MEETING MINUTES

Project	Mercer Int'l Middle School	Project No	2002
Subject	SDAT Meeting #3	Meeting Date	4/6/2021
From	Bassetti Architects	Date	4/12/2021

Attending

+ Attended in person   ** Attended by Phone*   *x Did not Attend*

* Brad Tong Managing Director	Shiels Obletz Johnson	* Cheri Hendricks Design Manager	Broadview Associates
* Justine Kim Project Manager	Shiels Obletz Johnson	* Lorne McConachie Educational Planner	Bassetti Architects
* Paige McGehee Program Coordinator	Shiels Obletz Johnson	* Caroline Lemay Principal in Charge	Bassetti Architects
* Jerome Hunter Founder of Seattle School for Boys	Partnered with SOJ	* Michael Davis Design Principal	Bassetti Architects
* Vince Gonzales Senior Project Manager	Seattle Public School	* Amanda Clausen Project Manager	Bassetti Architects
x Deborah Northern Equity and Engagement Manager	Seattle Public School	* Edward Arreola Project Designer	Bassetti Architects
* Sarah Pritchett Executive Director	Seattle Public School	* Cindy Watters Mercer Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Sherrie Encarnacion Mercer Assist. Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Katie Humphreys SpEd Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Aaron Hennings Music Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Sue Monroe Librarian	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Janet Bautista Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Emily Elasky Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Matt Kochevar Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Virginia Andrews School Counselor	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Katie Badillo Wright Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Tracy Kolner Attendance Specialist	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Azi Brannock Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Logan Neil Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School

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School | * | Erin Okuno
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| x | Grace Floyd
Parent | Mercer Int'l Middle
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Notes

This was the third SDAT (School Design Advisory Team) Meeting for the Mercer Int'l Middle School Project. Statewide restrictions to "stay home" in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 had us use videoconferencing to conduct this meeting. These notes do not substitute for the contents of the presentation; rather they supplement it by capturing context and comments made during the meeting, so please reference page numbers within the presentation.

1. WELCOME, AGENDA, AND INTRODUCTIONS
   + Amanda welcomed the group to SDAT #3. She gave an overview of today's agenda and reiterated that this meeting was a safe space for all. (page 1-4)
   + Amanda provided a recap of our SDAT #2 meeting.
     o She reviewed the inspiring neighborhood images from our photo safari challenge and explained that we pulled out words that were used frequently to describe why places were inspiring. These include: (page 5)
       • Safe
       • Stimulating Environment
       • Multi-Cultural
       • Places to Gather
       • Connection to Nature
       • Places for Performance
       • Flexible Space
       • Multi-Purpose Space
     o Amanda also gave a brief recap of the photo safari for the images that SDAT members felt were good examples of powerful learning. Amanda explained that we took their insights to craft some initial site-specific design principles that we incorporated into slides further along in the presentation (page 6)
     o Amanda recapped the breakout activity from SDAT 2 where we discussed four key priorities of the District's Strategic Plan. We discussed how these topics could be incorporated at Mercer Int'l Middle School. These include: (page 7)
       • Create supportive and culturally responsive environments
         • The environment should be representative of "our" community.
         • The community is involved, informed, and visible in promoting a rigorous academic learning environment.
         • Space that is flexible, space for learning in different sized groups.
       • Work in partnerships with families and communities who represent students of color furthest from educational justice.
         • Support learning of non-western based cultures.
         • Inviting collaboration in teaching/learning and different ways of teaching/learning.
         • Create safe, inviting, welcoming environments.

- Create spaces for multiple community groups
    - Students of color who are furthest from educational justice will feel safe and welcome.
        - Make the entry easy to find and welcoming for students and the community.
        - Use mural and artwork and visible signage in multiple languages.
        - Use nature and cheerful colors to brighten the space.
    - Students of color who are furthest from educational justice will be proficient in math in 7th grade.
        - Space should be flexible, small group learning is a huge part of learning math.
        - Put math on display, highlight engineering aspects of the building or show students work on large marker board walls.
        - Incorporate technology that supports math into the building.
  - Amanda gave an overview of the last topic from SDAT 2 which was the Mercer Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP). She recapped Cindy's presentation and the potential architectural responses such as enhanced opportunities for student voice, community and family engagement, and opportunities for innovation. Two items in particular were stressed as very important: (page 8)
    - Flexible learning environments that are future proof.
    - Providing enhanced opportunities for students to own, drive, and present their learning.
  - Amanda also updated the SDAT committee that we participated in a student workshop that was led by teachers. Bassetti provided the teachers with questions to gather insight on how students would envision their new school and how they would like it to feel. We will provide more information on what students offered in our next SDAT #4, but we gave a quick peek at some imagery and phrases provided by the students: (page 9)
    - Big entrance and lots of windows
    - Feeling welcomed right as you walk into the school, being able see people socializing
    - Outdoor seating, similar to restaurant outdoor seating. So there can be places to chill.
    - A futuristic school, fancy and modern looking
    - Natural light and fresh air circulating
    - Bright, but not too bright, with enough color to spark you
    - Greenery and outdoor classrooms
    - A place you can relax and feel at ease.
- The Goals for Today's Meeting Include: (page 10)
  - Learn about the District's Design Principles
  - Confirm or modify some proposed Site-Specific Design Principles for Mercer
  - Review exemplary learning environments to see how they incorporated Design Principles
  - Discuss how these could be applied to Mercer Middle School
  - Identify any additional Design Principles.

2. DISTRICT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Lorne explained that the next exercise is a three-step process.
  - First we'll review the District Design Principles.
  - Then we'll review your input from SDAT's 1 & 2 and see how that fits into and reinforces the framework of the Design Principles with site-specific information.

- o In small-group breakout sessions, we'll verify we've heard you correctly, and add additional ideas to the site specific goals.
+ The reason for doing this work:
  - o The Design Principles form the foundation for the design of the new Mercer Middle School.
  - o The design team will generate ideas based upon the Design Principles, and review design concepts with you in future SDAT meetings.
  - o We'll utilize the Design Principles to critique and refine the design through iterative reviews.
  - o Our hope is to build alignment around the Design Principles so that we are all focused on "what's best for kids and what's best for the community."
  - o Our goal is to shape a school design around the best thinking that will serve our kids and community well for 50+ years.
+ The District Design Principles:
  - o were crafted almost 20 years ago through a planning process involving SPS educators, architects, and community members, and have evolved and been refined on literally dozens of capital projects since that time;
  - o originally, they grew out of research from Stanford and the Gates Foundation that identified Attributes for High Achieving Schools;
  - o are a part of the Educational Specifications for all SPS major capital projects, including those that outline the parameters for our Mercer project.
+ These Design Principles are as follows: (page 12)
  - o **Learner Centered Environment:** The facility is designed with students' needs placed first and supports the District's academic achievement mission.
    - While this principle might seem obvious, it can help us avoid focusing on parking or sports or other adult parameters that don't put kids' needs first.
  - o **Personalizing Environment:** Each student is known well and cherished by adults and other students.
    - With up to 1,000 students, we need to ask how the building can help break down the scale of a large school to help shape those personalized connections, especially for students where America is a new place, English is a new language, or for our kids dealing with trauma --whether homelessness, abuse, or a year-long pandemic.
  - o **Program Adaptability:** The facility makes it possible to offer a wide variety of approaches through flexible and adaptable learning spaces that support multiple instructional strategies.
    - How can the building we design support evolving pedagogy and technology? In 40 years of designing schools, we've seen major shifts in brain research, approaches educators take toward teaching, as well as exponential changes in technologies.
    - Our buildings need to be both **flexible** -- to support quick changes -- such as operable walls, movable furniture; as well as **adaptable** -- to support longer term changes -- such as relocatable walls, and re-organization due to curricular changes.
  - o **Community Connections:** The facility has spaces that encourage the community to become part of the learning community and encourages outside resources and services to be delivered to students on-site.
    - Schools can serve as centers of community through rich partnerships.
    - How can the design of Mercer build on the vibrant diversity of its community?
  - o **Aesthetics:** The facility is appealing, warm, and inviting. It reflects the school's values and focus and inspires students to achieve.
    - How can we shape a building that is welcoming to students and to community, and that builds on the rich context of this extraordinary city and topography?
  - o **Safety:** Students are safe and cared for in all the important aspects of their lives.

- Safety encompasses both physical and psychological security. Of course, the design will meet codes for fire and life safety, ADA access and seismic requirements, as well as providing adequate fresh air and daylighting.
- The need to address challenges such as those of bullying, abuse, trauma, or an active shooter, will also inform our design.

- **Collaboration:** The facility provides spaces for everyone to work collaboratively. It promotes the celebration of diverse groups by fostering communication, learning, and the expression of commonalities that positively support school tradition, history, spirit, and identity.
  - Developing effective collaboration skills is critical for kids to succeed in both work and play. It is essential in meeting our goals around social justice & inclusion of all children into the big tent of democracy.
  - How do we develop a variety of spaces that support collaboration at many scales?
  - How can adults model collaboration for students?
- **Sustainability**: Create schools that encourage a culture of conservation and environmentally responsible behaviors by combining learning with sustainability.
  - The Seattle School Board has been very clear in challenging the designers of new and remodeled schools to meet a high bar of expectations for sustainability. How can we fulfill this challenge to create a building that both models and teaches environmentally responsible practices?

+ After a review of the Principles, Lorne and Mike presented examples of exemplary projects from around the globe that model different aspects of these commonly used Design Principles to demonstrate how they can be used in practice. (page 13-20)
  - **Learner-Centered Environment:** A variety of sized spaces that have flexible furniture. Multi-use spaces that are adaptable.
  - **Personalizing Environment:** Spaces to display student work, and differently scaled spaces where students can be social, work independently, or in small groups. The spaces reflect the character of the schools and are warm and welcoming.
  - **Program Adaptability:** Spaces can be adapted for different learning and teaching styles. A variety of ways to display work (writable walls, pin up, gallery walls, etc.) Adaptable furniture that can easily be re-arranged. Designing 5-, 10-, and 50-year walls which will allow future reworking of interior spaces as needed.
  - **Community Connections:** Creating opportunities for community space in the school. How do we make outside partners, families, and the community at large feel welcome? What is the right amount of outreach for Mercer Middle School? We often see offices, family outreach classrooms, welcoming seating areas, etc.
  - **Aesthetics:** The school should reflect the school community that uses it. How do we create attractive elements that can be adapted over time? The atmosphere should be warm and welcoming to all students. Consider connection to nature, natural materials, fun pops of color, and durable textures.
  - **Safety:** How do we create a safe and welcoming building? Providing a single point of entry and providing transparency for supervision are often the preferred approach. A variety of scales of spaces can offer students areas to be social as well as providing smaller spaces when they need to retreat. How can our spaces help students that have experienced trauma?
  - **Collaboration:** Providing space for collaboration at a variety of scales. These spaces should have good access to technology, space for pin up, adaptable furniture, and writable surfaces.
  - **Sustainability:** Our buildings should reflect our values. We will look for opportunities for sustainable practices such as stormwater conservation, use of solar energy, durable green materials, and good daylighting. How can we use our building as a teaching tool to create a culture of conservation?

3. SITE SPECIFIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES
+ In the next set of slides, Amanda explained that we will be looking at similar images but highlighting input provided by SDAT members in our first two meetings. This will help us to start making connections between the District's Design Principles and site-specific priorities of the SDAT committee.
  o Learner Centered Environment (page 22)
    • Provide a variety of spaces, with moveable furniture, for learning in different sized groups.
    • Use the building to demonstrate principles to support math proficiency.
    • Provide places with good lighting and attractive backdrops for kids to sing, dance, play, and perform.
    • Provide bright and open, indoor and outdoor places for students to gather and socialize.
    • Provide spaces where SpEd students can be a community.
  o Personalizing Environment (page 23)
    • Provide comfortable small group eating spaces that are visually connected to the larger group.
    • The environment should be a representation of the Mercer community, using non-generic art, murals, places, faces, music, to reinforce a sense of identity.
  o Program Adaptability (page 24)
    • Provide nimble spaces that enhance opportunities for student leadership and voice.
    • Provide flexibility for future capacity without sacrificing acoustics.
    • Provide amenities such as movable whiteboards or rotating walls that support collaboration and invite innovation.
    • Minimize built-in cabinets and furnishings that make change difficult.
    • Make it future proof.
  o Community Connection (page 25)
    • Design the entry sequence so it's easy for all to find.
    • Use clear, effective, multi-lingual signage throughout.
    • Zone the building so that some spaces (gym, library) and some services (community partners, family support) can be utilized after hours without providing access to the entire school.
    • Create spaces that can be shared by multiple community groups via rotating schedules, drop-in services, and other methods.
    • Provide welcoming space for family outreach near the front of the school.
  o Aesthetics (page 26)
    • The school should provide a stimulating multi-sensory environment.
    • The building should provide generous daylight.
    • Use circles and curves to emphasize a relaxed feel.
    • Use cheerful colors and connections to nature to brighten experiences and soften spaces.
  o Safety (page 27)
    • Locate the main office directly adjacent to the entry; make it open, transparent, and welcoming with comfortable seating and student art.
    • The school should feel like a safe haven for students from all cultures.

- Create inviting and welcoming environments to support students who have experienced trauma.
  - o Collaboration (page 28)
    - Provide spaces that invite collaboration and non-Western ways of teaching and learning to support educational justice.
  - o Sustainability (page 29)
    - Provide a sense of refuge within an urban center, with strong indoor and outdoor connections to nature.
    - Utilize solar – or other renewable energy sources.
    - Use materials and systems that provide for durability and longevity.
    - Support environmental justice by equitably providing for what different groups need – no more, no less.

BREAK OUT GROUPS

- + Amanda explained that the SDAT will break into small groups and each group will discuss two of the District's Design Principles to provide feedback on how these might look in the future at Mercer Middle school. (page 30)
  - o Learner Centered Environment (Katie, Sherrie, Cheri, and Amanda)
    - The dynamic of the teachers and staff with the students is primary. But after that, collaborative space is first and foremost.
    - What kinds of activities bring kids "out of their shell?"
      - In a single square classroom, we have limited ability to do group work; a more flexible environment with additional small group spaces would help with that.
    - What about hands-on learning or the need for messy spaces?
      - That would definitely help for an art activity. For 7th and 8th grade social studies, we need the ability to discuss and debate.
    - How often do you re-arrange furniture to get debating setups?
      - We're always in groups, never in straight rows.
      - We do Socratic seminars or circles every Friday. To not have desks and have the ability to get up and move around would be great.
      - Amanda gave an example of kids paying attention to a challenging activity because they were physically comfortable.
    - Kids should have opportunity to do some production, especially using their technology tools. Filming things or making slide decks, and producing it right away, cast their presentation to something.
      - A small green screen that's accessible; embedded in a few locations, to support a culture of performance.
    - Some of our kids coming from open elementary environments really like that there are doors because they create an opportunity for quiet and focus, not just background white noise all the time.
    - What is the right level of adaptability now, and then later in the future? What kinds of creative learning opportunities can be facilitated if things look different?
      - Capacity to change and move without everything being so cumbersome.
      - Accessible collaboration spaces without desks.
      - Walls where you can pin images, do gallery walks.

- Shared large digital maps, for example, like we're able to do right now on video platforms.
- Different interactive walls.
- It would be good to have "stations" that look at primary sources and artifacts, either digitally or physically.
- Also a place where presenters can come in and demonstrate traditional cultural ways for more than one class at a time.

o Personalizing Environment (Tracy, Jerome, Mike, Justine)

- Where do the students socialize? –
  - Lunchroom (not big enough, so outside as well), out of school activities run by the parks department. Not a lot of time to gather, since there is only 5 mins to move between classes.
- How would you envision to provide more spaces for student socialization?
  - Likes some of the smaller spaces shown on slides, some outside areas before and after classes to hang out.
  - Outdoor nooks to congregate. Kids are attracted to greenery. Also, inside the library, and lunch spaces.
- How do you spill out at lunch time with, 500 kids? Are kids allowed to go to the park?
  - Not supposed to leave campus during the day.
  - Kids spill outside because they like outside, as well as there are not enough spaces inside. Sometimes kids' hang out in the foyer and play chess. Teachers try to keep the students in the central area near admin, library, cafeteria, etc.
  - Simple things, such as seating, are inviting. Size of groups can be determined by amount of seating available. Transparency in one of the images is attractive – being able to see other students socialize is good.
  - Multi storied buildings have greater opportunities to connect with other parts of the community to give a sense of belonging.
- Mike quoted Cindy, school design should be a canvas for the students to create their own art and expression.
  - It is important for faculty to show how spaces are meant to be used, understand and recognize what opportunities there are for students to utilize.

o Program Adaptability (Matt, Cindy, Katie, Emily, Lorne, Edward, Vince)

- How does school want to be shaped on opening day and how can it adapt?
  - Not really seeing much individual teaching. Mostly group learning.
  - Students sit at tables together but not doing individual things.
  - Important to move from space to space to refresh mind, change of pace.
  - Outdoor space directly from classroom would be nice; but should still be defined and enclosed while being open for containment
  - Would like more grouped learning around computers
  - Would love a space where they have movable furniture; fixed furniture is restricting
  - Sinks and lab stations that tend to be fixed limit flexibility
  - Currently do not have any room for break out spaces but could see its potential
  - large group spaces would make most sense next to the cafeteria

- Would love garage doors like a café where you are connected to outdoors from the classroom; covered to protect from rain
  - o Community Connection (Caroline, Brad, Rumi, Erin, Sue, Janet)
    - How and when do community members engage with students?
    - Are there spaces for community service providers in one zone, integrated throughout the school, or both?
    - What should a zone of community service providers be adjacent to?
      - External Mentors come in but currently there are NO spaces to inhabit.
      - Ideally the configuration and array of spaces needed vary by activity.
      - The locations of new spaces for these interactions might be dispersed across the campus, because the touch points needed vary by activity. The solution must incorporate flexibility and variety.
      - Note that storage space is needed for intended use by community members.
      - Need for private, semi-private, and more public spaces for the community / mentoring activities.
    - What does family engagement look like?
      - Where should a family engagement space be located?
        - o A Family-centric room is best near central admin area but with a separate entrance; easily separated with restricted access to the rest of school (for privacy / safety control).
        - o The location of a family-oriented space needs to be easy to find, close to admin, and to create a welcoming feeling.
  - o Aesthetics (Katie, Sherrie, Cheri, Amanda)
    - A lot of kids love green spaces, INSIDE not just outside.
    - Kids identify themselves with people from different cultures with quotes that they can relate to.
    - Being greeted by teachers and staff is important.
    - Little nooks where kids can socialize. Feel comfortable with your friend group before classes start.
    - The atrium with a lot of windows, opening to a larger space.
    - Possibly even walls that have multi-sensory water, a musical feature, hear music.
    - Slow entry to a larger entry.
    - Where can you post things without covering beautiful artwork?
      - Have designated spots that are for display vs others for murals.
    - How do we embrace all cultures?
      - Example of Cedar River Watershed - cultural feature that combines all the elements of the natural world, music that resonates for all different peoples.
      - Knowing our students and families.
      - There's a diaspora of Vietnamese and Filipino families.
      - Imagery should be not just generic civil rights leaders, but leaders from these various communities. This goes with languages too.
        - o Imagery could be topical kinds of things - dining options, farming, dance: different kinds of textures, tapestries, it doesn't have to be blatant, like this is from Somalia, but there are motifs that can resonate more broadly.
      - There might be a theme of Journey, that's fairly universal.
        - o It could be used to frame a wall, or accent spaces.

- - Because Beacon Hill is becoming really gentrified, honor where we've been and the people who've helped us be where we are.
    - East African population, their journey reflected in the building as well.
  - Safety (Tracy, Jerome, Mike, Justine)
    - How do you create safe and cared for safe environment?
      - Now, it is tricky to locate the main office. Something open and inviting would be good – media/community room on one of the slides spoke to me. The middle slide, are the doors locked?
      - It does feel a bit institutional, maybe too large a space? A secure vestibule with transparency is pretty standard today. Current Mercer is very different.
      - There are quite a few 'wanderers' throughout the campus, including community members getting to the park, etc.
      - Current landscaping has a lot of spaces that are out of sight.
    - Where should support spaces located on school? Main door, adjacent to library, distributed among the classrooms?
      - If it is community spaces, could be near main entry, if it is support for students perhaps near counseling? Activities are typically happening throughout the day and after school, so it would be good to be located near multi-purpose type of spaces.
      - Flexible, multi-purpose spaces seem to be the theme of the project.
  - Collaboration (Matt, Cindy, Katie, Emily, Lorne, Edward, Vince)
    - This group did not have an opportunity to dive too deep into this topic. They discussed thinking outside the box. Where will we be in the future?
      - Think beyond whiteboards, what if we are using holograms!
      - Think about writing on glass.
  - Sustainability
    - How should conservation of energy be encouraged?
    - How should environmentally responsible behaviors be modeled by the building and site?
    - What should new MMS look like in order to engage student learning?
      - Utilize: natural light, water, show evidence of environmental impacts of their actions / activities / choices through metering displays or real time gauges (for example).
      - Outdoor learning spaces / classrooms.
      - Incorporate covered areas for outdoor learning so it can be used during wet days
      - Incorporate outdoor experience as part of every learning day
      - Idea: design every classroom to have a porch!
      - Incorporate sun / UV protection for outdoor learning areas
      - Remember MMS is directly under a flight path so must be mindful of noise distraction / impacts
  - Other Comments:
      - Responding to the richness in photos presented earlier in this session: What do students prefer – vibrant or muted / calming?
        - We think they need both, as the needs change circumstantially; thus perhaps richer overall is better with emphasis on glass, wood, then accent colors. Note: paint is inexpensive and also easy to modify / evolve.

- Love the image with mostly white finished and bright orange nook.
- The kids' vision was captured in the design elements.
- You can do more with glass than you can with a whiteboard.
- What's missing from what we've covered so far?
    - Hardscape for activities like playing ultimate frisbee.
    - Places that don't require adults. Blacktops, fields, kids can use them on the weekends, and they don't require adults to access them. Changes one's perspective as a student.
- The principal requested the team send out the links to all the padlets with student input.
- How many students is Mercer being designed for?
    - 1,000
- Bathrooms: Uncomfortable and fraught with danger in MS. Eliminate the public restroom feel of the school. Requires a lot of resources for adults to manage and doesn't help kids in any way. Some kids don't use the restroom in school.
    - In particular, the multi-stall configuration with partitions that are only 3/4 height, so that taller people can be seen over the partition and there's no sound privacy. Societal norms around public restrooms don't exist yet in MS. Entrapment feeling - only one door to get out.
    - Stalls would be better with floor to ceiling walls and a common handwashing station. Non-gender-specific. Handwashing can be public.
    - We have restrooms that close the door and clean themselves, so the technology is there.
    - Design a bathroom that you as an adult over 50 would be willing to go into.
- Design team: We'll share some bathroom design ideas around that soon - our social mores are changing.

7. NEXT STEPS

+ Next SDAT #3 will be April 27th. (page 27)
+ Bassetti will provide meeting minutes to the group

See attached documents from meeting: (Presentation slide show)

<div align="center">END OF MEETING MINUTES</div>