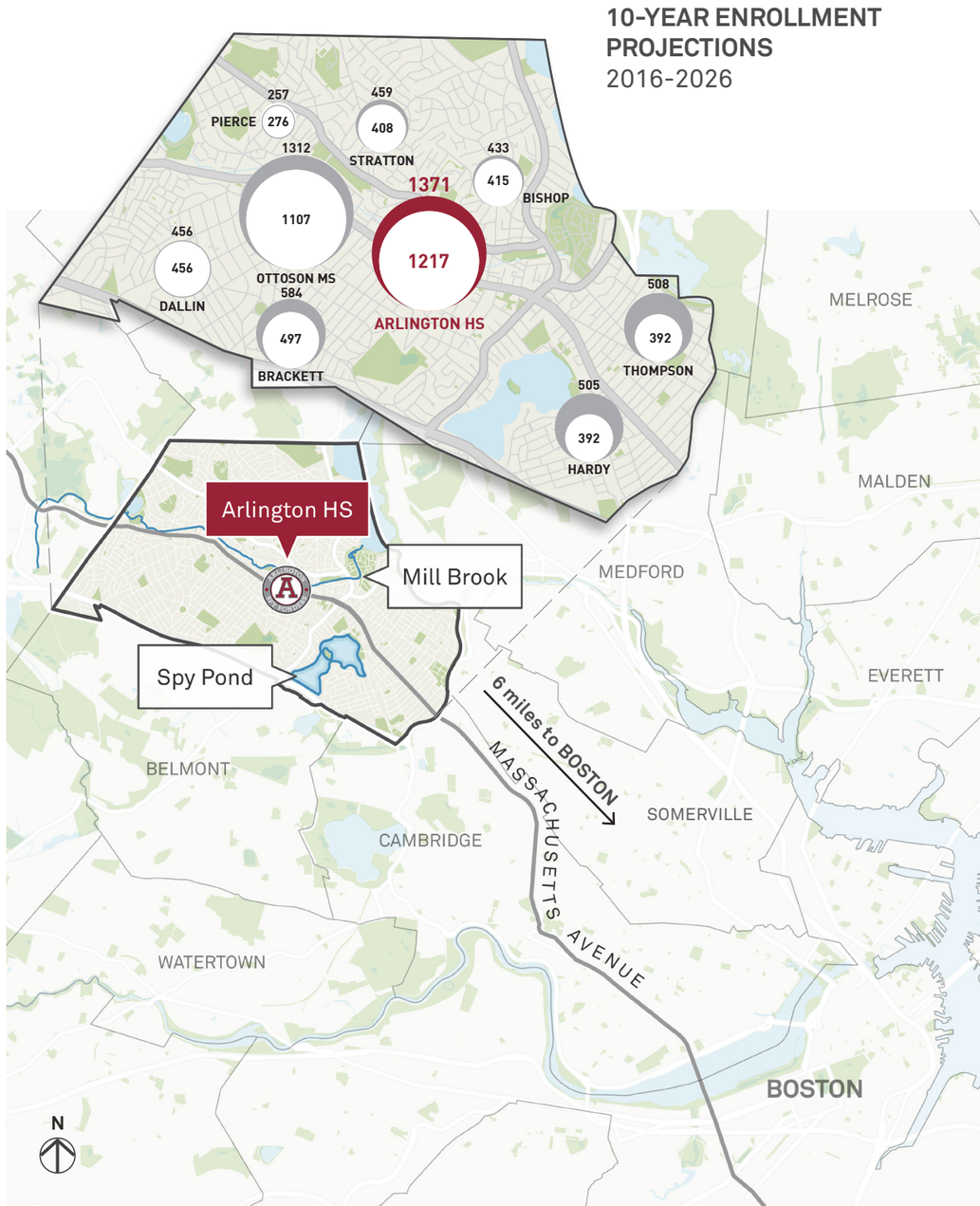


In the fall of 2013, the high school received a 'warning' status for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges citing the facility's limitations on the ability of staff to implement the curriculum, undersized and inadequate classrooms that interfered with instruction, and a lack of collaborative spaces among other issues. An assessment revealed that Arlington was still managing to excel in academic quality—both in terms of high achievement and improvements in academy equity—but **Arlington needed a facility that enhanced rather than hampered continued academic success.**

With growing enrollments across all grade levels, the district completed an assessment of its school buildings and comprehensive planning effort to upgrade its facilities and restore civic pride in the town's educational buildings. Additionally, the district completed a study of the high school to support its application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority, a quasi-independent government authority. In 2016 the high school was accepted into the MSBA's core program, a partnership that would provide substantial funding for the school's reconstruction from the MSBA's dedicated revenue stream (one penny of the state's 6.25% sales tax).

When the project kicked off, school administrators and faculty had already spent four years visiting schools, thinking about the future of learning, and engaging community groups to explore current and future educational needs.

> The community was deeply invested in providing a future-forward, collaborative, hands-on learning environment to serve generations to come.



A Robust Community Engagement Process

A broad range of stakeholders participated throughout the visioning, design, and construction process. To be as inclusive of everyone in the community as possible, outreach and engagement strategies included in-person visioning workshops, town-wide surveys, community forums, an e-bulletin that was distributed to over 900 subscribers, Facebook live video tours, sustainability workshops, a booth at Arlington's annual Town Days, tours of other schools, informational sessions at the Senior Center, and tours of the existing Arlington High School. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the same robust engagement process shifted online through Zoom meetings and information was frequently shared on the Arlington High School building project page and through social media.

The community engagement process assured that **all in the community felt a sense of ownership and investment in the project.** The town passed a debt exclusion override in support of the new high school in June 2019 by a 77% majority.

Project Stakeholders

- Teachers
- Administrators
- School Staff
- Students
- Parents
- Adult Education Beneficiaries
- Community Members
- School Building Committee
- School Committee
- Town Manager

School Building Committee Subcommittees

- Communications Subcommittee
- Finance Subcommittee
- Interiors Subcommittee
- Landscape/ Exteriors Subcommittee
- Security Subcommittee
- Sustainability Subcommittee
- Temporary/ Phasing Subcommittee

Town Entities

- Arlington Select Board
- Climate & Resiliency Planning Department
- Conservation Commission
- DEI Department
- Department of Public Works
- Disability Commission
- Engineering Department
- Facilities Department
- Finance Committee
- Fire Department
- Inspectional Services
- Information Technology Department
- Natural Resources Department & Tree Warden
- Police Department
- Purchasing Department
- Recreation Department
- Recycling, Trash & Composting Department
- Town Counsel
- Traffic & Parking Department
- Zoning Board

400+ Meetings & Events

- **128** School Building Committee meetings
- **10** Public tours
- **5** Town Days
- **274** Subcommittee meetings
- **3** Visioning sessions
- **2** Senior Center info sessions
- **15** Community forums
- **3** Community-wide surveys



Arlington Town Day



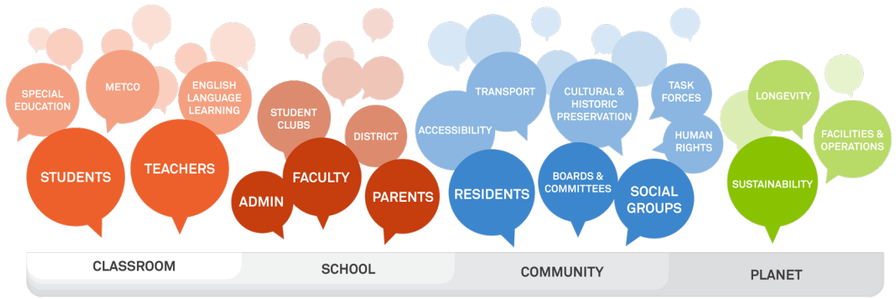
Community meeting


Community forum


Sustainability workshop

An Inclusive Visioning Process

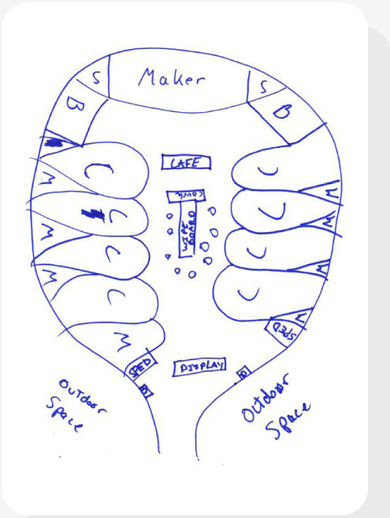
A diversity of voices and stakeholders in the early planning process and visioning sessions allowed for meaningful contribution and different perspectives. Three visioning workshops were held with an Educational Working Group consisting of approximately 65 participants including Arlington Public Schools leadership, Arlington High School administrators, teachers, students, parents, political representatives, and community partners. Ensuring an inclusive process was paramount to building public support for the project.





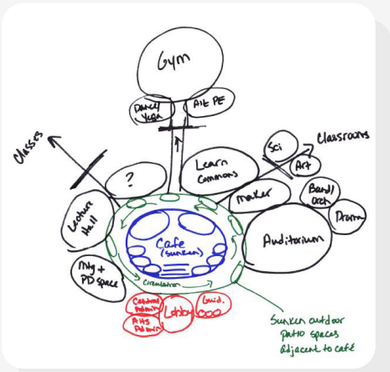
Three workshops and visioning sessions, each with different focus topics, centered around the question:

> **“What does teaching and learning look like for Arlington in the future?”**



Educational Visioning Workshop One focus topics:

- Priority goals for the renovated and/or new facility
- 21st-century teaching and learning practices taking place at AHS and nationally
- Priority programs and initiatives that are currently in practice within Arlington High School, as well as envisioned for the future
- Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Goals (SCOG Analysis) associated with Arlington Public Schools’ current academic programs as well as the vision for the renovated and/or new facility

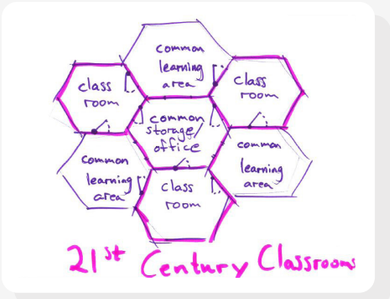


Educational Visioning Workshop Two focus topics:

- 21st-century design patterns 1.0 that innovative schools throughout the country have put into practice in order to make their forward-thinking learning goals come alive on the level of facility design
- Guiding principles 1.0 for design of the renovated and/or new facility

Educational Visioning Workshop Three focus topics:

- Blue sky ideas for the renovated and/or new facility
- Key spaces and adjacencies for the renovated and/or new facility
- Bubble and adjacency diagramming for the renovated and/or new facility

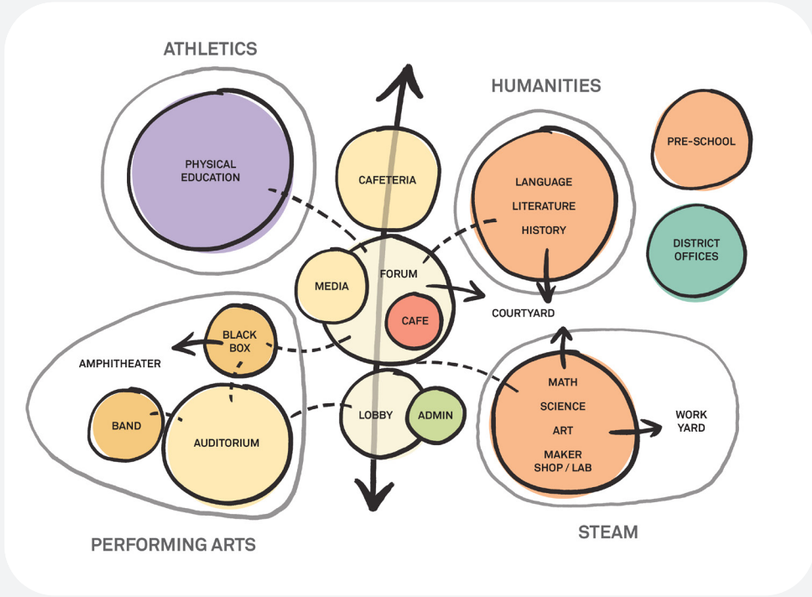


Additionally, the **entire faculty of Arlington High School** participated in a two-hour workshop in which they were introduced to the educational visioning process and the work of the EWG, as well as shared their priority goals and design patterns for the renovated and/or new AHS facility.

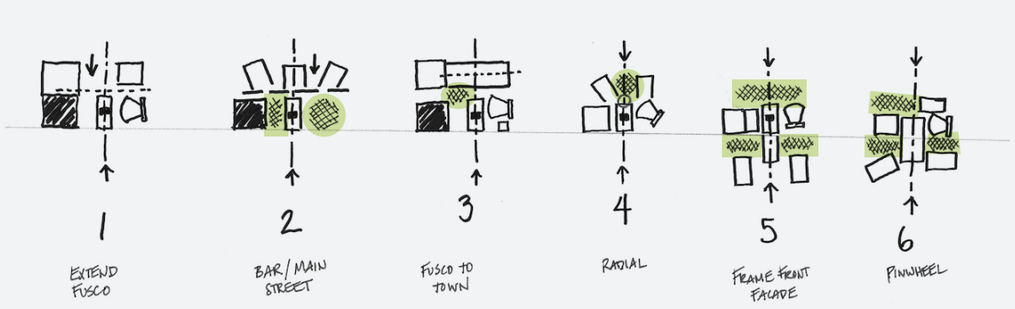
The visioning process resulted in six primary goals which became the **Guiding Principles for the new Arlington High School**:

- Teach the “whole” child
- Support inquiry-based, student-centered learning
- Foster school community & promote social-emotional health and well-being
- Design the school as a community hub
- Provide physical and programmatic flexibility
- Create a sustainable, resilient building



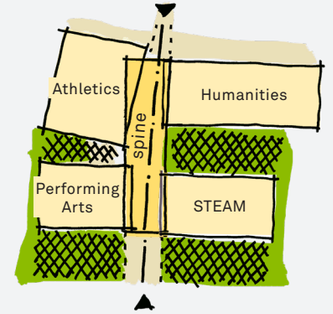


The six guiding principles informed the space program which was further developed through meetings with faculty. Discussions helped define the optimal adjacencies that would strengthen teaching methodologies today and into the future.



The building’s organization evolved through an iterative design process that considered not only the program and desired adjacencies, but how to build on a site occupied by approximately 2,000 people. Additionally, each footprint was developed and analyzed based on its ability to maximize learning opportunities outdoors, provide views and daylight, and strengthen the connection to the site.

FINAL



The final organizational strategy houses community spaces in a central ‘spine’ with four programmatic wings for athletics, humanities, performing arts, and STEAM.

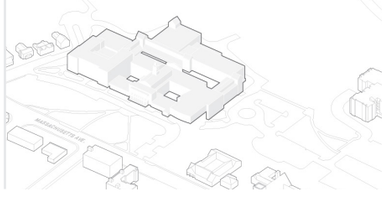
Assets

- Community pride in educational system
- Invested community that had developed an educational program and forward-looking vision
- Prominent, central site along Massachusetts Avenue
- Public green space
- Town commitment to a fossil-fuel-free future

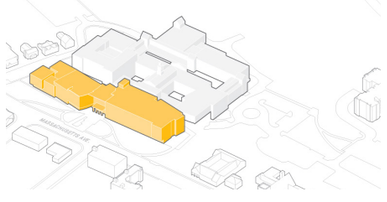
Challenges

- 4-phase occupied construction while maintaining the uninterrupted daily operations of the school and community programs
- 25’ grade change on site, with a brook (subsurface and above ground), wetlands, and contaminated soils
- Create an environment that fosters connections between the school and community, within the school community, and to the natural environment
- Design for flexibility to meet the current educational program and adapt to evolving pedagogy
- Maximize available funding: greatest educational impact and highest/best use of taxpayer and MSBA funds
- Reinforce the school’s strong civic presence and its engagement with the community

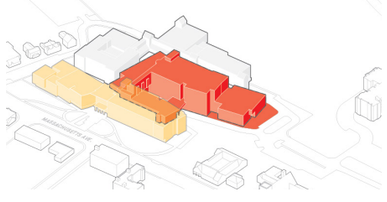




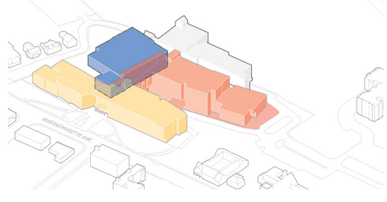
Performing arts wing
STEAM wing



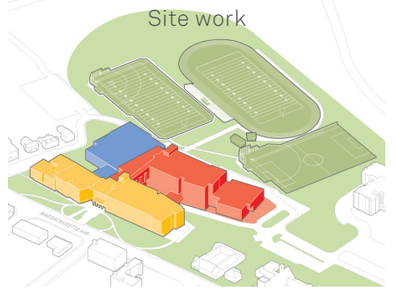
Humanities wing



Athletics wing
Black box theater



Site work



Strengthening Civic Purpose and Presence

From the outset, Arlington's high school was designed to strengthen its long-standing role as a community resource. Its civic presence and role is reinforced by its prominent, central location in town. The building itself is home to significant community programs and many civic resources are within walking distance:

- Arlington Community Education (ACE) is an educational partner that makes use of the school building during off hours to provide enrichment offerings including over 600 different classes to Arlington students and the community
- The school district administration offices occupy a portion of the school building with their own dedicated entrance and clear signage
- Menotomy Preschool, the town's integrated program for children aged 3-5 is integrated within the high school with its own child-scaled play space and entry
- LABBB Educational Collaborative, a special education collaborative program for the Lexington, Arlington, Burlington, Bedford, and Belmont School Districts is housed in the school
- The theater and gyms are located in the school and can be secured separately from the academic spaces for community performances and athletic events

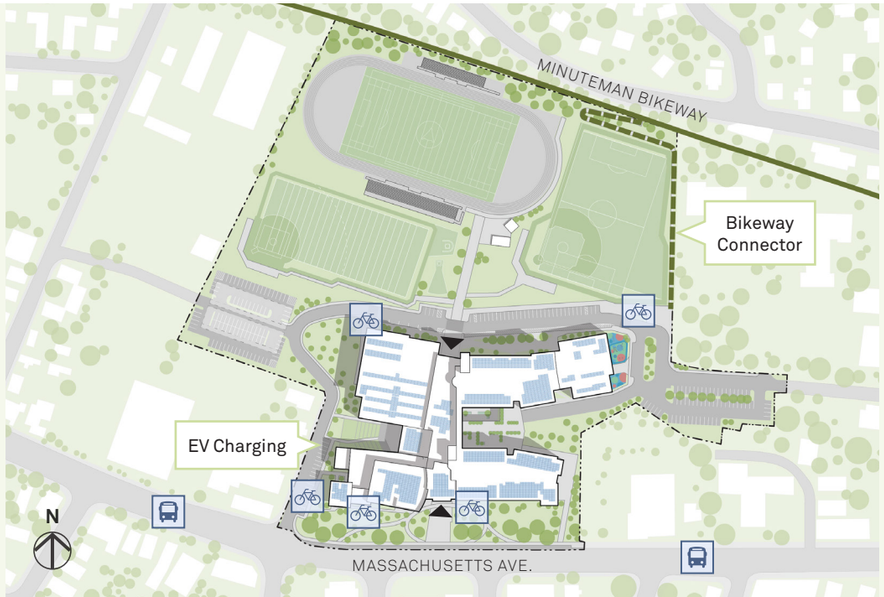


Many students and community members bike, take public buses, or walk to the school from the residential neighborhoods surrounding the commercial area along Massachusetts Avenue. A new connection from the school's site to the Minuteman Bikeway—a well-used transit corridor which links the towns of Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and Cambridge—connects the high school to the town's residential neighborhoods as well as the greater community and region.

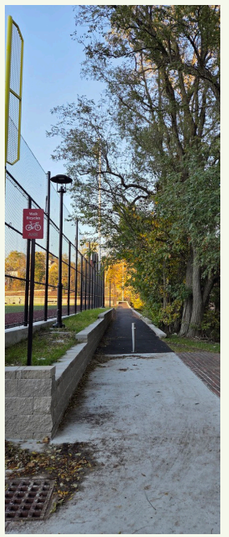
Walk score **81**

Transit score **46**

Bike score **75**



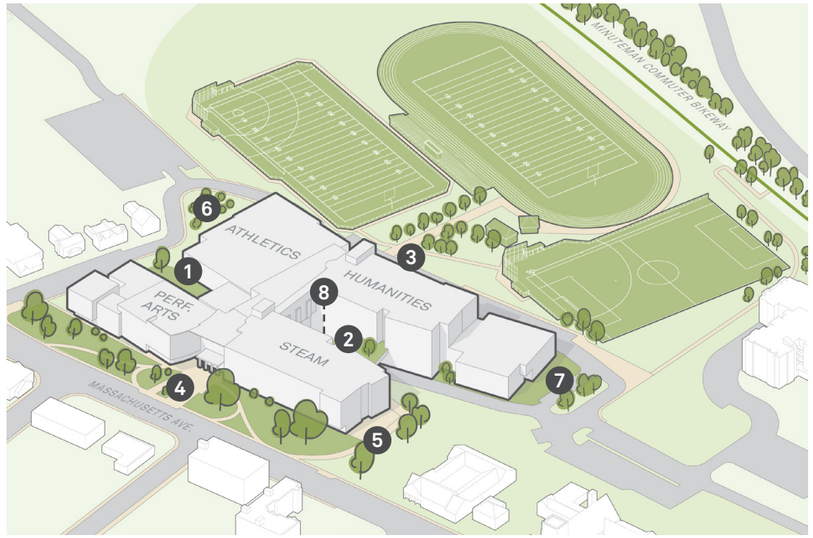






Connection to the Site and Natural Environment

As a centrally-located resource, the school's site is purposefully programmed to foster a deep sense of place, enhance the school's connection to the community, enrich student-centered learning, and create a more ecologically diverse landscape.



1. An amphitheater with tiered seating and an outdoor stage with catenary and theatrical lighting provides space for music practice, performances, and community events like movie nights
2. A learning courtyard between the STEAM and humanities wings contains outdoor classrooms and is connected both to the central spine by an operable wall as well as directly to art classrooms
3. A public plaza with benches and native plantings at the field entrance provides access to the district offices and space for students to socialize
4. The front green is used at all hours of the day by students and the community alike
5. A paved work yard is accessible from the maker shop for large-scale projects and hands-on work
6. A pollinator garden increases biodiversity on site and contains native plantings that slow and clean stormwater runoff before it filters into Mill Brook and the Mystic River watershed
7. Two secure play areas and a plaza with a sculptural tree defines the entry to the preschool
8. A lower courtyard with tables and plantings off the cafeteria provides space for outdoor dining and quiet or collaborative work


Amphitheater


Field entrance and plaza


Preschool play areas


Learning courtyard


Public green along Mass. Ave.

The Front Green

The existing school's 22-acre site was primarily defined by asphalt and mulched areas. The front green—the only significant open space along the length of Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington—was separated from the school by a drive and parking spaces, and the lack of quality or welcoming outdoor environments meant students did not socialize before or after school; they immediately dispersed at the bell.

The siting of the new school and its intentional integration with the pedestrian-oriented green transformed it from an underutilized space into a lively, welcoming place for socialization, community use, and outdoor learning. The preservation of mature trees and the introduction of curvilinear paths, benches, bike racks, and native plantings creates an inviting and accessible approach to the Massachusetts Avenue entry and reinforces the school's broader connection to the community.

The green has seen a significant increase in use and is activated throughout the day by students and town residents alike, building a stronger sense of community and place.





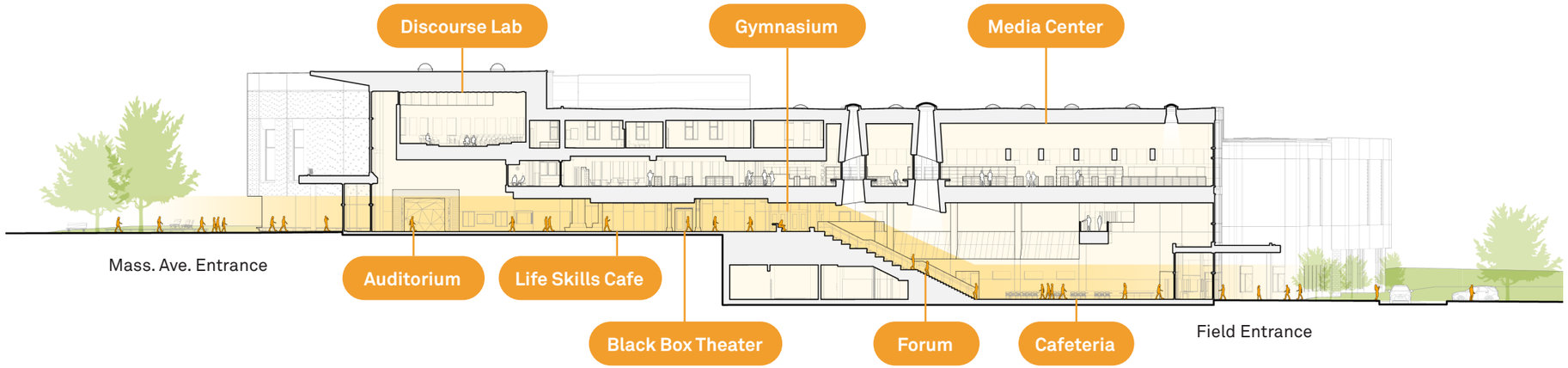


"The beautiful space in front of the new high school is an active community green and functions like a welcoming front yard for all town residents."

ARLINGTON RESIDENT

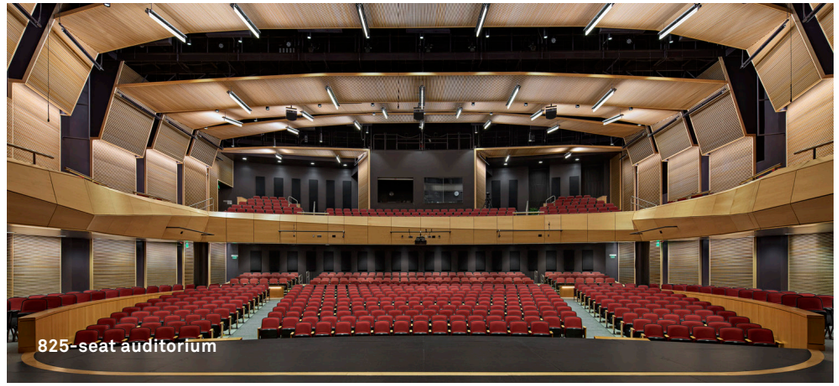
Center of Community: the Spine

The school's two entrances, an upper entrance from Massachusetts Avenue and lower entrance from the athletic fields, are connected by a central spine. As the physical heart of the school, the spine fosters community across all levels: it is a student center where all those within the school community interact; a pathway and connection through the school providing equitable access to community spaces from either of the school's entrances; and a hub of activity and services for Arlington residents and visitors.





The discourse lab is a 120-seat interdisciplinary center for scholarly discourse



825-seat auditorium



The student-run cafe provides refreshments for students and the community while providing valuable life skills education



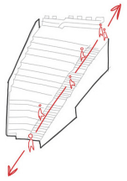
With varied and flexible furniture, the media center promotes different learning activities from quiet reading and focused study to collaborative work

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

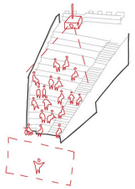
The forum in the spine is a functional and elegant design solution to the 25’ grade change on site while providing flexible space for a range of purposes including student dining and gathering, assemblies of single or multiple grades, staff meetings, and adult education programs. Accessible seating at the top and lower levels assures an equitable and inclusive educational environment.

Large lightwells harness daylight to support the regulation of circadian rhythms and student well-being, while programmable LED lighting allows the lightwells to function like a clock, changing colors on the hour.

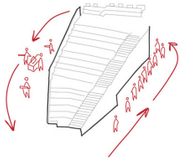
Circulation



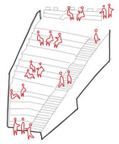
Assembly



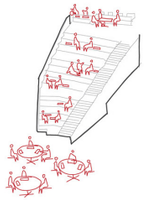
Servery Queueing



Social / Casual Hangout



Dining



Independent Studying



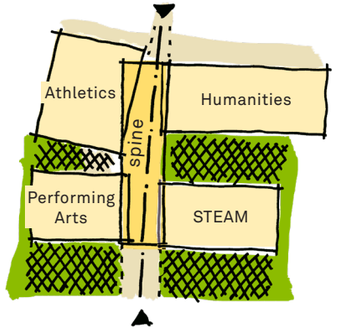












Four programmatic wings radiate from the spine:

STEAM: This wing contains math, science, the maker space and lab, art, and shared areas for collaboration, pin up, and large-scale projects.

Performing Arts: Fronting the green and Massachusetts Avenue, this wing houses significant community spaces like the auditorium for easy after-school access along with choral, band, production and practice rooms.

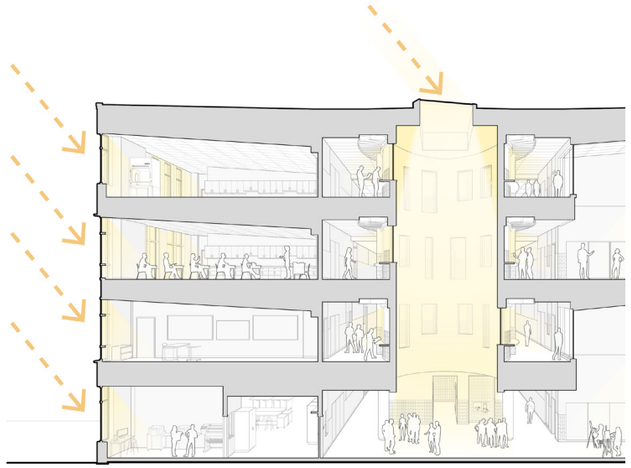
Humanities: English language arts, history, and world languages share a wing with centrally-located teacher planning rooms to strengthen a shared community among disciplines.

Athletics: With easy access to the fields entrance and plaza, this wing houses several gyms of different scales for student and community programs from indoor rock climbing to statewide athletic tournaments.



Multi-Story Lightwells

Multi-story lightwells penetrate academic wings and core community spaces to bring daylight deep into the school's compact and efficient footprint. Perimeter countertop workstations with built-in power provide breakout space for quiet, independent work.







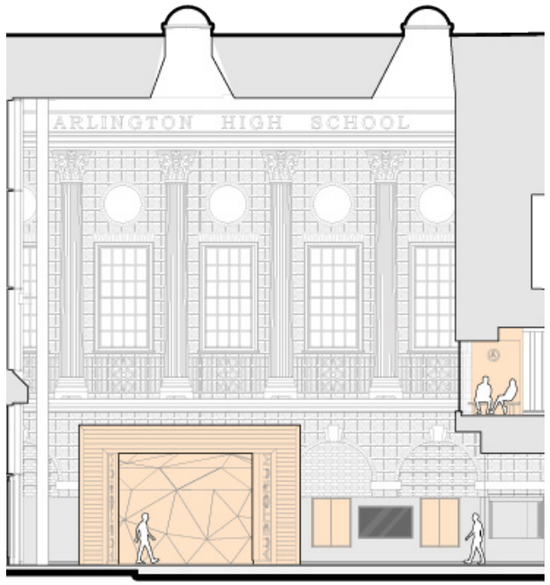
"I was initially struck by the use of natural light. I loved how open it made the new space feel. All the colors in the new building make it feel like a positive and energetic space!"

STUDENT, ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Evoking Arlington's History...

Arlington High School is designed as a contextual educational environment that evokes the history of its community and place. Through surveys early in the planning process, stakeholders articulated the importance of historic components from the original school building. In response, the AHS Building Committee Memorials Subcommittee collected and documented significant AHS historical artifacts from the original buildings, many of which have been physically incorporated in the new high school or are reflected in the design:

- A carved wood panel dating back to the early 1900s (part of the original high school's wood entry stair) is mounted on the wall of the lobby near the entrance to the black box theater and cafe
- The River of Hands mosaic incorporates the sculpted hands of over 200 AHS students and teachers and is on display in the 3rd floor corridor
- The "A" from the original auditorium's proscenium is on the 3rd floor balcony that overlooks the Massachusetts Avenue lobby
- A two-story drawing of the 1938 Collomb House facade defines the wall above the auditorium entry







The stone facade of the original 1914 AHS Fusco Building was preserved, restored, and now serves as the entrance to the black box theater, connecting generations of students to Arlington's history.



... and Building for Arlington's Future

As the largest municipal facility in Arlington, the all-electric, LEED Platinum certified high school exemplifies social and environmental responsibility and helps the town achieve its goal of reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. Additionally, the building acts as teacher connecting student learning to high performance building elements to help the next generation become stewards of their building, community, and environment.

> *"What may have seemed like a pipe dream a decade ago, this all-electric building is now a model in sustainability for the Arlington community and beyond, demonstrating that when the community comes together for a common cause it can reshape the future of the town for the better."*
>
> JIM FEENEY, ARLINGTON TOWN MANAGER

LEED PLATINUM — LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

A healthy environment is foundational to a child's education. AHS supports student wellness, growth, and development through a holistic approach to sustainability.

Energy produced from the PV arrays on the rooftop and over the parking lot reduces the building's energy use by over 30% from code.

AHS is one of the first municipal buildings in the state to use low-carbon concrete which contributes to an overall reduction of 9% in embodied carbon relative to the GBCI baseline.

The school incorporates red list free materials to reduce chemicals of concern and those that have Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), Health Product Declarations (HPDs), and Declare labels for transparency about each material's health impact.

Low-flow plumbing fixtures conserve over 660,000 gallons of water annually.



Graphic signage throughout the school highlights sustainable features where they appear, directly linking sustainability concepts to the everyday educational experience and creating impromptu teaching moments for students and visitors.

Right below your feet. . .
walk-off mats capture outdoor contaminants and prevent particulates from circulating in the air of the building. This improves **INDOOR AIR QUALITY** and **OCCUPANT COMFORT**.

IEQ (INDOOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY)

Now we're cooking!
The kitchen is completely powered by electricity which minimizes **CARBON EMISSIONS** and lowers the building's global warming potential (GWP), also known as its carbon footprint.

ENERGY



A window graphic illustrating the school's all electric mechanical systems ties into the curriculum and reinforces science and engineering concepts.



In the spine, a detailed building section provides an overview of the school's sustainable design strategies and how they advance Arlington's goal of carbon neutrality, reinforcing the building as a learning tool.

A College and Career-Focused Curriculum

AHS is a comprehensive high school that offers a full range of courses including Advanced Placement classes, college-prep tracks, and extracurricular activities. It has nine academic departments: English Language Arts, Mathematics, History, Science, World Languages, Physical Education, Performing Arts, Fine Arts, and Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS). In addition to the academic departments, the Special Education, English Language Learner, and Guidance departments provide specialized instruction and student support services.

VISION:

The educational program called for a building that would serve the whole child and foster connection and a sense of belonging. Key elements of the educational program include:

Teacher professionalism: rich classroom and departmental workspaces that support teacher expertise and community

Inquiry and collaboration: an interdisciplinary learning commons with research tools, technology, gathering, and breakout spaces

Creating and creativity: specialized spaces and technology for hands-on and applied learning, with areas for making, displaying, and storing work

Social-emotional support: centralized and distributed student support spaces, access to nature, and welcoming areas

Inclusive and engaged community: flexible spaces for school-wide gatherings that also serve as community resources

The school's design reinforces inquiry, collaboration, and creativity through the idea that learning happens everywhere. Project areas at the end of each academic floor provide flexible space for independent or group work, teacher collaboration, or one-on-one support. Movable and varied furniture helps build an inclusive community where students find and can adapt their space to suit their academic purpose.







Real-World Skills and Authentic Learning

The vision for an Arlington High School student as a learner is one who can work independently and collaboratively; analyze and synthesize information from a variety of sources; problem solve by creating; develop original work; and apply knowledge and understanding to their everyday life across content areas.

AHS fosters student-centered learning through a wide range of hands-on programs. Spaces with seamlessly integrated infrastructure, hanging electrical grids, and an array of tools facilitate applied learning through the STEAM-based curriculum; encourage students to participate in design thinking activities; and allow them to create in subject areas including ceramics, metalworking, fashion design, woodworking, culinary arts, interior design, filmmaking, animation, digital photography, and engineering.

All students take at least a year of art focused on creation either through the Visual or Performing Arts department. The Visual Arts department offers courses that span a variety of traditional and digital media, two and three-dimensional art forms, and industrial arts to encourage students to explore and strengthen their creativity and problem solving skills. The project-based curriculum is designed to help students make expressive, personal, and original work and to advance social justice through the arts.

By participating in these courses, students can earn a STEAM design thinking certificate which represents the integration of art and design thinking across disciplines and courses. Additionally, students can do real, experiential work at Menotomy Preschool, culminating in a certification in early childhood education.

> *"The arts and engineering programs have seen a real explosion since we moved into the STEAM wing. We have expanded programming and collaboration, and we are very excited about the opportunities for design thinking that the makerspace and STEAM wing have provided."*
>
> NATHAN MUEHLEISEN, MAKER SPACE / WOODWORKING INSTRUCTOR









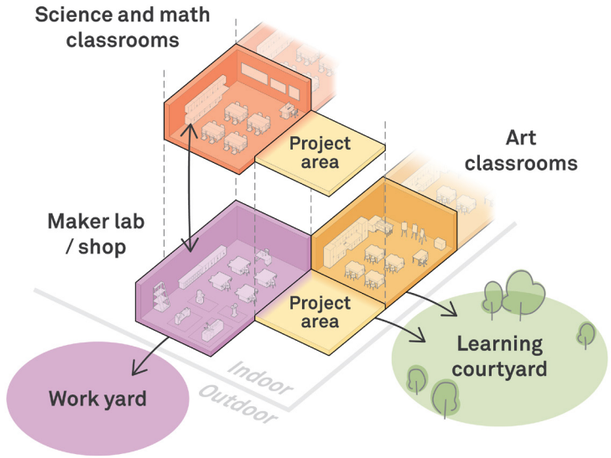




Supporting an Interdisciplinary Curriculum

To support greater interdisciplinary collaboration, arts, engineering, fabrication, and design share adjacencies in the heart of the STEAM wing. The proximity of these programs facilitates design thinking and making, allowing students to deeply explore a problem and work collaboratively across disciplines to iterate, problem solve, and develop solutions.

The maker shop, which houses advanced tools for creation, is a shared resource center allowing students to move easily from drafting in the adjacent maker lab or working in art rooms to the shop for production and project work. Additionally, math and science classroom-based concepts can be reinforced through hands-on work, creating authentic, real-world learning experiences.





> *"My arts department is not only working together, but re-writing the entire curriculum together! All arts department teachers are adjacent to one another and collaborating on integrated curriculums for their classes."*
>
> MATTHEW JANGER, PRINCIPAL







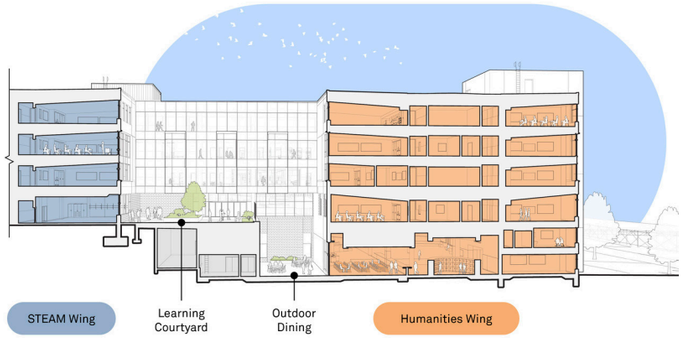


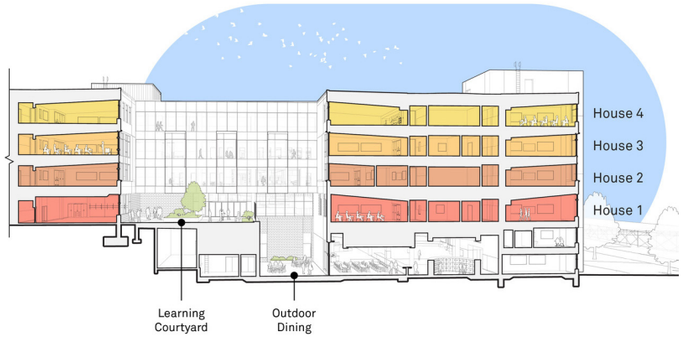
The STEAM wing's centrally-located project areas and pin up invites display and a variety of hands-on activities—from building theater sets and physical models to robotics testing—celebrating student expression and achievement. Since the school has opened, the art curriculum has expanded dramatically, with enrollment doubling in digital design and the art department growing from four to seven teachers.

Design for Change

Building Organization

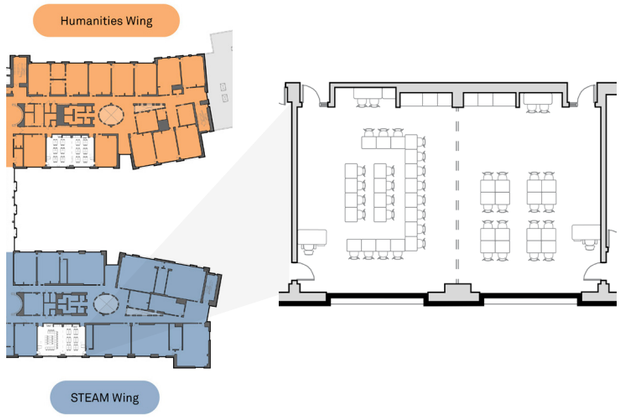
Designed to serve the community for the next 50+ years, AHS is flexible and adaptable to accommodate changes in educational delivery models, evolving programmatic needs, and demographic changes. While currently organized departmentally, the school is designed for educational flexibility and can shift to a house model in the future.





Academic Wing Flexibility

Operable walls between classrooms in the humanities and STEAM wings allow teachers to implement lesson plans for a larger class or collaborate with instructors from a different subject.



Classroom Versatility & Technology

Classrooms with flexible furniture and integrated technology support a variety of teaching and learning modalities, from lecture and discussion, to interacting with written text and research, to hands-on activities.

- Classrooms can easily shift from a lecture style layout to project-based learning set ups.
- Classrooms are designed to facilitate small group collaboration, larger presentations, or individual work.
- Interactive displays can be connected to an individual's computer and material can then be shown and edited via the connected computers and by touch. For flexibility and mobility, additional displays on carts can be used by smaller groups and/or outside the classroom in breakout areas.





Design for Inclusion

AHS builds community across race, ethnicity, ability, gender-identity, expression, orientation, family definition, income and occupation, and religious belief or non belief.

In the existing school, programs for neurodiverse individuals and students with social-emotional challenges were relegated to different corners of the building. The educational program called for greater integration of these programs in the new building to facilitate faculty collaboration, improved student transitions, and adjacencies and connections to other academic spaces.

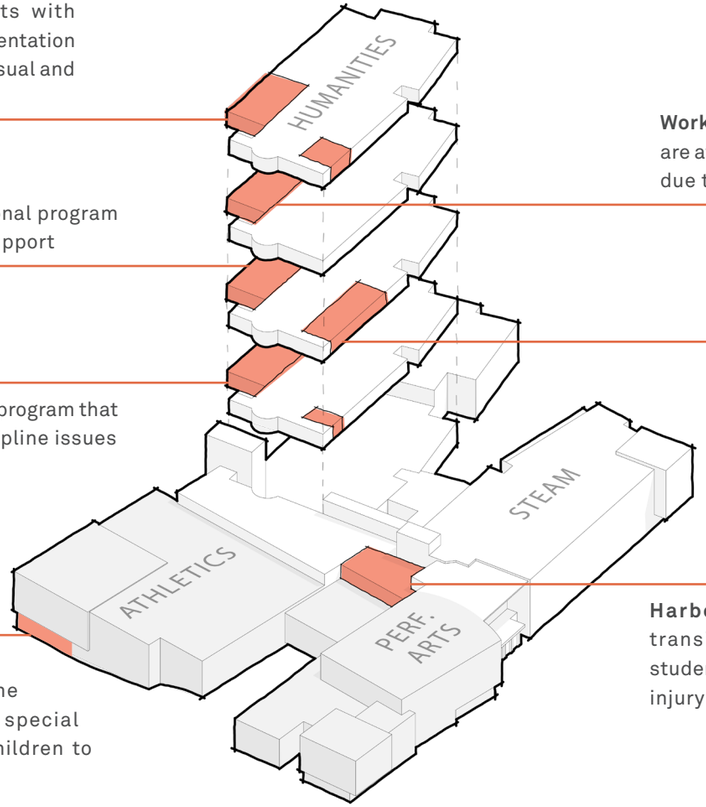
A continuum of services integrated within the school community ensures that **all are supported and feel a sense of belonging and safety**.

Compass serves students with intellectual disabilities, orientation mobility challenges, and visual and hearing impairments

Summit is a social-emotional program that provides academic support

Mill Brook is a transitional program that serves students with discipline issues

AHS students read and cook with students in the **LABBB Collaborative**, a special education program for children to age 22



Work Place serves students who are at risk of dropping out or failing due to social-emotional reasons

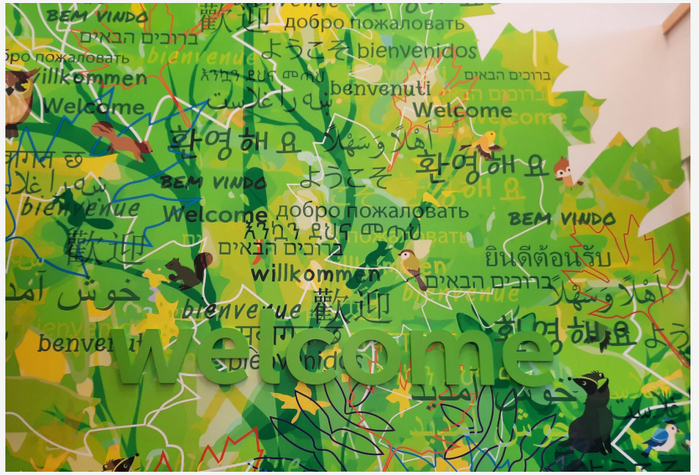
Reach serves students on the autism spectrum by providing a home base throughout the day and academic support

Harbor and **Short Stop** are transition programs to support students recovering from a medical injury or emotional situation



Relaxed — Active

Tunable lighting, a dynamic LED technology, offers adjustable color temperatures and intensities that mimic daylight. It is used in Arlington's special education classrooms and in the preschool to support the regulation of circadian rhythms, and for behavioral management.



Signage in the languages spoken by the school community celebrates diversity and helps create a welcoming, inclusive environment for all.

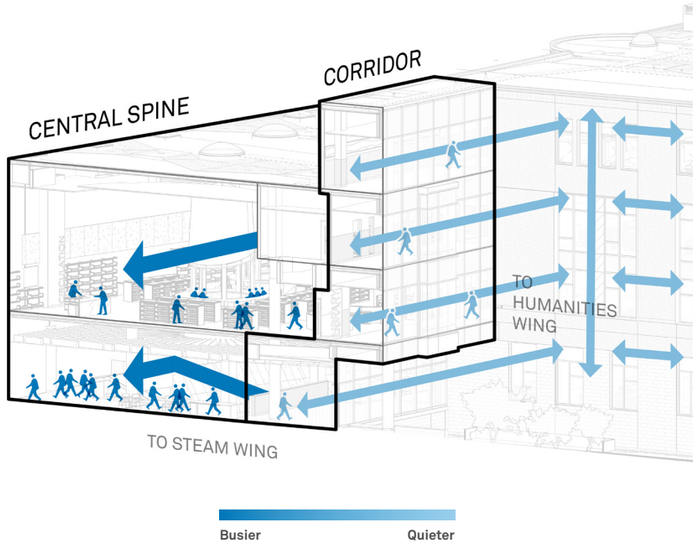
Mandarin	歡迎
Japanese	ようこそ
Spanish	bienvenidos
Portuguese	BEM VINDO
French	bienvenue
Nepali	स्वागत छ
Russian	добро пожаловать
Arabic	أَهْلاً وَسَهْلاً
Korean	환영해요
Farsi	خوش آمدید
German	willkommen
Thai	ยินดีต้อนรับ
Pashto	ښه را غلاست
Hebrew	ברוכים הבאים
Italian	benvenuti
amharic	እንኳን ደህና መጣህ

Design for Belonging

A diversity of space type, scale, materials, and furniture supports the social emotional well-being of all students, ensuring that each student feels comfortable and supported in their pursuit of academic success.

Transparency and views throughout assure that students have agency in choosing the space and environment that allows them to learn best while teachers can maintain oversight. This level of independence helps create a more collegiate experience, empowering students to take ownership of their learning experience and reinforcing a sense of belonging.

Additionally, students have choice in how they circulate through the building and move from one wing to another. Students who thrive on impromptu social interactions and high-energy spaces may choose to go through the busier and more vibrant central spine during class transitions. Students who are more introverted or find spaces in the spine overstimulating can move between wings through corridors on upper floors for a quieter experience where built in nooks and benches overlooking the courtyard provide moments for reflection, rest, or study.













Results



Community Goals & Stewardship of Financial Resources:

Arlington High School is more than a high school; it maximizes taxpayer funds as both center of learning and a civic asset. Since opening, it has seen a significant increase in use by all community members and different age groups. Children in Arlington and surrounding communities use the school for SummerFun! programs, from art and music activities to sports and cooking. The Town Recreation department uses the athletic fields and gyms for town leagues; local athletic groups play adult frisbee; the school hosts state speech and debate tournaments in the discourse lab; and nearly all district trainings are now held in the high school.

> *"We came in on time and under budget, which is no small feat on such a complex project where construction coincided with a global pandemic."*
>
> JIM FEENEY, ARLINGTON TOWN MANAGER



Sustainability & Wellness Outcomes:

While designing for the highest levels of sustainability was a goal from the outset, Arlington High School achieved LEED Platinum certification, far surpassing the LEED Silver requirement for projects designed in partnership with the MSBA. The project earned 85 points on the LEED scorecard, more than 30 points above the LEED Silver threshold. This unintended achievement reinforces the holistically sustainable design of the building which considered embodied and operational carbon, resiliency, efficiency, and the health and well-being of its occupants.

> *"I love that the energy model predicts more than $418,000 in annual electricity savings of the baseline. That's real money!"*
>
> KEN PRUITT, FORMER ENERGY MANAGER, TOWN OF ARLINGTON



An Educational Vision Realized:

The new school is the physical embodiment of the six guiding principles established through visioning. Every aspect of the building, from its flexible learning spaces and quiet reading nooks to its vibrant gathering areas and specialized program spaces, was thoughtfully designed to support the full spectrum of students' academic, social, and emotional needs. The design inspires hands-on, interdisciplinary exploration, fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity, and accommodates a wide range of teaching and learning approaches, creating an environment where all students and educators thrive.

> *"The new school enables high-quality education that is active, collaborative, connected to the outside world, and purposeful."*
>
> KATHLEEN BODIE, FORMER SUPERINTENDENT, ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Strengthening Education Across the District:

The new Arlington High School serves the entire district, uniting students, administrators, childcare services, and regional programs in one central location. Menotomy Preschool provides an engaging, inclusive environment for Arlington's youngest learners entering the public school system and practical experience for high school students enrolled in Early Childhood Development courses. Designed to accommodate Arlington's growing enrollment, the school strengthens the district as a whole, ensuring high-quality educational opportunities from preschool through graduation.

> *"It is so gratifying to be in a permanent space that is specifically designed for our youngest learners."*
>
> JOYCE SCHLENGER, EARLY CHILDHOOD COORDINATOR, MENOTOMY PRESCHOOL










Post-Occupancy Data

Survey results show that since the new school has opened, there is a **greater sense of connection, belonging, and pride**. The school climate has improved significantly—up from 46% in 2021 to 67% in 2024 and AHS students' self-reported sense of belonging has increased by 18% since the new facility opened.

87%

of post-occupancy survey respondents were either satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied with the building

"People are always eating lunch out in the front green. It's a nice place to get out of the school for a while and hang out with friends."

– Student, Arlington High School

"In the new building, there's plenty of interesting seating for students to study at. The bright and cleanly designed spaces make it easy to focus and create the vibe a school should give off...positive."

– Student, Arlington High School

"Each part of the building reflects individual students' interests and gives each of us a place to enjoy and work in an environment that we love. I love the practice rooms in the music wing, and that they are open for us to enjoy, practice and rehearse whenever we need. The big stairs leading into the cafeteria are perfect for groups of students to gather and eat lunch together, and I love how relaxed and open it is."

– Student, Arlington High School

"The new building is really great! There's a lot of natural light and lots of good study spots."

– Student, Arlington High School

