

# Remote Wyoming School Remodel Connects with Nature

October 8, 2015

*Ward + Blake Architects renovates Kelly Elementary for new look, low maintenance*



*Moose explore Kelly Elementary School’s playground (left). New steel siding and roof create a no-maintenance contemporary look for the little schoolhouse, which maintains a low profile against its magnificent National Park backdrop (center and right).*

Jackson Hole, Wyo. – Sept. 28, 2015 – At Kelly Elementary School in tiny Kelly, Wyo., it isn’t stray dogs that wander onto the playground, it’s stray moose. “We have all kinds of visitors from bison to moose and every other kind of critter,” says Pier Trudelle, principal of the remote 47-student Teton County School District facility that boasts Grand Teton National Park in its backyard. That remarkably scenic natural setting – and the unique learning opportunities it provides – factored into design decisions for Jackson Hole architecture firm [Ward + Blake Architects](#), who just completed a renovation of the 9,627-square-foot structure.

“Education is not limited to the classroom, and capturing opportunities in our local schools to enhance environmental sensitivity and help students and teachers feel the impact of our beautiful surroundings from within their classrooms is always part of our thought process,” says Ward + Blake Architects principal Mitch Blake. The firm has worked on several remote Teton County School District satellite schools, including Moran Elementary and Alta Elementary. Other education projects include the award-winning LEED Gold-certified [Teton County Children’s Learning Center – “The Ranch,”](#) and a \$54 million 180,000-square-foot K-12 [campus in Ft. Washakie](#), Wyo., currently under construction.

For the recent Kelly Elementary renovations, architects were tasked with correcting a laundry list of maintenance problems. Built in the mid-1970s with additions in 1982 and 1996, the school faced multiple issues that included “a significant amount of water infiltration on the north side of the building,” says TCSD Chief Operating Officer Brad Barker. Teachers, parents and area residents were engaged throughout the planning and design phases of the renovation, Barker explains. “We worked with school faculty and the community in a collaborative effort to not only improve the building, but to create the very best space for instruction and learning. And Ward + Blake has been very agile in accommodating input from the various stakeholders throughout the process.”

Ward + Blake’s design approach for the Kelly school took a long view to school sustainability, providing a no-maintenance exterior with new rusted cold rolled metal siding and metal roofing. Additional energy-saving solutions include ridged insulation for the roofs (for a complete thermal break) and triple-pane windows throughout.

“The steel siding will weather naturally to a nice earth-tone brown patina that blends with the surrounding mountain range and coordinates with the existing neighborhood of naturally stained cedar and log-sided buildings – but will never need painting,” says architect Blake. “This school goes through some challenging weather cycles and the design of the new exterior envelope will help the Kelly school save energy and reduce maintenance for many years to come.”

Other updates included new metal eaves and exterior doors, translucent Kalwall panels in the gym that invite daylight without requiring blinds, a weather-sheltering porch at the rear playground exit, and new bay windows for the Kindergarten that do double-duty in correcting the longtime water leakage problem. Indoors, the little schoolhouse got a fresh coat of paint, new vinyl floors and base, new carpet tile floors and, perhaps closest to architect Blake’s heart, view-capturing windows.

“The small punched windows were the first thing I noticed on my original walk-through of the school,” says Blake. “It seemed a shame with the beautiful views and National Park setting. The windows were already paired, so we combined them to create large windows that capture the view and make the interior feel more spacious without having to change the structure.”

Students returned to the refreshed building on “Little School Road” in early September. Principal Trudelle’s take on the schoolhouse’s new look? “It’s gorgeous,” she says.

Ward + Blake Architects was built on a distinctive vision: to be provocative in thought, flexible in nature and disciplined in execution. Since 1996, the firm has earned recognition for architecture that is sensitive to its environment and successfully integrated with its surroundings, including being named 2013 Firm of the Year by the six-state AIA Western Mountain Region. Ward + Blake creates buildings that are tactile, modern, bio-climatically responsible, honestly expressed, technologically sound and artfully crafted. A recent monograph, *In the Shadows of the Tetons: Selected Works of Ward + Blake Architects*,

provides an overview of the firm's award-winning work. For additional information, visit Ward + Blake online at [www.wardblakearchitects.com](http://www.wardblakearchitects.com) or call 307.733.6867.

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