

# Carroll Bell Elementary

CASE STUDY



**CARROLL BELL ELEMENTARY REDESIGNS CLASSROOMS  
FOR MORE ACTIVE AND ENGAGING LEARNING**



Moving into a new building gave Carroll Bell Elementary School teachers the perfect opportunity to reimagine their classrooms. The new larger spaces, equipped with colorful and flexible furniture from School Specialty, support more active and engaging learning experiences for students—and students are learning more effectively as a result.

**“THE STUDENTS ARE MORE COMFORTABLE. THEY’RE ALLOWED TO BE KIDS. ... THE NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS ARE VERY STIMULATING. STUDENTS LOVE COMING TO SCHOOL NOW, AND OUR ATTENDANCE IS UP.”**

CARROLL BELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, TALEEN BLOOM

The former building housing Carroll Bell Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas, was an old-fashioned schoolhouse that Harlandale Independent School District officials kept adding onto. Recognizing that this wasn’t a sustainable solution, the district passed a \$17.7 million bond measure in 2015 to build a brand-new facility, which opened in fall 2018.

The new modern building features larger classrooms, more open spaces, plenty of natural lighting, and new technology such as classroom projectors that automatically shut off.

Constructing a new school gave Carroll Bell educators the chance to reimagine what they wanted their classrooms to look like. “We asked teachers how they wanted the space to look and what they needed,” says Principal Taleen Bloom, “and then School Specialty helped us meet those needs.”

With input from teachers, school and district leaders completely redesigned and refurnished the learning spaces for prekindergarten through first grade to support more active and engaging learning. “Because we have larger classrooms, we were able to design the spaces differently,” she explains.

### SUPPORTING BETTER LEARNING

Flexibility is a key aspect of the classrooms’ new design. The furniture is on casters so that it can be moved around the room easily. Tables can easily be arranged into different configurations to support many types of activities, as well as groupings of various sizes. This makes each classroom a multipurpose learning space that can be set up in different ways, depending on the teacher’s learning objectives.

Comfort and choice are also prominent features. The rooms’ computer tables are height-adjustable to match the needs of students. There are seating options that allow students to rock back and forth or bounce up and down, so they can fidget when they are restless and still focus on their learning. There are also both hard and soft seating options, giving students choices in where they’d like to work so that they can be most productive.

“The students are more comfortable. They’re allowed to be kids,” Bloom says. “The chairs enable them to move around, which helps them burn excess energy.”

School leaders were very deliberate about their use of color in these spaces. Bright colors are featured in all of the furnishings, and the tables and chairs are color-coded by grade level. This made setting up the classrooms before school opened simpler, while also giving students a sense of identity.





There are functional touches in the design as well. For instance, the surfaces of the tables and storage cabinet doors allow students to write on them with dry-erase markers that wipe right off. This gives students an opportunity to work out their ideas creatively, wherever they happen to be in the room.

“We love the new furniture!” a kindergarten teacher gushes. “We are able use the tables as whiteboards to teach. Students enjoy writing on them and then wiping them off.”

### PERSONALIZED SERVICE

School Specialty was a key partner throughout the process, consulting on the design of the classrooms and ensuring that Carroll Bell had everything it needed to furnish and equip the new school building.

“The personalized service we received from School Specialty was a major benefit,” Bloom says. “We had a dedicated representative to assist in answering our questions and checking on the status of items. She always responded quickly and was very attentive to our needs.”

This timely, personalized service was a big help in moving into the new building before the school year began. “We had a tight deadline to meet, with only a few days to get up and running,” Bloom says. “Our sales representative, Robin Wilburn, helped us make sure kids were in their seats on the first day of school.”

District officials also appreciated the fact that they could order all of their needs—including not just the furniture but also supplies—from the same company. “That was one of the main reasons we chose School Specialty,” she observes. “They offered everything we needed.”



With help from School Specialty, Carroll Bell Elementary has transformed its early learning classrooms into vibrant, dynamic spaces that support more active and engaging learning—with comfort, choice, flexibility, and functionality at the heart of the design.

“The new learning environments are very stimulating,” Bloom concludes. “Students love coming to school now, and our attendance is up.”

