

A4LE PROJECT AWARDS

TRANSFORMATION

SOUTHEAST RALEIGH MAGNET HS GREAT HALL

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making the most of \$150,000 Federal Grant and a construction time-frame of a six-weeks during summer break, this architectural renovation consists of subtle but impactful insertions and additions. The existing entry hall was poorly lit, dull, and lacked spaces for students to sit, collaborate, and congregate. Trophy cases, lined the perimeter of the hall, in areas that could be better utilized. The principal had a vision for a GREAT HALL that would expand an image of athletic achievement into an image of collegiate collaboration. Now 1500 students have a comfortable place to sit, work, and exchange ideas.

Each seat in the GREAT HALL is highly coveted for collaboration, socializing and comfort. The material palette consists of cost-effective elements that bring light and warmth to the once dimly lit space. Perforated metal, led strip lights, maple plywood and writable desk surfaces are used intentionally to create a unified architectural composition. Given the budget constraints, the design reused existing elements in the space. New steel is grafted onto the existing stair and provides the framework for one large light fixture in the space. Existing masonry openings are re-purposed from trophy cases to collaborative spaces.



2 | SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

The principal provided the goals for the project and inspired us to create a welcoming, exciting and collaborative learning space that would represent the image of the school and the academic pathways. She wanted the Great Hall to feel like a collegiate space to inspire the students to prepare for college and reach beyond a high school diploma.

The purpose and vision of this theme is to provide all Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School (SRMHS) students with authentic university experiences in order to build the knowledge, academic skills, and vision necessary for them to attend university and pursue the future of their choice.

Through the university partnerships and community relationships that Southeast Raleigh Magnet engages in, students experience a relevant and engaging education that develops their abilities to collaborate, communicate effectively, and think critically and creatively.

Spaces in the new great hall embody these goals, and are used by 1500 students each day. There are spaces to sit, collaborate, relax and have informal conversations. The teachers can have small group meetings and also cross-disciplinary conversations.

The project budget was **\$150,000** (Federal Grant)



3 | SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND / OR ENGAGEMENT

The design process was a true collaboration between the design team, the principal, magnet teachers, and County planners. There were multiple sessions that the students participated in to give feedback and learn from the process.

There were many choices involved with reusing a building and working with existing conditions and it was important that all users of the project were enrolled in the decision-making process so everyone understood why we made design choices.

Given the budget and time-frame for construction, decisions were made quickly and input from multiple stakeholders was a critical component to the process.







4 | EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN





**EXISTING
TROPHY CASES**



**NEW
COLLABORATIVE
SPACES**



5 | RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

The new Great Hall at Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School creates a sense of refuge and community for the 1500 students that use it each day. Students and teachers spend hours of the day in school environments. The feel of the space is so critical to encouraging positive learning environments. This project creates a “living room” for the school. The new Great Hall is bright, inviting and the warm wood accents demarcate the new places to sit and relax.

In the old space, there was no comfortable place to sit. Students would sit on the floor or just pass through the dark space each day. This new collegiate and collaborative image of the school is a welcome one. Now the seats are highly coveted. Students eat, work, relax and have impromptu conversations. The seating nooks allow students to feel secure in small conversations of pairs, while having a visual connection to the larger space.

Between classes, during lunch breaks and after school students have a celebratory sanctuary space, where they always know they are welcome and part of a larger community of the school.

6 | PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

The feel of the space is so critical to encouraging positive learning environments. This project creates a “living room” for the school. The new Great Hall is bright, inviting and the warm wood accents demarcate the new places to sit and relax.

The context was an existing building and the goal was to be creative with the existing conditions to create the feeling of a new space. Design is possible at any scale and budget.

One of the most sustainable approaches to design is to reuse an existing building or space. These design interventions had low impact on the overall building, but greatly increased the design value of the space.

The design strategy was to reuse the existing steel structure of the stair and turn it into a light fixture. The light levels in the space were very low, and the new stair lighting and overhead light fixtures, create a brighter more welcoming space. We chose LED fixtures to increase the overall energy efficiency and not increase the overall electrical load.

The overall strategy was to make small changes that would have a big design impact. The goal of the project was to create a space that felt happy, healthy and welcoming to the students to improve their overall daily experience at school.

