Ideas about the future of education, teaching, and access to life-long knowledge are evolving. Contemporary debates about how to best prepare coming generations for a future filled with new jobs, skills requirements, and environmental challenges call for new pedagogical concepts about project based learning and life-long learning options that allow for educational facilities to meet the needs of their broader community. Can debates about the future of education be tested in the built form? How can the design of a school respond to the complexity of learning ecologies that go beyond the traditional teacher – student exchange and the school walls?

This studio will guide students to develop an understanding of what is a contemporary learning environment (learning ecology) and how it could evolve in future through the design of an elementary and secondary school facility. Understanding space as the ‘third teacher,’ we will explore how a symbiotic architectural and educational agenda can converge and shape a building to become a three-dimensional curriculum plan.

Few places have a natural and infrastructural feature so vital to their development, yet left oversighted, like the Los Angeles River is for the Los Angeles basin. The L.A. River flows 51 miles through the most densely populated areas in the country, ethnically and economically diverse communities, industrialized areas, and new parks and greenways. Once a natural river, it was paved in the 1930s as a design and civil engineering measure to control devastating floods. In recent decades, new claims and attention on the river are seen as a commodity and opportunity for redevelopment based on high-end mixed-use development. This studio will examine several sites along the river within the city limits of Long Beach, where less acute pressure (compared to the upstream segments in the City of Los Angeles) for redevelopment gives an opportunity to rethink revitalization through an active educational facility. The design will draw on lessons from this complex cultural resource to leverage the learning needs of its adjacent communities – some of the most diverse census tracts in the U.S.