Awards

Council for Educational Facility Planners Institute (CEFPI) Merit Award, 2006

Association of General Contractors and New Mexico Business Journal, Best Buildings, Top Winner Exteriors, 2006

Ernest Stapleton & Maggie M. Cordova Elementary Schools

Designing 2 new elementary schools in Rio Rancho presented an opportunity to make a statement about the identity of this young, growing city. Technology companies such as Intel form the core of local industry and are a source of both employment and pride for the city. This emphasis on technology and focus towards the future provided the foundation for the material and pattern choices at the new schools.

Both schools incorporate steel sunshades, sleek glass and metal infill panels on the exterior, balanced with a masonry structural skin. Inside the buildings, wayfinding is aided by geometric color compositions which are more sophisticated and three-dimensional than is typical for elementary school patterning. These wayfinding colors provide connections between the exterior entries and interior classroom nodes, linking the floors, walls and skylights at each node to create a functional yet playful splash of color.

Within the classrooms, teaching walls are built in to provide generous storage, including a personal wardrobe cabinet for the teacher, as well as a media cabinet to house the TV and other media equipment. Six sliding white boards hide the storage, provide ample teaching surfaces and double for use as projection screens. The gym includes a raised platform stage and is connected to the adjacent cafeteria through an operable partition wall. This allows the two spaces to be used as a single large space for events and performances. Music and art classrooms are located directly off the main lobby to showcase the strength of these programs, which are a source of pride and recruitment within the district.

The New Ernest Stapleton Elementary replaces an existing school campus on a nearby site that was comprised entirely of metal modular buildings. Maggie M. Cordova Elementary is an entirely new school that was designed in a rapidly growing area of the city. Both schools are identical in design and layout, but were given different color schemes and entry canopy designs to add unique individual character. The schools were designed to provide simple circulation and good daylighting for a population of 800 students. The floor plans were organized with a central core and angled classroom wings shelter the outdoor play areas from sun and wind. The site design focused on separating pedestrian, bus and drop-off traffic ensuring safety and easy circulation and divides the play areas into appropriate locations for playground versus multi-purpose and ball fields. Roof runoff is directed

towards the xeriscape plantings rather than the playing fields to reduce irrigation and ensure year-round use.

The schools were designed and bid as a single package in order to streamline the project schedule and take advantage of construction cost savings.

Location: Rio Rancho, NM
Size: 76,182sf each
Completion: July 2005

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