THE GATHERING CENTER
A CENTER FOR MUSIC, ASSEMBLY, THEATRE, DANCE, CREATIVE DISPLAY, PERFORMANCE AND SO MUCH MORE AT THE HEART OF THE ARBOR CAMPUS
In 1988, the Arbor School of Arts & Sciences began with 16 students in 1 old farm house on 5 acres we shared with 2 horses. Today, Arbor has grown to 190 students in 9 buildings on 22 expansive acres of meadows, streams, and forests. So much has changed at Arbor in these nearly 25 years. But throughout these changes, our goal of cultivating the whole child—emphasizing the development of intellect, character, and creativity—has remained unshakable.

Our students exhibit this dedication to creative performance daily in their writings, speeches, songs, drawings, and constructions, from their first Independent Projects as Primaries to their culminating Senior Projects. Our entire community honors their creativity by mounting major performances and celebrations throughout the year, from Arborfest to Winter Solstice, from the Senior Production to Ceili.

As a school, Arbor has always attempted to embody the same principles it strives to instill in its students. One such principle—that of making do with whatever is at hand—lies at the heart of our philosophy.

There is no greater evidence of this principle at work than in our use of the Arena, a former horse-riding facility that has served a panoply of needs, housing music lessons, PE exercises, dance sessions, weekly assemblies, play rehearsals, major productions, student exhibitions, and gatherings for our entire community. Under this roof Puck has enchanted many hapless lovers, graduates have awed us with their wisdom and poise, shy children have found the courage to offer a poem or a piano solo, and flying monkeys have swung from the rafters.

So many performances have been held in the Arena, so many voices have spoken, shouted, laughed, and sung together here, that this space has become the heart of Arbor School.
CREATIVITY
A GROWING COMMUNITY

But in steadfastly making do while calling upon our students’ creative energies in increasingly numerous and complex exhibitions and performances, we have stretched the Arena beyond its limits. Aims we take to be equally essential now compete with one another, our audiences’ experience has been diminished, and our community can no longer gather together as a whole. We have simply outgrown our beloved Arena:

- Music, PE, and rehearsals daily compete for space;
- Enjoyment of performances is hampered by poor lines of sight and acoustics that swallow voices;
- Ceili moved outside to make room for all to dance;
- Senior Productions are standing room only;
- Graduation invitations must be strictly limited;
- Audience members seated on chairs cannot see, and those in bleachers cannot hear;
- The entire community can no longer gather together for Arbor’s joyful annual rituals.

THE NEED

Our community needs a dedicated space in which it can assemble as a whole to perform music, dance, and drama; exhibit the visual and studio arts, science experiments, and Senior Projects; and host Ceili, Winter Solstice, alumni gatherings, visiting speakers, and Graduation.

Furthermore, this space must be designed to exhibit our students’ finest creative efforts, to match the excellence of their work, to allow the full expression of their ideas, and to embody the third pillar of Arbor’s educational philosophy: cultivating creativity.

Now is the time to build this space, just as in years past we have honored other needs of our developing school, stretching together to meet each one: new classrooms and buildings, a Design Studio, a Library, a proper Science Lab, 20 acres of land.

After 25 years of making do with existing spaces, a new Gathering Center will allow us to broaden our scope, extend our reach into the wider community, and expand our students’ sense of their own possibilities.
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THE GATHERING CENTER WILL

- Permit practice and performance in the same space;
- Accommodate all of Arbor’s annual festivals, weekly assemblies, and daily music classes;
- Offer clear sight lines, resonant acoustics, and a view of the woods to each and every audience member;
- Provide ample exhibition and performance space;
- Allow Arbor to expand its offering of lectures, readings, concerts, and colloquies;
- Regularly and gloriously display the imagination, skill, and effort of students’ daily work;
- Exhibit the “Arbor Vernacular:” board and batten siding, big windows, exposed roof trusses, and the absence of unnecessary ornament;
- Incorporate sensible, sustainable design elements: thrift, simplicity, natural light, energy-efficient heating, superb insulation, user-operable windows for natural ventilation, and comprehensive stormwater treatment.
THE GATHERING CENTER
HELP US RAISE THE ROOF!

We have accomplished so much in nearly 25 years. Living always within our means and usually on a shoestring, we have transformed a five-acre horse farm into a respected model for K-8 education. It is now time to build a space devoted to the third pillar of an Arbor education: creativity. The Gathering Center is this space. Please join us and help with its building.