



WALLACE & JOHNSTON EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY

Case Study No. 2, March 2024

Johnston, Iowa

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1 SCOPE

As part of a larger district-wide facility plan, the existing Johnston Middle School was set for redevelopment. Originally built in 1984, the school had expanded and been renovated over the years to accommodate the needs of the growing district. This time around, however, it was no longer needed as a middle school. The building was well built and maintained, so it was a good target for a new use.

The District engaged frk architects + engineers to create a vision for a new elementary center and early childhood academy that would support a more engaged and collaborative approach to delivering curriculum. Through the interactive, hands-on process, the goals were formed for the project and implementation began.

The project moved the existing Wallace Elementary and integrated the Early Childhood Education program into this larger facility. The Johnston Early Learning Academy met two important goals: 1) Bringing all the district early childhood programming into one centralized location and 2) Making good use of a wing of the existing middle school that was not needed for the elementary school program in the building.



OWNER *Johnston Community School District*

PROJECT TYPE

(K12) Recreation Commercial
Early Childhood Higher Education

CAPACITY **840 Students**

OCCUPANCY DATE **August 2018**

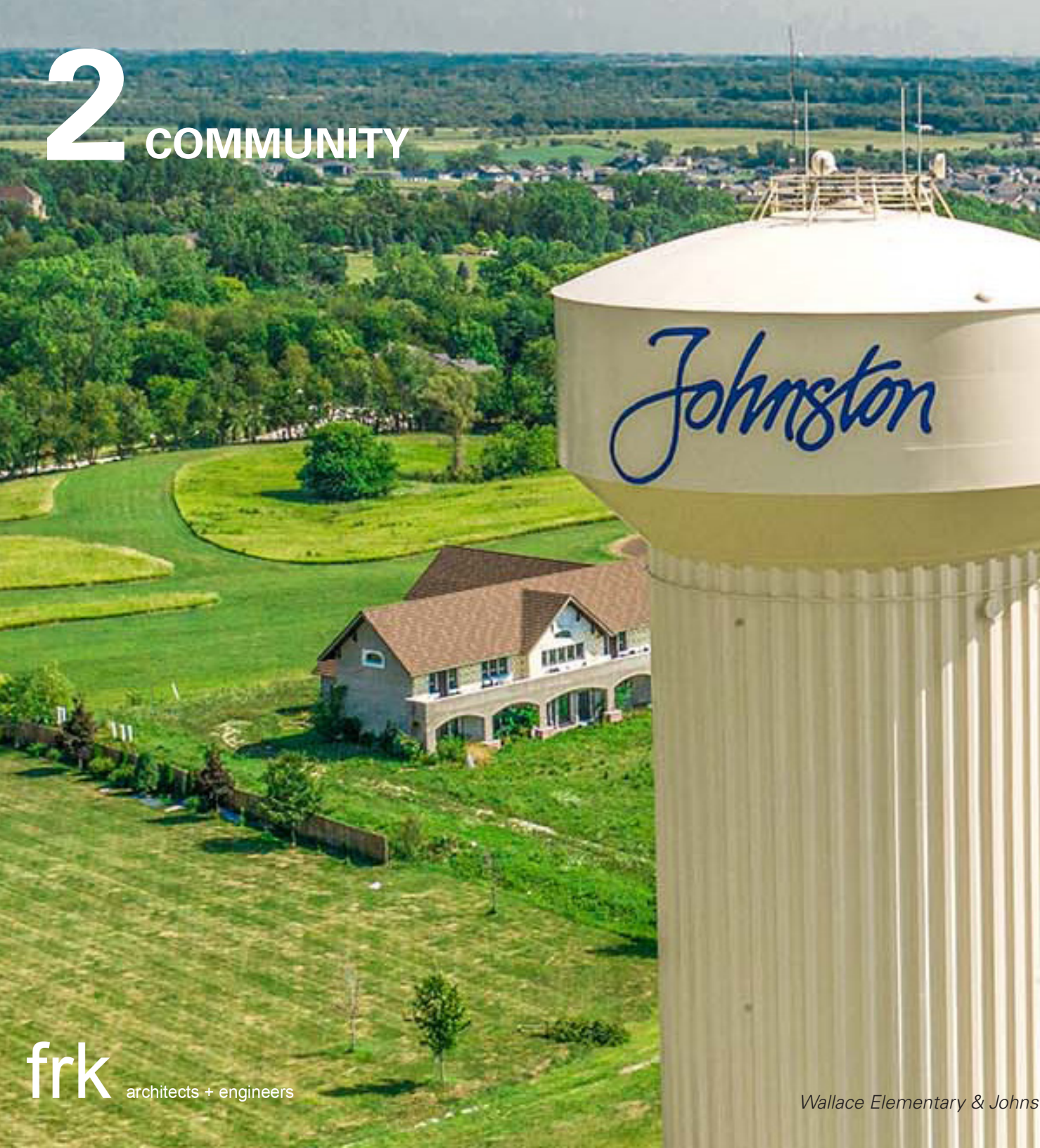
BUILDING AREA **93,000 SF Renov.**

BUDGET **\$ 14,975,000**

BID **\$ 14,250,000**

FINAL COST **\$ 14,796,000**

2 COMMUNITY



Johnston, Iowa is suburban community of around 24,000 people that is located on the north edge of the Des Moines metro area. In the last twenty years the city has experienced 178% growth in population, and continues to rank nationally and locally as one of the best suburbs to live, partly for its **award-winning schools** and quality of life.

Johnston's history was partially formed when Henry Wallace conducted experiments with hybridizing corn in and around Johnston. This led to the beginning of the Pioneer Hi-Bred, which eventually became the largest seed corn producer in the world. Still one of the largest operations in the city, the Wallace name would come to rest on the school that now sits down the street from the Pioneer headquarters, which is now owned by Corteva.

The Johnston Community School District has approximately **7,400 students from preschool through 12th grade**. From what started as a one building district in 1914, it is now comprised of five elementary schools, two middle schools, a high school, an administrative resource center, a community education center and a transportation and building and grounds facility.

3 PROCESS

Project Inception:

- Comprehensive district-wide facility plan addressing educational delivery
- Construction of a new high school created a shift of students throughout district facilities
- Existing middle school now available for redevelopment

Vision Planning:

- Formed a District Vision Committee to work with the design team
- Interactive exercises and design sessions were conducted to establish goals and priorities for the school layout.

Program:

- Creating an environment within the existing structure to engage early learners and not overwhelm them
- Refine space programs
- Establish budgets and schedules

Design:

- The frk team worked on design refinement, regularly consulting with district representatives to ensure goals for each space were considered in the construction documents

Project Delivery:

- The project was successfully delivered on time, meeting the goals and visions established by the District



4 ENVIRONMENT



Natural Light:

- Exterior windows opened up at structural lintel and expanded
- Window seating areas created
- Additional openings strategically added throughout interior spaces

Student-Centered:

- In addition to traditional classrooms, learning spaces that allow students to choose their favorite setting
- Spaces for large groups, small groups and individual learning

Collaborative Learning:

- Learning communities arranged by grade level
- Collaborative spaces tailored to fit student levels both in arrangement and furnishings
- Acoustical glass walls used for individual learning studios

Inviting Spaces:

- Bold colors to enliven and engage young learners
- Color to differentiate learning communities and help students find their way

Sustainability:

- Reusing an existing school building
- Low-E glass and energy efficient windows
- Additional windows to add daylighting
- LED lighting with dimming features
- Upgraded, energy efficient mechanical system with energy-recovery ventilation



5 PROGRAM

Building Organization

- Early Childhood Academy mostly as stand-alone center on one end of building
- Three learning communities for grades K-5 grouped by age level
- Secure building access
- Administration spaces located at main entrance

Student Commons

- Bold color palette used for wayfinding
- Abundant collaboration spaces for small group work

K-5 Learning Communities

- Classroom studios with glass walls for flexibility and natural light
- Central collaboration area
- Variety of seating and furnishings suitable for student's age

Art / Music / PE

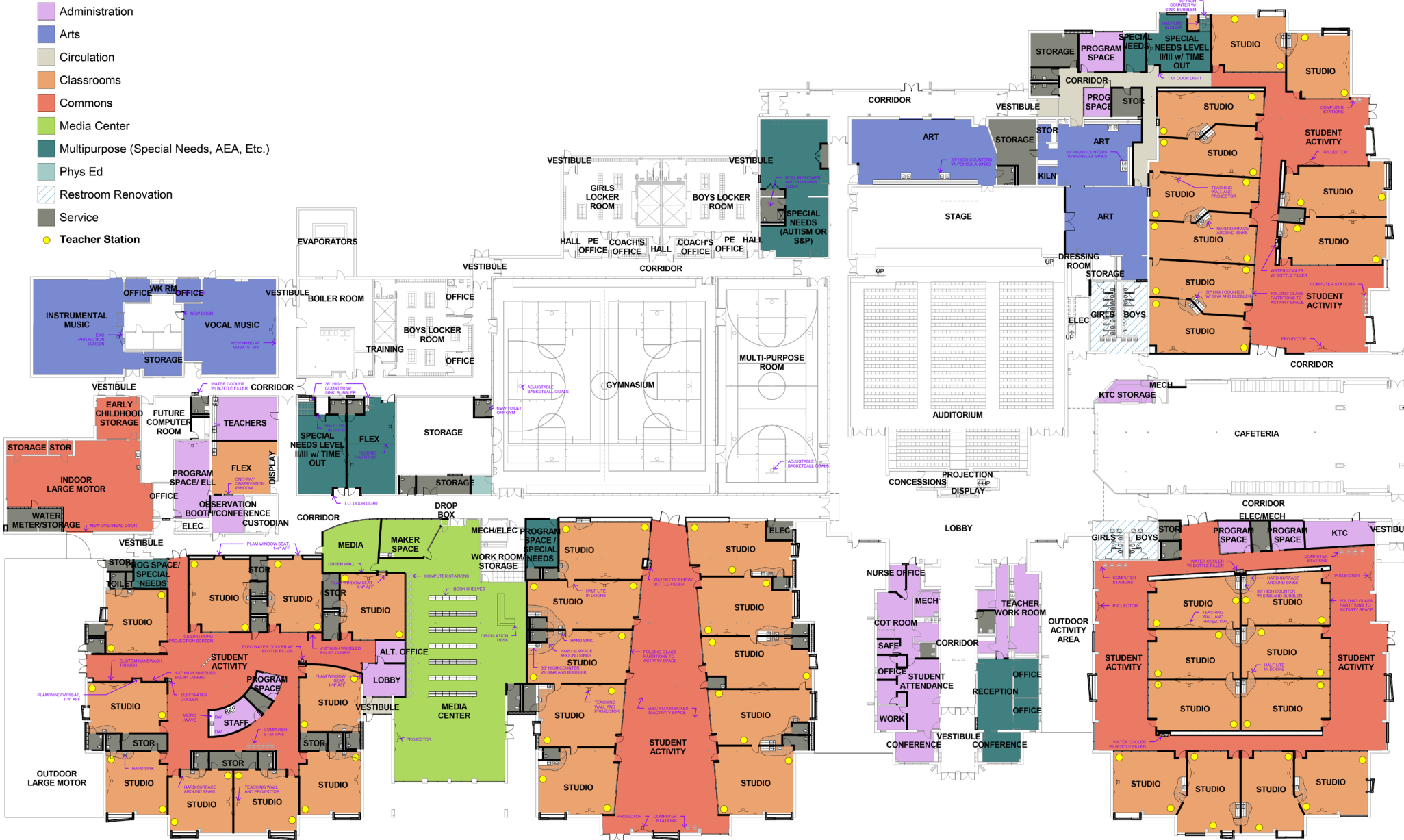
- Easy access available for all grade levels

Early Childhood Academy

- Separate, secure entry for students and parents
- Outdoor play area and indoor gross-motor play area
- Serves entire District's P-K program



- Administration
- Arts
- Circulation
- Classrooms
- Commons
- Media Center
- Multipurpose (Special Needs, AEA, Etc.)
- Phys Ed
- Restroom Renovation
- Service
- Teacher Station



Early Childhood Community

K - One Community

2 - 3 Community

6 OUTCOME



This educational facility was transformed to create a unique and dynamic learning environment for the Johnston Community School District's Pre-K and elementary students.

The Early Learning Academy is positioned at one end of the elementary school so that is able to have its own public entry, access to a self-contained outdoor learning center and controlled integration with the grade school students in the building. While designed as a fully contained and independent center, it is part of the elementary school and the early childhood center is able to make use of the art, music, PE, food service and special education programming in the elementary school portions of the building.

Each wing of the elementary includes ten learning spaces that surround a centralized collaboration space bathed in natural light. Interactive windows that children can climb into penetrate the exterior walls of each learning space and provide a strong indoor/outdoor connection. Bold use of shape and color define the spaces and engage the children in active learning and provides easy wayfinding through the larger building.

Through frk's leadership in visioning, collaboration and creative design, this school provides an environment that inspires and supports student development each and every day.

