



Isleta Elementary School

Located on a hilltop site with 270 degree views, the Isleta Elementary School was designed to replace the Isleta Pueblo's existing school which was outdated and too small for the current population. The new school was designed as a reflection of the Isleta culture and incorporates many design features that tie it to the site and the customs of the people. It accommodates over 300 students from kindergarten through sixth grade in a shell of 65,000 square feet.

While views are available in most every direction, the site is bordered on the west by Interstate 25. The noise from this highway was mitigated by orienting the classroom blocks perpendicular to it and by placing the gymnasium so that it not only blocks the sound but creates a courtyard for the campus. This courtyard is developed in a way that expresses the layout of the pueblo and its relationship to the land and the Rio Grande river in miniature. The river itself takes the form of a drainage swale that directs roof drainage away from the school to gardens that the children plant themselves, tying them back to the land and the crops grown by their ancestors.

Many sustainable design practices are evident in the school, all used as opportunities to teach the students about energy conservation and care in using the earth's resources. Three cisterns that capture rainwater are placed within the main courtyard with valves the students can control to water gardens that they plant. Classrooms are oriented to mitigate direct sunlight while allowing daylighting in each. All classrooms incorporate operable windows that use high performance glazing that complements the increased thermal insulation of the walls and building envelope.

Within the building the plan separates the younger children from the older with the Administration area in between. Each wing of classrooms incorporates a different interior design scheme, each drawing on the agricultural tradition of the pueblo. The design palette for the younger children represents the time of year for planting, while the older children are surrounded by colors representing the harvest. These ideas are reinforced with lighting that signifies the migration of birds south or north that coincides with these two seasons. The library and language classrooms provide space for the pueblo elders to teach these concepts to the children and reinforce the lessons of the classroom and building.

This project was achieved using a design-build fast-track process that allowed the construction of the project to begin before the design of the project was complete. Through careful coordination and cooperation between the contractor, the Pueblo, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and



Dekker/Perich/Sabatini the project has been completed quickly. Not only did this method allow for a school opening earlier that would otherwise have been possible, but it also allowed construction costs to be saved by beginning that phase earlier in the process.

Location: Pueblo of Isleta, NM

Cost: \$10.54 million

Size: 65,000sf on 15.4 acre site, K-6 w /310 student capacity,

Completion: November 2006



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