



# The Greater Dayton School

*a new model for educational equity*



Moody Nolan

## In America, your zip code still determines your education.

The achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers is one of the most well-documented and persistent failures in American public life. It is not a gap in potential, it is a gap in access. Research shows that when children have access to experienced teachers, enrichment programs, and stable healthcare and nutrition, they will thrive.

**40%**

the income-based achievement gap today vs. 25 years ago

**3 years**

how far behind disadvantaged students lag by 3rd grade

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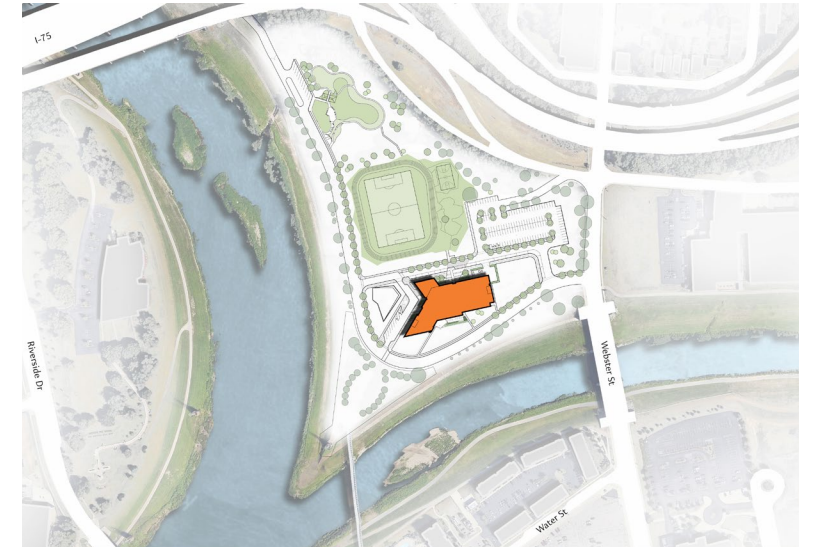
Research from Stanford and Brookings tells a consistent story: children who grow up in persistent poverty enter kindergarten already behind, and traditional school systems rarely close that distance.



## A chance for change

The Greater Dayton School re-imagines what education can, and should be. For children growing up in Dayton, the barriers to a quality education are not exceptional, they are ordinary. Nearly 27% of families live below the federal poverty line, making the location of the school an epicenter of local need.





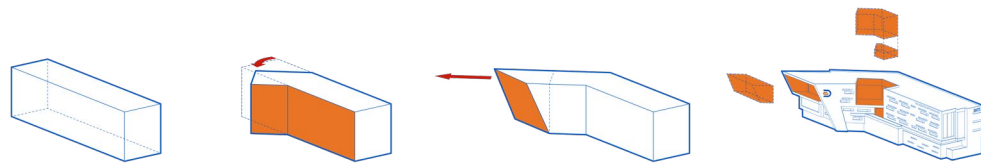
*At the river bend.*

**Overlooking the Great Miami River, sits a beacon of educational equity, a school designed for whole-child development.**

In a city where more than a quarter of residents live below the federal poverty line, the Greater Dayton School was built on a premise both simple and radical idea—that children from under-resourced families deserve the same academic rigor, enrichment, and care available at the most well-funded private schools in the country.

Set at the confluence of the Great Miami and Mad Rivers, the design takes cues from the riverfront setting in both its massing and orientation. The building's two main wings meet at an angle, forming the social heart of the school where larger learning and gathering spaces converge.

The form establishes multiple orientations toward the surrounding landscape and downtown skyline. Expansive glazing and upper-level terraces extend visual connections throughout the building, making the school's setting an integral part of the student experience.



# Designed for whole-child development

The five-story building prioritizes access to natural light to support health, focus, and restoration. Expansive windows give students daily access to natural light and views that reduce stress and enhance cognitive performance.



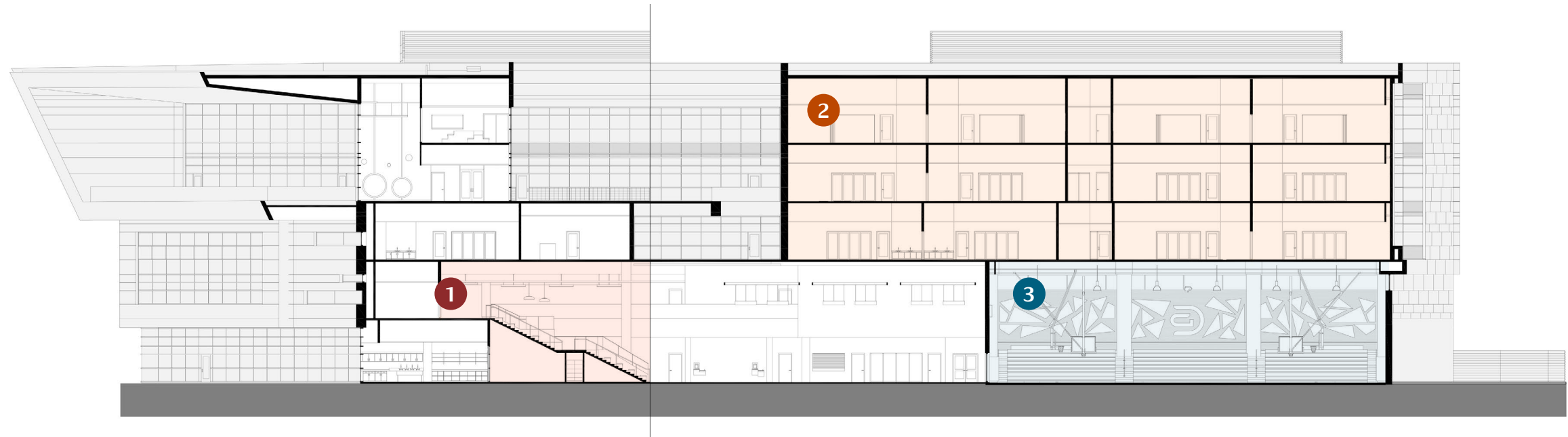
Three meals a day are prepared in a full-service kitchen and served family-style — students set the table, serve one another, and clean up together. After-school programs extend the day with enrichment and wellness activities, giving working parents reliable childcare and students access to opportunities often out of reach for lower-income families.



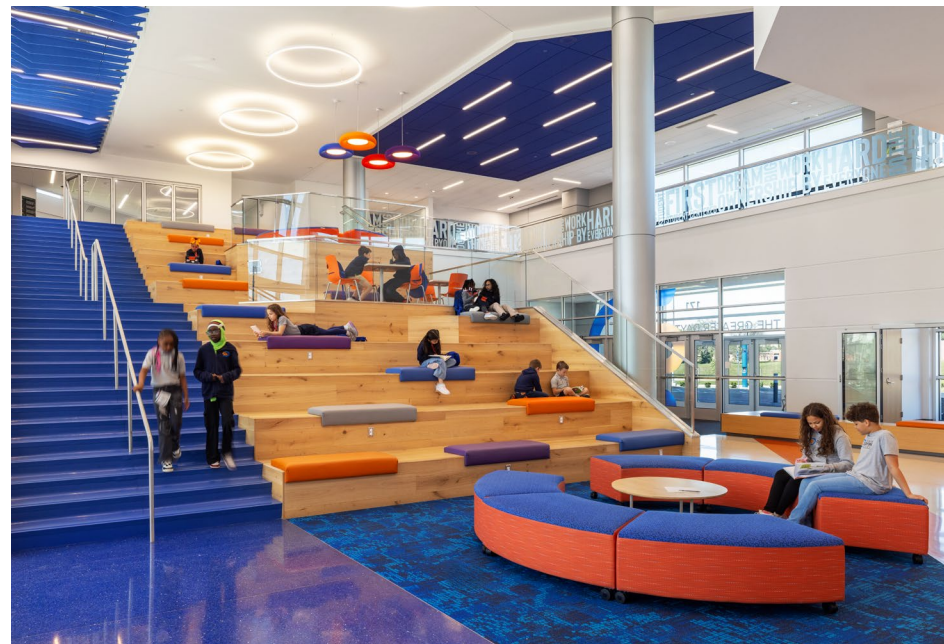
Classrooms are intentionally sized to accommodate two teachers per room, effectively doubling the instructional resources available to each student, with class sizes capped at 20 students.



Multipurpose learning spaces support independent, adaptive, and mixed-age learning. A student-run store, maker spaces, STEM labs, and art and dance studios extend education into real-world application and creative expression.



1 Learning Stair



2 Classroom



3 Gymnasium





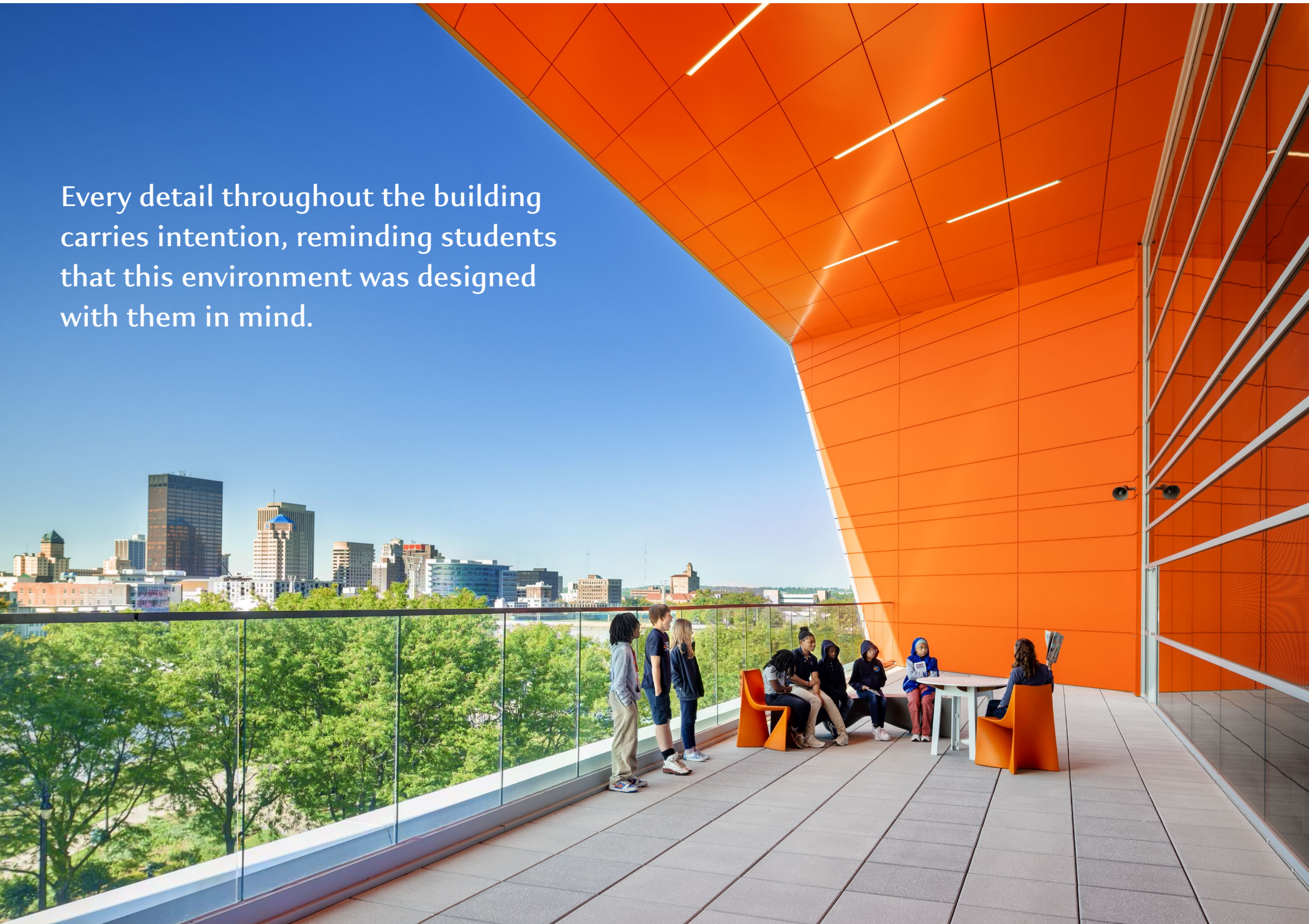
## Healthcare embedded where children already are

One of the most persistent barriers to learning is one of the most invisible: unmet health needs. GDS addresses this head-on by embedding a full medical and dental clinic—operated by Dayton Children's Hospital—directly within the school building. Students can step away from class for a dental appointment, a counseling session, or a vision check without a parent needing to take time off work.

Public funding covers a portion of each student's costs, with the remaining cost supported by The Connor Group Kids & Community Partners, the school's founding organization.



Every detail throughout the building carries intention, reminding students that this environment was designed with them in mind.



The building itself is designed to support wellbeing at every scale. The building's color system—bright primary tones at the lower floors transitioning to softer hues above—functions as both wayfinding and an affirmation of belonging.

Small pockets intentionally carved throughout the building give children a place for respite and regulation.

# Results that prove the model works

The Greater Dayton School’s long-term vision looks to 2041, when its first eighth-grade graduates turn twenty-seven, old enough to measure whether the school achieved its deepest goal: adults who are financially independent, healthy, and able to define success on their own terms.



*Within the first year of operations:*

**35 → 57%**  
jump in overall  
performance

**43 → 80%**  
Kindergarten math  
proficiency increase

**48 → 71%**  
Kindergarten reading  
proficiency increase



Performance statistics: The Greater Dayton School, “Impact and Outcomes.”



THE GREATER DAYTON SCHOOL



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