



## T'siya Elementary and Middle School

Located a mile north of the Pueblo of Zia on a mesa with a view of Sandia Peak, T'siya Elementary and Middle School replaces the Pueblo's original K-6 school. The original school is outdated and overcrowded; the new facility will allow the Pueblo to accommodate 156 students up to the eighth grade.

The design of the school centers on a circular plaza, intended to mirror the Pueblo's main plaza. This outdoor space can be used for community gatherings and dances, as well as an outdoor teaching area. It faces Sandia Peak and is paved with colors that mark the four points of the compass, recognizing the colors associated with those directions.

The focal point of the plaza is a pair of towers. They are situated in such a way that at sunrise on either solstice, a line of light appears between the towers, marking specific lines across the plaza. The elders of the Zia culture continue to observe the progress of the sun throughout the year as a way to mark the change of seasons. Patterns such as these will serve as a platform from which the elders can teach the children about their culture.

The plaza divides the school into elementary school and middle school areas. Pre-kindergarten through fifth grade is located with the library, administration spaces and an elders' room. This room is a place for tribal elders to teach the students about their culture and for bilingual education in English and Keres, the Pueblo's native language. It is situated next to a secondary outdoor plaza that brings light into the classroom corridor and acts as a staging area for the main plaza during tribal dances and events.

The materials and colors of the building, both inside and out, were chosen to recall the traditional Pueblo buildings and how they were decorated. Some of the exterior walls are also patterned in a fashion similar to native pottery, which is typically painted within a consistent set of colors and patterns.

As the largest building on the Pueblo, the school represents a crossroads between the Pueblo's history and its future. It realizes this representation by integrating both Zia culture and modern technology, including an integrated fiber-optic computer network. The outdoor plaza and giant sundial are excellent examples of how the learning environment for students can be enhanced through architecture and can also teach students about themselves and their culture.

**Location:** Zia Pueblo, NM

**Size:** 44,425sf/10 acres

**Completion:** 2002

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