



Focus Group Workshop
November 15th 10:00 -11:15 am | 2022

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Physical and Mental Wellness

Alum Rock Union School District





Ed Specifications
& Standards

Next Steps:

Incorporate content from this interview into the Ed Specs design guidelines—then schedule round two video conference meetings with the same group to review the draft chapter for input in, March 2023.

Participants were oriented to understand what a Master Plan is and what Ed Specs are. Then highlights from the Ed Specs Visioning Workshop were shown, concluding with a list of learning shifts produced by Ed Specs Workshop participants as a vision for the future on the following page. After that, participants were asked a series of questions to confirm the program and vision for the future.



Learning Shifts Focus on Student Empowerment- DRAFT

ARUSD's learning environments will support students' development of ***mind, body and spirit***. They will be empowered with the opportunity to try different ways of learning to discover how they learn best, ***find their spark*** and to ***keep the curiosity*** they were born with to become ***expert lifelong learners***. ARUSD will work to give students and families who need additional support to have an ***equal chance to thrive***, meeting all their needs.

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO BECOME EXPERT LEARNERS

- Multi-sensory and multi-intelligences learning
- More control at the hands of the students
- Independent choice and/or collaborative elective periods
- Less teacher-directed time
- Students setting individual goals
- Student-driven activities
- Student-chosen schedules
- More independent work time
- Relaxation rooms
- No school uniforms

HIGHER COLLABORATION

- Team collaboration across studies, play, and extra-curricular activities
- Flexible and collaborative opportunities

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Spaces to support personal and basic needs (i.e. laundry services)
- Full day kindergarten

MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

- More outside and exploration time
- Play and naturalistic movement
- Bring community into the class
- Indoor and outdoor use spaces

Program Background:

- What Programs for mind, body, and spirit are currently being implemented or will be implemented in ARUSD to support student wellness?
- What does the P.E. program look like at ARUSD in Grades 1-3? Behaviors you are trying to encourage? How does the program tie in with Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?
- What does the P.E. program look like at ARUSD in Grades 4-5? Behaviors you are trying to encourage? How does the program tie in with Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?
- What does the P.E. program look like at ARUSD in Grades 6-8? Behaviors you are trying to encourage? How does the program tie in with Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Participants were asked questions to confirm their programs.

Program Background:

Middle school Physical Education programs have a dedicated teacher and are held for a 50 minute period, five days a week. Activities are done outdoors due to the lack of indoor facilities. Fourth and fifth graders have P.E. once a week. This program is meant to get students acquainted to regular physical education, however it is much less structured and more play-based. While upper-level elementary students are playing, teachers use that period as their personal prep-time.

TK/Kinder students don't have structured physical education. Partnership programs with organizations like Little Heroes, YMCA, and Bossy (girls soccer) support outdoor play time or indoor game time for 45 minutes per week.

Adaptive P.E. is provided for learners with disabilities, based on a comprehensive assessment, to give them skills necessary for a lifetime of physical fitness and wellness. Many campuses currently lack intentional space to support this program.

Participants were asked questions to confirm their programs.

Program Background:

Some campuses within ARUSD have joint use agreements with the City of San Jose for their tracks and fields to remain open to the public. These sites include Ocala, Joseph George, Sheppard, and Painter. There is also a thirty year use and priority contract with Alum Rock Youth Center set to end in 2030 that allows after school sports teams to use their facilities for practice.

After school partners such as Think Together, City Year, Envisioneers, and YMCA host moderate to vigorous physical activities for an hour after the last bell. Dance and yoga are often a focus in these groups, especially through the Sky School Program for second through fifth graders currently at seven school sites.

Recess across all grade levels is an hour long break; TK through fifth grade have 40 minutes to play and 20 minutes to eat while Middle School students aren't required to go through the lunch line and can spend the hour how they wish. Often group sports and play like soccer, tether ball, and basketball take place during lunch time.

Participants were asked questions to confirm their programs.

Program Background:

Mental wellness is addressed mostly through programs implemented by counselors. Elementary School counselors are split between two sites, so the counselor travels between the two campuses throughout the week.

At the Middle School level, school counselors are assigned per campus and a school counselor internship program is provided to train part time counselors who split their work across multiple sites. Currently Middle School counselors focus on Dialectical Behavior Therapy, teaching tools and strategies to filter, pause, and self-regulate.

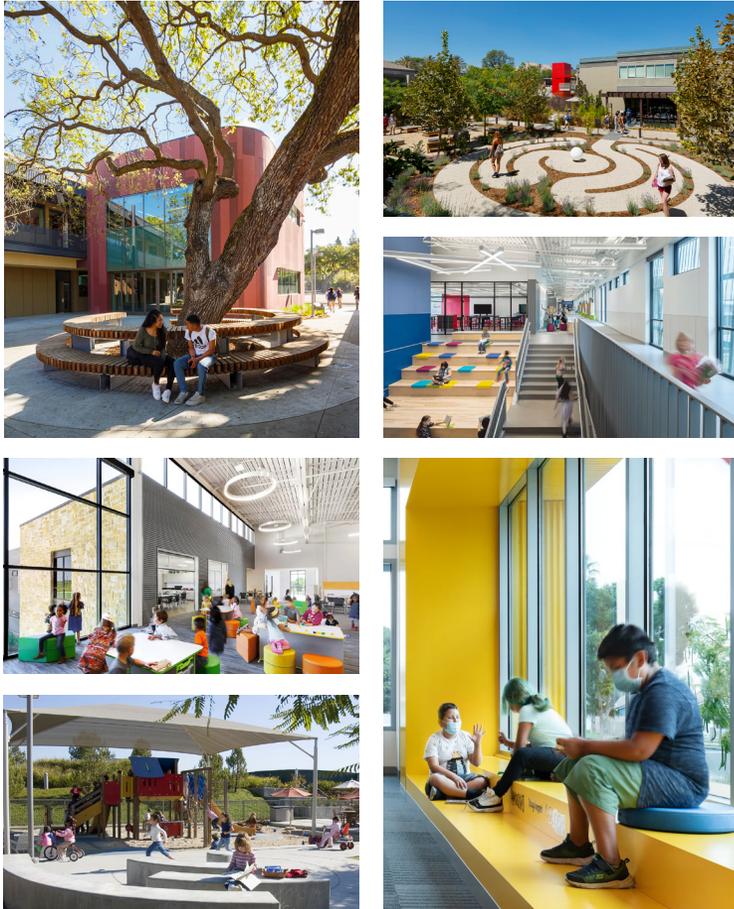
For grades Kindergarten through Fifth, the Kimochi Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program exists in every school and gives exposure to and teaches young children to access emotional language early on. Middle School SEL curriculum includes Second Step and in some cases Restorative Justice Programs.

Participants were asked questions to confirm their programs.

Before going into the Big Picture Questions, reference images below were shared. Participants were invited to leave comments on the photos.

MURAL LINK

Exterior Spaces and Views



Physical Wellness and Counseling



Physical Education



Interior and Exterior Connections



Big Picture Questions:

- Are there peer institutions or specific facilities you've seen that you've liked (or didn't)? What did you like (or dislike) about them?
- What activities should a wellness space support?
- What other amenities should be provided to support wellness?
- Do teachers on most campuses have a space for respite and to connect and collaborate with each other?
- What programs support wellness? What is needed in the environment to support those programs?
- Research has pointed to the benefits to the developing brain to spend time outdoors. When students come back inside, they are better able to focus. What learning is currently taking place outdoors besides play-based learning? What learning activities could be supported by outdoor learning areas with the necessary infrastructure? If places were created on campuses for nature-based learning adjacent to indoor areas, would you envision learning being facilitated in those places?

Participants were asked questions to draw out their ideas to improve the learning environments to support the mission and vision of Alum Rock USD.

Big Picture Questions:

- Besides formal programs, do ARUSD campuses encourage daily movement in indoor environments (i.e. active learning with furniture that gets students up and moving to engage).
- Can fitness, health, and wellness be integrated in the whole school/campus? How could it be integrated within the learning environment outside of a designated fitness or play time?
- How can learning environments meet all learners' sensory needs? Do you have ideas for how these spaces could be more integrated into the learning environments?
- Is there anything else we should know about how mental and physical health could be improved at ARUSD?

Participants were asked questions to draw out their ideas to improve the learning environments to support the mission and vision of Alum Rock USD.

Reference Projects Shared by Participants:

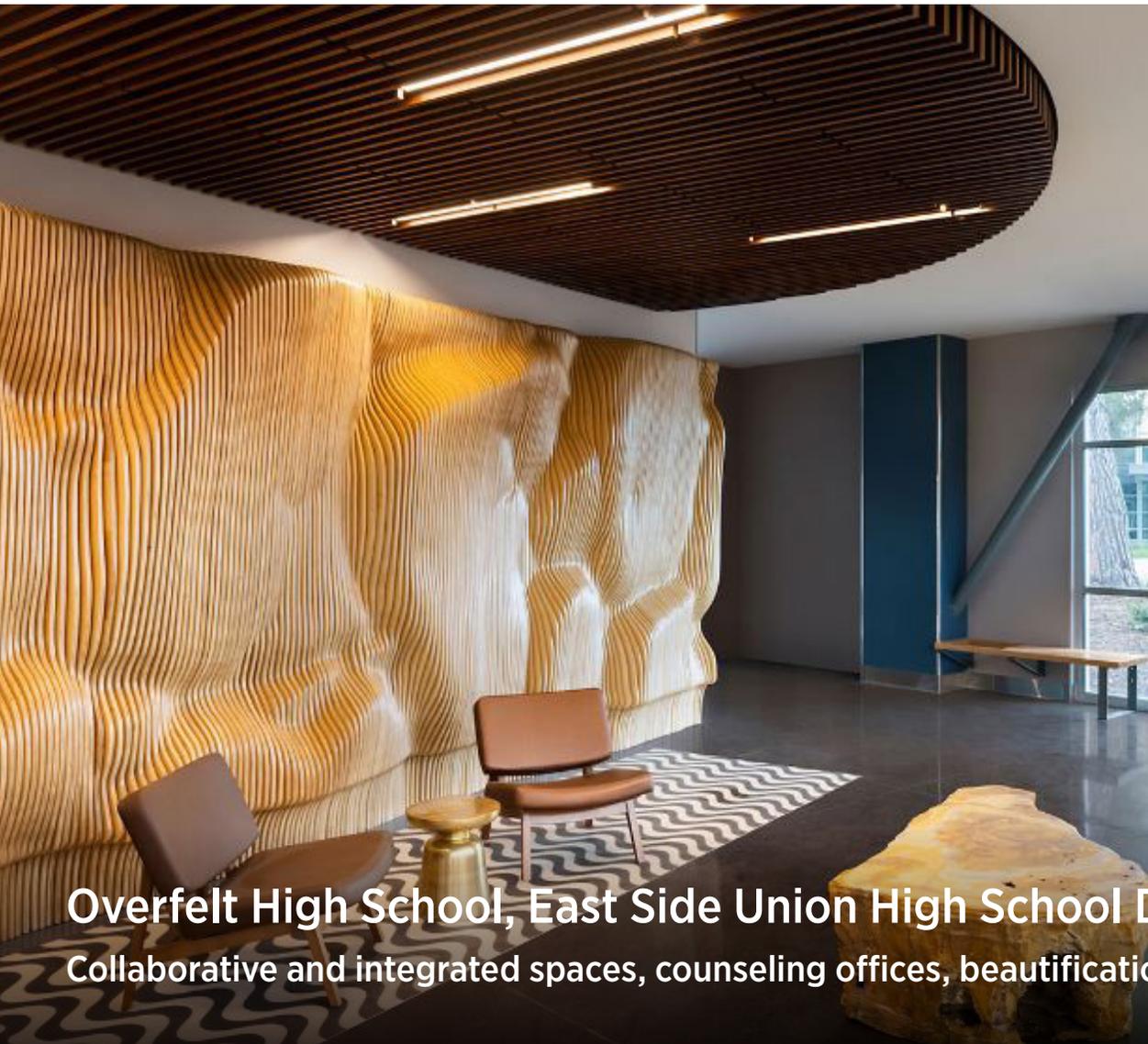
- Overfelt High School - Collaborative and integrated spaces, counseling offices, beautification day
- Hubbard Media Arts Academy- Front Office
- Renaissance at Mathson - Maze
- Berryessa Youth Center
- Mayfair Community Center
- MACSA Property (Mexican American Community Service Agency) - Wellness space, classroom sizes and indoor gym

The first question was intended to see if participants had reference projects to share with or felt that they were exemplary, whether it is in ARUSD or outside of the district. The following pages show the reference projects discussed.

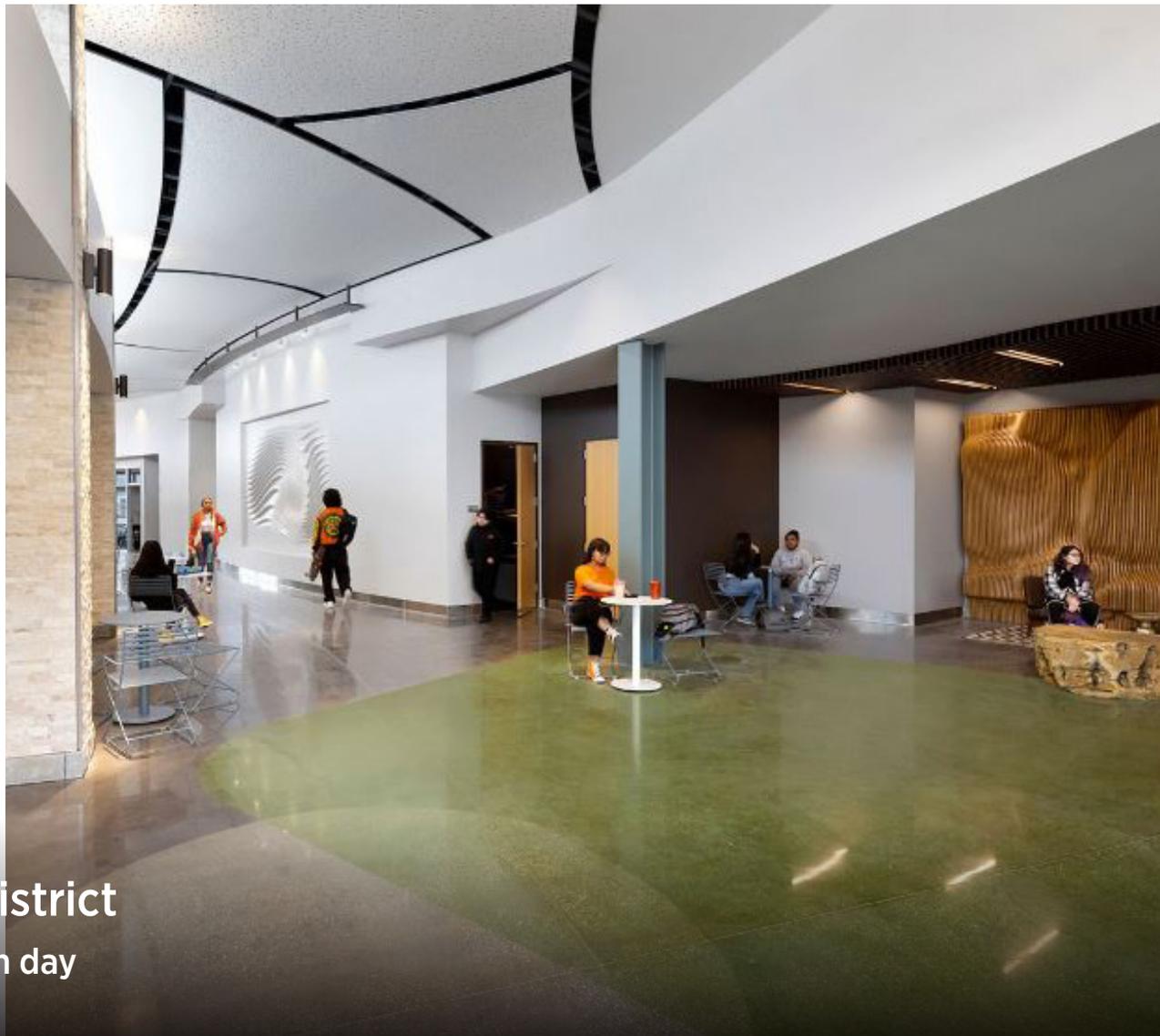
Reference Projects Shared by Participants:

- YMCA - Outdoor artificial turf area, pool, classroom/private room, MPR
- Lyndale Elementary School
- Ocala STEAM Academy- Garden boxes
- Milpitas India Community Center - Kitchen where culinary arts can be taught
- LUCHA Elementary School - Sensory spaces in classrooms/sensory corners
- Renaissance at Fischer - Equipment for students with ADHD

The first question was intended to see if participants had reference projects to share with or felt that they were exemplary, whether it is in ARUSD or outside of the district. The following pages show the reference projects discussed.



Overfelt High School, East Side Union High School District
Collaborative and integrated spaces, counseling offices, beautification day





Lyndale Elementary, ARUSD
Garden boxes





**Ocala STEAM Academy, ARUSD
Garden boxes**

The following pages show the participants answers placed in the sections in which they will appear in the educational specifications sections for this topic.

- Sections:
1. Activities
 2. Current Challenges
 3. Design Objectives
 4. Affordances
 5. Sizing and Adjacencies

1

Activities

- Little Heroes classroom game time for Elementary students 45 min a week
- Middle School PE Classes
- Middle School classrooms participate in community circles.
- Counselor sessions include grounding activities that are physical or sensory in nature.
- Counselors walk with students often
- Occasional counselor/student games of soccer or basketball
- Mindfulness yoga classes to support emotional regulation
- Individual and/or silent decompression
- Circle talks along the lines of restorative justice practices at the Middle School level
- Gardening programs on campus or part of partnerships such as Veggie-lution

2

Current Challenges

The biggest challenge to physical and mental wellness across ARUSD is space. Physical fitness spaces are almost exclusively outdoors and outdated, making them difficult to use in hot weather or when it rains. There aren't spaces designated for physical wellness that the whole campus can use, and activities like yoga or dance take place after school hours in classrooms or cafeterias that aren't organized or supported as multipurpose rooms. Mental wellness is, for the most part, contained to counselors' rooms and special education rooms, which lack confidential office space and adequate sensory support areas. Faculty lounges are organized more for quick breaks rather than being a welcoming respite area for faculty. Outdoor areas are very bare of plant life, trees and shading, and furniture that would increase one's engagement with nature and improve mental health.

3

Design Objectives

Mental and physical wellness are inherently connected and need to be supported by the built environment. **Spaces of zen and respite** for both students and teachers, and support spaces for faculty to organize wellness programs are a priority. The spaces should be **welcoming and have a connection to the outdoors**. There should be at least one space, indoors or outdoors, that offers the opportunity of daily movement.

3

Design Objectives

Ideas for the physical environment to support the vision for learning

Outdoor areas

- Areas for leisure with adequately sized furniture to serve both students and faculty
- Adequately sized play equipment
- Trees or shade structures to break up the sun exposure on blacktop areas
- Properly maintained blacktops and play fields to keep students safe as they run and play
- More engaging school gardens to serve educational and mental wellness purposes. Garden box planters and leisure paths would be great.

Indoor physical wellness spaces

- Floors that are easy to clean.
- Enhanced acoustics to reduce noise during play or exercise programs
- Indoor sensory rooms with tactile surfaces on the walls and floor that encourage fine motor skills and challenge students' creativity and sense of imagination.
- Indoor zen rooms that are welcoming and comforting with calming colors and soft seating.

4

Affordances

Furniture and Equipment

- Physical equipment beyond cardio to allow kids to choose how they engage with their body; this could include strength training for example
- Sensory, self-regulatory equipment
- Kinetic sand and water tables
- Exercise ball chairs for students
- Soft and flexible furniture

5

Sizing and Adjacencies

- Confidential counselors' offices off of a larger zen room for students that's at least the size of a classroom.
- Faculty lounge relatively two classrooms in size
- Sensory space within counseling rooms or a separate community sensory room
- If sensory and zen rooms are designed as their own spaces, they should have a direct connection to the outdoors

Appendix

Please follow the links to the Mural board to see artifacts from the focus group interview and the Ed Specs Visioning Workshop link to see the Artifacts from the workshop.

Mural Link: [HERE](#)

Ed Specs Visioning Workshop Link: [HERE](#)