

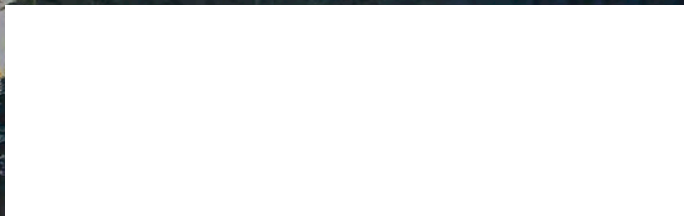
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



CITY OF THE FUTURE

Steven Holl Designs Linked Hybrid in Beijing

SECTION: Schools of the 21ST Century



Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School

Washington, D.C. | Hickok Cole

BY Joann Gonchar, AIA

SINCE IT FIRST OPENED in a church basement in Northeast Washington, D.C., with 57 preschoolers in 2003, the Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School (LAMB) has had a nomadic history. The quickly growing LAMB, which offers a dual-language immersion program combined with a curriculum based on the philosophies of educator Maria Montessori, relocated four times in just six years. It shared quarters with other schools and spent one academic year in the newly renovated, early-20th-century school in D.C.'s Brightwood neighborhood that would eventually become its permanent home. But before settling in for good, LAMB temporarily relocated one last time to ease construction of an approximately 19,000-square-foot addition. Peripatetic staff and students

returned to the expanded Federal Style structure last January.

Local firm Hickok Cole is responsible for both the renovation and expansion projects that transformed the landmarked, almost century-old school with four classrooms into one that could support LAMB's approach to learning and accommodate its growing population (enrollment is now at 171 students through fourth grade). To the rear of the two-story, load-bearing masonry structure, the architects added a straightforward but thoughtfully designed brick-clad box containing offices and two classrooms. Between the old and new, they inserted a strip of circulation space, glazed at both ends. This slotlike zone provides a new main entry, reorienting the building toward an adjacent park and away from the busy avenue to the south, just beyond the historic school's original portico-covered front door.

The arrangement also allowed designers to take advantage of the site's steep slope and create entrances into the new circulation zone on two different levels – an upper one from a plaza to the reception area, and another from a lower elevation to a basement multipurpose space. A welcoming steel-tread stair, with both adult- and child-scaled handrails, connects the two floors.

Within the circulation zone, the historic brick facade is left exposed, creating a contrast with the new construction's supporting steel columns and beams. Leaving these elements visible was in tune with Montessori philosophy, explains Diane Cottman, LAMB executive director, who hopes the students will learn from the structure. This goal of using the building as a teaching tool, in addition to a desire to reduce stormwater runoff, also provided the motivation for installing a green roof over the entry lobby. Although the roof is not accessible, students can view it from several second-floor windows.

The classrooms are basic but appealing. In the historic building, contractors repaired plaster-on-masonry walls; reinforced wood-paneled ceilings to support new light fixtures; and refurbished existing, double-hung wood windows. In the new wing, classrooms have suspended ceilings that partially reveal ductwork, and generous high-performance windows that provide a connection to the outdoors. Holly Lennihan, Hickok Cole project designer, says that these "mute" surroundings should foster development of children's concentration skills. Creating a setting to support learning is like designing a gallery, she explains. "The room is the backdrop for the art." ■

ARCHITECT:

Hickok Cole Architects – Michael E. Hickok, AIA, principal in charge; Holly Lennihan, project designer; John Murray, AIA, project manager; Elba Morales, Sheena Spearman, project architects; Susan Pelczynski, Vy Horwood, interior designers

CONSULTANTS: VIKA (civil); Structura (structural); Hurst & Associates Consulting Engineers (m/e/p)

CLIENT: Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School

SIZE: 19,257 square feet (new); 12,179 square feet (renovation)

COST: \$5.7 million

SOURCES

MASONRY: Carolina Ceramics

CURTAIN WALL: Kawneer

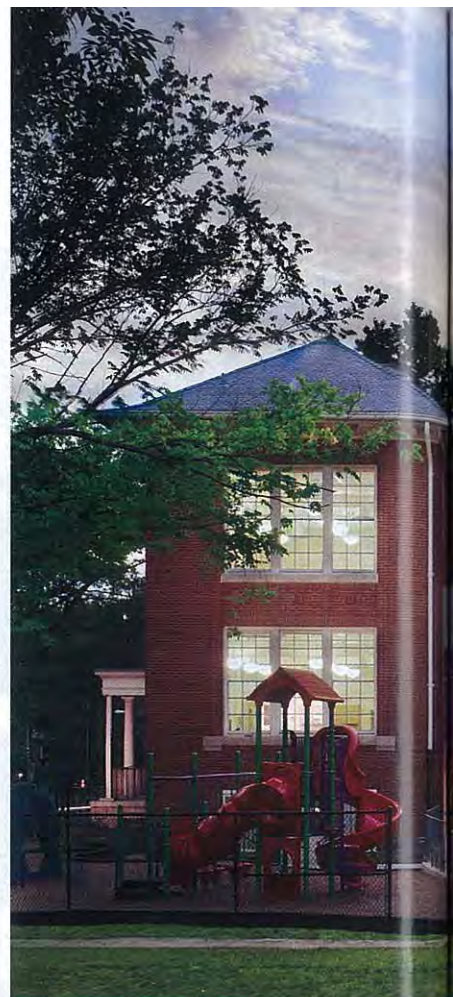
ELASTOMERIC ROOFING: Firestone

GREEN ROOF: American Hydrotech

ELEVATORS: Kone

ACOUSTICAL CEILINGS: Certainteed

SUSPENSION GRID: Armstrong



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1. The architects gave the school a new primary facade with entrances on two levels – an upper one from a plaza to the reception area, and another from a playground to a basement multipurpose space.

2. An interior stair with both adult- and child-scaled handrails connects the basement entry to the first-floor reception area.

3. The exterior walls of the historic school and the new construction's supporting steel structure have been left exposed within the circulation zone.

DRAWINGS

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Reception | 5 Kitchen |
| 2 Classroom | 6 Storage/utilities |
| 3 Administration | 7 Library |
| 4 Multipurpose | 8 Green roof |



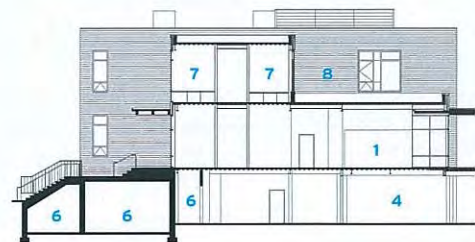
BASEMENT

■ New construction

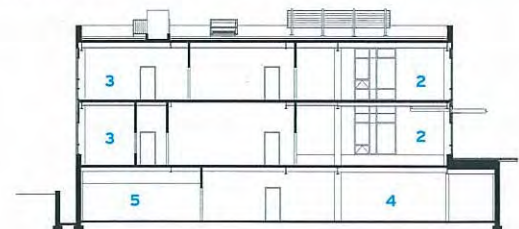


SITE/FIRST FLOOR

■ New construction



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B