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Every Student Deserves Space to Learn

As a teacher at USC, I have the privilege of seeing our students experience school in ways that most people outside our building never do. I see what happens between the first bell and the last practice of the night. I see teachers and students finding ways to make the most of the space we have, moving, sharing, adjusting, and sometimes simply making do. And it makes me wonder: What more could our students and staff do if they had the space they need to learn, teach, and grow?

So much of what I see in the course of an ordinary school day would never show up on a school calendar or in a newsletter. A teacher moves from classroom to classroom because they do not have one of their own. A small group of students search for a quiet place to collaborate when there is no small group space available. Lunch tables extend into the hallway during one of the busiest times of the day. Students practice activities in spaces that weren't designed for them. Practice begins late in the evening because every available space was already spoken for.

None of these moments by itself tells the whole story. Together, they show what happens when more students, programs, and needs compete for limited space. As our enrollment has grown, students and staff have learned to adapt. Teachers teach from carts. Spaces are shared, divided, and repurposed. Schedules are adjusted. Programs find whatever room is available. And we make it work. Schools always do. But there is a difference between making space work and having the spaces students need.

When you see those things every day, you start to think differently about what having enough space can mean for a student. It can mean having a classroom where materials and resources are readily available. It can mean having a quiet place to work with a teacher when extra help is needed, or enough room to collaborate with classmates on a project. It can mean having an appropriate place to practice an activity safely. It can mean finishing practice at a reasonable time and having time for dinner, homework, rest, and family.

The proposed project is intended to address space needs in several ways. Additional classrooms would provide more instructional space as enrollment grows. Small group and flexible learning spaces would create more options for instruction, collaboration, and student support. Repurposed spaces would support STEM, core instruction, and specialized services. Expanded student support areas would provide dedicated places for students and staff to meet, while a multi-purpose learning space would provide room for physical education, student activities, practices, programs, and larger gatherings.

The students I see each day are the reason these needs matter now, but they are also why planning for the future matters. The students who will walk through these doors five, ten, or twenty years from now will bring their own strengths, interests, and needs. Planning for the future means making sure the opportunities available to them are not limited by the space available to provide them.

Every student who walks through our doors deserves the opportunity to learn, participate, receive support, and grow in an environment that gives them room to do those things. Because every student deserves more than a place in our school. **They deserve space to learn**.

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