

## Architect tackles school challenges

BY DAVID PAGE

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**MUSTANG** – When architect Gary Armbruster started a \$25 million project to redesign and expand Mustang High School, he faced a basic problem: combining six existing buildings and 152,000 square feet of new construction into a single unit with a common entrance.

“One of our biggest concerns was security,” said the principal with MA+ Architecture of Oklahoma City. “Today you have to have one point of entry.”

An added problem was keeping the school with 2,200 students open during construction.

Work financed by a bond issue started in late 2009 and is scheduled to be completed late this year. The result is an education center with new construction and remodeled buildings combined into one building and designed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification to the extent possible, Armbruster said.

Materials and equipment were selected for long life and low maintenance. The design includes cost-saving elements.

“We turned the former main entrance into the media center to save money so our dollars went a lot further,” Armbruster said.

Energy-efficient lighting was used – 73 of 75 new classrooms have natural light.

“We replaced a very inefficient lighting system with a very efficient system,” he said.

Teachers can dim or increase lighting in individual classrooms as needed.

For floors, terrazzo and carpet squares were used.

“We choose terrazzo because the floors will have longer life and be effi-



Architect Gary Armbruster stands in the hallway at Mustang High School.

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cient to maintain,” Armbruster said. “With carpet squares, if there is a spill you can replace one square. It will wear better and look better.”

Aluminum was used for door frames and railings for low maintenance, and no painting is needed.

“All hallways have low-maintenance materials and do not have to be painted,” he said.

Unlike traditional high schools, for security reasons there are no lockers.

Savings are also expected from the heating and air-conditioning system.

“Before, each building had its own heating and air-conditioning system,” he said. “Now there is one system.”

The redesigned and expanded school has amenities for students, including study spaces throughout the building.

The new lunchroom is open-concept

with added service lines.

“Statistics show that if a student cannot be served in two or three minutes they will not eat,” Armbruster said. “They would rather socialize than eat.”

The open lunchroom also serves as a large open lobby for the auditorium. Before the redesign, the entrance to the auditorium was from the outside into a small lobby.

The auditorium has new seats, floor, lighting and sound system.

Armbruster is also involved with the renovation of Capitol Hill High School in the Oklahoma City Public Schools system. He has worked with other school projects, including the new event center, health and wellness center and student center renovation and addition at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford.