



## **An Exciting Component of the High School Building Project: A School for Belmont's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educational Vision**

One of the most exciting aspects of the high school building project is the opportunity to design a building to support Belmont's Educational Vision for Teaching and Learning—to prepare students for success in higher education, the work force, and in life.

60% of kindergarteners will hold jobs that don't exist today. It is the goal of the Belmont School Department to prepare these children for whatever the future holds by instilling communication, leadership, problem solving, and collaboration skills in an environment that supports the social and emotional development of each student. It is the goal of the Belmont High School Building Committee to develop a facility that supports and enhances the town's educational vision--to prepare Belmont's students for the future.

Belmont's Vision for Teaching and Learning emphasizes student engagement with rigorous academic content through which they can develop skills in the areas of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. To adequately foster these skills, students must have the opportunity to not merely receive content, but to design, create, synthesize, and make connections that are meaningful and relevant to the world around them.

To support Belmont's Educational Vision, educators are encouraged to focus on student-centered, interdisciplinary teaching and learning with real-world applications. Unfortunately, dated classrooms, with severe space limitations, make it more difficult for Belmont's educators to create optimum learning environments. For example, a social studies teacher at Belmont High School recently organized an international economic summit with visiting students from Beijing, China. It was an amazing opportunity where students were able to simulate negotiating deals while managing trade barriers and tariffs—a timely, real-world exercise. Unfortunately, with no suitable space available during the school day, the summit was held on a weekend in the BHS cafeteria. Many students were unable to attend due to other weekend commitments, and considerable time and staff resources were necessary to update the AV hook-ups and transform the cafeteria into a usable summit space. In the building plans for the updated high school, there are large, flexible project rooms that can be utilized for just this type of exercise—during the weekday, ensuring that all interested students will have the opportunity to engage in practical, meaningful, educational experiences.

Belmont's Educational Vision also emphasizes academic instruction that encourages students to design, create, and explore in all curriculum areas. This is evident in the work of the science department at BHS. In the Computer Assisted Design (CAD) and robotics courses, students employ design thinking and use content knowledge to complete design challenges. Once again, however, students and teachers are

severely limited by the current building constraints. There is inadequate space for students to work with tools, to work in groups, or to display completed work. Additionally, there are significant power limitations for necessary technology, tools, and equipment, thus limiting the scope of design and experiment work. In a new building, there will be “maker space,” large rooms where students don’t consume technology, but create with technology and other tools. These areas are designed for the sharing of ideas, equipment, and knowledge in an interdisciplinary environment. No longer will space be a limitation on student creativity. Instead, there will be spaces that support and foster creativity.

Multiple examples of building constraints impacting Belmont’s Educational Vision are evident throughout BHS. With limited classroom space and no designated break-out areas, students must do group work in the hallway or in stairwells. Without quiet space or collaborative work space for students, teachers are limited in the type of projects they can assign. This is evident to any visitor walking through the English Department with students sitting in groups in the hallway working through an inquiry assignment or in the foreign language department with students out in the hallway attempting to have authentic conversations with partners. Break-out rooms, flexible classroom space, and quiet space in a library/learning commons are all part of the new high school building plan and support Belmont’s Vision for Teaching and Learning.

*To sign up for email updates and to learn more about the Belmont High School Building Project, including project timelines, videos, meeting schedules, presentations and more, please visit [www.belmonthighschoolproject.org](http://www.belmonthighschoolproject.org).*

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