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BBS Architects & Engineers and Belfor Property Restoration complete \$14 million reconstruction of South Bay Elementary

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BBS Architects & Engineers and Belfor Property Restoration completed the \$14 million reconstruction of the South Bay Elementary School following the fire, which nearly completely destroyed the structure on February 18, 2010. The design and construction team completed the reconstruction on an accelerated schedule, allowing students to return to their rebuilt school on September 8, 2011, the official academic year opening day. BBS served the client, West Babylon Union Free School District, as architect and MEP engineer. Belfor was the project's general contractor and the office of Thomas D. Reilly, P.E. served as structural engineer.

200 firefighters and 16 fire departments battled the flames for hours. The most destructive school fire in the history of suburban New York destroyed South Bay Elementary's 47,000 s/f of premises and 75% of the exterior walls.

BBS president and lead architect Roger Smith, AIA, LEED AP said, "The disruption to the community with the loss of their elementary school was enormous. BBS was proud to immediately take on a proactive role to solve the district's most immediate needs as well as its long term ones. BBS not only worked with the insurance provider to implement as many design improvements as possible within the defined budget, but also collaborated with the administration to greatly improve the functionality and sustainability of the rebuilt facilities."

"BBS Architects' support went far beyond the design services and was absolutely critical in quickly rebuilding the school and addressing other needs of the community," said Anthony Cacciola, superintendent of schools at the West Babylon Union Free District.

The rebuilding effort began on the morning following the fire, when both the New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR) and Belfor teams visited the site of the fire. Belfor was originally retained by NYSIR to assist with securing the remains of the building and assessing the scope of the reconstruction. The company was later hired by the district to perform the entire reconstruction.

The original, exterior walls of the school had been constructed of masonry and brick. Belfor rebuilt 75% of the walls and BBS designed them to match the look of the pre-existing structure, including brick color and size. The main entrance features two piers, which survived the fire and visually emphasize the building's entry.

Installation of the redesigned steel roof support structure necessitated revisions to the remaining exterior bearing walls. The crews removed top two to three feet of the pre-existing walls and installed CMUs (concrete masonry units) and steel bearing plates that support the open web steel joists welded to them.

The new school encompasses three wings and houses 17 full-size classrooms, not including specialty classrooms such as the music and art rooms. The average classroom size is 780 s/f. The entire school is fitted for wireless Internet access.

"BBS devised several interior design solutions that not only addressed our current needs, but also provided flexibility for possible future revisions," said Cacciola.

Other improvements included the 3,800 s/f gymnasium, the 2,200 s/f cafeteria/multipurpose room, and an 800 s/f theatrical stage. Additional interior upgrades included the 1,500 s/f kitchen designed by The Sam Tell Companies.

The 1,500 s/f library boasts new wood casework and furniture, a separate workroom for the library staff, linear pendant lighting fixtures and carpet tile flooring. The new, 750 s/f art room features fluorescent linear pendant lighting fixtures, new casework, VCT flooring, an art storage room and a kiln in a separate, specially built kiln room.

The 700 s/f music room is located in the central wing adjacent to the gymnasium.

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