

## **EDISON SCHOOL AND HEADQUARTERS, EDISON SCHOOLS INC.**

*Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc. in association with  
Gruzen Samton LLP*

*Location: Harlem, New York, NY*

*Client: Edison Schools, Inc.*

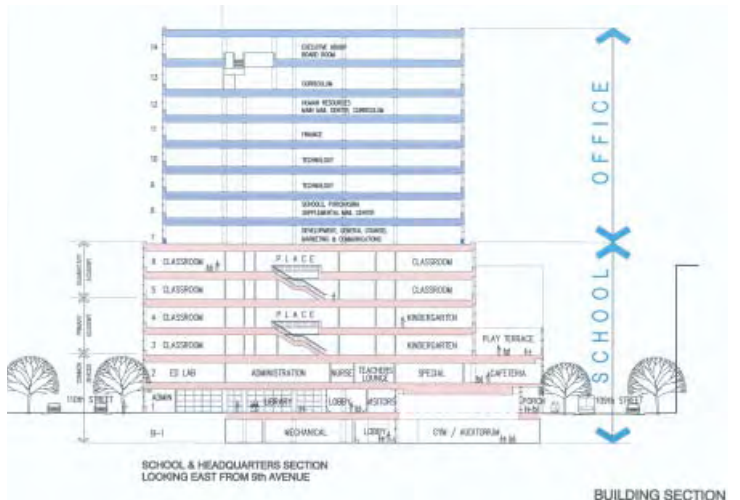
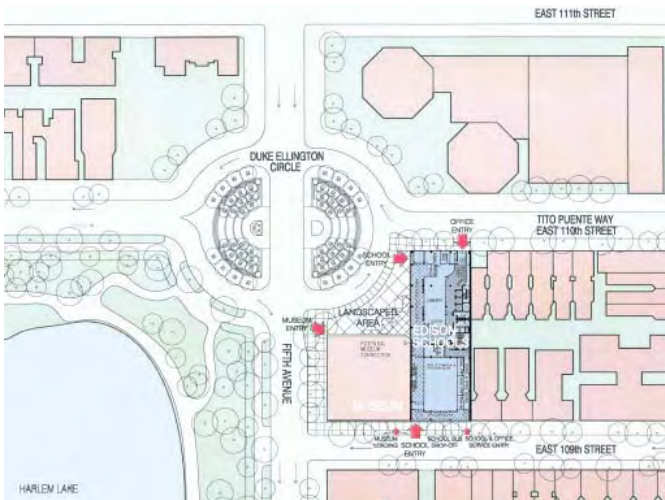
*Area: 170,000 gsf*

*Completion: 2002 (project suspended)*

In September 2000, Edison Schools Inc. selected VSBA to design a laboratory school and corporate headquarters in Harlem. The site, at the nexus of Harlem and East Harlem (El Barrio), is located at Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, across from the northeast corner of Central Park at Duke Ellington Circle. The Museum for African Art was to move to a new building adjacent to Edison's, to be designed by Bernard Tschumi. Gruzen Samton collaborated in the design of both projects.

Edison Schools, Inc., the world's largest and most successful for-profit K-12 education provider, was to be the first publicly-traded company with its headquarters in Harlem. Their offices were to house approximately 400 employees. The Edison School was designed to serve 600 public school students in grades K-5. The School was also to serve as a laboratory for development of Edison's rich curriculum, a place for training and a place to demonstrate the company's school curriculum and design to others.









The design called for the school to be housed on seven levels with an eight-story office building above it. At its ground level is a tall, generously glazed lobby space addressing the public plaza along its Fifth Avenue facade through which there would be an entrance. The plaza would be both a community amenity and the formal forecourt to the School. The lobby was to include a changing, illuminated electronic banner, decorative and informational, for communicating school identity, news, and community events. The School's cafeteria and gymnasium were to face 109th Street where the majority of students would enter and exit. A separate Edison Schools Headquarters entrance was to be from 110th Street, with views from its elevator lobby into the School's library.

The School's design reflects Edison's curriculum structure distinguished by the division of the school into four "houses" of six classes each, within two "academies" serving grades K-2 and grades 3-5. Each House occupies a floor that includes two classrooms for each grade level and additional classrooms for special subjects and uses, including art, music, special education, and/or tutoring. Adjacent Houses forming an Academy are connected by a central open stairway.

The lower levels of the School were to house a gymnasium / auditorium, library, cafeteria, "ed lab" computing and multimedia center, school administration, and parent conference and volunteer space. The project's small 15,000 sf site and limited perimeter exposure for daylight at the school floor levels presented particular design challenges.

The exterior design of the School and Headquarters reflected and accommodated the internal requirements of its enriched curriculum and dynamic organization as well as the urban design opportunities of this significant site -- its Harlem neighborhoods, Central Park, and the adjoining Museum for African Art.

The School was to be distinguished from the Headquarters above via differences in window size and proportion, color, and architectural scale, as well as identity elements and views to the inside identifying Edison's flagship school as a welcoming place for children. The building would relate to the mostly brick neighborhood and to the proposed glass-enclosed Museum through contrasting but harmonious combinations. Facades would vary to reflect activities inside and different immediate contexts outside. The massing of the building responded to zoning code requirements and the School's need for a rooftop play area outside the Kindergarten rooms.

The project was suspended in 2002.

