



# Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders



# How It All Began

**As part of a \$1 billion bond program passed in November 2017, the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders' project design team was charged with the modernization of a 1950s era campus to support 21st century learning.**

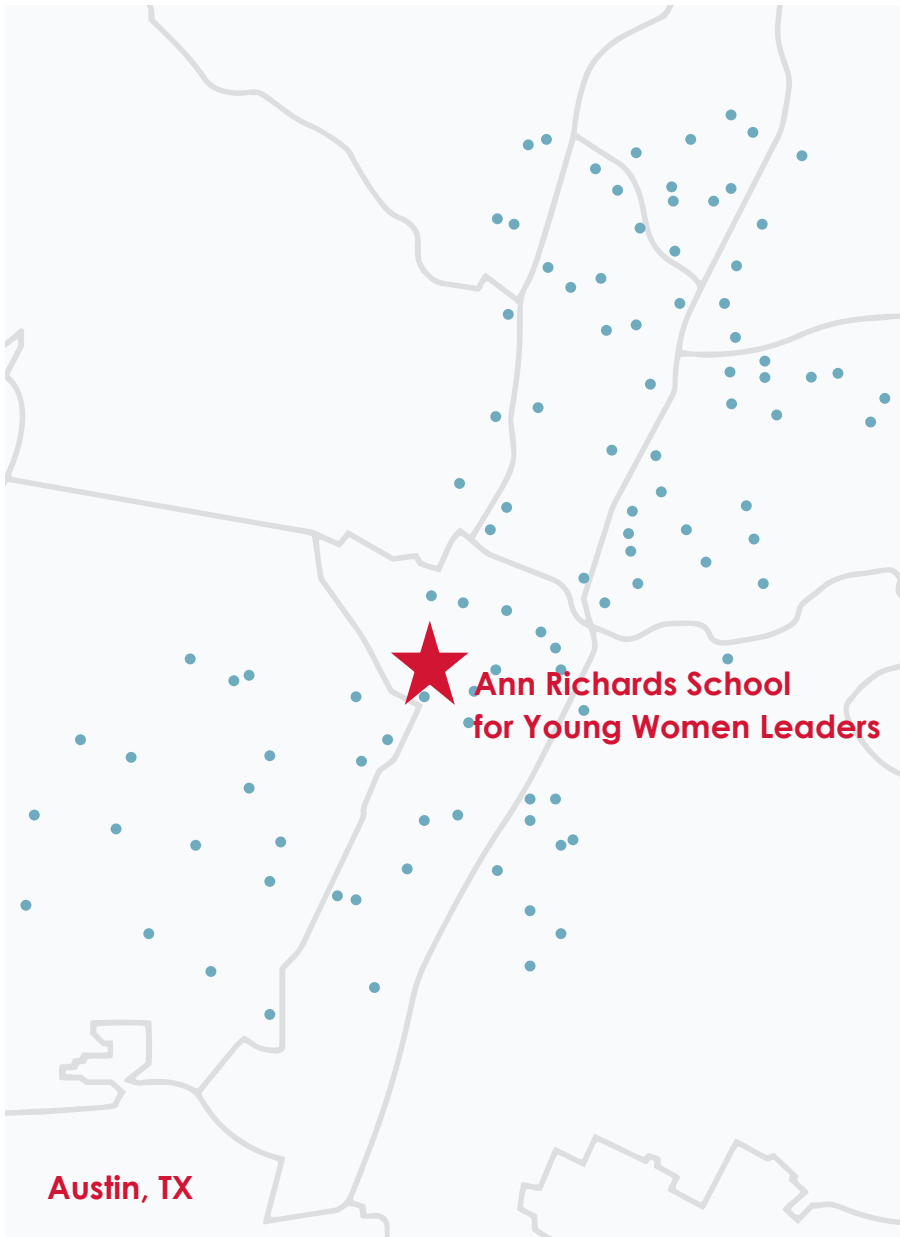
Named for the 45th Governor of Texas, the Ann Richards School (ARS) is a college preparatory public school of choice for girls in grades 6–12. A part of the Austin Independent School District (AISD), the school was originally established in 2007 at a 1950s era middle school campus that was no longer in use. The aging facility resulted in a learning environment that was deteriorating and lacked the ability to best support the unique curriculum and approach to instruction of ARS. It was vital to determine how this

project could better align with a learning philosophy centered around collaboration, STEM technology, and a culture of 'making' for all students, otherwise known as the Girls. The District's facility assessment conducted prior to the bond election documented an educational suitability rating of 28/100 for the campus. With this context, the team immediately realized that it would be a significant challenge to renovate the existing 123,000 SF building on its 15-acre site.



## Executive Summary

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A choice school, with a lottery-based selection system, ARS applications are received from students attending any of the 78 elementary schools in the Austin district. The student population is required, by school charter, to mirror the demographic makeup of the District, thus supporting a very diverse population from across Austin. The selected Girls are immediately embraced into the ARS culture upon admission. With a renowned transformational education process supporting modern learning, the school was already a hub for the local community and a model educational facility for the nation, in spite of its outdated facilities.

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Original Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, before the modernization project





**“ We designed and built around the idea of trust and empowerment of students. Allowing the established culture of student leadership to grow and thrive.”**

**Kristina Waugh**  
Principal, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders

Envisioning an environment for a modern learner, ARS and the design team worked collaboratively to define elements of the built environment to best serve this unique student population. Starting with the school’s mission, to “dedicate itself to preparing young women to attend and graduate from college, commit to a healthy and well -balanced lifestyle, lead with courage and compassion, and solve problems creatively and ethically in support of our global community,” foundational goals were established to support the campus now and into the future.

### Power Skills

Modern students need knowledge beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. 21st century learners layer skills of collaboration, communication, connection, creativity, critical thinking, and cultural proficiency. Flexible spaces to support varying instructional activities were also a priority. The campus environment was architecturally designed to inspire and support this development.

### A Reimagined School and National Model

ARS desired an environment for student empowerment, wellness and personalized learning. Stakeholders reimagined the school as a space that also facilitates teacher empowerment and collaboration. ARS was already a bastion for the continuing development and strengthening of the culture and curriculum, and required the renewed campus to

match the educational program’s prominence, and serve as an exemplary 21st century learning facility.

### Unique Curriculum Focus & Support of Modern Pedagogy

Classroom neighborhoods tailored to each grade level, varying-sized learning spaces, multiple maker-spaces for hands-on learning and discovery, ubiquitous technology, a competitive gymnasium and soccer field/track and performing and fine arts spaces were required. Designing a modernized environment which supported the stated project goals called for a targeted architectural response using strategies that included:

- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Student Ownership
- Outdoor Connections
- Student Work Display
- Sense of Play
- Environmental Sustainability
- Project Based Learning / Flipped Classrooms
- Pervasive Technology
- Community Support



## Executive Summary

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### Growth

With an existing, crowded campus serving 850 Girls, the school would continue to serve 6th through 12th grades with a lottery-based enrollment. The new facility needed to provide additional square footage to accommodate the increasing number of students, with a capacity of 150 students at all grade levels for a total enrollment of 1,050 students.

### Empowering Future Leaders and Embracing Community

Student leadership and trust, instead of control and compliance, were championed through the campus transformation. ARS focuses on personal development of the whole student—providing Girls with academic and enrichment opportunities that expand their horizons and build confidence, improve their communities and achieve their dreams of graduating from college. With a 100% high school graduation rate, ARS is proud of the fact that 63% of their graduates will be first in their families to graduate from college.

### Appreciation of Student Seniority on Campus

Students who applied and are accepted to the school spend seven years on campus within the same facility. The new campus plan needed to create opportunities to nurture student growth and development over the years, with some hierarchy of spaces, and ensure natural interaction with Girls of all grade levels throughout the campus.



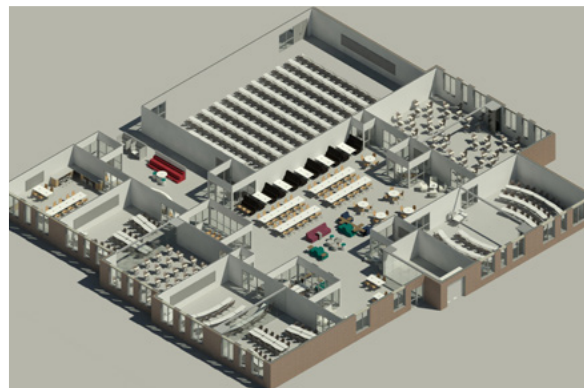
# Finding a Solution That Fits



The design team implemented an architectural development practice that followed a design thinking process, cycling through understanding, exploring, and materializing a concept for the plan forward. A 4-month programming and master planning process was the first step in understanding the culture and design for the ARS Facility Modernization project. The process involved working with a broad stakeholder group from the start, in development of the campus vision and master plan.

Architectural programming was completed through systematic evaluation of the interrelated values, goals, facts, and needs of the campus, along with input from facility users, and the surrounding community. A program which led to high quality design through discussion and identification of goals and priorities, space characteristics (types, quantities, needs, and sizes), building organization and major adjacencies, and the influence of instructional pedagogies on architectural design, was accomplished.

Through this analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement, it was determined that a replacement school was necessary to meet the facility modernization goals and best support the needs of this dynamic education community. This required the entire team – including designers and campus community, to develop a new solution that could still be accomplished within the budget parameters.



**“ We never want to compromise the student’s experience... when you have a partner that thinks that way you come up with elegant solutions that allow you to reduce costs.”**

**Matias Segura**  
Chief of Operations, AISD



## Scope of Work and Budget

The challenge of designing and building a new, comprehensive 183,800 square foot facility on 15 acres, within an active community, while school remained in session would only be met through implementation of a well-coordinated effort between the District, campus administration, design team and general contractor. A phased construction schedule, coordinated with the school schedule that included testing, sports seasons, and holidays, made it possible to complete the project without disrupting ongoing school operations.

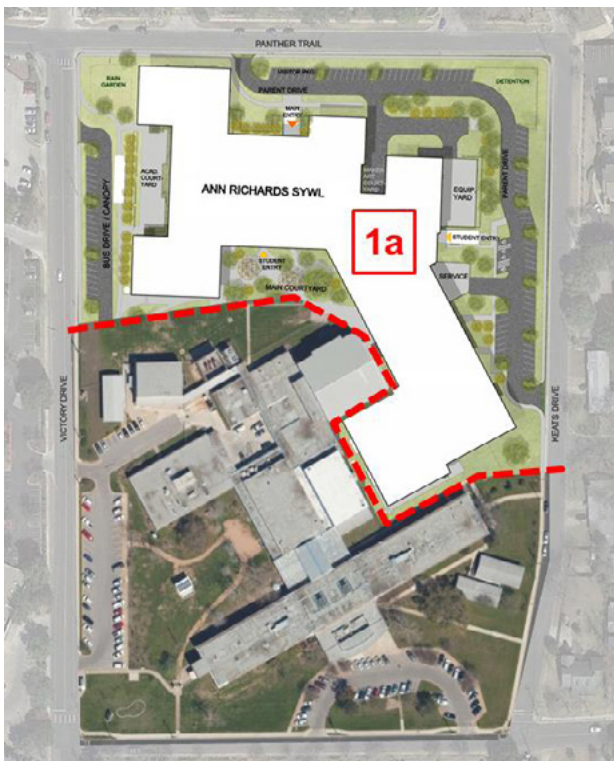
Three distinct phases were implemented:

### Budget

The initial budget identified was \$70.4 million total project cost, with a targeted \$50.2 million construction cost for the facility. When campus leadership presented their request for a school replacement, to achieve the maximum results, more funds were needed. The District identified previous campus bond program savings, along with district bond program savings, adding to the budget for a final total construction cost of \$56.1 million.

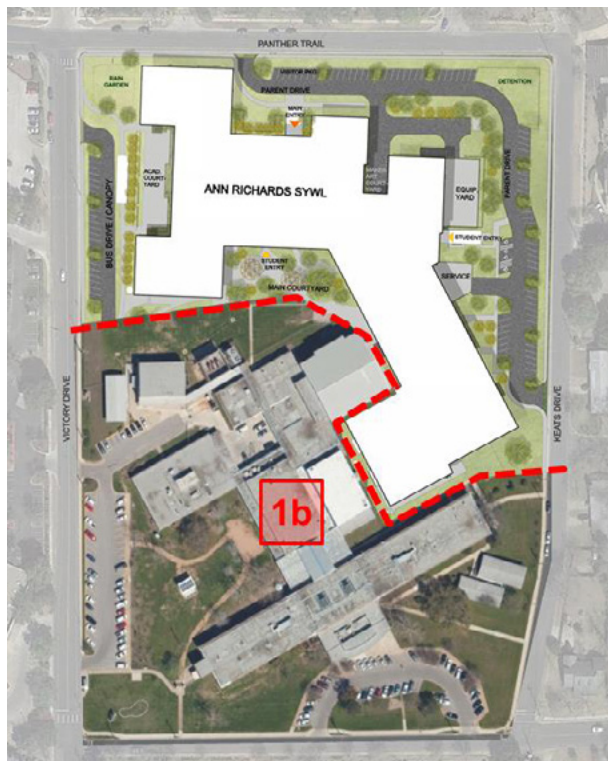
#### PHASE 1A:

Build the new Ann Richards School



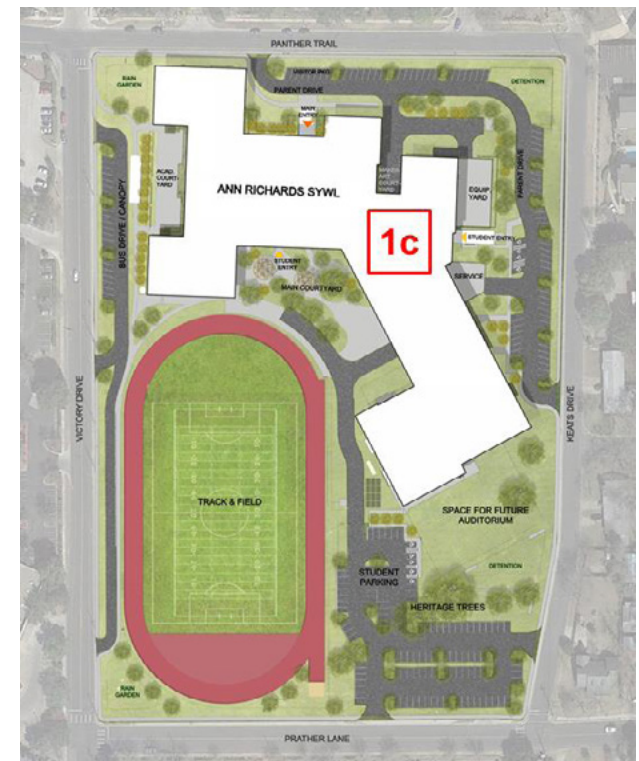
#### PHASE 1B:

Demolish the existing buildings



#### PHASE 1C:

Build new track and field

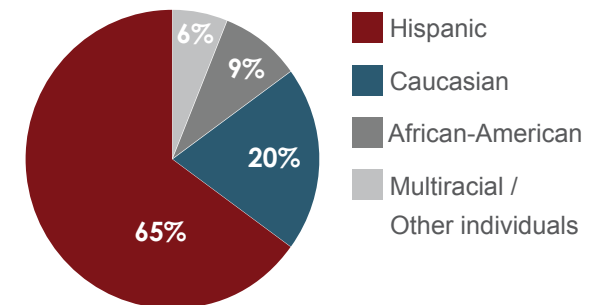


# Engaging the School Community



## Community


Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders welcomes students from all of AISD. It is required by its charter to match the demographic composition of the district. Therefore, it is part of a much larger community than just the neighborhoods that surround it. The student body is represented by 65% Hispanic, 20% Caucasian, 9% African-American, and 6% Multiracial/Other individuals. Approximately 60% of students qualify for free and reduced meals. Community engagement meetings and information sessions included a Spanish interpreter, to facilitate participation by the community members that did not speak English as their first language. Project reports and documents were provided in dual languages and in accessible formats that were easily obtained through a district-maintained website.





## School & Community Engagement

2017  
BOND  
PROGRAM



REFLECTIONS:  
Concerns I am left with: 3

1. bathrooms- enough stalls for girls
2. something to help with bad smelling bathrooms
3. concession stand big enough to hold a fridge, counter top, possible burner for cooking not dogs. would love to fast track gym

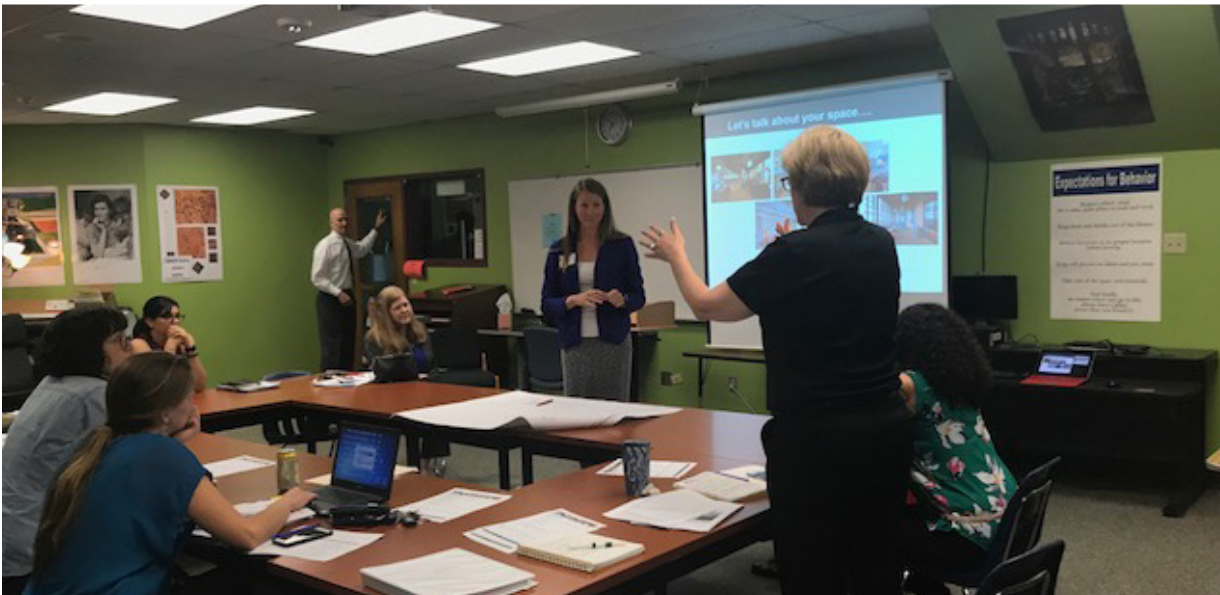
Positive takeaways from today:

1. beautiful, well-thought out design



The CAT members were instrumental in collaborating and providing guidance to the project team throughout the process of design, sharing input on design considerations such as building layout and finish materials, educational programming, and perspectives on learning zones that included collaboration areas, outdoor, media and library spaces. During the design process the project team met with the CAT at every design milestone for review, input and approval. CAT meetings were open to the entire school community, and members were expected to routinely brief their constituent groups about the progress of the project and bring issues and concerns from those groups to the CAT for resolution.

At each design milestone, such as schematic design and design development, as well as during construction, public meetings were held. These meetings included project updates and a formal process for documenting community feedback. The CAT members provided initial design approval, followed by public meetings and feedback collection. A member of the CAT was required to attend the public meetings. Faculty meetings kept the teachers informed, and the ARS foundation board members were also provided interim updates. Feedback items were individually documented, considered and addressed.



## School & Community Engagement

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**More than 95 meetings were held during the design and construction processes, including:**

- 6 CAT meetings
- 3 focused student input sessions
- 2 parent stakeholder meetings
- 4 meetings with ARS Foundation Board
- 4 public community meetings
- 30+ campus user group meetings
- 40+ Owner-Architect-Contractor meetings
- 3 in-person meetings with staff
- Student furniture mockup test and voting session
- 4 virtual meetings to finalize furniture package at the beginning of pandemic in March 2020



One of the most intense challenges of the project was the balancing act between community involvement and engagement in conjunction with an aggressive, time-sensitive schedule. The breadth of stakeholder groups, and the commitment to communication and reporting required dedicated effort from the entire team. Addressing community feedback while also reporting and documenting engagement for district leaders were vital components of minimizing disruption within the neighborhood and compliance with district requirements. The sheer number of meetings and the logistics of managing location, childcare and refreshments was a significant investment that demonstrated the team's resolve to solicit and encourage community engagement.

In addition to a centralized website, the district provided forms and templates for information collection and sharing. The design team created documentation and presentations describing goals and design elements. After every public, community meeting, information including presentations and notes were uploaded to the website.

These facilitated meetings and conversations provided the design team with the insights to develop an optimized program supported by existing facility understanding, goals and priorities, facility program, initial master plan concepts, and potential costs. The final program met the project goals identified above, including being a 21st century learning environment, but it also attained a certain amount of “coziness”, a pulling together of the parts to maintain proximity and a sense of community.





## School & Community Engagement

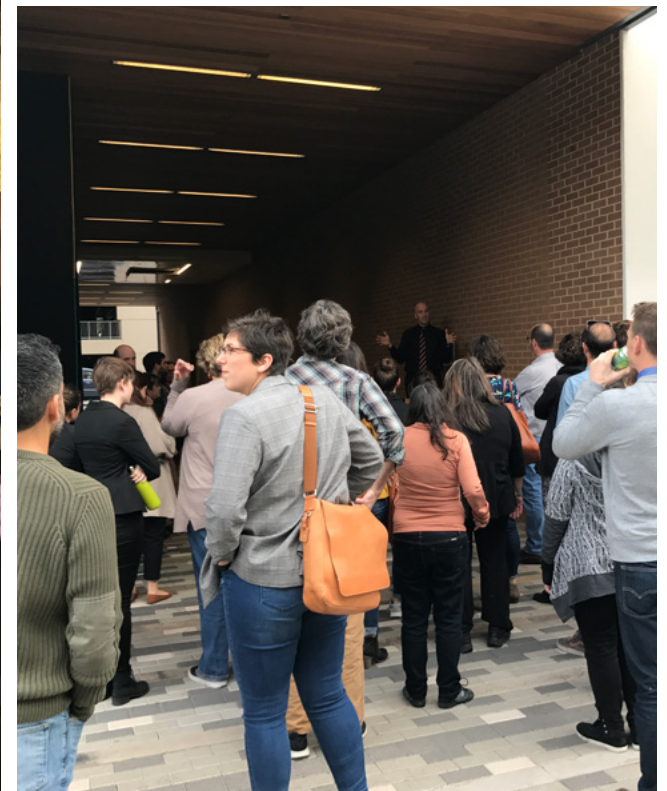
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Encouraging the staff to think big and envision a new type of learning environment was supported by a national tour of award winning facilities with a few members of the design team and a small group of campus leaders, including the Principal, Associate Principal and a teacher representative. This tour provided the executive leadership team for the project with built examples of spaces and innovations that served as inspiration from the start of the project.

To further engage the school's teachers and staff in the vision for the new campus, and create an opportunity for early input, buses were rented to bring the entire staff on tours of several regional facilities that modeled the 21st century environments the design team was planning. During a reception at a modern WeWork facility on the tour, comments, likes, and dislikes were recorded.



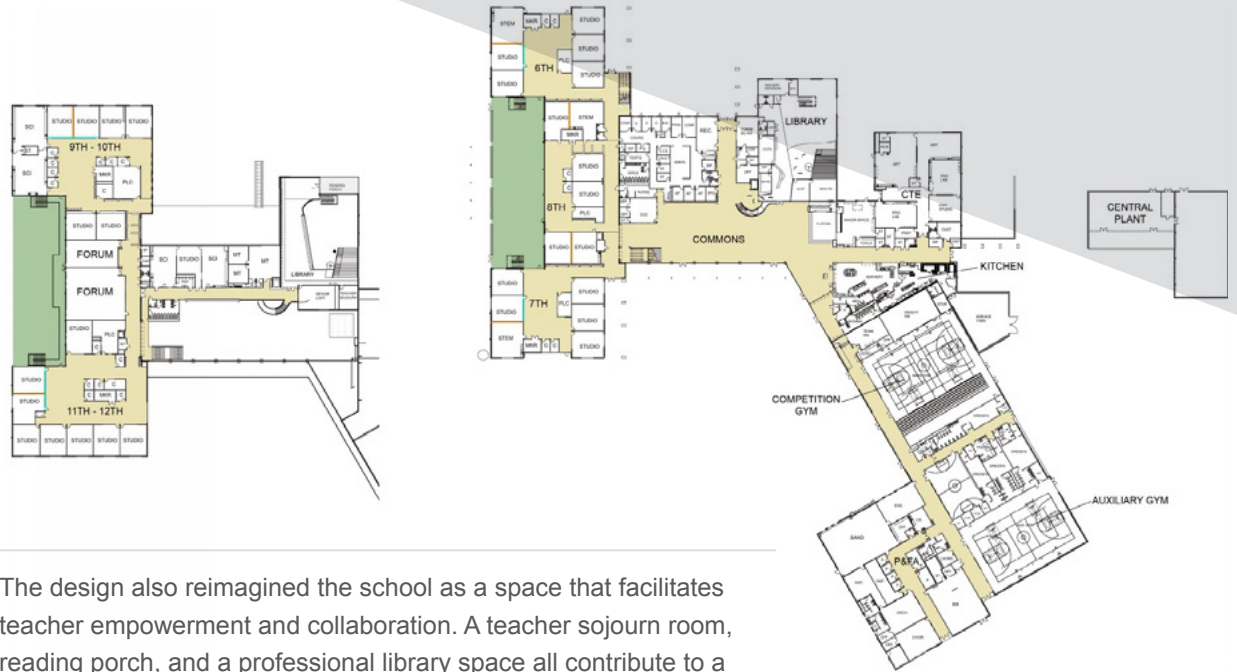
Lastly, community participation was integral to positive communication and minimizing disruption to the neighborhood and students for the duration of the project. Efforts to keep everyone informed allowed for additional consideration during challenging times where traffic was impacted, construction noise and dust were prevalent, or security and transportation procedures were changing. Ensuring that the community was included generated a lasting positive connection between the final product and a sense of respect for everyone's perspectives.



# Enhancing the Educational Environment

Throughout the design process, the Principal and students emphasized their desire for the campus to be a place that encourages learning, growth, freedom, creativity and confidence. The school environment was intended to center around student leadership and trust, instead of control and compliance. The dedicated Senior Loft area, small collaboration spaces, access to multiple outdoor learning areas like the courtyard and library reading porch provide the desired focus of a building that reinforces student leadership and trust.

Project goals achieved include a reimagining of a school that facilitates student empowerment, wellness, and personalized learning. The ability to move throughout the campus and visually see learning in action everywhere you look, including in the maker spaces, science labs, library and art rooms is evidence of this goal met.



The design also reimagined the school as a space that facilitates teacher empowerment and collaboration. A teacher sojourn room, reading porch, and a professional library space all contribute to a space that facilitates teacher empowerment and collaboration.





## Educational Environment

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The school delivers a challenging, college-preparatory curriculum with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills; with project-based, experiential learning to enhance real-world application. Instruction also includes collaborative projects within the community to explore career options. Careful furniture selection as well as movable partitions and walls ensure a building that is flexible for future changes in curriculum and population.

The design recognized and was built to actively support all functions required for great leaders. ARS places a focus on personal development of the whole Girl—providing students with academic and enrichment opportunities that expand their horizons and give them tools to become confident and competent leaders, improve their communities and achieve their dream of graduating from college. With a 100% graduation rate and 89% continuing their college education, ARS is proud of the fact that 63% of their graduates will be first in their families to graduate from college. Students at ARS love learning, have the desire to succeed, and care about the future of the world. Learning and play are interwoven throughout the Ann Richards School as part of the culture. All together, the state-of-the-art design delivers an environment that is comforting and inviting, fun and playful, empowering and confidence-building.



**100%**

High School  
Graduation Rate

**89%**

Continuing College  
Education

**63%**

First Generation  
College Graduates

“*They listened to our crazy, crazy ideas, our concerns and our dreams for this campus and they brought that vision to life.*”

**Kristina Waugh**

Principal, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders

## Educational Environment

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### Supporting STEM & Hands-On Learning

The 2,423 SF of MakerSpaces in the new school are a modern-day version of a shop classroom designed to support 3D printing technology and contemporary tools. The space, which is adjacent to the art wing and has large garage doors opening up to an outdoor courtyard and loading dock for large materials and supplies, supports advanced learning opportunities to explore, experiment, create, and invent.



The courtyard is shared space for art and other projects that carry over and through from one class to the next. The areas are as intermingled as the learning and teaching methodologies. These spaces encourage tinkering and complement the school's project-based philosophy and focus on STEM.





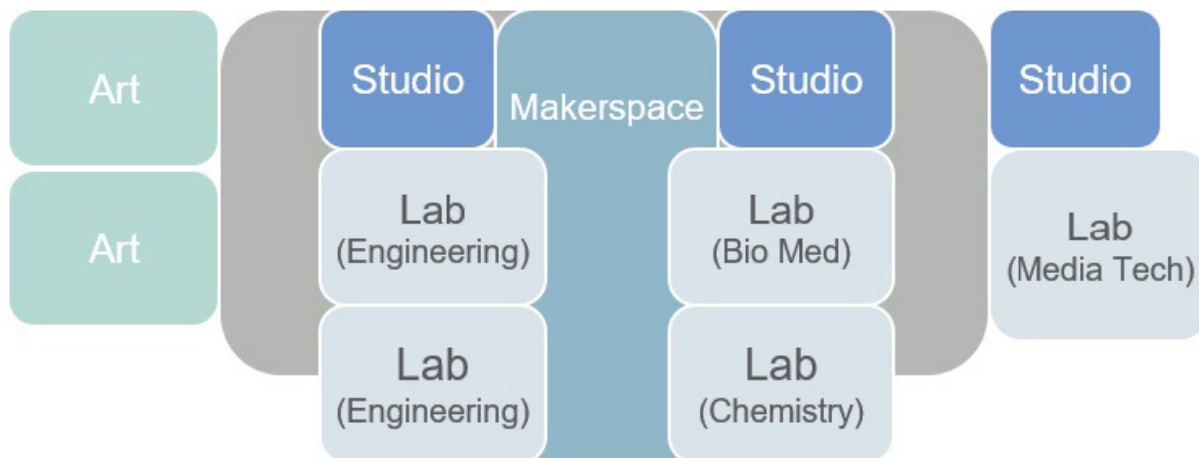
## Educational Environment



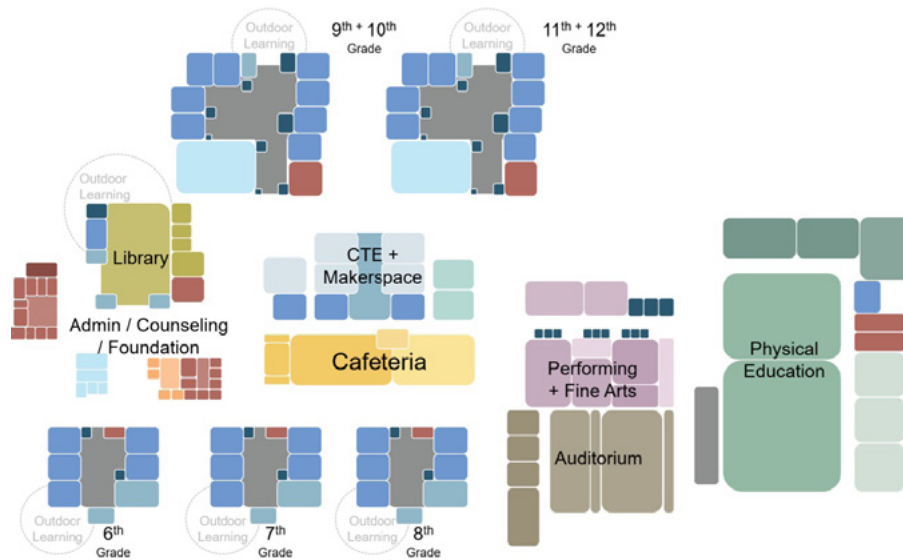
The facility design needed to support the role of “making” which is integrated throughout the school’s curriculum with hands-on learning opportunities in all grades and courses. Educational pathways of biomedical, engineering, and media technology for all students needed a home in the facility. Play, focus, confidence, mental health, physical health, math, science, exploration, and comfort were key considerations. Each of these were carefully balanced to determine how to best incorporate them individually and holistically. Adjacency planning created direct pathways between learning and collaboration areas.

Additional special features, all of which required close coordination between design team and contractor, use of visualization software and tools, and regular communication included:

- Adjustable size rooms
- Outdoor learning areas
- Multiple Makerspaces
- Bright and open collaborative areas for project-based learning
- Scholastic atmosphere that reflects a college environment



## Educational Environment



Choice provides a large role for learning and teaching throughout the school, allowing students and teachers to fully engage the modalities of learning, starting with the large commons welcoming students and staff as they enter the school. The commons acts as the central hub of the school, providing an active space throughout the day and connecting to the Media Resource Center, Makerspace wing, and each of the grade level neighborhoods.

Five neighborhoods serve the grade levels, each with its own open collaboration area and connection to outdoor learning space. Small group rooms in neighborhoods have everything from tables and chairs, to floor cushions and bean bags. Every neighborhood commons offers a plethora of acoustic and lighting experiences. Users have control of the lighting around these areas to adjust the scene throughout the day. Offering a breadth of options to support a conglomeration of learning styles with an ever-adapting variety of subjects requires an impressive assortment of spaces.

During the past decade, the flipped classroom model has become a more prevalent tool to combine technology and teaching in ways that empower students to engage in deeper subject analysis in the presence of their instructors and peers. Incorporating and accommodating this style of student engagement and teacher leadership was crucial to the success of the school's design.



## Educational Environment

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**The combination of large group collaboration spaces and small group or independent study areas provides the teachers with added capabilities to adapt learning environments and lesson plans within physical space to meet the needs of students individually.**

Serious and Play are mixed throughout the campus. Portals to the upstairs neighborhoods are seen beyond the commons and a quiet retreat is tucked under the stairs. Girls can choose to sit in louder areas or find nooks that offer greater acoustic absorption and overall quieter feel. Furniture supports the progressive and flexible learning environments with unique pieces capturing the spirit of innovation while standardized pieces help create a cohesive design.





## Educational Environment



The library space is a beautiful intersection of study and fun, representing important school values. The Media Resource Center includes a spiral slide from the open second floor study area, with a squishy turf landing area. A learning stair in the space supports an entire grade level for instruction or individual touchdown areas. Resources and refreshments are intermingled in the space with stacks of books, computers, and a coffee bar sharing space on the first floor.

**“ It’s a building, I feel,  
that has collaboration  
at its centerpoint.”**

**Shawn Mauser**  
Librarian, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders





# Educational Environment

## Adaptable and Flexible

The size of the commons and its design elements allow for sections of the space to be utilized for varying educational and social activities.

As the axis of the school, the central commons was designed to provide space and furniture options for groups from 1 to 200 and can host a whole grade level for lunch, one or more classes for a learning unit, and serve as a location for collaborative and independent work. The open commons area itself easily flexes from a large dining hall to an educational assembly room or a celebration venue with intentional capability to change or rearrange furniture in the space.

The design team used acoustics and volume to create areas that feel more cozy within the open

commons area (large overhead acoustic drums, filtered light through the tubes under the stairs, small platform with lowered ceiling and faux fireplace. All together in one massive room that can serve 200 and also feel intimate for a lunch of 12).

Varying sized classrooms open to each other and are adjacent to large common areas in the learning neighborhoods. Furniture supports lounge, group work and standing postures in the learning commons. Vision between the spaces connect Girls to the learning that occurs throughout the facility all day. Small conference or breakout rooms for quiet group or independent study are sprinkled in the neighborhoods, each with its own unique and inspirational graphic wallcoverings drawing on imagery reflecting local community pride or confidence building imagery.



# Physical Environment Impacts Fun and Function



The new facility is a flexible and adaptable learning environment composed of classroom neighborhoods, varying sized learning and activity spaces, and core curriculum areas such as P.E and athletics, fine arts, science, dining, and media center.

A senior loft concealed behind a star-punched metal panel wall, seen from the commons, gives the upper-level Girls a place of their own to assert their independence and express responsibility and respect for their campus. A secret, but visible nook under the learning stair invites students to enter and offers additional access to unique spaces.

Added elements of fun and play into the school environment were achieved through special features including the curved staircase in the main commons (designed to resemble the bouffant hair-style worn by the school's namesake and lovingly referred to as the StHair); fanciful and inspiring wall coverings in small breakout rooms; rocking chairs in the courtyards; basket swings on the reading porch; and a 2-story spiral slide in the library.





## Physical Environment



At the northeast corner of the site, the grade drops approximately 16 feet. The main level of the building follows the natural grade and steps down approximately 12 feet to the lower commons, library, Career and Technical Education (CTE) spaces, and kitchen. Exterior courtyards and service areas support these spaces. The library provides extended operating hours and can be accessed by students before and after school as well as by visitors during the weekend. In response to the site conditions, the library is situated on two levels.

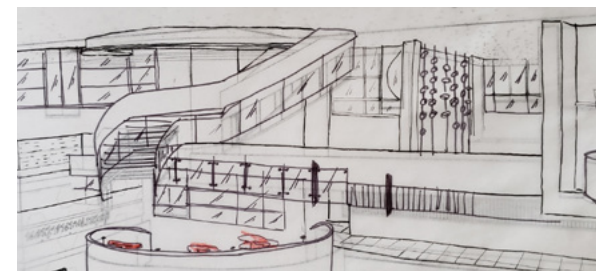
The learning stair can accommodate an entire grade level for instruction before students disperse across the library to use all its resources. Large acoustic cylinders also create different sound levels in the light filled, expansive commons. The spiral

slide in the library was a specific request from the students, who wanted to make sure there was an easy way for less mobile students to get down from the second floor in case of emergency. The acoustic clouds over this playful zone bring the outdoors in and provide a whimsical feel.

The core academic spaces on the northwest side of the facility open to collaborative areas. Learning Studios are strategically paired to allow for the use of operable walls to double room sizes. Middle School is on the main level and High School is on the upper level.

The college and career center is strategically located where it's not only easy access from the main commons, but intentionally on the path of travel to 6th -8th grade neighborhoods. Visibility and direct

access to the college and career center from the main commons emphasizes the school's focus on graduation, college access and completion. Design features such as the herringbone wood design elevate the college center as an exciting destination and help to Demystify and promote the path to college on day one of 6th grade.



## Physical Environment

The site plan design locates the building at the east edge of the site. The main entrance is on the north side (Panther Trail). Bus drop-off/pickup is located on the east side of the school to minimize cross traffic. Parking is distributed around the site.

Still, the school was planned and constructed with the surrounding neighborhood in mind and high levels of engagement with neighborhood stakeholders, including residents and business owners. Great care was put into how the new facade would interact with the residential and commercial buildings that surround the lot. The way that natural wood and accent materials were incorporated in the exterior was carefully designed to compliment the neighborhood where the school resides. A focus on native landscape plants that reduce irrigation needs, combined with intentional habitat preservation and creation contributes to the tranquility of outdoor learning areas and community spaces.



The exterior design of the building is a direct response to the feedback received from ARS staff, students, and community. The feedback indicated a preference for natural materials with a regional feel and rich textures, including pulling from Austin's Hill Country Architectural language. Using this input, the design team crafted the following philosophies for the physical environment:



### **Materials born from nature provide the girls a community that is Ann Richards School.**

The overall design is influenced by the regional architecture and materials. This gesture pays homage to a community rooted in place. Material choices include limestone, board formed concrete, corten and metal panels. Roofing consists of a combination of modified bitumen and sloped metal roofing. Drainage strategies will include roof drains, gutters, and downspouts.

### **Modern forms echo the exploration of bold solutions to global problems.**

The contemporary and collegiate building forms reflect the innovation and cultivation of revolutionary ideas occurring within the building envelope. The volumes and massing respect the proportions of the adjacent residential neighborhood.

### **Transparency without boundaries celebrates our leaders of tomorrow.**

Transparency throughout the building provides students, faculty, and staff connections to the exterior as well as connectivity to each other within the interior spaces, and showcases student learning throughout the building. Transparency suggests the absence of barriers with endless possibilities.





### From Local to Global

Overall, the building tells the students that they are welcome here. They had a hand in creating the space and a result of that process is visual representation that their ideas are valued. The curriculum at the Ann Richards School engages in project-based, experiential learning to enhance real-world application.

The textures and patterns used as part of the installation and throughout each academic neighborhood were uniquely selected with the staff and ARS interns to reflect that grade level. The patterns in the 6th grade neighborhood being the most free and wild, including colorful watercolor patterns. 7th grade starts to organize and sort through the wild (represented by fragmented colorful shapes), 8th grade is when they choose their pathway (demonstrated by doors), and 9th-10th grade they begin to put some pieces together and have information to share and inspire (signified by light bulbs).

The building's architecture and interior design speak to the larger context of our city and the world. When looking at the building, one can see elements of Austin's City Hall. The hierarchy and glimpse of spaces allow for an exploratory and engaging environment. While interior design elements, like the multi-ethnic wallpaper, offer a vision for equity and inclusion. The design successfully motivates students to look beyond the known and take on the world!

# Celebrated Project Outcomes

**Students at ARS love learning, have the desire to succeed, and care about the future of the world.** Learning and play are interwoven throughout ARS as part of the culture and are realized in the design and construction of the new facility. A program which led to high quality design through discussion and identification of goals and priorities, space characteristics (types, quantities, needs, and sizes), building organization and major adjacencies, and the influence of instructional pedagogies on architectural design, was accomplished. Ensuring that the community was included generated a lasting positive connection between the final product and a sense of respect for everyone's perspectives. All together, the state-of-the-art design delivers an environment that is comforting and inviting, fun and playful, empowering and confidence-building.

## Power Skills

The modernized building facilitates 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, connection, creativity, critical thinking, and cultural proficiency through flexible classroom spaces, breakout rooms, and making spaces. The design of the building supports flexibility and personalized learning in every space. With the connection of the Media Resource Center, makerspace, and art wing - projects and concepts are transferable from one class to the next.

## A Reimagined School and National Model

The stakeholder engagement and design process produced a facility that is uniquely adapted to the culture and vision of ARS. Incorporating concepts from higher education and open co-working spaces, the result is an exemplary campus focused on preparing young women to attend and graduate from college, commit to a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle, lead with courage and compassion, and solve problems creatively and ethically in support of our global community.

## Growth

The new facility's increased capacity means that up to 200 more students each year have space to learn with these unique and evolving instructional programs and technologies.

## Empowering Future Leaders and Embracing Community

ARS places a focus on personal development of the whole Girl—providing students with academic and enrichment opportunities that expand their horizons and give them tools to become confident and competent leaders, improve their communities and achieve their dream of graduating from college.

## Appreciation of Student Seniority on Campus

The new spaces for upperclass students have already given the younger Girls privileges to aspire to. They look forward to their opportunity to join the Senior Loft and make it their own. The art project in the entryway celebrates the entire journey that Girls travel during their time at the school, including growth and a victorious graduation. Through the design of grade level neighborhoods, the Girls enjoy spaces that grow and change with them, moving toward a more collegiate environment in the upper grades.

**“ They were constantly thinking of ways in which to get the Girls opinions on things, to make sure that they knew what was happening, to be involved with the design process.”**

**Kristina Waugh**

Principal, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders



## Results of the Process & Project



### Unique Curriculum Focus & Support of Modern Pedagogy

Designing a modernized environment which supported the stated project goals resulted in classroom neighborhoods tailored to each grade level, varying-sized learning spaces, multiple maker-spaces for hands-on learning and discovery, ubiquitous technology, a competitive gymnasium and soccer field/track and performing and fine arts spaces. The final program met the project goals, including being a 21st century learning environment, but it also pulled together a multitude of previously disparate spaces and functions that generated a certain amount of “coziness” and synergy.

### Sustainability

Sustainability was a key component of the AISD design guidelines for 2017 bond projects. Similarly, the values of ARS include making positive contributions to society and taking care of the environment. With this in mind, ARS was designed and built to high green building standards, resulting in a LEED Silver certification and a local Austin Energy Green Building Star rating. Some of the ways the project met the District goals in this area include:

- 29% energy savings compared to modeled baseline, achieved through energy efficient HVAC systems
- Daylight and occupancy sensors
- High-performing windows
- LED lighting
- 25% potable water saved indoors with water efficient plumbing fixtures including faucets, toilets and showers to reduce demand on the city’s water infrastructure.
- The school recycles and composts to further reduce landfill waste
- 59% potable water saved outdoors by using native and adapted water-smart plants and efficient irrigation equipment
- 81% of project construction waste diverted from landfills, totaling 9,237,948 pounds
- Low and non-emitting materials selected to ensure healthy indoor air quality
- Many of the building materials are made with recycled and Texas sourced components

## Results of the Process & Project

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### Modernization & Retention

The ARS project is a flagship example of the district's efforts. It represents a model in 21st century learning design, supporting personalized learning, STEM curriculum, and the latest technologies. The facility was designed to keep pace with evolving curriculum, technology, and population needs.

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**“ This is a school built  
for the next 100 years.  
A place where students can find  
their Super Powers and change  
the world.”**

**Kristina Waugh**  
Principal, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders

As an urban school district, AISD faces challenges to student retention as families move outside of the city due to increased living costs. Competing against a number of surrounding school districts and private schools, AISD recognizes the importance of modern campuses to attract students and teachers. As a high achieving school that accepts students from all over the district, the new ARS facility attracts students from a wide geographic area. It provides a learning environment and resources that may not be present at the middle and high schools the Girls are zoned for. The opportunity to attend ARS gives students and families an incentive to stay within AISD.

The district also faces challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. As a model school, ARS has prioritized teacher empowerment, learning, and collaboration to attract and retain the best educators. The new school facility eliminates many of the environmental challenges the teachers faced in the old building, including HVAC problems, leaks, and rodent infestations. Beyond creating a comfortable, modern environment, the school incorporates a teacher sojourn room, dedicated staff porch, and a professional library space all to facilitate teacher empowerment and collaboration.



## Results of the Process & Project

### A STEM Academy for the Entire Community

The Ann Richards School is a choice school for girls throughout the Austin Independent School District. The student population is required, by its charter, to mirror the demographic makeup of the District, thus supporting a very diverse population from across Austin. The expansion of the campus, with the modernization, offered the opportunity for increased population, taking the class size capacity to 150 students per grade level. With a 100% graduation rate, and a curriculum that focuses extensively on college acceptance, this increase in size provides a direct path for more first-generation college students in Austin. At ARS, the mission is to ensure that students are not only admitted to college but are also equipped to graduate from the college of their choice.

The nature of the school's curriculum promotes multiple STEM pathways. From design through construction of the new ARS building, students were engaged in the process by participating in design charrettes, user focus groups, and internships with the architecture firm and contractor.



*Allowing the community and our girls be part of the design process was amazing! The girls were able to dream of a school that would serve their needs and be timeless for years to come. They were able to see their ideas on paper and then watch the building come to life. They were involved in every aspect of the building process. No better opportunity to see themselves in the role of architect, engineer, project manager, designer.*

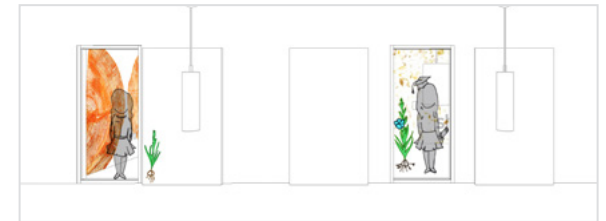
**Kristina Waugh**

Principal, Ann Richards School  
for Young Women Leaders

## Results of the Process & Project

In another important component of the internship, Junior Class interns worked closely with the interiors team on the project and actually provided the design graphics for a special feature in all the grade level 'neighborhoods.' Students, interior designers and local artists came together during this project to create a custom installation at the main entry of the school that captures the spirit of campus life for students life span and spirit of a student at ARS.

The wallcovering and sculpture were done by local artists that integrated and incorporated community motifs and elements, in addition to the students' neighborhood graphics. The Girls tour all visitors through this installation and are able to tell the story because it is uniquely theirs, created and lived by them.





## Results of the Process & Project

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### Design Inspired

The design team created numerous areas of respite and reflection for the Girls at ARS to complement the daily interactions and collaboration of large and small group study. One intentional area for such breaks is located under a main staircase in the central commons. Natural light filters through playful tubes incorporated as a design element. The Girls initiated an unexpected, but heart-warming, purpose for these tubes, using them as a conduit for leaving notes of inspiration to each other.

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### Unexpected Outcomes

The Architecture/Engineering/Construction (A/E/C) industry is often a male dominated field. The design and construction teams for this project defied that norm and from the start, the Girls and the staff of ARS saw role models and engaged with female professionals, including women firm leaders, architects, designers, engineers, project managers and more who were intentionally selected and actively involved in this project. These women provided a tangible example for the girls at the School that women can indeed thrive in STEM related careers. During their internship, the Girls worked alongside team members in their day-to-day meetings, design charrettes, site walks and plan reviews for a full week of career exposure. They were given opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback representing the needs and desires of students, adding value that will benefit students for years to come.



### Visual Impact on the Neighborhood

The Ann Richards School provides a keypoint in the urban fabric of this South Austin neighborhood. Updated from the aged, multi-faceted campus architecture of the 1950s, the new school provides a beacon of revitalization and unification for the neighborhood. In a playful yet sophisticated way, the design addressed scale, materiality, and massing working between the adjacent office, multifamily, and single family structures.

One of the most dramatic visual changes was a result of the reorientation of the school on the site. Not only did the new building look different, it was in a completely different place, with new traffic patterns, entrance and exit points, student and bus drop-off locations.

The design of the facade was thoughtful in its approach to use of materials, including natural wood, stone and metal that blended important local elements in this urban setting that was surrounded by families and businesses. This complimentary approach and recognition of existing in harmony is evident in the design not just of the building, but in the landscape choices and more.

## Results of the Process & Project

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The Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders dedicates itself to prepare young women to attend and graduate from college, commit to a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle, lead with courage and compassion, and solve problems creatively and ethically in support of our global community.

This project created a campus to execute on this mission for generations to come.

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