Since the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched the $20 billion New School Construction and Modernization Program in 1997, many Los Angeles, CA, schools have undergone dramatic upgrades and transformed into facilities with modern architectural designs. With so many schools being overhauled or completely rebuilt, architects and contractors began thinking outside the box to make each structure unique. One such building is the William R. Anton Elementary School, which features a four-story curved column comprised of custom designed and manufactured T16-L siding panels at its entrance.

Shannon Haber, facilities spokesperson for the LAUSD, said the staff and students at Anton Elementary are delighted with the new facility. The sleek, curved panels are a beacon that announces the school’s entrance. They are an inexpensive way to give the school an added dash of architectural flair. Architects at Nadel Architects, Inc.—the architecture firm that designed the building—were challenged with creating a modern facility that was conducive to learning and meeting the needs of students and educators while also maximizing the potential of the sloping property that the school sits on.

“IT’s a sloping site, and the planning of it dictated the architectural expressions,” explained Gregory Serrao, AIA Public Division Director with Nadel Architects. “The vertical element announces the entrance to the building.”

While brainstorming designs for the school, Serrao said the architects knew immediately they wanted ribbed metal paneling near the entrance and knew just where to turn for the job. Metal Sales Manufacturing Corporation, a top national manufacturer of metal panels, was commissioned to provide the panels, which included 1,260 square feet of curved 20-gauge G-90 galvanized...
Kynar 500 T-16 L siding panels near the entrance of the school.

“It gives some relief from the stucco, concrete block, or brick,” Serrao said. “And the cost of it is manageable. It creates some interest in terms of reflecting light.”

The champagne gold panels were custom manufactured by Metal Sales to fit the design concept Nadel Architects envisioned. Dan McAleer said the panels weren’t anything that could be found in the manufacturer’s catalog but he is proud that Metal Sales was able to manufacture them to precisely match the design the architects were looking for. The curved horizontal lines on the column provide a visually stunning and attractive element to the school’s entrance. The column’s ribs were created at 90-degree angles, compared to the 45-degree angle ribs that are typical of the T-16L panels, according to McAleer. McAleer said the 90-degree bends create a bold appearance. “We’re the only people in the business who make them that way,” he said. Metal Sales contracted with Curveline, Inc., of Ontario, CA, which curved the panels in accordance with the architectural plans. R & J Sheet Metal of Huntington Beach, CA, installed the panels.

“Before this project, this kind of shape was basically unknown to the industry,” McAleer said. “But we’re happy to customize our products to meet the requirements of what the architect or contractors are looking for.”

Prior to the completion of the new school in September 2009, students attended the nearby Hammel Street Elementary, which was built 92 years ago. The Hammel Elementary property now serves as the site for a new LAUSD high school.

Haber said the school district could not have asked for a better design for the new Anton Elementary facility. Anton’s 1,176 students are now treated to a learning environment that is safe, modern, unique, and aesthetically enjoyable. Due to the size and slope of the 3.2-acre site that Anton Elementary occupies, the building was designed vertically, ranging from two stories to four stories, with a parking garage underneath. Serrao said the curved four-story T-16L panels break up the vanilla of the brick and plaster building and declare it a contemporary learning facility that will serve the next generation of kindergarten through fifth grade students who are being educated in the school district.

Metal Sales also provided 10,240 square feet of uncurved 20-gauge G-90 galvanized Kynar 500 T-16L champagne gold panels that were used to enclose an external stairwell of the building. Serrao said Nadel wanted to create consistency by using the same paneling, but decided not to curve the stairwell panels to give the stairwell enclosure a unique architectural accent.

Serrao said the T16-L panels were chosen for the project not just because of their breathtaking aesthetic appeal, but also because of the durability, low cost, easy installation, and ability to be painted in the future. “Everybody is concerned about cost, but from our experience we felt that the metal would stand up over the years,” he said. “You’re creating a lot of interest without paying a lot of money.”

Serrao said suggestions were made to replace the T16-L panels with a different metal paneling, but the architects at Nadel insisted that the ribbed panels from Metal Sales were the most economical product. He added that different panels would not have worked nearly as well with the architecture of the building and Nadel’s vision for the facility. Nadel has worked with Metal Sales previously for their metal paneling needs on other projects, and Serrao said he is always impressed with Metal Sales’ high quality and dedication to the details of the design.

Anton Elementary was constructed in accordance with the Collaborative for High Performance Schools standards and features sustainable features, including passive solar shading to reduce utility costs. The panels provided by Metal Sales are recyclable and contribute to the school’s environmentally friendly elements. The structure met the Pacific Gas & Energy “Savings by Design” performance standard and exceeded California’s Title 24 efficiency standards.

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