

EducationARCHITECT

ADDRESSING THE DESIGN NEEDS OF TODAY'S INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



*Curtis School
Collaborative
Learning and
Innovation Center
designed by Pica +
Sullivan Architects.*

Collaborative Learning and Innovation Center

After a number of years of programming and design, the Los Angeles-based Curtis School is poised to embark on the construction of their new **Collaborative Learning and Innovation Center** (or **CLIC**); a place where art, science and technology education intertwine. Thanks to the vision and

commitment of the Board of Trustees and Administration, the future **really is now**.

Under the leadership of Dr. Meera Ratnesar, Curtis School has embarked on a multiphase initiative to amplify the school's legacy of thinking forward about elementary education. As noted by Dr. Ratnesar, "It is not enough to teach for the now, we have to teach for the future. We know that collaborative learning not only develops higher level thinking skills in students, but boosts their confidence and self-esteem as well. There is no environment in which collaboration is not essential in the 21st Century."

Located in the Santa Monica Mountains between L.A.'s Westside and the San Fernando Valley, Curtis is an independent, coeducational day school. It serves elementary-age students from Developmental Kindergarten (DK) through the Sixth Grade.

The proposed new 21,000 square-ft. building will be situated along the existing campus quad. The two-story (plus lower level) CLIC will incorporate state-of-the-art Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) resources for all grade levels.

Designed by noted Los Angeles-based education architect Pica + Sullivan Architects, the CLIC

is intentionally planned to encourage cross-curricular opportunities. Engineering team members for the project include Playa del Rey-based Johnson-Leifield Structural Engineers, Los Angeles-based KPFF Civil Engineers, and Monrovia-based AlfaTech Mechanical, Plumbing and Electrical Engineers. Santa-Fe Springs-based Matt Construction has been selected to be the General Contractor.

The Pica + Sullivan design separates the building into two vertical groupings, with each level housing two sets of classrooms. The approach of dividing the physical mass, along with incorporating variable roof heights and contrasting exterior materials, reduces the apparent scale - allowing the new structure to harmonize with the existing campus context.

Pairing of programs (in adjacent classrooms) enables cross-curricular project based learning - encouraging students to explore differing perspectives in an integrated fashion. As noted by Science Teacher Justin McInnes, "(The building layout) gives us an opportunity to recreate the curriculum provided to the kids. There will be an ability to seamlessly flow back and forth between rooms and disciplines."

On the first floor of the CLIC building the Lower Elementary Science teaching space is paired with the Lower Elementary Art teaching space. Robotics and Maker Space/Engineering are a cohort on the opposite side of the breezeway.

The Upper Elementary Science teaching space is paired with the Upper Elementary Art teaching space on the second floor. Across the breezeway, the 6th Grade Science classroom and the 3-D Art/Ceramics studio stand alone.

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CLIC Co-Designed With Curtis School Teachers



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View from the
Campus Quad.*

The temperate Southern California climate allows for extending the learning environment to the exterior. The first floor classrooms will open to adjacent courts - encouraging alternative teaching venues and the unique opportunity for presenting curriculum in a meaningful and memorable fashion.

As noted by Dr. Ratnesar, "When we take down the walls between classrooms, subjects, grade levels, and the outside – in this case literally – students develop into curious and dexterous problem solvers." Art Teacher Autumn Brannon exclaimed, "I am already inspired by this building, and already thinking about the great projects in the future."

In addition to the first and second level classrooms, the Collaborative Learning Innovation Center includes a 7,000 square-ft lower level to house a teacher collaboration space, an Internet Technology (IT) Help Desk Center, a multi-purpose classroom, a skylit Movement Room, and a large "Materials Bank" storage (essential to support a project-based learning curriculum).

The Curtis School has embarked on a Capital Campaign for the proposed new CLIC building. "The kickoff of the Think Forward campaign is a dream come true for all of us having worked on the Master Plan and thinking of the future of Curtis," noted 2020-2023 Board Chair Rob Friedman. Parent Amita Ramesh echoed Rob's senti-

ment and added, "We owe it to the families that came before to continue this tradition of giving back to the school, to make it stronger not only for this generation but also future generations."

As noted by Dr. Ratnesar, "At Curtis School we share an overriding purpose to build our children's foundation and set them up to be the empathetic collaborators our world needs. Our teachers are so excited to get into CLIC, start teaching and expanding our program."

Pica + Sullivan Architects specialize in master planning, architectural design, interior design and project management for non-profit schools, religious institutions, social service organizations and charitable organizations. Our approach includes **hands-on principals** who are involved in the project from inception through completion; **flexible and responsive staff** who have a long history with the firm; a **value-engineering approach to design** where the cost-benefit is considered throughout; **contextual approach to design** where an architecture unique to the context is developed for each client; **understanding of the non-profit client** as a multi-faceted group of constituents; and most importantly **multiple projects with most clients** which demonstrates the level of confidence and trust that is placed in our firm.

Learning Happens

For More Information About Curtis School Think Forward Campaign Visit CurtisThinkForward.com