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Throughout 2020 and 2021 our world has witnessed significant change, equal parts challenging and transformative. Despite being physically distanced, we have been fortunate to maintain our connection to each other through virtual programs and thoughtful discussion—using technology to bridge this divide. While it can never replace the impact of in-person connection, it did allow much of the daily rhythm of our lives to continue in relation to business, commerce, and importantly, education.

The KI and IIDA 2021 Education Evolution series explored the critical role education plays in society and how the pandemic radically shifted the experience of thinking about, planning, and designing for education. Bringing together design thought-leaders and end-users to address the issues and questions being faced individually and collectively, these programs looked ahead to the evolution of education. As all of us have lived through multiple pandemics, both health and social/political, we found community with each other through a connection around design, equity, innovation, and change. The teams gathered discussing empathy and resilience, and learning inside and outside. Issues of dignity, collaboration, persistence, and innovation were addressed. We were inspired and understood that design is the ultimate tool to solve problems, support health and wellness, facilitate and celebrate learning, and build stronger education communities.

What remains true throughout is the importance of human connection, and the essential role design plays in facilitating and inspiring connected spaces. Watch and re-watch the full virtual series for important discoveries and lessons on education, innovation, and commitment, with design, as always, at the center.

Cheers,

Cheryl S. Durst, Hon. FIIDA
Executive Vice President and CEO
IIDA

“...The world of learning, like so much in our lives, has substantially shifted in recent years. These inspirational discussions highlighted the importance of integrated design to the future of education, and the vital role of true collaboration and inclusion of all voices.”

— Cheryl S. Durst, Hon. FIIDA
Executive Vice President and CEO, IIDA
EDUCATION AS EVOLUTION

The 2021 KI and IIDA Education Evolution series featured voices, viewpoints, and insights from end-users, leading educators, designers, and firms—exploring shifts in education and designing for resiliency. Co-moderated by Executive Vice President and CEO of IIDA, Cheryl S. Durst, Hon. FIIDA, along with the National Education Leader of KI, Jonathan Matta, these conversations brought together diverse design teams to explore the ways schools are rethinking their spaces to anticipate evolving in-person and hybrid needs for education, and to discuss designing for equity, change, and a new age of learning.

For 10 to 15 years, we’ve been building our practice to create learning environments that are high-performance, sustainable spaces that nurture student achievement and wellness. There is a direct correlation between the environment that they are in, and their overall education experience. And to get there, collaboration with all the users has always been essential to our process.”

Omar Calderon, Principal, Perkins Eastman
Discussing Banneker Academic High School in Washington, D.C.

“What’s great about this project is that while it identified and targeted needs, it also allowed us to be a part of the process, so it was empowering as well. The administration, faculty, and HKS team were constantly engaging us to think through this project, and while it could have just been another fancy grouping of rooms, it will now be a dynamic space for learning and connection.”

Colt Brock, Lake Highlands High School Alumni and Georgia Tech Student of Architecture
Discussing Lake Highlands High School’s new facility.

“Using design, let’s create flexibility in our space by doing something other than building walls. More and more as a firm, and I think as a profession, we can define space differently and we can adapt space without infringement.”

Barry Nebhut, AIA, Principal, Stantec
Discussing the Empower Centers for Austin Independent School District.

EIGHT KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Education spaces need to be designed to allow for change and improvisation.

2 The design starts with the end-users and their voice is critical.

3 Allowing for a project to evolve and transform creates impactful design.

4 Design guides and facilitates conversation as much as it directs.

5 Sustainability and health and wellness are interconnected.

6 There is no one size fits all for education design.

7 Designing for flexibility is also designing for equity.

8 Education and office design are interconnected, and inform each other.

Photos Courtesy of KI
The first in this three-part series examined the ways in which groups of stakeholders from Banneker Academic High School in Washington, D.C. worked with Perkins Eastman’s education leadership to create an inspiring space that supports a diverse student population through a deep understanding of end-users’ needs.

Perkins Eastman brought together the Deputy Chief of Facilities, Andrea Swiatocha, AIA; School Principal, Anita Berger; and 11th grade student Jabari Paul, along with Perkins Eastman Design Principal, Omar Calderon, AIA, to talk about the creation of this new high-performance learning facility. This collaborative team discussed the evolution of the close-to-completion project, and the learning spaces within. The conversation demonstrated how best to facilitate collaboration in safe and healthy ways, while incorporating multi-functional spaces that provide opportunities for the collision of people and ideas in education.

Banneker has deep roots in the Washington, D.C. school system as a renowned college prep high school that draws students from all over the city. The school currently ranks 136 out of 18,000 schools nationally, and fifth in the Washington, D.C. metro area. Since its founding in 1981, Banneker has seen success with a 100% graduation rate and 100% college acceptance rate. The new high school facility, designed by Perkins Eastman, had to serve a diverse, driven, and committed student and educator population.

Based on the concept of a learning commons, this state-of-the-art new building features an open atrium at the heart of the school, well-lit classrooms, collaboration areas, gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, coffee shop, science labs, studio and performing art spaces, and outdoor learning areas—with sustainability and wellness at its heart as the school seeks LEED Platinum and Net Zero ratings.

The school has a strong sense of pride, and a deeply engaged student population fought for the creation of this new facility—the expectations were high and this innovative and inspiring project exceeded those expectations. Through the process of collaborative development and the building itself, the project has further deepened and unified the Banneker community.

Learn more about this inspiring project and collaborative team by watching the CEU accredited webinar on IIDA.org/academy.
FLEXIBILITY IN DESIGN

How are we incorporating flexibility into the design process? Associate Principal at Lake Highlands High School, Casey Gray; Lake Highlands High School Alumni and current Georgia Tech Student of Architecture, Colt Brock; and Vice President and Director of Education at HKS, Adelia Shleusz, IIDA, came together to discuss the evolution and major goals of the Lake Highlands High School project—one that changed over the course of discovery, design, and construction.

The panel addressed the importance of the voice of the teachers, students, and administrators and how to best develop the spaces to ensure health, wellness, and safety as well as facilitating dynamic learning models. Their approach to collaboration and discovery with the school community helped to create strong social and learning environments.

A key takeaway was the importance of facilitating in-depth dialogues with all stakeholders and end-users to create distinct priorities. Designers should also function as lead facilitators with education leaders to enable groups to create clear pathways forward for a collaborative and inclusive process, with a result that serves communities in more effective and thoughtful ways.

Engaging students from the very beginning is critical to understanding the full spectrum of voices and needs of the end-user and is invaluable to planning. Brock and other students were invited to share their thoughts on the project during the discovery process, as they had firsthand knowledge of the challenges of the original spaces.

Schools aren’t just learning environments; they are social and emotional spaces. Leveraging space and education environments to remove divisions facilitates not just optimum learning environments, but ideal spaces for health, wellness, and emotional growth.

Learn more about this inspiring project and collaborative team by watching the CEU accredited webinar on IIDA.org/academy.

Q
Can you tell us about the shift from the initial plan and RFP to the actual final project?

A
“The initial request for the school was the addition of classrooms and creating a connection between two academic buildings. Through extensive community meetings and discussions, we identified an aligned need and mission with every representative of the community, to create a single thriving space that knitted the campus, educators, and students together through a unified space.”

Adelia Schleusz, IIDA, HKS

Q
Colt, as a student who was involved in the discovery process, what were some of the needs that you identified or saw for your peers and the campus?

A
“There was a huge divide between these two centers of the original campus. The use of the spaces created divisions among the 3,000 students, and many students and teachers never crossed paths because they used the space differently. The principal asked me to participate in a discovery project, and it was great to be a part of identifying and targeting needs, but also empowering as a student as well.”

Colt Brock, Lake Highlands High School Alum and Georgia Tech Student of Architecture
The third session in the series explored how technology has been impacting evolving models of learning and what it means for design. The Principal from Stantec, Barry Nebhut, along with the firm’s Senior Associate Planner, Theo Pappas, and Senior Interior Designer, Allison Schneider, IIDA, joined Senior Architect and Senior Project Manager of the Austin Independent School District, Michael Mann, to discuss the Austin Facilities Master Plan and its in-development Empower Center which envisions classroom spaces modeled on an interchangeable stage design. This innovative education design model allows for hyper-flexible spaces that can respond to what will be needed in education now and in the next 25 years, by integrating technology, equipment, and education design. The Empower Center builds a vision for the future of education and considers how adjustable space and technology can facilitate positive change.

The Empower Center is an idea that was initially developed to achieve many of the desired learning modalities of 21st century learning environments, all within one facility. It’s an adaptable space that can change relatively quickly to accommodate multiple uses. The design can evolve over time to serve new programs, and updates within existing programs, without inhibiting their goals. These spaces are not owned by any one program, but rather, are designed to accommodate most any program and curriculum while encouraging cross disciplinary collaboration.

“It’s intriguing to think about using the principles of stage design and applying that to a classroom. This upholds some principles around access and equity and maybe challenges a bit of the traditional power structure in the classroom.”

Cheryl S. Durst, Hon. FIIDA, IIDA

Stantec shared that these classroom concepts allow the students to define for themselves where they were headed with education. Not only are the students empowered to make those types of decisions and actions, but the Empower Center will offer the flexibility to adapt and evolve as needs change.

How does this new education concept embrace the needs of the student population in Austin?

“This program is built around the idea of student agency, where the students themselves drive where their education is headed and not necessarily fitting that into a traditional environment or a traditional classroom structure.”

Barry Nebhut, AIA, Stantec

Learn more about this inspiring project and collaborative team by watching the CEU accredited webinar on IIDA.org/academy.
OFFICE EVOLUTION: COFFEE WITH CHERYL AT NEOCON 2021

During this year’s NeoCon, IIDA Executive Vice President and CEO, Cheryl S. Durst, Hon. FIIDA, convened industry leaders to discuss the rapidly evolving needs of workplace design over coffee in the KI showroom at theMart in Chicago. Concluding the Education Evolution series the focus shifted to the work environment, bringing together a Design Principal from CannonDesign, Mark C. Hirons, IIDA, FAIA; Principal at Perkins&Will, Joseph T. Connell, IIDA; Vice President at Stantec, Angie Lee, IIDA; and Owner and Creative Director of Kuchar, Sarah Kuchar, IIDA.

The conversation touched on questions of education in relation to the office. Considering the learning environment as a source of inspiration and guidance, the interconnectedness was addressed as schools now seek to look more like workplace environments, embracing concepts of campus to corporate. The design community is poised to lead envisioning and developing these new, innovative spaces that support the community with the understanding that all places are learning environments.

As our workforce slowly emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are also changes in thinking about office space and how it best serves a new hybrid workforce. A key takeaway from this discussion was that work culture is still built at the office and the space that it happens in is critical—connection is amplified in-person and the office is a symbol of the company’s culture, where innovation happens. As our communities re-learn how to re-engage and be social again, how can workplace design affect that transition for its employees with a focus on wellness and equity? As we are now all asking, “Why do we go to the office?”, the answer was resoundingly, for connection. “I have a kitchen, but I still like to go to restaurants!” shared Joseph T. Connell, IIDA, LEED AP.

These thought-leaders looked ahead to what the office environment will look like in five years, and the question was raised of effective flexibility: what’s working, not working, and what do communities really need to thrive? Adaptability, resilience, work-life boundaries, and effective communication channels were highlighted as essential.

“With the workplace we often think of it as just being ‘the office’, but workplaces are also hospitals, higher education, science and technology, and other institutions. So there is now a great awakening for the workplace,” noted Mark Hirons, IIDA.
When we think about the re-imagination that lies ahead for school-based learning, it is moments and intentional efforts like these, bringing together a divergent set of users, influencers, designers, and architects, that lay the foundation for the much-needed change that our school systems are in need of.”

— JONATHAN MATTA  
NATIONAL EDUCATION LEADER  
KI