

Chief Manuelito Middle School



Conceived within a greater master plan to eliminate junior highs, Chief Manuelito will hold a population of 800 students and will be located at the edge of Gallup adjacent to Gallup High School. As with all schools, the design was to create an environment that promotes the growth of children. Additionally, there was a clear directive to properly zone the school and create a “school within a school” configuration to help the students through this transitional time in their life and education. Finally, there was a desire to utilize the potential of the site with panoramic views and be sensitive to cultural and climatic conditions that are specific to the Gallup region.

The diagram of the building shows two story classroom wings, each containing a grade level and one with special education that are intersected by a general use spine that connects the gymnasium to the library. The gym holds the northwest corner of the site, while the classroom wings, responding to views and lighting, move south and orient east west. The remaining elements follow logically, lining up and off the north/south spine. The library and student commons provide a bridge between the wings. The administration core acts as an interstitial layer separating public from private. It also has a prime adjacency to the south of the entry commons for student monitoring. The cafeteria, band and choir are grouped north of the commons with the gymnasium creating a zone of physical and acoustic activity.

The site plan reinforces many goals by separating bus and traffic flows and public and private areas. East of the cafeteria is an outdoor commons with seating and basketball courts. Further east, the playing fields provide the edge of campus. These student and pedestrian areas are secure from traffic which circulates on the west side where parent drop off, parking lots and the main entry to school define the front façade.

On the exterior, a rhythm of masses is articulated with varied hard masonry and softer stucco. Exterior materials fold into interior treatments creating visual unity; concrete walks and masonry walls extend from outside-in and then out again, and light washes color from exterior accents into classrooms.

Location: Gallup, NM

Size: 108,000sf

Completion: 2008

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