The Amherst Wilder Foundation is a nonprofit community organization that helps children, families, and older adults in the greater Saint Paul and East Metro area through direct service programs, research, leadership development, and community building.

The Wilder Child Development Center exists as an arm of the foundation that specializes in the care of children 16 months to 5 years, including the development of best practices for parents. On touring their facility, just south of an urban community farm in Frogtown, we were struck by the sheer scope of the responsibilities they take on daily. They feed the students breakfast and dinner, they brush the students’ teeth. They provide clothing when students arrive underprepared. They do a load of laundry every day. They not only concern themselves with food allergens, but cater to family requests like organic milk or no apple juice.

A student teacher ratio between 6:1 and 8:1 works well for them and there is always a waitlist for enrollment.

Like every institution of childhood education, the Center struggles with storage, organization, and culling. With schools, lack of consistent funding can lead to a feast or famine mentality, which leads to the collection of STUFF. Additionally, time pressures on the teachers leads to less time to organize and cull. The Center is generally doing very well, and we saw excellent examples of curation, particularly from the 5 yr olds’ classroom where every surface seemed to be used to its greatest advantage. In other locations we saw opportunities for clarification, simplification, and further legibility of spaces and their use.

We put together a quick specification of smaller interventions as a sourcebook, and attempted to order them starting with the most achievable. For now we’ll review a few of the larger interventions we are recommending for the building.
COMMUNITY

DINING - add banquette for rentable events / adults

GYMNASIUM - express verticality / destinations

DAYLIGHT

STAIRCASE - add skylight

GYMNASIUM - clerestory windows

CLASS / CONF. - reflect mirrors
**AREAS OF INTEREST**

**COMFORT**

**ENTRY** - combine waiting spaces, add graphics, cohesive destination

**STAFF BREAKROOM** - combine waiting spaces, add graphics, cohesive destination

**STORAGE**

**STORAGE** - multiuse (shelves, cubbies, drawers)

**CURRICULUM ROOM** - 2 zones, closed cupboards for reducing visual clutter, adding light shelf

**BREAKROOM** - multi-use storage and seating space - integrate trash, microwave, etc.
### SECRET GARDEN

A charming garden scene with a focus on nature and tranquility.

### ART OF CLEANING UP

1. **Keep**
   - Go through the checklist one more time to make sure you get the same result. It is still possible the "keep" test may vary, make sure you threw it in the trash or the recycling bin.

2. **Store**
   - If it’s good enough to keep, but doesn’t fit the category in your everyday living space, consider storing the item safely and securely with a service like Mailbox Plus or pick it up and bring it back for future use.

3. **Donate / Sell**
   - Worried about your donation or sell allows never finding its way out of your home? Grant them! Think of the idea of your donateable goods, mail them to the offices where you can mail your items for home.

4. **Trash / Recycle**
   - If the item isn’t of use to anyone, make sure you file this test to see if it’s recyclable or if it requires proper disposal before it ends up in the garbage.

### REGULARIZING SIGNAGE

- Hold the item in your hand and ask yourself:
  - **Is it functional?**
    - **NO**
    - **YES**
  - **Does it sparkle?**
    - **YES**
    - **NO**
  - **Do you have anything else like it?**
    - **NO**
    - **YES**

- **Start Here**

### CURIOSITY CABINET

- A variety of items and objects showcasing the art and science of curiosity.