

# EducationARCHITECT

ADDRESSING THE DESIGN NEEDS OF TODAY'S INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



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

## CURTIS SCHOOL CLIC Ribbon-Cutting

An early morning ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the opening of the new Curtis School **Collaborative Learning and Innovation Center** (or **CLIC**). 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 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 new 21,000 square-ft. building is situated along the existing campus quad. The two-story (plus lower level) CLIC incorporates 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 included Johnson-Leifield Structural Engineer, KPFF, Inc, Civil Engineers, Carter Romanek Landscape Architects, and AlfaTech Mechanical and Electrical Engineers. Matt Construction was 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 integrate fashion. As noted by Science Teacher Justin McInnes, ***"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



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# CLIC Co-Designed With Curtis School Teachers



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Science classroom and the 3-D Art/Ceramics studio stand alone.

The temperate Southern California climate allows for extending the learning environment to the exterior. The first floor classrooms 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."*

The Collaborative Learning Innovation Center includes a 7,000 SF lower level - housing teacher collaboration space, 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).

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 that our world needs. Our teachers are so excited to get into CLIC, start teaching and expanding our program."*



Learning Happens

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