Using the Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP) requirements and the Kennewick School District's Sustainable Mission Statement as a template, the following elements were incorporated into the project to create a more sustainable and enhanced learning environment for all users of Cottonwood Elementary. The life-cycle cost of all materials and systems was a major determinant in their selection.

  - Stormwater management
    - On-site filtration reduced the rate and quantity of runoff to minimize negative site impacts
  - Heat reduction through roof design
    - Energy Star labeled roof with at least .9 emissivity for over 75% of the roof surface
  - Outdoor irrigation
    - The system operates on nonpotable water for the vast majority of the irrigation season and is tied to a weather station to reduce water use.
  - Indoor water use
    - Potable water use reduced by 30% through use of low-flow plumbing fixtures and other systems.
  - High efficiency mechanical, electrical, and lighting systems
    - An energy efficient mechanical system was selected and designed for the new school, resulting in a 27% reduction of total net energy use compared to Energy Code requirements.
  - Enhanced daylighting and the related control system allow complete adjustability
    - A 2% daylight factor is achieved over 75% of critical visual task spaces with no direct sunlight penetration to surfaces commonly visible from critical task areas

- Indoor Environmental Quality - directly affects the end user of the space and the quality of the experience within that space
  - Composition and sustainability of the selected finishes
    - Interior carpet/flooring, paint, insulation, acoustical ceilings, wall panels, and interior wood flooring are some of the finishes that are specified as low emitting
  - Amount of daylighting allowed into a space
    - Direct sunlight is eliminated from March 21st through September 21st with the use of fixed shading devices on the exterior of the building for most spaces
  - Ability to control the exposure of dirt, dust and chemicals
  - The value of over 50% of the products used were sourced within a 500 mile radius

- Other products selected for recycled content and/or low maintenance
  - Majority of the floor surfaces were polished natural concrete embedded with a decorative recycled seeded glass (durable and low maintenance).
  - Exterior concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls selected for low maintenance and durability.