

Robert Frost Elementary School opens with poetry and praise

SEATTLE- Studio Meng Strazzara is happy to announce the completion of Robert Frost Elementary School, a new K-6 school in Kirkland, Washington for the Lake Washington School District.

Infused with art and poetry, this 59,260 square foot replacement facility was designed to take advantage of its wooded site and to create strong connections to the natural surroundings, to the school community, and to the timeless words of poet Robert Frost. The classrooms, the uniquely designed shared learning spaces, and the multipurpose Commons are all flooded with natural light.



Principal Sue Anne Sullivan recalls her early connection to poetry and learning. "As Frost students know, I have a particular passion for poetry, which began when I was very young. I remember sitting on my Grandpa Sullivan's lap as he read "Birches" by the great American poet Robert Frost." From her years as an educator, particularly of students with special needs, Principal Sullivan understands the need to enrich a child's spirit along with educating the student's mind. It was with this drive and passion that she and others from the Lake Washington School District and larger school community engaged the architectural team throughout a successful design process.

As students and visitors walk into the lobby and commons area, they are welcomed by 99 brightly-colored aluminum butterflies hanging from the ceiling in honor of Frost's first published poem, "My Butterfly." An excerpt from one of Frost's last poems, "Pod of the Milkweed", is cast in bronze on the floor of the lobby. In eight different locations both inside and outside of the school, excerpts from Frost's poems are sandblasted into large stones. A grove of birch trees near the building's main entry honors the

poem, "Birches." Three other poems: "Mending Wall," "Hyla Brook" and "The Road Not Taken" are also reflected in different ways throughout the site.

An additional commemoration of the poet Robert Frost came in the form of a gift to the school from the Robert Frost Farm, in Derry, N.H. Mr. Charles Dent, trustee, donated a number of branches from the farm's last remaining sugar maple tree, which featured prominently in Frost's famous poem, "Tree at My Window." Local woodworkers Bryan Northrop and Patrick Kenney are volunteering their time, using the tree branches to create a bench for the school lobby.

Cornerstone General Contractors, Inc. was the general contractor and, through a successful partnership with Studio Meng Strazzara and the Lake Washington School District, completed the project on time and within budget.

Other members of the design team include: Coughlin Porter Lundeen, civil and structural; Hargis, mechanical; Coffman, electrical; Worthy & Associates, landscape architecture; BRC, acoustical; Bundy Associates, food service; and Judith and Daniel Caldwell, artists.



About Studio Meng Strazzara

Studio Meng Strazzara is a dynamic, Seattle-based architectural design and planning studio producing innovative and award-winning work recognized throughout the Pacific Northwest. Established in 1976, the firm is divided into multiple design studios which focus on K-12 education, higher education, commercial/retail, residential, childcare and government/public agencies. www.studioms.com

About Lake Washington School District

Lake Washington School District is a high-performing public school district serving Kirkland, Redmond and Sammamish, Washington. It is the sixth largest district in the state of Washington, with over 23,000 students in 50 schools.

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Media contacts:

Mark Wainwright, Director of Marketing, 206-587-3797, mwainwright@studioms.com

Shannon Parthemer, Community Relations & Communications Coordinator, 425-702-3300
sparthemer@lwsd.org

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