



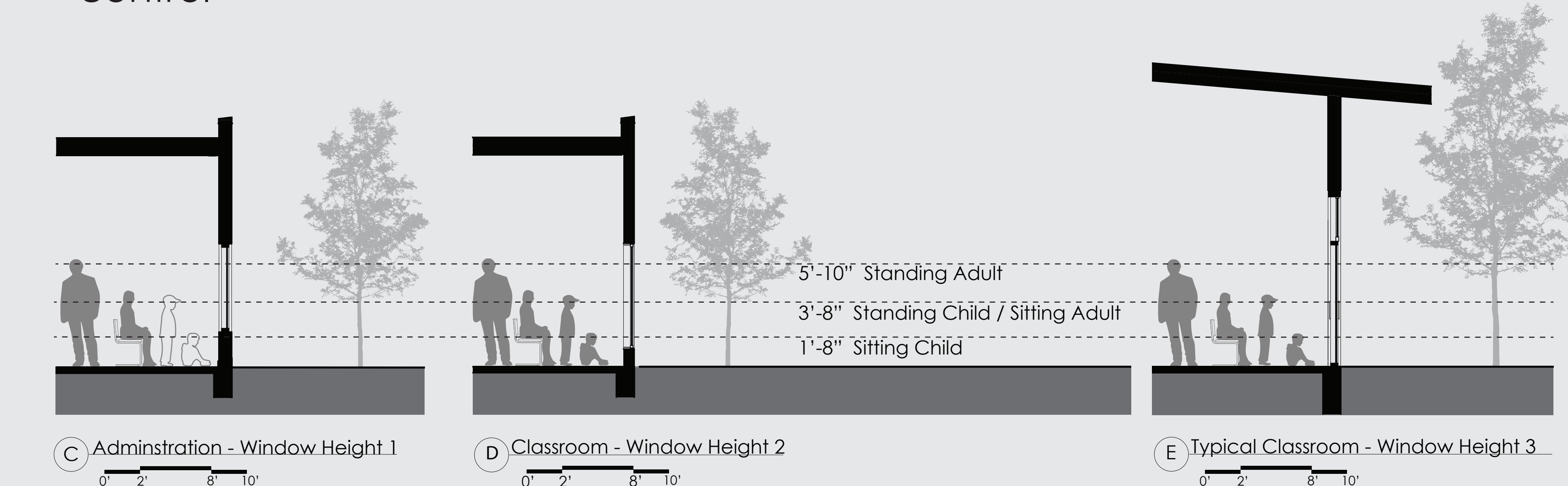
ACT FOR CHILDREN

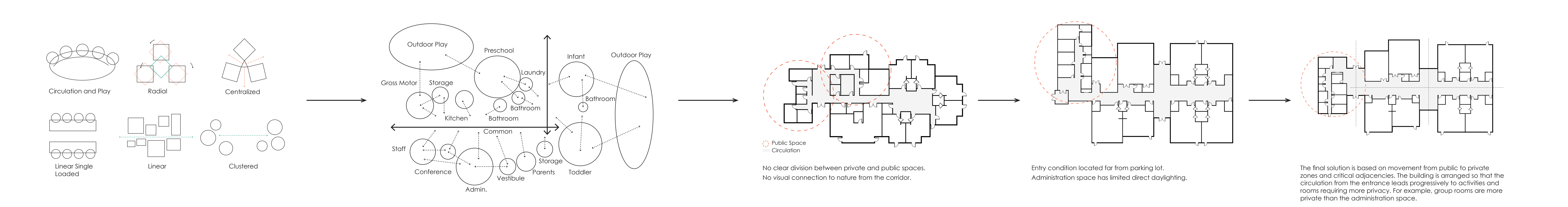
CAN ARCHITECTURE SERVE AS AN EDUCATIONAL AID IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

Our future rests on the success of our children. Due to social and economic trends, there is a tremendous need in our society for quality child care. The impact of the built environment within these facilities can drastically impact many aspects of development. If we as designers can successfully identify the needs and wants of our users, we can create an environment that fosters learning. My thesis seeks to explore redefining the typical day care center into an educational facility which prioritizes learning. I seek to achieve this by identifying key prepared environments that facilitate learning in early child development.

Goals:

1. Scale and Perspective
2. Natural Lighting
3. Access to the outdoors and connection to nature
4. Home-like environments
5. Optimal spatial arrangement
6. Environments which encourage movement, comfort, competence and sense of control





Connection

Thoughtful design was implemented into each classroom space by providing ample natural lighting, ventilation and access to the outdoors. Children are born explorers and take great pleasure in eating lunch on a porch in the yard, singing in the rain, or running spontaneously outside to experience a sudden snowfall.



Play Yard

The exterior space focuses on play which promotes cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being, offering the necessary conditions for children to thrive and learn. The exterior play yard promotes gross motor development through natural play.



Residential Entry Condition

Creating a highly visible entry condition assists infrequent visitors and facilitates protection of the building. Other key influential design aspects include a memorable entry condition which consists of seating, vegetation, a large overhang and lastly a welcoming front door with sidebars of glass enabling children to preview the interior before entering. Research shows that a child's acceptance of a new environment is deeply influenced by the aesthetic quality of its approach and entry condition.





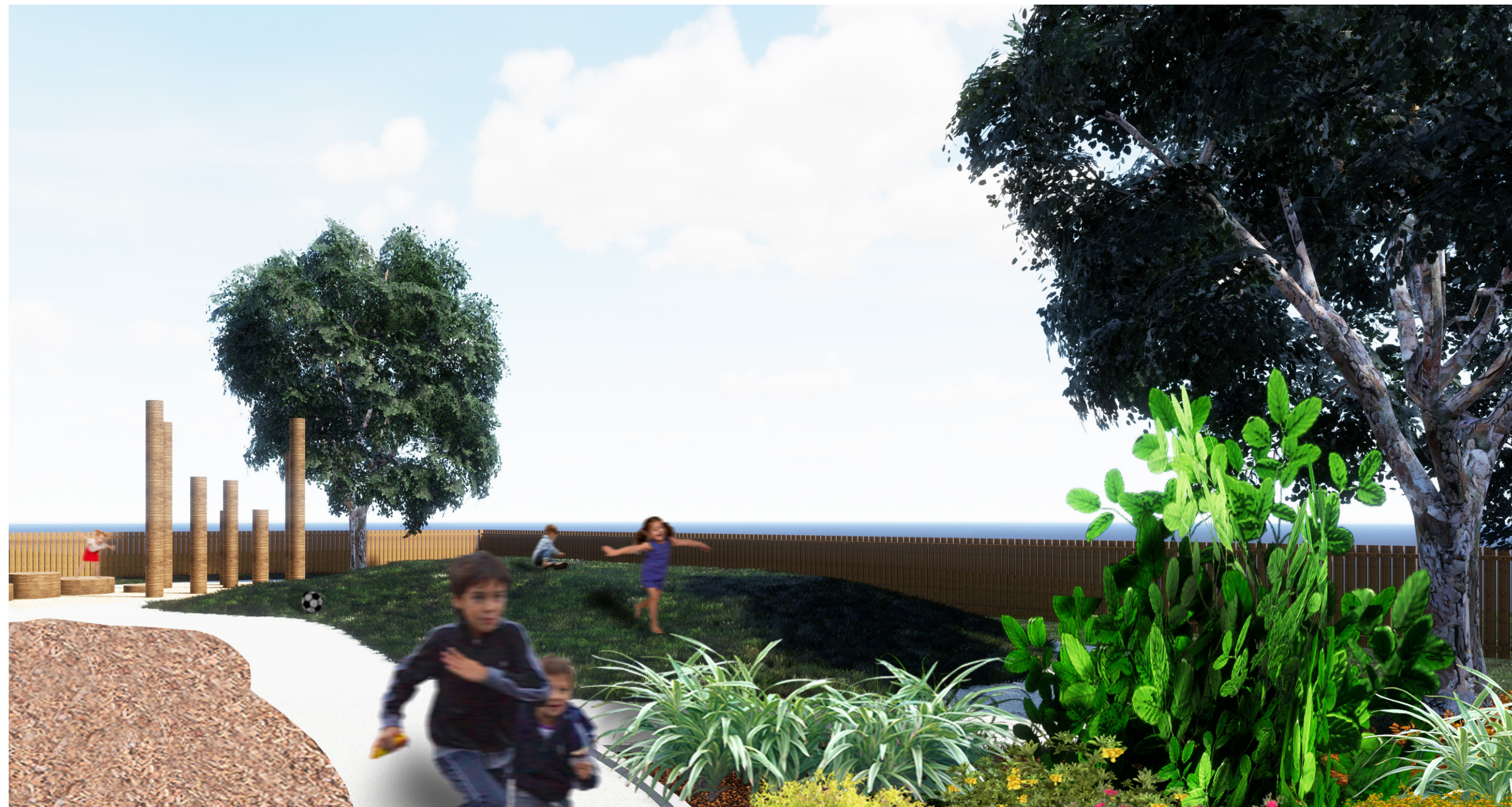
Typical Classroom

Each classroom was designed to accommodate a larger minimum square footage per child. Currently, Minnesota Department of Human Services requires a minimum of 35 square feet per child, unfortunately this has become the standard. According to research children's social behavior reveals that densities of one child per 40-50 square feet optimize positive social interaction.



Central Node

Windows and natural lighting is essential in every room children occupy. A central node/gross motor area provides a transitional space for children and parents. Research indicates that learning spaces should never be limited to the classroom. This space is crucial in creating an engaging environment that fosters learning and discovery at all times.



Play Yard

One large play yard was designed to accommodate 100 square feet per child which exceeds the minimum of 75 square feet per child. As children explore the play yard they notice a variety of different activities which were designed to represent the learning abilities of different age groups.



Learning Street

A learning street is a corridor which provides children with opportunity to socialize and move amongst each other just like in a community. By providing alcoves, different sized reading nooks and informal exhibit space the main corridor offers children the ability to explore their environment freely.