

# BERNARD ZELL ANSHE EMIT DAY SCHOOL CHILDHOOD WING

EARLY CHILDHOOD WING AND NURSERY REMODEL



**LOCATION** Chicago, Illinois

**SIZE** 2,500 sf

**RECOGNITION** IIDA Illinois, RED Award, Educational PK-12 (2017)

Believing that each child is equipped with an innate curiosity to learn through investigation of their environment, the school sought to create two right-sized early childhood spaces from one larger one while supporting Reggio Emilia teaching methods. This teaching philosophy celebrates child-led learning based on natural elements, materials, and self-discovery.

The original classroom is divided by the “Hive,” a geometric object that creates individual learning areas without completely separating the two spaces. The outer shell of the Hive is a faceted white writing surface that can be either written or projected on. Students experience the bending of light on its unique angular surface. There is also a distinct learning setting within the Hive. Inside, one is immersed in color and softness of acoustic wall paneling and built-in soft seating, creating an atmosphere conducive to storytelling.

The classroom spaces are broken into zones of discovery: the daylight filled Atelier, an art space in which the wall and glass finishes are active canvases; terraced seating of natural birch wood with cubbies allowing students ready access to choose their learning mediums; and abstract birch tree silhouettes with a green tackable backdrop where students can hang their belongings and art. The open layout of the Café invites children to learn alongside their educators as they mix their baking.

While a small piece of the whole of Bernard Zell, the nursery renovation has become the prototype to a movement to reimagine current classrooms into learning spaces for the future.

