



The Field School

CONTEXT: Founded by educator Elizabeth Ely in 1972, **The Field School** originally housed 44 students above Regina Cleaners in DC's DuPont Circle. After two years the school more than doubled its population to 97, forcing them to move a townhome in DC's Kalorama neighborhood. Eventually they purchased another home across the street and the two buildings were used for their now 220 students. In 1998 the Field School once again needed to move for their growing academic program. The Cafritz mansion fit the bill; an Art Deco mansion on 10-acres in the Foxhall neighborhood of Washington, DC.

In 2002, **CGS Architects** completed a campus plan for the new space, utilizing the existing residence and adding two buildings; Aude and Sapere, meaning Dare and Be Wise in Latin. In 2012, the Field School engaged **CGS Architects** to again to update and expand their facilities.

The updated program impacted all aspects to their campus-academic, arts, athletic, and administration-creating two new integrated structures, the Elizabeth Meeting House and the Bridge. In the Meeting House, the focus was on providing a new school entry and a new all-school gathering space at the heart of the campus. The Field School requested a gathering space that feels like a 'family room' while being flexible enough to accommodate a



Location:

Washington, DC

Scope of Work:

Programming, Architecture, Interior Architecture, Public Approvals

Cost:

Withheld at Owner's Request

Size:

41,000 SF

Construction Completion Date:

2016

Delivery Method:

CMaR

wide range of activities, performances, presentations, and formal or informal gatherings. The Bridge contains performing arts spaces, a music performance space/ classroom with adjacent recording studio and isolation booth, art and science labs, and classrooms.

SOLUTION: CGS Architects worked with a broad constituency from the school community to develop a design that reflects the unique culture at the Field School. “Vibe” sessions were held with key stakeholders and then followed up with frequent design discussions facilitated with the use of an evolving 3D model. Through that process, a design was developed that reflected the school’s vision down to the finest detail while accommodating a complicated and diverse program.

The new structures are tucked into the hill next to the mansion, integrating them into an already tight composition of existing buildings on a steeply sloping site and creating the feel of a small hill town. Outdoor spaces, adjacent to and on top of the new structures, provide a myriad of gathering opportunities of varied scale and size for the school community. The Meeting House is embedded in the site with a habitable roof for up to 500 persons.

The mansion’s front door was used originally utilized as the school’s main entrance, but the new structure became the new face of the program. The existing mansion housed a circular staircase with gold leaf ceiling and was a prominent element for students and teachers. When discussing what the entry should be, this form was an obvious starting point. The new entrance rotunda worked a ‘knuckle’, connecting the existing buildings to the new Meeting House. The rotunda entrance serves as a clean and identifiable front door and opens to spectacular views into the landscape.



Key Strengths

- + Master Plan Development
- + Modernization of/Addition to Existing /Historic Building Fabric
- + Phased Project Implementation
- + Designed to a Specialized/ Learning Differences Pedagogy
- + Highly Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement Process
- + Successful DC Regulatory Approvals Process (ANC/CFA/ HPRB/DCRA)
- + Design-to-Budget
- + Construction on an Occupied Campus