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JOHN S. MCCAIN III ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

New elementary school's design takes off with metal panel exterior

While "innovation" might not be the first word that comes to mind when considering elementary school design, a recently completed project in the Phoenix suburb of Buckeye, Ariz., brings this idea front and center. Designers organized their plans for the John S. McCain III Elementary School around the grade-range learning centers, rather than strict, grade-level classrooms. Their conceptual theme, Taking Flight, reaches back to the life of namesake Senator and former fighter pilot John McCain and to the inspiration they hope the school will provide to students reaching forward to their own futures. The futuristic exterior design, with extensive use of metal wall panels, helps emphasize the forward-thinking goal.

Instead of hallways lined with classrooms, the new school is designed to house three different learning communities for grades K-2, 3-5 and 6-8, each with its own maker spaces and shared breakout areas. "It's sort of the first of its kind, especially for the district," says Kasey Josephs, project manager with Orcutt Winslow, the project's architects. Traditional walls have been replaced with glass partitions that can open up to surrounding areas. "It's all about transparency and inclusion and providing different spaces for different learners."

The 95,000-sq.-ft. project came together quickly, with construction beginning November 2020 and wrapping up just nine months later, in time to welcome students for the 2021 school year. Opting for tilt-up concrete exterior walls helped support the aggressive schedule, and the material provides a strong visual foundation for the building's first floor. The second floor, home to the middle-school-age 6-8 grade programs, features a mix of metal panel profiles that Josephs sees as suited to the educational growth seen during those years. "They have a look of a more advanced technology."

Installers with Phoenix-based Global Roofing Group specified Petersen for the project's metal cladding because of the availability and range of systems the company offers. This range was important, given the final project incorporated four different Petersen profiles in a mix of solid and perforated styles. Approximately 22,000 sq. ft. of Petersen's PAC-CLAD panels were used, including 7.2, Snap-Clad, Flush and M-36 profiles.

In the school's form-follows-function design, each of the profiles plays a role in defining the building's varying masses, according to Josephs. "We had a purpose for each one," she says. "Each had their purpose and work with the volumes they're on, so it makes sense design-wise."

For example, the 7.2 corrugated panels in Award Blue take the lead in defining the building's second floor; solid M-36 panels in Stone White helps the two-story projecting entrance way create a visual pop; and perforated versions in the same finish allow sunlight to pass through the polycarbonate wall lining the sky bridge. Flush panels in black help define transitions; "We really wanted it to look like a void," Josephs says.

While the project wasn't large in scope for Global Roofing Group's installers, its timing did pose challenges. "The amount of work and the general contractor's schedule to deliver to the client was extremely tight," says Shawn Wood, the company's director of metal. "We had to supply around 15 employees to meet the timeline."

The added efforts by all involved have paid off in a finished project with which all involved are proud. "I think everyone's really happy with it – you can see it from really far away, so it has an iconic presence in the community," Josephs says.

Wood agrees with this positive assessment. "The project is absolutely beautiful – this should win some awards."

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Petersen, a Carlisle company, manufactures PAC-CLAD architectural metal cladding systems in multiple gauges of steel and aluminum. PAC-CLAD products include hidden- and exposed-fastener wall panels, standing seam roof panels, flush- and reveal-joint wall panels, vented or solid soffit panels, perforated metal, coil and flat sheet, composite panels, column covers, plus fascia and coping. All are available in a Kynar-based 70% PVDF Fluropon coating in 46 standard colors and 16 wood grain finishes that include a

30-year finish warranty. Most colors meet LEED requirements and are rated by the Cool Roof Rating Council. Custom colors and weathertightness warranties are offered. BIM and CAD documents are available for most products. Founded in 1965, Petersen's facilities are located in Illinois, Georgia, Texas, Maryland, Arizona and Washington. For information on the complete line of Petersen's PAC-CLAD metal products call 800-PAC-CLAD, visit pac-clad.com or write to info@pac-clad.com.

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