

Port Townsend School District: Salish Coast Elementary School - “No Child Left Inside”

Landscape Architect: Osborn Consulting, Inc.

Architect: Integrus Architecture

Public school sites present special opportunities for achieving JEDI goals. As free places of learning for children of all backgrounds, public schools *should* provide students with broad access to all types of learning, including social-emotional, physical, and academic. As civic institutions, public schools are central to cities and neighborhoods, and serve as gathering places, performance spaces, social assistance centers, emergency shelters, food distribution centers, playgrounds, sports fields, and green spaces. Countless studies have shown that providing generous, green outdoor space for children positively affects learning outcomes and growth. With so many necessary functions, public schools are naturally places where justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion can blossom – and guide the design process.

Osborn Consulting’s landscape architects had the opportunity to participate in the design of the new Salish Coast Elementary School in Port Townsend, Washington. From the beginning of design, a robust and inclusive community process set the goals for the new campus. The school community and neighbors identified how important it was for the school to be a connection between the Peninsula's natural environs and the school’s outdoor spaces. The resulting design incorporates a community garden that supports farm-to-school programs and provides food for the greater community. The site's porosity – created through multiple public pathway connections – creates a place that welcomes the community to the site. The school library doubles as a public library branch location, which supports the school’s use as a community hub.

Goals for the project included easy access to outdoor learning, exploration, and play for all. It was also important for the team to be efficient with the space available and provide dual use of the school’s common spaces to include all community members. Accessible connection to these spaces was an important consideration to make sure it was safe, secure, and welcoming experience for everyone.