

*The school's new addition (right) is a modern complement to the historic existing building.*



# THE PERFECT FIT



*A large mural pays homage to the nearby setting of the 1964 World's Fair.*



# Queens Public School Expansion Overcomes Site Constraints

BY ZACH CHOUTEAU

**THE** remarkable renovation and expansion taking place at P.S. 19 Marino P. Jeantet School in Queens is a project that fits right in — both literally and figuratively.

Tasked with helping the school overcome its overcrowding issue, Murphy Burnham and Buttrick Architects (MBB) needed to forge a design that would add a huge expansion to, and modernize, the school's historic 1923 main building. A crucial goal was to complement the older building's classic exterior while also working within tight space constraints that included an elevated train track curving around the planned expansion area.

MBB achieved all that and more, wrapping an expansion of the borough's largest elementary school and adding an attractive new building, learning spaces, and other important community-focused amenities to the crowded district. A revamp of its existing space will also be finalized this summer; Citnalta Construction Corp. of Bohemia, N.Y., has taken the lead on the contractor end of the project.

"Our key design goal was to create a highly functional facility, and to do so in a contextual and beautiful way within a challenging, 18-month construction timeline," said Jeffrey Murphy, FAIA, LEED AP, partner, MBB. "We think that well-designed school buildings are among any community's most valuable assets, and when done right they really epitomize the idea of a 'good neighbor.'"

Murphy also explained that Corona, Queens — where P.S. 19Q is located — is one of New York's most diverse and populous neighborhoods. The school serves 2,000 kids, and for a long time it ranked among the city's most crowded.

"Our design concept was to expand P.S.19Q with a modern building that feels of our time, while also feeling complementary to the neighborhood context and to the original school building's historic, early 20th century, 'English Collegiate Gothic' style," Murphy elaborated. "From a functional standpoint, improving and facilitating circulation was one of our most important goals. In order to move 2,000 young students quickly and easily from one activity to another, we connected the new building to the existing structure with a new shared core, creating a cohesive structure with three central circulation hubs, highlighted by oversized stairs that also add visual interest to the corridors. We're proud of how the project came together so well in those short 18 months."

Effectively doubling the size of P.S. 19 Marino P. Jeantet School, the ground-up, five-story expansion replaces temporary trailer structures with 97,000 square feet of desperately needed classrooms, cafeterias, gymnasium areas, and specialty instruction spaces for art, music, and science, as well as space for neighborhood programs providing key social and health services. The new building connects to the school's historic 1923 main building with a new shared core,

## DESIGN INSIGHTS

Project Manager Michael Salinas, AIA, with Murphy Burnham Buttrick Architects, took time out from his busy schedule to share some project insights with SCN on the impressive new PS 19Q endeavor.

**SCN:** How do you think the newly created spaces illustrate some of the current trends in school design?

**Salinas:** There are certain core design concepts we try to incorporate in all of our projects, and especially in schools such as P.S. 19Q. Finding ways to incorporate more daylighting, for example, is a current trend that we've emphasized for a long time. Studies show the importance of natural light for our long-term health — whether at home, in the workplace, or at school — so for P.S. 19Q we were as generous as possible given the restrictions of site, client, and program. In addition to focusing on daylighting for instructional spaces, we strategically used advanced translucent glazing at the gym and in restrooms to help distribute western light.

Breakout or alternative teaching spaces are another key school design concept you'll find here. The New York City School Construction Authority (NYCSCA) emphasized efficient use of square footage for this project, so we looked at opportunities along circulation spines, introducing bench alcoves along corridors to support these functions. These informal, occasional moments throughout the building can be used for one-on-one meetings, reading, and small group interaction.

Throughout the school and its grounds, we also sought out ways to incorporate Active Design elements — from wide stairways that encourage and aid movement to play yards and a rooftop playdeck, which we located above the cafeteria so it connects to the gymnasium while capturing valuable square footage.

**SCN:** What was the main challenge in terms of the site location, and how did you approach it?

**Salinas:** Situated along Roosevelt Avenue, with the 7 train rumbling overhead along this northern edge, this particular site is perhaps the most challenging location for a primary school building. We looked to ensure the school would be a good neighbor by softening this urban edge and emphasizing a human scale. Wide, tree-lined sidewalks, for instance, add greenery to the streetscape and form a transitional buffer to the schoolyard.

Learning from our neighbor across the street, an older school rendered in dark brick with minimal windows, our design looked to lighten the mood under the tracks. We convinced our client to glaze the cafeteria between slots of the horizontally stepped, warm-grey brick façade. The solid glass block satisfies the clients' desire for security and translucency, while keeping in character with the storefronts of this busy avenue.

While more active programs were allowed to line the train frontage (i.e., cafeteria, stairs, & play roof), the client preferred to keep most instruction spaces along the quieter neighborhood streets, thereby adopting the historic school's north-south orientation. A few remaining instruction spaces along the north utilize STC-rated window assemblies to mitigate train traffic noise.

Photo Credit (all): Frank Oudemans



Natural light adds a nice touch to the facility's second-floor gymnasium.





A pair of cafeterias helps serve the student body of about 2,000 children.



A hallway nook is ideal for study and socializing.

creating a cohesive new building to serve a large student body. Three central circulation hubs with massive stairways enhance the hallways' visual appeal while moving more than 2,000 children throughout the school on a daily basis.

MBB's design provides a welcoming, architecturally complementary presence in the Corona neighborhood, bolstering the firm's standing in terms of creating flexible, creative K-12 solutions that nurture both the educational efforts at a school and its surrounding communities. The modern brick facade and large, canted windows of the expanded P.S. 19 building match the scale, massing, and fenestration of the original school structure and illustrate the modulation of classroom layouts and uses inside it. A broad sidewalk lined with plant life adds verdant greenery to the streetscape and creates a natural transitional space to the schoolyard. By the new building's northeast corner, acoustical baffle walls and acoustically treated, high-performance glass lessen the bustle of the adjacent elevated 7 train, located just a few feet away.

The new addition emphasizes flexibility and efficient use of space and was located to optimize daylight year-round. One illustration of this is the spacious gymnasium being elevated to the second floor, which opens up the ground floor for a roomy entranceway and pair of cafeterias. The rooftop also serves as an additional play yard, which is accessed from the gymnasium. Inside, vibrant color serves as a wayfinding tool, easing student efforts when navigating to classes and exits. In the lobby, a colorful mural by Brooklyn-based artist Cheryl Molnar captures the nearby 1964 World's Fair locale plus the lake environs and marshy grassland of Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

"We're particularly proud of how each design element comes together into a whole, serving the community with a warm, welcoming atmosphere," elaborated Murphy. "For instance, we were able to integrate abundant natural light with a warm, wood-centric material palette and mural work by local NYC artists, thanks to the New York

City Department of Cultural Affairs' Percent for the Arts program. All of this creates a school environment that feels elevated, inspiring, and tied to the life of the surrounding community. The design also opens up the school to its urban environment, turning a perceived site constraint — the elevated rail line on the north side of the building — into an asset by inserting windows into an acoustical baffle wall so that the lives of both students and train riders are revealed."

To Murphy, the blood, sweat and tears that go into such an extensive undertaking are being paid back with interest by the chance to impact the children and staff who make the facility their home away from home.

"Seeing the school open and seeing both the client's and the community's warm reaction has been very gratifying," he remarked. "As architects, it's a great feeling when kids, parents, and other community members all embrace a new school building — that kind of response shows the real civic and cultural value of architecture." ■

## project data

**Facility Name:** The Marino Jeantet School - Public School 19 Queens (PS 19Q)

**Location:** 40-10 99th Street Corona, Queens, NY 11368

**Type:** IB

**Construction Budget:** \$98 million

**Start Date:** January 2017

**Completion Date:** September 2018, addition; July 2019, renovation of existing building

**Area:** Corona, Queens, New York, NY

**Owner/Operator:** NYC School Construction Authority / NYC Department of Education

**Design Architect:** Murphy Burnham and Buttrick

**Architect of Record:** Murphy Burnham and Buttrick

**Partner-in-Charge:** Jeffrey Murphy FAIA

**Project Manager:** Jose Miranda, Taylor Aikin

**Project Team:** Timothy Butler, Gerald Francois, Andrea Nolan, Emily Ottinger, Dawid Pol, Claire Ross, Michael Salinas, Nyssa Sherazee, Varia Smirnova

**Landscape Architect:** Scape - Landscape Architecture

**Lighting Designer:** Melanie Freundlich Lighting Design

**General Contractor:** Citnalta Construction Corporation

**Structural Engineer:** Silman

**MEP Engineer:** Loring

**Civil Engineer:** Langan

**Geotechnical Engineer:** Langan

**Food Service Design:** Romano Gatland

**AV Consultant and Acoustics:** Cerami

**Graphics:** C and G Partners

**Elevator:** VDA

## product data

**Tile:** Daltile

**Paint:** Benjamin Moore

**Wood Ceilings:** Armstrong

**Carpet:** Tandus Centiva

**Rubber Flooring and Stairs:** Armstrong

**Plastic Laminate:** Pionite

**Quartz Surfacing:** Icestone, Cambria

**Exterior composite panel:** Trespa

**Exterior Thermally broken whythe connectors (insulated precast):** Thermomass

**Exterior Lighting:** Bega

**Interior Lighting:** Louis Poulsen, Neoray, Prudential, Peerless, Prescolight, Lite Control, Fail-Safe, Lithonia

**Art Installations:** Cheryl Molnar