

HMFH Architects Earns Top k-12 National Design Award for Woodland Elementary School

Awards jury cites use of light, scale, and color within the school's "beautifully-inspired sculpted interiors"

Cambridge, MA – The [Woodland Elementary School](#), designed by Cambridge-based [HMFH Architects](#) for the Town of Milford, Massachusetts, was awarded the William W. Caudill Citation as the top-ranked K-12 entry in the 2017 American School & University [Architectural Portfolio Competition](#).

Welcoming 985 students in grades 3-5, the Woodland School is one of the largest elementary schools in the state. To create a more intimate and home-like setting, HMFH worked with stakeholders to establish three distinct, small-scale communities with shared spaces rather than build a single monolithic building. A central three-story academic wing, with students in each of the three grades together on a single floor, is bracketed by a physical education wing on one side and a dining and arts wing on the other. The 133,000 square-foot project is tracking towards a LEED Silver Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Differentiated Learning

"What works so well for the students and teachers at the Woodland School is that the entire program is organized around grade-level learning," said Matt LaRue, AIA of HMFH. "Each of the three grades occupies a full floor in the academic wing, with six classrooms per floor and a learning commons just outside each class."

The design supports the school's team teaching and inclusive instruction methods, with spaces for small group activities, directed learning, and individual and project-based learning. The variety of spaces available in the common areas - a media space, amphitheater, circular storytelling rooms and a variety of project areas - encourage a range of flexible teaching approaches. Natural light streams through the classrooms and shared common areas. "Educators can easily shift from classroom environments to large-group events, team projects, and small-group work sessions, which allows a lot of flexibility to meet the learning styles of individual students," LaRue explains.

Community Spaces

On either side of the academic wing are two wings housing core and community spaces: a dining/arts wing, which houses a hybrid cafeteria and flexible performance space with a stage, kitchen, music rooms, art rooms, STEAM labs, a viewing balcony, and administrative offices.

An athletic wing, containing a gym and a multipurpose wellness center, is shared by the entire school community and fosters student health and well-being. A variety of outdoor activity and learning spaces, together with a landscaped entry garden, complement the interior by providing additional opportunities for hands-on learning, recreation, and fitness.

The awards jury cited the Woodland School's "beautifully-inspired sculpted interiors" and the design team's use of light, scale, and color to create a warm and child-friendly environment throughout.

About the AS&U Award: The American School & University Architectural Portfolio competition is the premier showcase celebrating the best in education design. The 2017 winners are published in the November issue of the magazine and on the publication's website.

About HMFH: Since its founding in 1969, HMFH Architects has established a national reputation for educational design excellence. With its tradition of design excellence, HMFH has earned recognition for skillfully integrating informed educational planning and programming with award-winning design to create memorable, innovative learning environments.

Contact:

Liza Bouton, HMFH - 617.844.2153
lbouton@hmfh.com

Michael Reilly, Reilly Communications - 617.464.1717
mreilly@reillycommunications.com