



Helen Keller Elementary School

Kirkland, WA

New Construction/Addition Entire School/Campus Building

BLRB Architects
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DESIGN TEAM

Tom Bates, FAIA, Principal-in-Charge
Lee Fenton, AIA, Project Manager
Dave Pool, AIA, Project Architect
Ben Ferguson, AIA, Project Designer
David Boileau, AIA, Job Captain/
Construction Admin.

OWNER/CLIENT

Lake Washington School District
Redmond, WA
Dr. Traci Pierce, Superintendent
425/936-1257

KEY STATS

Grades Served: K-5
Capacity: 550 students
Size of Site: 9 acres
Building Area: 56,528 sq. ft.
Building Volume: 1.1 million cu. ft.
Space per Student: 103 sq. ft.
Cost per Student: \$32,291
Square Foot Cost: \$314
Construction Cost: \$15.2 million
Total Project Cost: \$17.8 million
Contract Date: Jun. 2011
Completed: Sept. 2012
Sustainability Rating System/Applied/
Status/Level: WSSP

PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Through its design and pedagogy, Helen Keller Elementary School seeks to instill its 320 K-5 students with Helen Keller’s voracity for learning and curiosity with the world around her. Just as the sensation of water finally engaged Keller with her surroundings, tactile artwork, sign language graphics, and oversized Braille dots in common areas and on exterior planters encourage students to be inquisitive and thoughtful citizens. Keller’s inspirational quotes flank students’ paths to four different learning communities, each with identifying themes that reflect the school’s mission and its namesake’s character: Growth, Respect, Integrity, and Perseverance.

Creative phasing was utilized to construct the replacement school adjacent to the existing working school, and the design needed to adhere to a strict 35-foot height restriction. Extensive glazing and skylights provide plentiful natural light into learning and common spaces, while wireless technology and movable partitions give teachers flexibility. Responsible environmental solutions, including a high performance building



envelope system, mechanical heat recovery systems, and site preservation strategies create a healthy, vibrant place for children to learn.

The result is a warm and welcoming building that provides a cheerful human scale and invites students and the neighborhood to share its community “living room.”

