

Laurelhurst

Name:	Laurelhurst Elementary School	Enrollment:	405
Address:	4530 46th Avenue NE	Mascot:	Bear
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	none



Laurelhurst, ca. 1970 SPSA 242-5

In 1900, 50 wealthy men bought 54 acres on Webster Point in northeast Seattle and founded the Seattle Golf Club, between what is now NE 35th and NE 40th streets. Developers bought the golf course and adjacent land in 1906 and divided it into house lots for sale.

To reach this neighborhood, known as Laurelhurst, from downtown Seattle, visitors took a streetcar to Madison Park and, from there, a steamer across the mouth of Union Bay to a dock on the west side of Webster Point (south of NE 35th). In 1912, a community dock and public boathouse had been built where the steamers landed. There were 18 houses in the neighborhood, with an additional four in Laurelhurst Heights, site of the former golf course. Local children attended Yesler School, which they reached by walking west across Yesler Creek and the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks.

In August 1915, Laurelhurst residents urged the Seattle School Board to locate a portable in their neighborhood. The next spring Laurelhurst Annex opened at 43rd Avenue NE and (N)E 34th Street, as an annex to Yesler School, near the old steamer dock. The Yesler School janitor walked over every morning to build a fire in its large stove. This one-room portable held one class for grades 1-3 or 1-4.

The first teacher, Alice Clayton Mooers, recounted this story of



Laurelhurst, 1930 MOHAI 83.10.4190

Name: **Laurelhurst School**
 Location: 4530 46th Avenue NE
 Building: 9-room, 2-story brick
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore
 Site: 2.75 acres

1928: Opened in fall
 1940: Addition (n.a.)
 1950: Addition (George Wallington Stoddard & Associates)

the heavy snowfall of 1916: “I walked all the way from North Broadway to school in spite of the knee-deep snow because I knew some of the children would be there. Two or three were waiting at the door and I sent them home. We kept a weather calendar at that time and there was snow on the ground for six weeks.”

In 1919, a new, larger portable was opened on top of the hill to the north. The former annex was leased to the Episcopal Church for Laurelhurst Mission and its successor, St. Stephen’s Mission. In 1925, the district reclaimed the property. After World War I, it became part of the Union Bay Village veterans’ housing complex, affiliated with the University of Washington.

Laurelhurst School opened in October 1, 1919 as an annex to Bryant. It was located on 2.75 acres at (NE) 45th Street & 46th Avenue NE. At first, it had two rooms, one for grades 1–3 and the other for grades 4–6. A large wood stove heated the building and was used to heat soup at noontime as well as for hot chocolate and coffee. Enrollment grew from 44 in 1920–21 to 117 in 1927–28.

A permanent school opened on the same site in 1928. The next year Laurelhurst became independent, serving grades 1–8 for the first time. The school paper, the *Laurel Leaf*, got its start the same year. A lunchroom portable was added in 1930. In 1936–37, the year kindergarten was added, enrollment totaled 450, and portable classrooms were added.

In 1940, a four-room addition replaced four portables. During World War II, U.S. Army troops occupied the park across the street to the south, living in tents and a permanent barrack. Children had to walk around the perimeter of the installation going to and from school. From the ballfield, anyone hitting a ball into the machine gun nest got an automatic double.

By 1944, the auditorium was divided into two classrooms and three portables were in use. In support of an upcoming school levy, an October 1944 *Seattle Times* article proclaimed, “Laurelhurst Pupils Must Eat in ‘Heats’ or They Go Hungry.” The 400 children who ate lunch at the school had to go in shifts because the lunchroom portable held only 130 at a time and had only one door for entry and exit. “In order to enable all the pupils to find shelter at noon time, lunch periods [were] staggered in a schedule so complicated it makes a railroad time table look like a primary reader The time when one group is excused for lunch depend[ed] entirely on how long it [took] their predecessors To cope with this variable problem, ‘runners’ or ‘spotters’ from the classrooms [went] to the lunchroom to carry the word back to the teachers—like little Paul Reveres.”

Laurelhurst became a K–6 school in 1946–47. An addition to the building was finally built in 1950, with six classrooms, a lunchroom, and an auditorium. At the same time, a gymnasium (the Laurelhurst Fieldhouse) was added, with 67 percent of its funding coming from the Seattle Parks Department, which operated a public playfield in Laurelhurst Park to the south.

By 1955–56, the 19 classrooms were supplemented by 10 portables on the playground in order to hold the peak enrollment of almost 1,100 pupils. The opening of Sand Point School in 1958 helped relieve enrollment pressure not only at Laurelhurst but at View Ridge and Bryant as well.

In 1960–61, Laurelhurst served 850 students and required only



Laurelhurst, 1960 SPSA 242-1

seven portables. An overpass across NE 45th Street was completed in 1960, linking the school and playfield, as originally proposed by the Laurelhurst Community Club in 1927.

An Individually Guided Education Program began in September 1970. The same year, Laurelhurst 6th graders moved on to middle school as part of the district's K-5-3-4 program. Teachers received specialized training and organized into teams with an emphasis on individualized instruction.

In 1993, Laurelhurst became the only school in the district to be accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. To receive accreditation, the school had to complete a two-year self-study process. Recently, student and adult volunteers created a Peace Garden in honor of Aki Kurose, who taught at Laurelhurst for 25 years (see Kurose).

Laurelhurst and the University of Washington's School of Music created an imaginative new program in 1995. The department wanted to develop a laboratory music program in a real school to train graduate students as well as provide a top-quality music program for the host school. Nearby Laurelhurst had been without a music specialist since 1992 or 1993 because of budgetary constraints. Dr. Patricia Campbell, internationally recognized for her development of multicultural music curricula, comes to the school and teaches the children under the observation of UW students. Graduate students spend over 12 hours per week with the children.