



HAWTHORNE COMMUNITY STEAM EXPLORATION SPACE DESIGN

Statement of Qualifications

October 27th, 2017

POMEGRANATE CENTER TEAM

Pomegranate Center

Outdoor Classroom Design

EarthPlay Design

Herrera Environmental Consultants

Contact: Eric Higbee
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POMEGRANATE CENTER

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"I think that playgrounds should be renamed 'research environments.' This is what the children are doing so vigorously. They are not playing. They are finding out how the universe works."—R. Buckminster Fuller

October 26, 2017

Dear Selection Committee Members,

A school playground is more than a place for kids to run around at recess. It is a community gathering place, a place to connect with the outdoors, and a place for open-ended learning. More importantly, the process of envisioning, designing, and building a playground is more than a construction project. It is an opportunity to bring a school's community together, to generate a sense of ownership, and create a rich platform for student learning and legacy.

As a parent of a first grader at Hawthorne, I see every day a giant chasm hidden below the playground's sea of asphalt. On one side of this chasm is years of investment and energy from teachers, staff, and parents to create a place that will help our children reach their potential; on the other side is, well, our playground.

I couldn't be more excited for the opportunity to help close that gap.

We've assembled a team that we believe will let the Hawthorne community and its children realize their potential. Team lead Pomegranate Center will bring its 30 years of experience convening inclusive and joyful community engagement processes and turning community ideas into vibrant, art-filled public spaces. Jason Medeiros of Outdoor Classroom, uniquely qualified as a teacher and landscape designer, will work with students and teachers to create classroom-integrated learning opportunities through every step of the process. To round out our team, we have asked Leon Smith of Earthplay to consult with us regarding nature and interactive play, and Herrera Environmental Consultants to provide civil engineering services as needed.

Thank you for your dedication and courage bringing this project to fruition, and for recognizing this project's potential for learning and community-building. We look forward to joining you on this journey to create a unique space that is strong in community ownership, deep with learning, and burgeoning with play.

Rise Up!

In Community,

Eric Higbee
Pomegranate Center

FIRM PROFILES



Pomegranate Center

Pomegranate Center specializes in bringing community ideas into fruition. For 30 years, this Seattle-based nonprofit has been bringing people together in the design and construction of vibrant community spaces. Founded by artist Milenko Matanovic and now comprising a staff of six, Pomegranate Center has a national reputation for successful participatory design projects that build local character, enhance place-making, and express the connections inherent in every place. The organization has facilitated hundreds of community meetings and built more than 60 public spaces, including many children-focused projects. Our refined and robust training program has taught hundreds of neighbors, agencies, and professionals how to strengthen communities through collaborative placemaking.

References: David Johnson, Highland Park, 206-816-4420, davidjohnson982@msn.com
Willard Brown, Delridge Neighborhood Development Assoc, willard@dnda.org



Outdoor Classroom Design

Outdoor Classroom Design specializes in providing experiences that meld curriculum, learning space design, and direct classroom support. Founded by Jason Medeiros in 2010, its techniques for student engagement build directly off of lessons and subject matter being taught by teachers, and not only inform creative and educational landscape design, but add real life relevance to classroom skills and content. Teachers have the opportunity to see their learning goals captured in playground design, and students show off skills and knowledge to inspire the larger community process. Outdoor Classroom Design worked with Aki Kurose Middle School to build science fair projects that doubled as design inspirations for the Brighton Science Park, and continues to work with Louisa Boren STEM K-8 on inquiry science lessons that inform the restoration and enhancement of a local wetland park.

References: Sunny Graves, 3rd grade teacher STEM K-8, asgraves@seattleschools.org
Alisha Winger, 4th grade teacher Highland Park Elem, amwinger@seattleschools.org



Earthplay Design

Earthplay has been in the vanguard of natural play environments for more than 18 years. Founded by Rusty Keeler, author of *Natural Playscapes: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul*, Earthplay has worked with dozens of clients across the country to dream, design, and build custom natural playscapes for children. EarthPlay's mission is to help connect children with nature through play and to support messy adventurous free play through education and advocacy. They believe that all children deserve the opportunity for free play in magical, muddy, marvelous settings. Their playscape designs bring nature to children in fun ways with hills to climb, dirt to dig, plants to explore, and water to splash.



Herrera Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Herrera provides a full range of civil and environmental engineering services to public and private sector clients. Herrera engineers work closely with their clients to understand project constraints and develop cost-effective solutions for permits and construction. Their engineers work on all aspects of projects, with experience that allows the team to integrate “big picture” project goals into the specialized analysis required during each project phase.

KEY PERSONNEL

ERIC HIGBEE

Pomegranate Center | Landscape Architect



As the Executive Director of Pomegranate Center, Eric draws upon his decade of experience as a licensed landscape architect managing local, regional, and national projects, and as a community organizer who has facilitated dozens of community meetings and work parties. His work includes pioneering projects such as the UpGarden (the country's first rooftop community garden), Marra Farm (Seattle's first Urban Farm), and the Wallybug (Seattle's first painted intersection mural). His experience also includes the master planning and construction of multiple school projects including John Muir Elementary, Highland Park Elementary School, and Camelot Elementary School (Federal Way).

Eric graduated with a Master in Landscape Architecture from the University of Washington, where he returns annually to teach about community driven design and urban agriculture. He is also a father to a boisterous 6-year-old boy who loves legos and math.

Eric will lead the design and community engagement for this project.

REGISTRATION

Licensed Landscape Architect, WA

EDUCATION

Master in Landscape Architecture,
University of Washington

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Illustration
AAS, Graphic Design, R.I.T.

SELECT PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Highland Park Elementary - Seattle

Delridge Wetlands Park - Seattle

Three Cedars Waldorf School - Bellevue

New Holly Head Start Natural Playground - Seattle

Camelot Elem. Forest Classroom - Federal Way

John Muir Elementary School - Seattle*

Seattle Prep School Master Plan - Seattle*

Oak Harbor High School - Oak Harbor*

Community Farm at Rainier Vista - Seattle

New Holly P-Patch Redevelopment - Seattle

*project work at a previous firm

STEPHANIE INGRAM

Pomegranate Center | Architect

Stephanie Ingram is a licensed architect with a diverse background in design/build and public interest design. Stephanie has worked on projects of many types and scale, including museum and public facility design, residential design/build and community-based village planning with rural communities in Central America. Stephanie has worked for several Seattle architecture firms, including Jones and Jones and LMN, as well being a founding partner in a small residential design/build firm. She has also formed a design group dedicated to serving nonprofit organizations in need of design or planning services. Her range of experiences have given her insight into working with a wide range of clients, consultants, and communities.

Stephanie will lead the project management coordination, support community engagement efforts, and coordinate with the engineering team.



KEY PERSONNEL

JASON MEDEIROS

Outdoor Classroom Design | Principal Educativist



Jason Medeiros has over thirteen years of experience implementing creative educational solutions and teaching science in underserved communities with such organizations as Rainier Scholars, Seattle YMCA, Family Science, and IslandWood. He currently specializes in the design of public spaces linked to school curriculum, supporting cognitive development for learners young and old. Through projects like Brighton Science Park and the SBOC Bird and Butterfly Garden, his work enhances science curriculum at schools and generates science awareness for the community at large. Jason has also worked as a grantwriter for many of his projects, garnering \$300,000 for public art, native plant gardens, and science installations in several Seattle communities. Innovative and proficient in outdoor and environmental education, classroom science instruction, group facilitation, and landscape design, his unique set of skills and experiences are valuable assets for our team and Hawthorne Elementary School.

Jason will lead student engagement efforts and provide design and project planning support.

EDUCATION

Master in Landscape Architecture, Univ. of Washington

Master of Science | Soil Ecology, UC Berkeley

Bachelor of Science | Biology, Yale University

RELEVANT PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Highland Park Elementary School, Seattle

Delridge Wetland Park, Seattle

Brighton Science Park, Seattle

Viewlands Inspiration Plan, Seattle

Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center, Seattle

Villa Academy, Seattle

Camelot Elem. Forest Classroom - Federal Way

Ballard Preschool Co-op, Seattle

Safe Passages Peace Garden, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Idlewood Nature Trail, Lake Sammamish

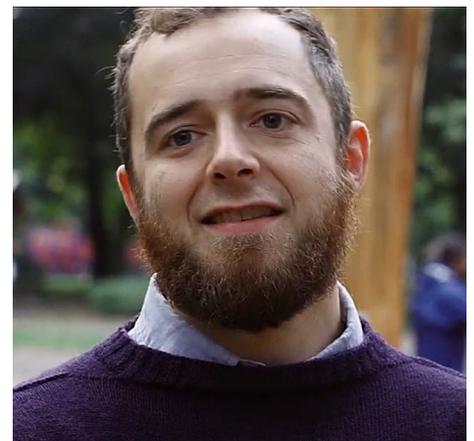
Linden Orchard P-Patch Gate Design and Fabrication, Seattle

LEON SMITH

EarthPlay Design | Principal Playmaker

Leon Smith has worked with Rusty Keeler at Earthplay since 2004, designing custom natural play environments for preschools, child care centers, and communities around the country. Prior to joining Earthplay, he worked as a childcare provider and preschool teacher in several different settings, most notably the Giddens School (formerly called Happy Medium) in Seattle. Through his work with preschool children, he developed a passion for creating spaces that allow children to do what they do naturally—thrive. Leon is also the founder of Portland Free Play, which is an organization dedicated to empowering children to play through the introduction of loose parts. He is also a member of the Advisory Council of the International Green Schoolgrounds Alliance, and a long time board member of the Community Built Association. Leon was born and raised in the Alaska Interior (he will neither confirm nor deny rumors that a family of brown bears raised him until the age of 5).

Leon will provide his design and technical expertise on natural play and playground safety.



PROJECT UNDERSTANDING & APPROACH

As studies continue to affirm the importance of play upon the cognitive, behavioral, social, and physical development of children, our responsibility as designers is to create school grounds that capture the imagination, enthrall children with discovery, and encourage meaningful interaction between children and nature. We envision this project as a pivotal space for the community and a resource for families. We view Hawthorne Elementary as a partner in our collective mission to raise a new generation of stewards who value community and respect each other and the environment.



Volunteers work together during Pomegranate Center’s “Gathering Place Initiative” (left), and New Holly Head Start Natural Playground (right).

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES, STUDENTS, AND STAFF

Community process starts by recognizing that together we know more. Each participant has wisdom and insight to contribute, and an inclusive process provides a space for people to recognize the value of others’ ideas. We facilitate community meetings in a way that everyone has a chance to speak, and the best ideas rise to the top.

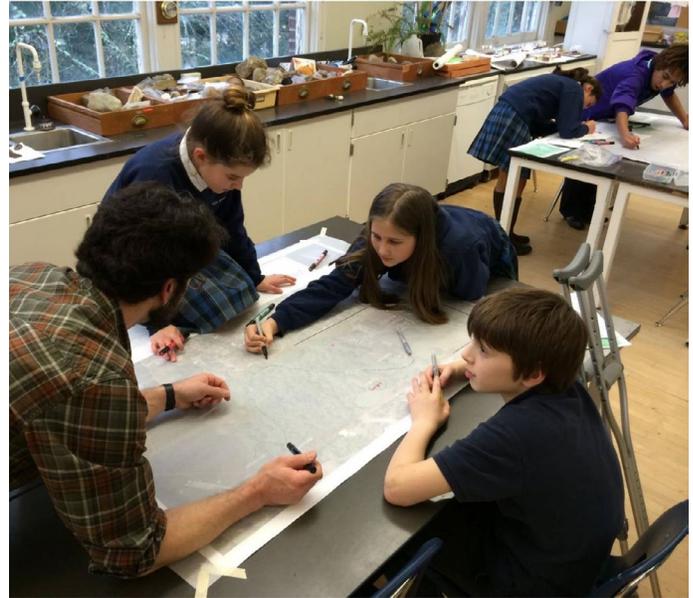
A successful community process also needs to offer multiple ways for people to participate beyond public meetings. While community meetings are often a critical component of a public process, they typically attract only a certain segment of the population that have the flexibility to attend these meetings. Since a goal of this project is to involve Hawthorne Elementary’s diverse community, we would like to consider a more holistic strategy that allows people to contribute through other means, such as family discussion at home, hands-on work, or project support through existing community resources.

In our experience, giving students a genuine role and deep investment in a project will inevitably pull in their parents to participate. Our goal is to engage students in a way that makes them real participants, creating artwork and site evaluations that will attract more parents to community meetings and help guide and inspire the decision-making process.

This is what we recently did at Highland Park Elementary School, where we drafted a plan for the schoolyard focused on natural play and learning spaces. Team member Jason Medeiros worked with 1st and 4th grade classrooms on a variety of assignments: Students mapped current schoolyard conditions and used math to calculate different area types; they painted and drew their ideal “play habitats,” and then asked their parents what types of play they remembered as kids; and they spent time building models of their ideal play environment and discussed the results as a class. The strong student and teacher excitement for our planning process spilled over into homes and increased parent involvement and attendance at our meetings.

In order to strengthen the skillset of the Hawthorne community, we would like to offer the equivalent of a half-day workshop in the Pomegranate Method to Hawthorne staff and interested community members. Participants will learn the fundamentals of community engagement, including meeting facilitation, outreach, and other skills that help ensure a successful and meaningful public process. The design and development of this concept plan will provide real life experience of the process in action.

UNDERSTANDING & APPROACH



Children are free to get dirty and explore at one of EarthPlay Design’s natural playground projects (left). Jason Maderios of Outdoor classroom (right) works with students during a playground design workshop at Villa Academy.

EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

We believe that the designer’s role should be in service of the community. In our process, the community sets the vision for the place—what activities and values should happen there—while the designer gives expression to that vision. Projects get into trouble when designers start to tell the community what should happen, or when the community starts to micro-manage the design. Our process respects the unique strengths of each group.

Professional design and technical expertise should dance in tandem with the spirit and energy of a neighborhood’s grassroots place-based efforts. Our approach throughout design and construction documentation is to identify and incorporate opportunities for community-built work. Working side-by-side creates the strongest community bonds, whether it’s hands getting dirty planting native plants or co-creating a piece of artwork. It is also one of the most effective ways to get people involved who might not participate in a community meeting.

This is one of Pomegranate Center’s core areas of expertise. We know how to facilitate and seamlessly blend contractor-built components with community-crafted efforts. Our project experience proves it’s possible to build beautiful, vibrant, and functional spaces on lean budgets and with community participation.

We also work hard to make every project seamlessly integrate universal accessibility standards, ensuring that there are no barriers to enjoying the beautiful places we design. Our compass for social justice guides us to advocate for those who are not often represented, including children with special mobility or developmental needs. Our experience has been that the material and grading choices to accommodate those with special needs often overlap with our strategies to create friendly and welcoming schoolyards. Good design, by definition, is accessible and appealing for all.

Our team also has a thorough understanding of City requirements, design standards, and review processes. We have worked under Seattle School District and City of Seattle guidelines to design and construct playgrounds, irrigation systems, right-of-ways, and more.



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

HIGHLAND PARK ELEMENTARY

Seattle, WA

Year Completed: 2016 (Plan)

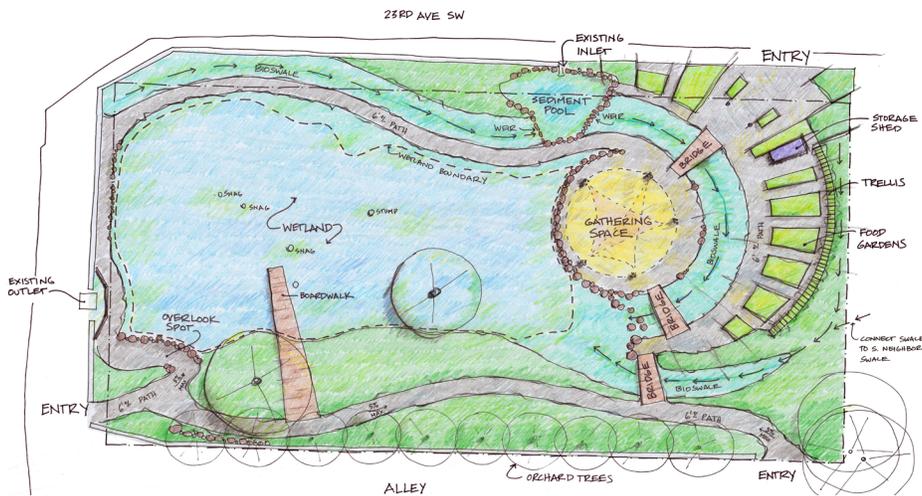
Construction Cost: N/A

Project reference:
 David Johnson
 Highland Park Elementary School
 steering group member
 206-816-4420
 DAVIDJJOHNSON982@msn.com

Based on student and community input, our final design for Highland Park Elementary has set a new precedent for natural play in the Seattle School District. The future playground incorporates natural play elements such as a log scramble, boulder climb, outdoor classroom areas, digging areas, rain gardens, and generous plantings of native species. The District agreed to treat our design as a pilot-project that, if successful, could eventually be replicated elsewhere.

The Pomegranate Center, with Outdoor Classroom Design and Earth-play Design, worked with Highland Park PTA to develop a plan that re-imagines Highland Park Elementary's playground. The team worked with several classrooms to engage students in art and math lessons focused on the playground design. A series of community meetings and workshops that included parents, teachers, and students helped identify priorities and develop design ideas. The process identified a strong interest in bringing natural play into a playground that is currently predominantly asphalt.

The design phase of this project was completed in Fall 2016, and the team is now working on construction documents for an initial phase of construction.



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

DELDRIDGE WETLAND PARK

Seattle, WA

Year Completed: 2017 (Conceptual Plan)

Construction Cost: N/A

Project reference:
 Willard Brown
 Director, Housing and Environmental
 Programs
 Delridge Neighborhoods Development
 Association
 206-935-2999
 willard@dnda.org

A wetland is a habitat of rich biodiversity; a neighborhood is a habitat of rich cultural diversity. Pomegranate Center has been working to discover what happens when a neighborhood has the opportunity to restore a wetland and integrate it into the surrounding community through our collaboration with the Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association.

One of the primary goals for this project was to create a unique and powerful educational resource. Our partner, Jason Medeiros of Outdoor Classroom Design, engaged one hundred 3rd and 5th grade students at Louisa Boren STEM K-8 (just one block away) in wetland science projects and site design activities. Student excitement about their designs and their learning about the wetland was shared as part of the heavily attended STEM Project Based Learning Night. This work helped generate investment and energy from the school community in the Delridge Wetland project, and modeled how the space could be used for rigorous science curriculum. As a capstone, Jason organized an “Educator’s Charrette” with teachers and professionals from nearby schools and agencies; generating design strategies for ongoing classroom and community education at the Delridge Wetlands.

The goal is to create a pilot project that not only protects the wetland, but elevates its importance as a place for children and adults, both for education and sanctuary.



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

JOHN MUIR ELEMENTARY

Mt. Baker/Rainier Valley, Seattle, WA

Year Completed: 2009/2013

Construction Cost: \$270,000

Project reference:
 Jin Lee
 PTA member
 206-933-1150
 jin@nkarch.com

Working with school staff, students, and community members while a project manager at Murase Associates, Eric Higbee designed a series of creative interventions breathing life and play back into the school grounds for this culturally diverse elementary school. Through a series of community meetings, Eric established the needs and desires of all stakeholders and developed a series of design alternatives for community review. Eric also collaborated with the student council to collect the children’s ideas for the playground.

Once a final vision was established, Eric worked within a limited budget to draft construction documents and plans for fundraising. Features of the play area include vegetable beds, a butterfly and hummingbird garden, an outdoor classroom, two rubber-surfaced play mounds, colorful paint striping, new accessible entries, play equipment for ages 2–5, improved fencing, and a grass play area.

The first phase of the project was complete in 2013 with help from the Seattle Parks Opportunity Fund.



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

THE PLAYPOD PILOT PROJECT

Portland, OR

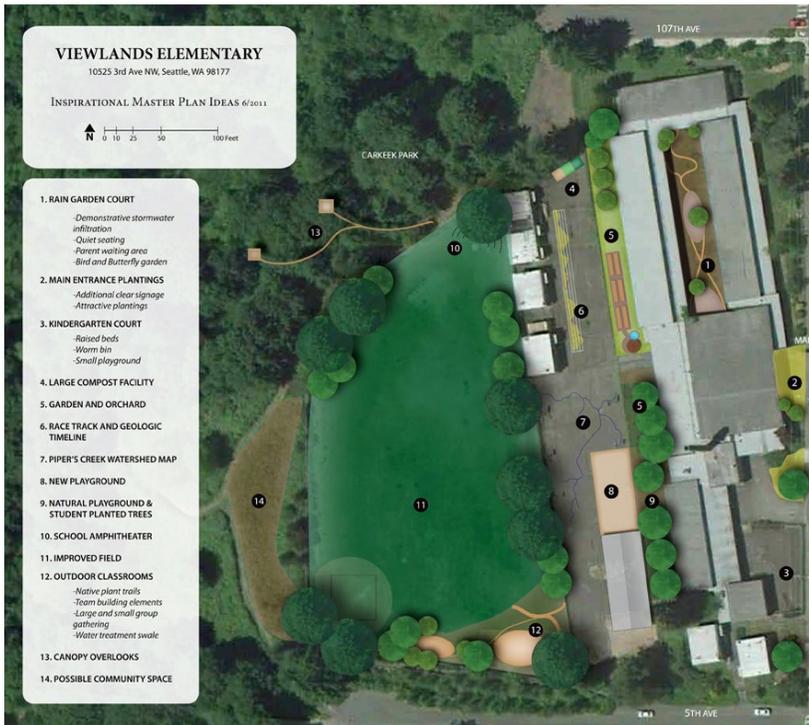
Year Completed: 2017

Construction Cost: N/A

Project reference:
Ben Keefer
Principal
503-916-6415
bkeef@pps.net

The PlayPod Pilot Project was an experiment by Leon Smith of Earth-play/Project Freeplay to examine the effect of introducing loose parts into outdoor recess at a public elementary School in Portland, Oregon. Various loose play materials were stored in a 'pod' on the playground and made available for kids to play with each day. Through this experiment, we observed a clear increase in children's enjoyment of recess time with more children being engaged in creative play. There was also a greater inclusion and collaboration among diverse groups of children, and a slight reduction in playground injuries.

See more here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xs0UpfeU3OE>



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

VIEWLANDS ELEMENTARY

Seattle, WA

Year Completed: 2011 (plan)

Construction Cost: \$135,000 (2015
DON grant request)

Project reference:
Frank Sanborn, former PTSA Co-chair
206.778.3343
frank@sanborn.org

As a member of the Viewlands design team, Jason Medeiros of Outdoor Classroom Design worked with teachers, community members and Principal Lisa Escobar to develop a mission, vision, and inspirational master plan for their soon-to-reopen school. The design brought life and form to the school's environmental mission offering outdoor classrooms for both reflective and active learning, a low ropes (team building) course, native plant trails, an outdoor amphitheater, and natural playground. The final document inspired discussion and involvement at community meetings, helped prioritize next steps for the PTSA, and provided a starting point for fundraising that eventually landed a Department of Neighborhoods Small and Simple grant.

Jason continues to volunteer with the school, serving on the Steering Committee for the Viewlands Elementary playground improvement for the last two years. He is familiar with the process of balancing community, school, and district needs on a large grant funded project. Jason is currently working with the Seattle Schools Self-Help coordinator to transform areas in between and around Portables into dynamic, learning filled spaces. Downspout rain planters and murals are being installed now.



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

MEDINA ELEMENTARY

Medina, WA

Year Completed: 2005-2006

Construction Cost: N/A

Project reference:
Jill Heijer
jillplus3@hotmail.com
425.442.6226

In partnership with the Medina PTA, Pomegranate Center helped integrate art, education, and community history into the new elementary school. Teachers, students, and alumni used their handprints and fingerprints to make an 18'x12' great blue heron painting that now hangs in the new library. Salvaged I-beams were transformed into lamp posts adorned with hand painted tiles designed from children's drawings of lesson plans. Another I-beam became a large sundial with carved tiles representing the seasons. This area is now used as an outdoor classroom and a reading circle for older students. An amphitheater and stage was constructed from stone to illustrate the ages of the earth (students now enjoy lunch there regularly), and a 12' square terrazzo "milky way galaxy" (1 foot equals 5,555 light years) proved so popular with kids and teachers that they later added a giant picture of the galaxy taken from the Hubble Telescope.

Each element at Medina Elementary School was developed based on Pomegranate Center's core values of strong communities of place, collective creativity, and multiple victories where the best ideas solve more than one problem at the same time. Teachers continue to work with new students to create new tiles to add to the gateway. In part, due to our collaborative efforts, Medina is a school where intentionally and collaboratively designed spaces add to the learning and curiosity of students.