

# school news.

Spring 2023

## *Impactful Interiors*

**Transforming Learning  
Environments Through  
Interior Design**



HMC Architects

# HMC Architects

## **PreK-12 Practice Leader**

Brian Meyers LEED AP, BD+C

## **PreK-12 Market Leader/ Director, School Advisors**

Julie Strauss ALEP

## **Communications Director**

Bruce Boul

## **Senior Marketing Manager**

Justin Panson

## **Senior Art Director**

Steve Potter

## **Senior Graphic Designer/Photographer**

David Fennema

## **Senior Graphic Designer**

Jillian Melgosa

## **Contributing Writers**

Bruce Boul

Kelly Morrison

Justin Panson

Kathleen Stanton



## Impactful Interiors 3

By Suzanne Sasaki-Hartstein  
& Sergio Lechuga



## Career Technical Education on the Rise 8

By Judy Krall



## Knowing When to Modernize vs. Replace Buildings 11

By Virginia Marquardt & Brian Nichols



## Meet Sherry Sajadpour, Principal in Charge 14

By Bruce Boul

---

Architecture for Communities	17
Earth Week	18
Project Spotlight	19
Milestones & Events	19
People / Awards / Project Win	20



# Impactful Interiors

*Transforming Learning Environments Through Interior Design*



PHOTO BY DAVID WAKELY

**A**lbert Einstein — one of the greatest minds of our time and an educator — once proclaimed that he did not teach his students. He said, “I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.”

Schools have come a long way since then, and more districts subscribe to this philosophy for a good reason. A learning environment is more than just a classroom. It’s a space where students should feel inspired by their surroundings and safe and supported in their pursuit of knowledge. If we can create these “conditions,” they are more likely to be successful.

Interior architecture and design are critical for students’ physical, psychological, and emotional safety. All children learn differently, so it is essential to create spaces or areas within a classroom for different teaching pedagogies that engage students and help them learn in various ways.

From furniture and finishes to materials and colors, design choices can support an active learning environment and play an essential role in student success. Many kids get lost in the system because their environment is stifling them. These design elements reinforce a district’s commitment to making its students feel welcomed, recognized as individuals, and that they matter.

**By Suzanne Sasaki-Hartstein**

CID, NCIDQ, LEED AP

**& Sergio Lechuga**

CID, Assoc. AIA



**Suzanne** has over 20 years of education design experience working with school districts to infuse interior design into educational programming to help create innovative learning spaces.

With 16 years of experience in project management and design, **Sergio** aims to create PreK-12 interiors that are pragmatic and functional, while being contextual and evocative of the school district, its values, and the community in which it serves.

**PHOTO:** Furniture can be used to divide space into quiet, contemplative zones and spaces for collaboration and group work.



**PHOTO:** Mangini Ranch Elementary pays tribute to Folsom's past with large wall graphics that span the entry lobby and classroom wings connecting local historic images to day-to-day student learning.

## INTERIOR DESIGN IS MORE THAN JUST COLOR AND FINISHES

Interior design is an essential component of the overall building architecture. As the site, surrounding context, and client objectives inform the building architecture, so too does the interior design. Architecture and interior design go hand-in-hand with how students, staff, and the community experience and use the building. The user experience carefully curates thresholds, from how students arrive on campus, to extending the interior learning environments to the outdoors. Every design move must be carefully considered to ensure that it supports the district's educational goals and meets the needs of students and teachers. A well-designed school interior should have functional and efficient spaces for easy movement and organization. This includes classrooms, offices, libraries, and common areas. Since all design forms rely on material, shapes, and color, the school's architectural features must complement every other design feature within the building. Architects and interior designers work together to create the exterior and interior architecture, orienting the building to receive optimal daylight and frame views or to cool the building passively. Interior design is an integral part of the team from start to finish. We work together to align goals and priorities and develop a cohesive design concept.

## THE PROCESS

Since schools are a beacon for the community, engaging all the right stakeholders in our design process is essential. We include students, teachers, administrators, facilities maintenance staff, parents, and community members so we can be inclusive, understand their unique perspectives, solve challenges, and garner support.

Open houses allow the districts to shape plans around citizen concerns and keep residents informed. A trend for renovating educational facilities or buildings is to serve as community hubs helping bridge the gap between students, residents, and the community.

Together we review educational specifications and programming documents to determine the facility's needs and bring innovative ideas about teaching and learning to challenge and plan for twenty-first century learning. We are not only designing schools for today, but are designing a school for the future. A recent example of this engagement was during the design process for Arroyo High School. Students were brought in to discuss sustainability features and ideas that speak to how they learn and how they see their school evolving now and into the future. Students were continually involved in design and review meetings to provide input.





### FINDING A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

Everyone learns differently and has different teaching needs, and schools today need to reflect and adapt to the growing demands of their students and community. Spaces in and out of the classrooms must be diverse, inclusive, and engaging.

### FOSTERING COLLABORATION

For students to be successful in the future, they need to learn how to work together. A study by Stanford University found that when students are placed in groups and given a task to complete, they tend to achieve a higher level of success than when working individually. This is why schools need to have spaces that promote collaboration. Rows of tiny desks facing the same way do not allow for a twenty-first century learning experience.

Collaborative learning spaces, by nature, should be highly flexible and agile, allowing for movement and integration of technology. Our designs encourage group work and discussion. These spaces can be for both small and large groups and be included in libraries and other multi-purpose areas for brainstorming, presentations, and other collective work.

### FLEXIBLE CLASSROOMS

Different seating options support movement and empower student choice.

Offering a variety of seating and even standing options allows students to learn in comfortable ways, minimizing distractions. Creating a flexible classroom will enable students to move and encourages the teacher to mingle and engage with their students. Every wall or surface can be a teaching surface, rather than the teacher standing in one place. On average, children sit for 8.5 hours daily, which can cause health problems and decrease concentration. Allowing students to stand, and providing seating options in which they can wiggle, spin, or rock, promotes healthy blood flow and increases classroom engagement.

### FURNITURE INNOVATION KEEPS STUDENTS ENGAGED

Furniture that supports and encourages learning and teaching differently or is uncommonly seen in a traditional classroom setting can play a huge role in how the classroom functions. We look for furniture designed for flexibility and adaptability to help promote different teaching and learning models. Providing diverse types of furniture, such as lounge seating, group work tables, and banquets, also helps students become familiar and comfortable with educational settings they might encounter at college. Using unique furniture settings helps give students choice and flexibility.

**PHOTO:** Integrating technology, writable surfaces, and different group work settings makes the classroom accessible to everyone.

*“We relentlessly explore new ways to design learner-centered spaces where every child is engaged, and every educator empowered.”*

**-Sergio Lechuga**

*“Good interior architecture is inviting and facilitates the educational program, making students feel safe and secure.”*

**-Suzanne Sasaki-Hartstein**

For example, desks in several shapes support collaboration, while providing individual desking. Some furniture is also designed for neurodiversity, sensory experience, or control. This includes adjustable sitting task chairs that can also rock, foam blocks, and even hammocks or swings.

#### **MORE OPTIONS INCLUDE:**

- Tables and chairs with casters to facilitate break-out groups as well as individual learning.
- Comfortable furniture in places where students socialize, read, or relax.
- Irregular-shaped tables that offer a variety of configurations.
- Adjustable height chairs used at a variety of countertop heights.

At Washington Elementary School in Sacramento, California, we left the existing building structure untouched, but completely transformed the classrooms using flexible furniture. As a result, students were more engaged within their learning environment.

#### **CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE**

We take great care in considering the needs of each project and how we can create a sense of place that fits with the project’s location, the client’s desires, and the community it’s serving. At the Saugus School District’s Plum Canyon project, we achieved this by creating destinations throughout the building. We concentrated on the classrooms and connecting corridors, the most heavily used spaces. Each classroom has a reading nook with a unique color on the floors and walls, making it stand out and drawing children into the space. Outside the classroom, the corridors became another destination, transformed from circulation into multi-functional spaces. We started by calling the halls “collaboration spaces,” to help reframe the student’s view of the space. While they still function as connectors between all rooms, we made them special spaces by adding large garage-style doors that open portions of the corridor to the exterior. We also designed large-scale millwork pieces that spell out the

word “Explore” down the entire run of two adjoining corridors. Each letter is an oversized, three-dimensional element, where one letter creates a reading nook and another forms bookshelves.

For Diamond Bar High School’s music building, we introduced a feeling of movement reminiscent of the ups and downs of a music scale. Using a sound wave image as inspiration, we utilized the acoustical baffles required for proper acoustics in a linear, tonal range of purple to white along all walls within the orchestra room. With a center datum point, we started with the darkest purple, working upward and downward through shades of lighter purple to white. We carried a similar theme to the band room, using reverberation as inspiration. Using large format ceiling “clouds” throughout the space, we placed each cloud at various heights to achieve the look of a vibrating or pulsating space, while carefully maintaining the required acoustics within the room.

In Diamond Bar’s science building we incorporated the chemistry, biology, and physics curriculum. We distilled each subject to a basic symbol. Biology is represented by a DNA strand, chemistry by a molecular structure, and physics by the delta symbol. We then abstracted each, trying to reach one common form for all three, resulting in a rhombus shape. Taking this shape, we applied one to each classroom, morphing it to carry across the floor, onto the wall, and across the ceiling. Each classroom type received a unique color and rhombus shape, creating energetic spaces that tie back to dynamic learning.

At Mangini Ranch Elementary School, we worked with the staff to develop graphics that could be used as a teaching tool, while enhancing the physical space. The school pays tribute to the city’s history with large wall graphics that span the entry lobby and classroom wings, connecting local historic images to day-to-day student learning. Promoting collaboration, the entry commons is a large, inspiring space with a gathering staircase serving as a student hub. Three building wings contain 25 classrooms that open into shared collaboration spaces with mobile furnishings and operable partitions to encourage flexible learning and teamwork. ●





## Instill School Pride with Environmental Graphics

Incorporating environmental graphics is one of the many creative concepts we use to enhance space. Graphic artwork and signage can reinforce a sense of place and community pride and assists in intuitive wayfinding. Creative use of color, student art, and murals to strengthen positive messaging help schools feel more community-driven and encourage students to think creatively. The outcomes can significantly impact student behavior and engagement.

- Places to feature student artwork that showcase their accomplishments.
- Murals of community members or historic images like the ones we created for Mangini Ranch Elementary connect the school to the surrounding neighborhood and invoke community pride.
- Environmental graphics with positive messaging reinforce uplifting thoughts and behaviors.
- Integration of the school mascot and alma mater to encourage school pride.

## Good design changes behaviors.

We've seen this firsthand at Del Oro High School. The project's design included a flex collaboration classroom, a library commons that provided comfortable lounge furniture, and other areas that allowed students some autonomy. The building design, aesthetic, finishes, and furniture all gave students such an immense sense of pride in their school that they went to a "no-bell" schedule where students could leave their classroom when appropriate for their next class. One student said their new school made them "feel important." Parents who grew up in this community see their children in a vastly different educational environment and wish they could have attended school in this facility. Some parents, specifically dads, have returned to the campus to help monitor and protect the school in place of security officers.

We endeavor to make inclusive spaces representative of a district's unique goals, challenges, culture, and context. While every design decision, from how we orient space down to the material selections, is grounded in achieving those goals, we also strive to create space that is inclusive, resilient, and adaptable so that as our clients' and students' needs change and teaching styles evolve, our classrooms can change with them.

*Parents who grew up in this community see their children in a vastly different educational environment and wish they could have attended school in this facility.*

# Career Technical Education on the Rise

*How to Prepare Our Facilities for This Demand*

**By Judy Krall**

AIA, LEED AP



*As an architect who specializes in both PreK-12 and Higher Education projects **Judy Krall** is passionate about designing spaces that propel students into successful careers. She recently partnered with three school districts to develop spaces that support CTE programs.*

Career Technical Education (CTE) spaces have existed for many years. Your district may have had a wood shop or an auto shop program to provide students with real-world trade experience when you were in school. Over the years, whether due to low funding or a higher priority on preparing students for college, these programs decreased in popularity. Today, there is a significant labor shortage in many skilled trades, which provide a good income without a four-year college degree. And, for some students, college is not their goal. Either they have no desire to earn a degree, or they cannot afford to go. With a more hands-on learning experience for all students and a direct pathway to a post-graduation career, CTE programs are attracting more students, and schools are expanding their programs to better address the needs of their students and communities.

## **BENEFITS OF CTE PROGRAMS**

No matter what post-graduation path a student takes, whether they decide to pursue a college program or a post-graduation career, CTE programs connect them with valuable real-world applications to prepare them for today's jobs. CTE programs focus on problem-solving, mimic real-world work environments, and offer more engagement than a traditional classroom, benefiting students across all their classes. For students who do not plan on attending college, these programs help them learn a skilled trade and secure a job after high school.

For those interested in pursuing a college education, CTE may be a first experience that inspires a new area of interest and helps them succeed in higher education.

## **TYPES OF CTE PROGRAMS**

CTE programs address the school, community, and local workforce needs and include agriculture, arts, entertainment, construction, child development, culinary, business, healthcare and nursing education, robotics, cybersecurity, and eSports. New industries and technologies are constantly being introduced, and the sky is the limit as to what CTE programs would benefit today's students.

## **CONNECTING WITH INDUSTRY**

A CTE program can flourish when a school incorporates industry tie-ins and hands-on experience. At Kennedy High School in Los Angeles, we designed a master plan for their career pathways program, including a screen-printing program. The school partnered with a local screen-printing business that helps the students develop real-world skills and learn more about the industry. The school also has a large percentage of students navigating immigration issues. A local law firm brings paralegals to campus to help, while allowing students to shadow them and gain a valuable understanding of the legal profession.





**PHOTO:** CTE classrooms can be a space for product development, STEM, media, or digital transformation.

Folsom Cordova Unified School District has developed a relationship with Sacramento Valley Manufacturing Association (SVMA), the local Los Rios Community College District, and Sierra College to help students move directly into a career or a degree program. The partnership with SVMA has helped them develop CTE facilities across their district. At Folsom High School, the group reviewed design plans and equipment lists, and illustrated all the skills and training they require of their new hires to help build the best facilities possible to prepare students for their post-graduate school plans.

The CTE facility at Folsom High School features a shop, lab, and classroom spaces for learning in a broad and diverse set of disciplines, such as product innovation, graphic design, game development, and video production. The machine shop connects to one of the classrooms via a window allowing supervision and observation. The labs/classrooms are shared with the physics program, and feature sinks, lab worktops, and power drops from the ceiling at each workstation. Oversized doors open onto a work yard, which serves as a staging and utility area for materials and large projects.

We strategically planned the design so that the various programs could work in sync within the space and included slab stabilization for vibration control, dust control, compressed air, and technical power needs of the machinery.

#### DESIGNING FOR A CTE PROGRAM

When planning for a CTE program in your school, you must understand your students' needs and any prominent industry and workforce needs. Once you've chosen the appropriate programming, a qualified designer will consider the industry-specific equipment and space the program will need. Depending on the program, new or remodeled spaces will need specialized design touches not usually considered in a traditional classroom, such as high ceilings, roll-up garage doors, a realistic medical office environment, or connections to existing programs and classrooms.

In California, there are currently more than 37,000 job openings in the cybersecurity industry. Funded by California CTE funds and Measure M, the design of Moreno Valley Unified School District's (MVUSD) Canyon Springs High School's new Cyber Innovation Center converted existing auto and wood shop spaces into a hands-on lab and classroom for cyber security education.

*A CTE program can flourish when a school incorporates industry tie-ins and real-world experience.*

**PHOTO:** Open concept CTE classrooms are flexible and allow for the space to adapt to changing curriculum.

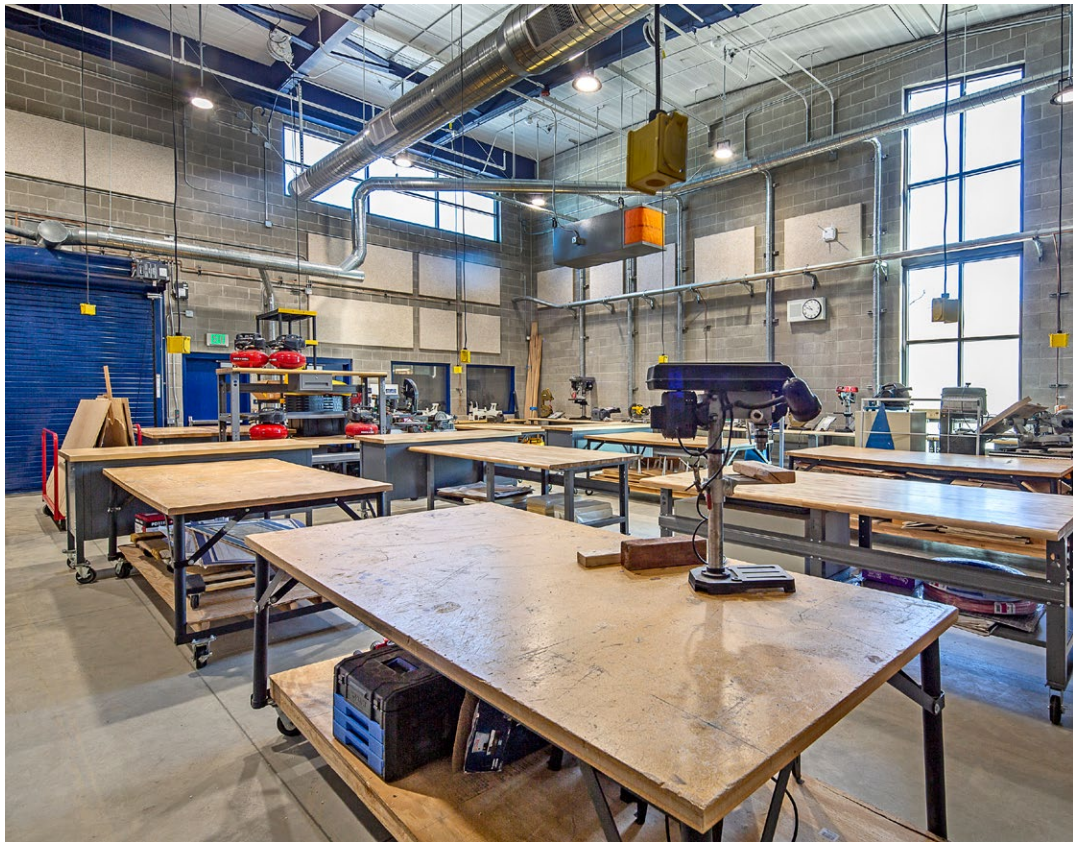


PHOTO BY JOHN SWAIN

The new space aims to meet California's current cyber security and gaming demands, training students in cyber security, programming, logistics, critical thinking, and teamwork. The program began seven years ago as an after-school program in a small classroom. The 7,686 SF Cyber Innovation Center supports the district in encouraging students to solve the clear and present challenges facing our society and prepare students to continue their education and pursue a career in this in-demand industry.

#### **FURTHER READING:**

- 1) [NPR Education](#)
- 2) [The Good Jobs Project](#)
- 3) [California Department of Education CTE Fact Sheet](#)

As educators and designers committed to meeting students where they are and creating spaces that help them thrive, we should support them on the pathways that fit them best. For students who want to pursue careers that do require a college degree, these CTE programs can spark a new interest or give them an early start in their chosen profession. But college is only for some, and students who do not plan on pursuing higher education should be given every opportunity to thrive outside of high school. An innovative CTE program is a powerful motivator for their journeys. ●



# Knowing When to Modernize vs. Replace Buildings

*Difficult Trade-Offs and Cost Models are at the Heart of the Facilities Planning Process*



**By Virginia Marquardt**

AIA, LEED AP, NCARB

**& Brian Nichols**

AIA



The lifespan of a school campus is a process of continual evolution. As needs change, communities grow, educational delivery adapts, and facilities age, buildings will eventually be added, and others will be removed or consolidated. All school districts reach a point where they are faced with deciding whether to replace or modernize buildings. These are challenging inflection points with long-term implications across various factors, including cost, amenities, program and curriculum delivery, the sustainable use of resources, and safety. These decisions lie at the heart of the educational facility planning process we assist our clients with.

A simple definition of “depreciation” is the estimated reduction in the value of a fixed asset within a period — a tangible asset like buildings, equipment, or vehicles.

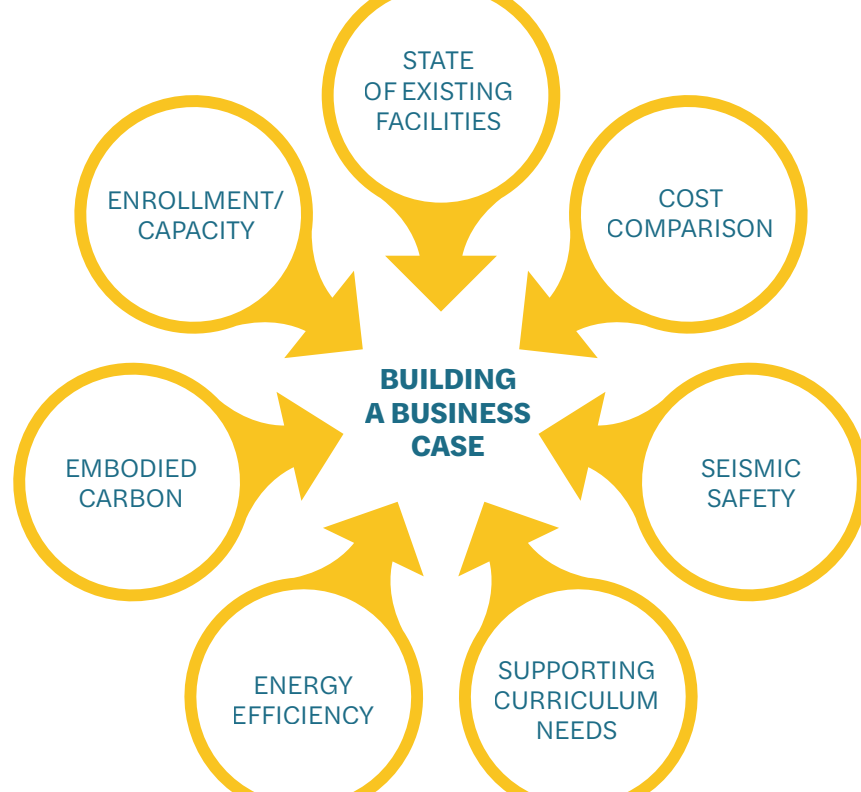
In this sense, the decision to renovate or rebuild a building is not unlike many other types of ownership decisions. Consider your car: do you spend on the hefty repair estimate or buy a new one?

Additionally, facilities are considerably more complex since they involve a multi-dimensional decision matrix informed by imperfect information and varying assumptions. The tipping point between modernizing or replacing often needs to be clear-cut. It is a significant decision that requires careful consideration and the crafting of a business case to make a wise long-term decision — the synthesis of all factors and priorities, including the availability of district funding and California School Facility Program (SFP) funding.

**Virginia** has 24 years of experience leading educational projects and is devoted to creating inspiring, effective learning environments, including district-wide, multiple-facility improvements, renovations, additions, and new construction.

**Brian** has over 20 years of experience designing educational facilities and campuses for PreK-12 clients. He is a visionary partner, advancing concepts, providing direction, and ensuring the design intention meets the school district’s goals.

**IMAGE:** Arroyo High School’s new music, theater, and administration building



*(This is) a significant decision that requires careful consideration and the building of a business case to make a smart long-term decision — the synthesis of all factors and priorities, including the availability of funding.*

We assist clients with this decision by conducting a detailed assessment of current conditions, the structure, finishes, and all building systems. We then partner with our cost estimator to develop preliminary cost models based on different scenarios: new construction vs. modernization vs. a combination of both. We engage with district stakeholders to better understand whether the existing can be made to work over a future period, considering capacity issues and needs vs. wants. Modernization projects typically face more complications in the construction process due to existing conditions and unforeseen issues than starting with a clean slate in ground-up construction.

One key factor is whether the modernization cost will trigger a mandatory seismic retrofit. Per the Division of State Architect (DSA) IR-EB3 and four requirements, if the price of a modernization exceeds 50 percent of the cost of new construction for a similar facility, the building must be upgraded to meet current seismic standards. This is typically expensive and requires the building's structure to comply with the existing code.

Potential seismic retrofit is a significant factor that often drives the decision toward new construction. While this code may be challenging, we must acknowledge its purpose is to ensure safety, especially

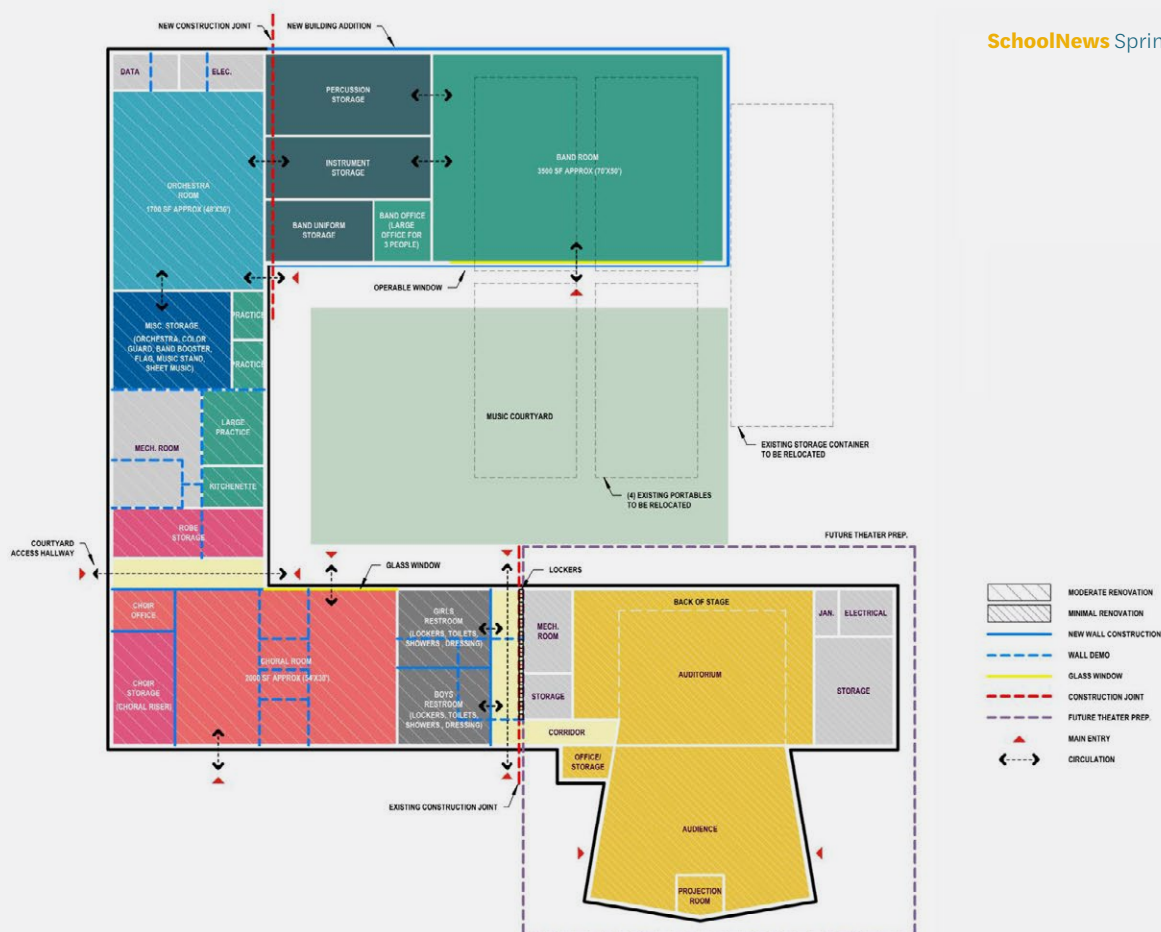
in California, with major fault lines running through many population centers. A building that stands even for a minute or two longer in a major earthquake will save lives by allowing students, teachers, and administrators to escape.

Beyond cost and safety, we also consider educational objectives — how well an aging facility performs in supporting the mission of providing students with the best possible learning opportunities is critical. Will modernization be enough to prepare today's students for an increasingly digital, technology-driven world? A new facility will provide advanced features, flexible learning spaces, and communal areas, something that modernization may not achieve. This is especially important now, when many districts are experiencing declining enrollment. Schools must compete for students and wow them with future-focused facilities.

We faced these decisions at Arroyo High School in the El Monte Union HSD, in the San Gabriel Valley just east of Los Angeles. The campus was constructed over 60 years ago, between 1955 and 1968, in a small residential neighborhood. The original buildings are single-story, wood-framed with brick and wood-sided exteriors.

As we dug into fact-finding and analysis, one factor rose in importance: the district's need to expand enrollment to





2,200 students. There were capacity and programming challenges in many campus spaces including the administration building, theater, gym, and stadium. The 200-member award-winning band and music program had wholly outgrown its space.

Based on our analysis, HMC prepared both modernization and new construction options. A hybrid decision was made to replace the administration, music, and theater buildings and to modernize the gym.

An increasingly important factor in these planning questions is our need to make environmentally responsible decisions. As the saying goes, “the greenest building is the one you already have.” Demolishing and replacing is a resource-intensive proposition, even assuming the salvage and reuse of materials. According to the Preservation Green Lab of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, “it takes 10 to 80 years for a new building that is 30 percent more efficient than an average-performing existing building to overcome, through efficient operations, the negative

climate impacts related to the construction process.” The other side of that equation is that a new building using active and passive energy strategies can exceed previous efficiency limits. Increasing emphasis on reducing embodied carbon and meeting Net Zero Energy goals is important to consider.

We assist many districts with these questions, and sometimes the process of working through assessment and cost modeling leads to conclusions that are at odds with initial assumptions — like a scenario where a district assumed they could modernize and the analysis showed that new construction would be more cost-effective. Beliefs and expectations on the lifecycle of a building are often not specifically defined or understood.

The question of modernization vs. replacement can involve hard conversations and difficult decisions with long-term implications. We approach these challenges with an open mind, a thorough process, and the belief that there can be opportunities for improvement regardless of the ultimate decision. ●

**IMAGE:** A study of Arroyo High School's existing theater and music building helped inform the best options for El Monte Union HSD.





Q+A

## Meet HMC's Newest PreK-12 Principal in Charge Sherry Sajadpour

As part of an ongoing strategy to invest in one of California's largest and most successful PreK-12 practices and our overall position in the Northern California region, HMC Architects is proud to announce that Sherry Sajadpour, AIA, ALEP, has joined the firm as a Principal in Charge.

Sherry is an experienced senior PreK-12 architect, thought leader, planner, and mentor who brings over 20 years of project management expertise and unique skillsets rooted in predesign, programming, and planning. Located in HMC's San Jose office, Sherry will play a pivotal role in maintaining and continuing to establish lasting partnerships with our school district clients to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. Sherry is also the AIA Silicon Valley Women in Architecture committee chair.

**Q** *What is your educational background and specialty?*

**A** I received a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering from the University of Science and Technology in Tehran, Iran, and attained my architectural license in California. I specialize in programming and planning pre-design phases as an Accredited Learning Environment Planner (ALEP) through the Association for Learning Environments (A4LE).

**Q** *What does your new role at HMC entail, and what do you hope to accomplish?*

**A** As a Principal in Charge, I intend to establish lasting partnerships with our PreK-12 districts to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. I want to make a real difference in the lives of students and educators by designing inspiring and innovative spaces that challenge and support all learners.

**Q** *What major projects have you worked on that our PreK-12 clients would like to know about?*

**A** Some of my noteworthy projects include the Evergreen Valley College Language Arts Building in San Jose, California, the King City High School Agricultural Science and CTE Building in King City, California, the Mountainview Whisman School District Master Plan, Graham Middle School Performing Arts Center in Mountain View, California, and a new elementary school campus in Sausalito to support the community's unification goal of bringing together the two highly diverse communities of Sausalito and Marin City and provide equitable opportunities for students throughout the district.

design  
for  
good

**PHOTO:** Sherry and the AIA Silicon Valley Women in Architecture Committee at a recent strategic planning meeting.



**Q** Tell us about your involvement with Women in Architecture.

**A** I serve as chair of the AIA Silicon Valley Women in Architecture committee. I'm passionate about social equity, and I hope to continue raising awareness of equitable practices and their impact on our communities and the architecture field. Our committee has an annual theme that guides all our events throughout the year, and this year's theme is "Elevating a Balanced Community." Through our events and initiatives, we aim to inspire and empower women in architecture and work towards creating a more balanced and inclusive community.

**Q** What is your mission, and how do you want to be remembered?

**A** I aim to positively impact those around me, including my coworkers, colleagues, and emerging professionals. I want to inspire others to follow their passions and lead empathetically, while breaking down traditional practice barriers. If nothing else, my experience has taught me that sometimes our career paths might not be linear, and we may have to take detours to discover our true passions. I want to be remembered as someone who

made a difference in people's lives and helped shape their future.

**Q** What are your passions outside of architecture?

**A** Gathering friends and family, finding new places for different outings, or curling up with a good book or movie. Ballroom dancing is on my bucket list. Most importantly, I love spending time with my sons and our adorable pup Bodhi. ●

**PHOTO:** Sherry and her labradoodle Bodhi.





# Architecture for Communities

*Los Angeles  
Design by Diversity*

March 25 marked the second annual Architecture for Communities Los Angeles (ACLA) Design by Diversity (DxD) Block Party at Sci-ARC in Downtown Los Angeles. This fabulous event connects professionals to students across many experience levels to create a “circular mentorship” platform and to introduce interest in design professions. DxD raises awareness of the role of architectural design in our communities, highlights the contributions minority architects have made to the fabric of Southern California, and gives students of all ages a platform to engage with AEC professionals. This free event is open to the public and welcomes students of all ages, parents, educators, professionals, and community members.

This year’s DxD featured Architect Norma Merrick Sklarek, the first African American woman licensed in California and New York, and the first African American woman Fellow with the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Her major projects include California Mart, Los Angeles; Fox Plaza, San Francisco; Park Center Commercial Complex, San Jose; San Bernardino City Hall, San Bernardino; Commons-Courthouse Center, Columbus, Indiana; The United States Embassy, Tokyo, Japan; Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles; Terminal One at the Los Angeles International Airport, Los Angeles; and Mall of America, Minneapolis, Minnesota.



PHOTO BY ANGEL CHEN

HMC Architects was proud to participate in the DxD Block Party again with a booth and interactive activity where we built a community with structures created through everyday objects. This event allowed HMC staff to share our Design for Good philosophy with the community and develop a more diverse talent pipeline. HMC employees also engaged with the students through portfolio reviews, mock interviews, and daily mentorship sessions. HMC is proud to be a majority-minority firm, allowing our teams to connect more authentically with the communities we serve. ●

**By Kelly Morrison**



As HMC’s Director of Marketing **Kelly** is a fifth-generation Southern California resident who is passionate about inspiring positive change through community outreach.

# Earth Week is April 16 - 22

## *Finding a Sustainable Balance*

**By Jennifer  
Wehling**

AIA, LEED AP BD+C,  
ID+C, WELL AP



*With over 20 years of experience, **Jennifer** leads strategic initiatives for sustainable design at HMC. She strives to deliver school districts the most sustainable projects possible without negatively impacting the budget, scope, and schedule.*

I've worked with teams to integrate sustainability into projects for 20 years. I regularly encourage people to think about building design before the industrial revolution, when our ancestors built in response to the local climate, with the materials they had access to, in locations where they knew they could survive. The industrial revolution has created a culture of convenience that can make space weather-tight, put electric lights in, and heat and cool space with little concern as to the outside conditions. While this has given us limitless opportunities, we can see that these opportunities come with consequences, and it's time for a change.

Sustainability has always been about balance. While I remind our teams to consider the traditional balance between economic, social, and environmental issues, I encourage them to consider a much bigger balancing act. We must push the boundaries on every project to minimize impacts and maintain a habitable environment. We must also work within a project's budget, scope, and schedule to succeed. To see a project soar, we consider the project-specific issues of the client's priorities, the local opportunities, and the experience of the project team. Finding this sweet spot is never easy; it takes creative thinking, coordination, experience, and trust.



At HMC, balance is part of our Design for Good mission. We aim to deliver the best project for our clients and the surrounding communities. The solutions lie somewhere between our past practices and tomorrow's innovations. Integrating our ancestors' proven design strategies inspires us to tread lightly. Working with our brilliant partners throughout the design and construction industry, we will push today's innovations to find better solutions. Balance takes work and awareness; you must be willing to evaluate the ever-changing conditions and adapt to be successful. ●



## STUDENT CENTER

## *milestones and events*

### **Earle Crabb**

**Gymnasium** Placer Union High School District celebrated the opening of its upgraded Earl Crabbe Gymnasium at Placer High School in Auburn, California, with a ribbon-cutting event on February 7.

### **Saint Francis High School**

in Mountain View, California, celebrated the official opening of its new HMC-designed Eggers Innovation Center on January 10.

### **Walnut Valley Unified School District**

celebrated Diamond Bar High School's new Instrumental Music Building, designed by HMC, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on February 4.

### **Santa Ana Unified School District**

celebrated the completion of an HMC-designed modernization project at Century High School with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 8.

## Grange Middle School

### *A Beacon of Success*

Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District's (FSUSD) Grange Middle School in Fairfield, California, is on a mission to be a transitional bridge for students between an elementary and high school that fosters growth and prepares students for successful futures. With the community's support of Bond Measure J, Grange Middle School is ready to achieve its mission with their new student center, a modern facility designed to adapt easily to various needs now and in the future.

The new student center encourages student interaction and utilization, and promotes a sense of school pride. It features a safe space for students to eat meals, an innovation lab, and a college and career center, all combined into one large, divisible space.

Beyond the center, we also modernized and expanded the school's library, converted a multi-purpose building into science labs, and added a locker room to the gymnasium. After witnessing students eating lunch under trees to stay dry on a rainy day due to a lack of shelter in the quad, the team designed a translucent extended dining shelter to serve as a covered dining plaza and the quad's main architectural feature.

The center's design takes advantage of indoor-outdoor connections flanked by flexible spaces to reduce the overall building footprint, create a flexible space for the school to grow, and help the district respond to physical distancing requirements as students return to in-person learning. Its translucent wall panels and expansive window system stretched across the northern façade revitalize the heart of campus and provide abundant daylight inside. In the evening, the building becomes a soft-glowing lantern. ●

# HMC Architects

## Los Angeles

633 W. 5th Street, Third Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90071  
213.542.8300

## San Diego

8910 University Center Lane  
Studio 650  
San Diego, CA 92122  
619.744.4077

## San Jose

333 W. San Carlos Street  
Studio 750  
San Jose, CA 95110  
408.977.9160

## Ontario

3546 Concourses Street  
Ontario, CA 91764  
909.989.9979

## Sacramento

2101 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100  
Sacramento, CA 95816  
916.368.7990

## San Francisco

388 Market Street, Studio 800  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
415.915.0759

## HMC School Advisors

3546 Concourses Street  
Ontario, CA 91764  
909.989.9979

## design for good.

Founded with the purpose of anticipating community needs, HMC aims to create designs that have a positive impact, now and into the future.

We focus primarily on opportunities to have the most direct contribution to communities — through healthcare, education, and civic spaces.

Learn more at  
[hmcarchitects.com](http://hmcarchitects.com)



## PEOPLE



**HMC Architects' Senior Project Manager Bridget Flecky, AIA**, has graduated from the Coalition for Adequate School Housing's (CASH) School Facilities Leadership Academy (SFLA). The nine-month immersive academy provides school facilities professionals with the tools to succeed in all planning, design, and construction areas.

## AWARDS



PHOTO BY DAVID FENNEMA

**Mangini Ranch Elementary School** Wins CASH/AIACA Leroy F. Green Design and Planning Award

## PROJECT WIN

HMC was selected to lead **Durham USD's Durham Intermediate School Campus** modernization and additions project in Durham, California. The \$10 million, 13,480 SF project will transform the campus and provide a modern, future-focused set of learning environments for the students and faculty.