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CASE STUDY *Elementary and Middle School*

CREDITS

OWNER: Confidential
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CONSULTANTS: HPS Haustechnikplanung Schreiber (building services); SHL Architekten (landscape); Brandston Partnership (lighting)

SOURCES

GREEN ROOF: Benkert and Zinco
EXTERIOR SOLAR SHADES: Warema
COLORED GLASS: Vanceva
LAB CABINETRY: Waldner
RUBBER FLOORING: Nora
CORRIDOR LIGHTING: Zumtobel

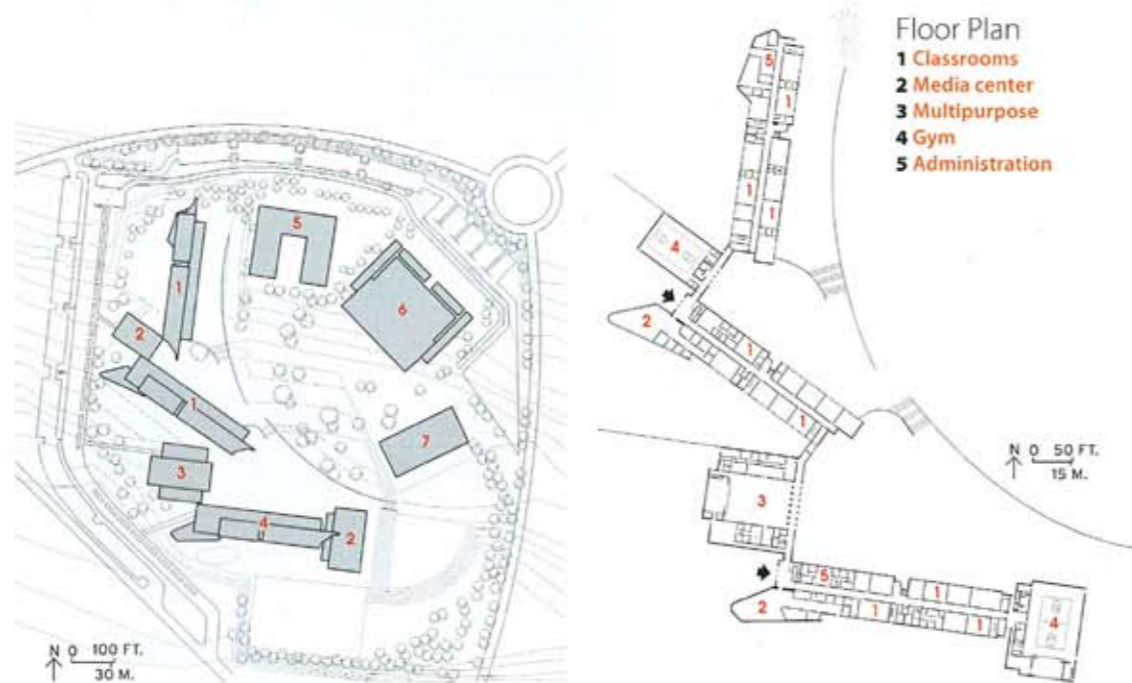
At Home, Abroad

Mitchell/Giurgola infuses an American school in Germany with a taste of the States.

BY MICHAEL DUMIAK

An American elementary and middle school designed by Mitchell/Giurgola in Bavaria forges form with specific purpose. The \$36 million, 1,500-student project reflects educators' requests: "There are gathering spaces in the hallways and between the long classroom buildings for impromptu break-out groups, for example, and larger classroom sizes handle computer equipment or "national" sessions for German-language lessons or sampling local cuisine. Long, gently rising green roofs complement the steep slopes of the 17-acre site, and natural ventilation and abundant daylighting courtesy of clerestory windows breathe life into the halls. In doing so the New York-based architects had to successfully negotiate many

significant differences in both culture and curricula. The project required skillful coordination among multiple partners, too. The client's project architect says that while it helps to have a local architect who understands local building codes and construction methods, it was necessary to hire an American architect who understands what American students and teachers expect and need. Indeed, students residing in foreign countries often rotate schools every few years, so it's important to keep a level of consistency in curriculum between schools. The same idea applies to architecture, which should feel approachable to a student body that may move through multiple schools both Stateside and abroad, and which should take 21st-century American



Blue exterior surfaces characterize the middle school, which is located uphill from the elementary school.

teaching approaches into consideration.

Mitchell/Giurgola partners Jan Keane, FAIA, and Steven Goldberg, FAIA, started work from a community master plan done by a local landscape architect. The school suggested in that scheme showed a much more German approach to pedagogy and its architecture. "It was a giant, curving megastructure," Keane says of the sober

vision, which distinguished little between grades.

The site's 24-foot overall grade change was a challenge, as was seamlessly situating the playing fields and creating identities for elementary and middle schools, Goldberg says. Their reworked design broke down the school components and resulted in a series of buildings placed along one side of the slope in 12-foot terraces—three

bar-shaped structures set like falling dominoes. This splintered the megastructure, bringing in breathing and play space. Students work their way up the hill over time. Primary-grade buildings are accented in yellow, and higher grades feature cerulean blue. Other entrances and administrative buildings are white.

Two rounded, boomerang-shaped multimedia



CASE STUDY Elementary and Middle School



Like the middle school, the elementary school entrance (above) is defined by lozenge-shaped volumes. Clerestory windows enhance interior daylighting and natural ventilation (right). The wedge-shaped building (below, foreground), which has a companion at the middle school, houses a multimedia library.



library rooms in yellow and blue emerge from two of these three wings. Meanwhile, nearby multipurpose rooms are used for both remedial and advanced students—there's no shoving the remedial kids into substandard space. Keane also says that on the weekends or after hours, both sets of rooms host meetings and activities because they can be isolated from the rest of the school.

With their bright colors and strip windows these spaces suggest something of the International style instead of Americana. Another building signature is the large, prow-shaped canopy identifying one entrance, as well as other overhanging roofs that shield the school from the elements during the long European winter. These climate-sensitive weather buffers would be commended anywhere, just like the eco-friendly details that include photo sensor-controlled exterior blinds, radiant floors, and a pond and science garden fed by stormwater runoff in, addition to the natural ventilation and daylighting strategies. So would modern conveniences, like a central utility tunnel that winds underneath all the buildings so that repairs don't disrupt classes. Overall results are measured pretty quickly. "Kids are in it," says the client's project architect. "And they love it." ■

Michael Dumiak writes on architecture, design, and science from Berlin.



Clockwise from top: Glass panes featuring inlaid color film evoke a Mondrian painting. These colors accent particular building surfaces, including each school's entry elevation. Mitchell/Giurgola's daylighting strategies are on display in the corridor of the middle school, and in the school's generously scaled, wood-paneled gymnasium.

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