Brick Weaves a Brighter School

Case Study in Masonry:
Washington Heights Elementary School Replacement Structures, Fort Worth ISD

Acme Brick
Featherlite Hill Country Stone
Washington Heights Elementary School is back in the sunshine, rebuilt above grade to replace a 1979 underground school. Airport noise mitigation now comes from angled walls of Featherlite Hill Country Stone. Entry and playground facades have colorful walls of Acme Brick, animated by a multicolor basketweave pattern that celebrates the school’s prominent site. With Acme’s durable, beautiful masonry products, the future is bright, indeed.

Students and faculty greeted the new building in commemorative sunglasses to symbolize the move from a below-grade campus without daylight to a new school built to make efficient use of natural light in every classroom.

Architects created a rich vocabulary of Featherlite Hill Country Stone, with academic insignia insets, and Acme Brick laid in a basketweave pattern on a blend of venerable contrasting brick.
The design team achieved our goal of creating a school that reflected its neighborhood. The brick patterning and color scheme make clear this is an elementary school—playful and colorful—a place where kids come. In bringing the school above ground, we worked with the design team to make the building light, bright, colorful, and exciting, with classrooms designed and oriented to protect against airport noise with masonry elevations. The school is a hit with the community.

— Gary Griffith, AIA, LEED AP, District Architect, Fort Worth ISD
"We used masonry to tie the whole building together. The larger Hill Country Stone and laminated windows on the sawtooth classroom design element addressed sound from the airport across the street. Acme Brick was a simple material we could use in interesting ways to celebrate the special parts of the building and handle the challenges of a tight plan and FAA height restriction. We even repurposed the void of the old school as a detention tank for storm water under the playground."

— Roberto Ramirez, AIA, Principal, WRA Architects
Playful colors of Elgin Butler glazed brick and imaginative patterns highlight the walls of a school once buried away from the sky, now brilliantly above ground on its century-old site.