



THE 2010-2011 AIAA AWARDS FOR ARCHITECTURE
BUILDING THE SCHOOLS OF THE 21ST CENTURY



Garden School | Beijing | OPE's Architecture
Branching Out
A sprawling high school on the outskirts of China's capital connects students to environment of leisure and offers a progressive approach to teaching.
BY CLARE JACOBSON

OUTSIDE IN
The school's design encourages students to spend time outdoors, with a red running track and a garden area.



At Beijing's Garden School, students can sit on outdoor steps to hear lectures, gather for talks along an open-air corridor, and plant vegetation on the roof. "Students taught under a tree, and trees make laughter for students on the lawn," explains Shuang Shuang, partner at Beijing-based HOK Architecture. But designing a 1.7-million-sq-ft school to promote an education teaching across a multi-use, mixed-building context and a historically rigorous office model system typically produce a standard school with a teaching block as the only outdoor space. But HOK's competition-winning design, inspired by an enlightened administration, offers opportunities beyond the classroom. Garden School—officially Beijing No. 4 High School, Xingfeng Campus, a suburban satellite of the downtown Beijing No. 4—is named for the six gardens on campus and the building's many courtyards. Each has its own character: one is a wide lawn edged by benches, another is a hot level space with a grove of bamboo. All sit atop pieces of the 100,000-sq-ft school building. To fit the broad program on one site, the site and where to build restrictions, HOK put some large spaces—cafeteria, auditorium, music rooms, dance studio and parking—outside of HOK's jurisdiction. The space also inspired the construction before. For example, one garden is supported with wooden seating with integrated glass panels that transmit sunlight to a basement gymnasium.

The largest open space is a vegetable garden on the building's roof deck. The school currently has only 100 of its planned 1,000 to 1,200 students enrolled, but when it fills up, each of its 16 classes will tend their own plot. In the school's

first months of operation, one class planted an experimental garden, and local farmers tended the rest of the plots. All this attention to the school's outdoor space does not come at the expense of its interiors. Abundant, the building appears as a lively composition of structure with a central atrium for circulation and eight levels for building, classrooms, labs, and administrative offices. Large wood-paneled spaces provide rooms for quiet and provide flexible spaces for relaxing and socializing. Modular perforated metal forms a detached dormitory that houses the senior high school.

The school is spatially dynamic. Its main lobby—paved from the street through a long, low gate and across a large plaza—may look coordinated in plan, but works well as a link to various stairways and levels. The classrooms themselves are simple boxes, but other spaces assume bold shapes. The library, for example, stretches out as a long, curving volume, while the cafeteria is an expansion, at one angled toward sculptural stairways made walking along white flights connecting only the two levels on one of the stairways.

Details too are well considered, such as the simple doors—some heavy set in a horizontal pattern and the mechanical equipment (HVAC coils) in a horizontal pattern. The school's agricultural gardens dot the central atrium, offering spaces for music, learning, and other activities.

Of course, it is one thing to design indoor and outdoor spaces with flexibility in mind and quite another for them to be used effectively. Garden School Principal Shuang Chen says that while it may be convenient for students to use environmental spaces, the unfamiliar can stimulate

curiosity. He explains that to fit an outdoor program on the site, the school had a range of outdoor spaces. One is a large lawn for group activities, another is a courtyard with a grove of bamboo, and a third is a vegetable garden. "We want to give students an outdoor space that is not just a lawn, but a space that is rich in culture and history," he says. "We want to give students a space that is not just a lawn, but a space that is rich in culture and history." He also notes that the school's design is a response to the local context, which is a mix of traditional and modern architecture. The school's design is a response to the local context, which is a mix of traditional and modern architecture.





The school's design is a response to the need for a modern educational environment that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. The building's design is a blend of traditional Chinese architecture and modern architectural techniques. The building's design is a response to the need for a modern educational environment that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

DESIGNING THE OPEN SCHOOLS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

GARDEN SCHOOLS OPEN ARCHITECTURE

creative teaching, life and facilities are well equipped. The school is a place for learning, growing, and exploring, following the philosophy of the progressive school. The school's environmental program on its main campus, which is an extension of a wide corridor to home to small-scale outdoor learning, recreation, and sports activities.

The school is part of the Changping town in Beijing's northern district. Beyond the 19th-century wall, the school is a modern school with a focus on the city and the development of students in the area with an emphasis on sustainability. In addition to its garden and playground, the school includes a professional-level green, recreation, sports facility, and other green facilities. The school is among China's first designations, which would make it the first school in the country with this green rating.

UPR's designed Garden School is to be a great school. Students' parents can use the library, and plants call for the opportunity to have access to the library's surrounding green. The school's architecture with a separate entrance is available for non-school events. In November, principals from around China gathered there to discuss the new design methodology of Beijing No. 4 and work there to create a school that supports the "Green in 2010" initiative. Beijing No. 4 is a school for green garden in education in China," says Principal Wang. "This is the great garden in campus design."

