

## IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH DESIGN

Gaylaird Christopher, AIA, President, Architecture for Education Incorporated

### Project

Design a New High School in East Los Angeles, Los Angeles Unified School District, California. This project will be a new high school on a small, sloped, urban site. The design will explore the capacity for how architecture can inspire and support the learning of each and every student at this high school.

### Intention

The program will engage design skills ranging from urban and master planning, building design, and developing learning environments and outdoor social spaces. What makes up the ideal learning environment? How can architecture address the overwhelming scale of a standard high school? What is the role and responsibility of a New High School in this dense neighborhood of East Los Angeles?

### Program

High school for 2,300 students divided into 5 small learning communities including classrooms, performing arts spaces, gymnasium, library media center, multi-purpose room, food service, administration and various support services, parking, and outdoor sports fields. The 213,000 SF program sits on a 12-acre site.

### Background

This project comes from an actual Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) project that is currently in design. LAUSD is involved in the largest school construction program in history. In the next 5 to 10 years, over 200 new schools will be constructed with over \$8 billion being spent on either new construction or renovations. Philosophically, LAUSD is also transforming itself from a district comprised of many large, impersonal institutions to a district celebrating smaller scale, autonomous schools. Educational research has found that school size, more so than any other factor, has the strongest correlation to student achievement.

The goal in ELAHS will be to find creative solutions to break up the large 2,300-student high school into five "small learning communities." Also of significant relevance is how the design solutions address the urban fabric of a tight community, the growing thoroughfare of Caesar Chavez Avenue, and a hillside site that has up to 40 feet in sloped topography.

### Process

The approach will balance the big picture and the intimate picture. We will begin by exploring the details of how best to configure the ideal classroom, and how these learning environments are combined to create the small learning communities. Simultaneously, the studio will explore the overall site goals of a demanding urban setting. The end result will merge the small intricacies of the ideal classroom, the medium scale of the learning communities, and the large design of the entire high school, and how it addresses the city of Los Angeles.

This studio will include participation from a number of guest advisors and critics: LAUSD educators and design leaders, advisors from USC School of Education, and from Architecture for Education Incorporated, Dennis Roney, Miriam Grethel and Design Leader Anthony Poon.

