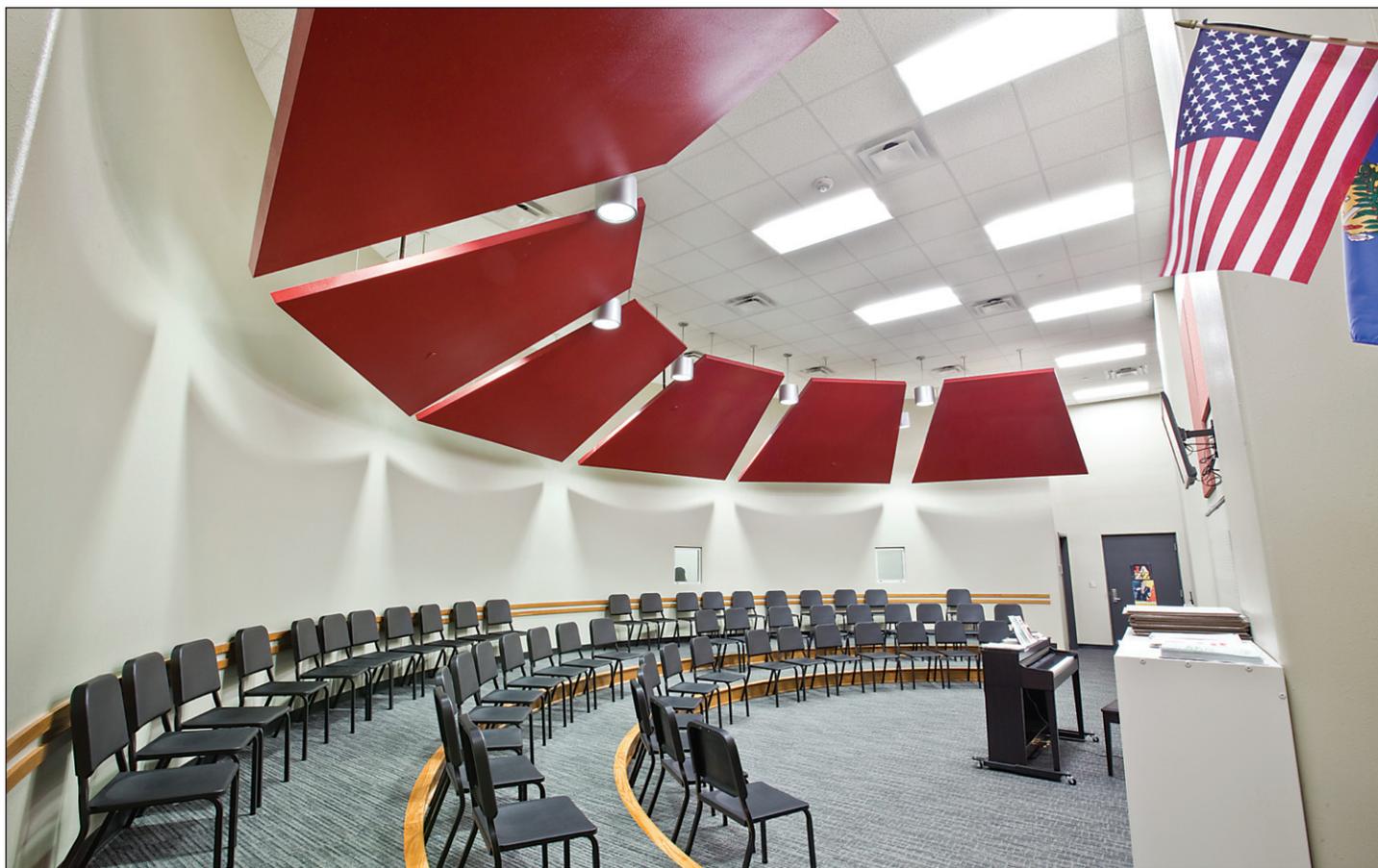


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A safe room at Canyon Ridge Elementary School at 3600 S. Sara Rd. in Oklahoma City. *COURTESY PHOTO*

## Seminole State College getting safe room

OKLAHOMA CITY (JR) – A safe room designed for 500 people is under construction at Seminole State College in Seminole.

When the safe room is completed in a couple of months, MA+ Architecture will have completed 15 Oklahoma safe rooms with combined capacity for more than 8,000 people.

“If we were to use every one of our saferooms at once, we would have room for over 8,300 people,” said Gary Armbruster a principal architect with Oklahoma City-based MA+ Architecture. “That’s a lot of lives protected.”

Armbruster is one of only three architects in Oklahoma recognized as a certified educational facility planner (CEFP), a mark of distinction in the educational facility planning profession.

Armbruster served on Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb’s committee on school security.

“You can’t design a building today without taking the modern threats that face us into account,” he said. “We have security issues as well as weather issues to address to keep people safe,” he said.

The safe rooms designed by MA+ Architecture are above ground and surround classrooms with 1-foot-thick reinforced concrete. They are equipped with special ventilation and have specially designed tornado-proof doors.

The firm has completed projects at Creek Elementary and Canyon Ridge Elementary School for Mustang Public Schools and is in process with Canadian Valley Technology Center in Chickasha and El Reno in installing each with an emergency safe room.

“We need only look at our campus in El Reno to see the damage that could occur and the value of a safe room,” said Greg Winters, Canadian Valley superintendent. “We are committed to making our campuses the safest in the country.”

The cost of extra protection is always an issue. “The additional cost is, of course, dependent on the size and scope of the safe room,” said Armbruster. “However, it usually occupies about 15 percent of the final project total.”

Plans are being evaluated to equip facilities at other universities with safe rooms in their upcoming construction.

“We’ve been including safe rooms in schools since the 1980s with projects at Clinton Public Schools,” Armbruster said.