

# Enhance Educational Programming with Interior Design

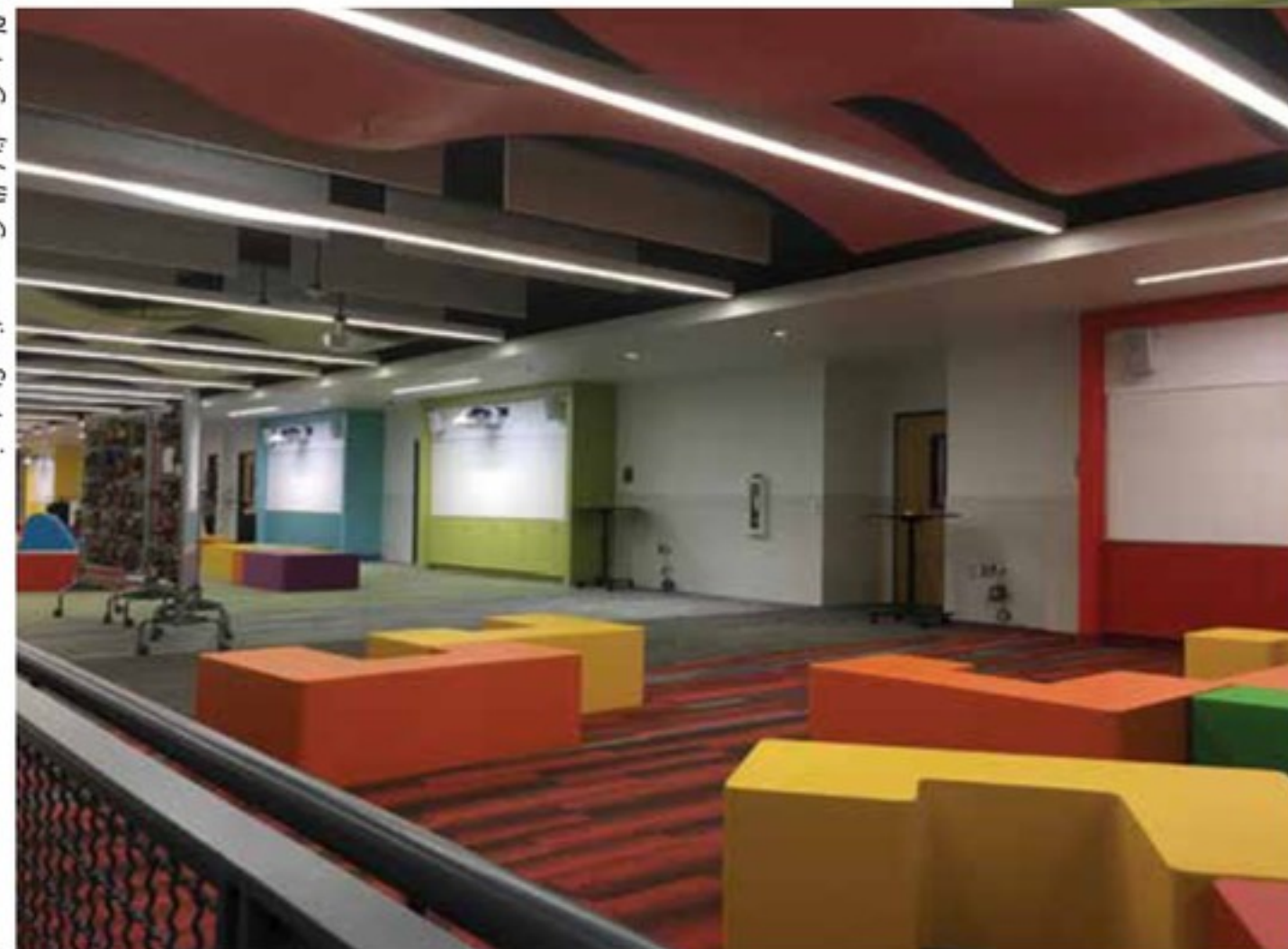
By Kerrianne Wolf

As 21st century learning makes a larger impact among school districts across the nation, the design of school facilities has shifted from a construction-first to an education-first philosophy. Educational space is no longer one size fits all, and the days of the sterile, cookie-cutter classroom with rows of desks and chairs are becoming a thing of the past. Building an educational program has become, in many cases, the ultimate guide when creating a facility's layout. This makes interior design an integral part of ensuring that learning spaces not only look aesthetically pleasing, but also accurately support the educational program for which they are intended.

A prime example of using interior design as a tool to reflect educational programming is the Dean P. Corey Academy of Fine Arts and Dual Language in Arlington, Texas (Arlington Independent School District). Once a typical K-6 facility, the structure was completely transformed to support the programs the space intended to offer. The facility supports bi-lingual



Color is used to distinguish learning spaces in the Dean P. Corey Academy of Fine Arts and Dual Language in Arlington, Texas.



Rather than traditional metal chairs, various seating options provide comfortable spots for lengthy activities like independent reading.

learning (English and Spanish) with robust performance spaces to support the school's offerings of visual arts, theater, music and dance. Repurposing the building allowed designers to create specific spaces for unique classes such as piano keyboarding and ensure the emphasis was placed on the philosophy of collaborative learning.

Upon entering the school, a row of color-coded learning spaces has replaced traditional classrooms. Each space uses the same color for the floors, walls and ceiling. Using color to distinguish among areas separates them in a vibrant, warm way. The bright primary colors are welcoming and inviting, and they provide a glimpse into the kind of positive energy that is generated by each lesson. Each space is also equipped with audio enhancements so a teacher's voice can reach all students.

The building uses flexible furnishings to provide endless options for large- or small-group learning. Chairs can be rearranged for collaborative learning in groups of various sizes or set in an audience-style arrangement to support direct instruction. This gives students and teachers the ability to morph their surroundings to fit their needs. Rather than traditional metal chairs, various seating options provide

provide areas for small-group learning. These spaces allow for less noise when students need extra focus. The glass walls allow teachers to move back and forth among large and small groups while still being able to see their students at all times.

While the interior design illustrates a full palate of colors and furnishing choices, the curriculum reflects a full palate of fine-arts offerings in a dual-language delivery method. This is evident on any given day when students can be found dancing in brightly colored costumes and singing in Spanish, English, or even Mandarin. On the walls leading to the performance space are examples of student artwork that meet curriculum objectives for mathematics.

Using interior design as an extension of educational programming is a great way to create a warm, welcoming environment that fosters and enhances student learning.

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residence halls of 244 beds and 178 beds comprise the Calhoun Honors College, with academic, assembly and administrative space on the first floor arranged around a raised courtyard. Common lounges connected by open stairs enhance the idea of community. Student accommodations offer double and single semi-suites with semi-private baths.

To the south, a 265-bed residence hall provides double occupancy rooms with common private baths. The housing design aids the college in its recruitment for a National Scholars Program and the continued retention of students living on campus following their first year.

Exterior materials complement the existing campus architecture and delineate various Core Campus components. Punched windows and two tones of brick were selected for the residential units. Full-height glass windows were placed on the main dining level to afford optimal views to the exterior and provide natural light.

"Floor-to-floor glazing panels were utilized at open stairwells, studies and lounges to provide long-range views to the mountains and lake," said Gressette. "Exterior porches on levels 2 and 5 on the east and west elevations provide students with exterior spaces to enjoy the surrounding views of campus."

Along the east elevation, slate panels accentuate glazed porches and provide a backdrop to the projecting two-story retail dining space. Brick pilasters provide a rhythm and delineate the primary dining elevation. Corners of this element are full-height curtainwall with clear and fritted glazing panels. All primary entrances into the residential and dining areas use the same projecting porch vernacular to provide covered exterior dining spaces and protected entrances.

As for the overall feel of the Core Campus's improved spaces, generating a sense of style and ease of use spanning physical and aesthetic aspects of the project were important goals for the project team, and their work will yield enhanced student experiences for years to come.

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