

Rainier Beach

Name:	Rainier Beach High School	Enrollment:	786
Address:	8815 Seward Park S	Nickname:	Vikings
Configuration:	9-12	Colors:	Blue and orange
Newspaper:	<i>The Viking Shield</i>	Annual:	<i>Valhalla</i>



Rainier Beach, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 021-82

Name:	Rainier Beach Junior-Senior High School
Location:	8815 Seward Park Avenue S
Building:	2-story brick
Architect:	John W. Maloney
Site:	21.6 acres

1960:	Named on March 9; opened on September 7
1972:	Became <i>Rainier Beach High School</i>
1998:	Performing Arts Center opened

Plans for a combined junior and senior high school in the southeast section of the city were initiated in 1957. A portion of the site was purchased from the City of Seattle in August 1958. During the planning stages, the school was known as Southeast Seattle Junior-Senior High School. It was to be named after Samuel Gompers, a noted pioneer in the labor movement, but that name was given to a trade school instead (see Rainier). The architectural plans submitted in 1959 showed two alternatives for the building, with or without an auditorium and gymnasium. After much controversy, the auditorium was dropped from the plans for financial reasons.

At that time, it was felt that a combined facility for grades 7-12 would be adequate for many years to come. Rainier Beach Junior-Senior High School opened in September 1960 with 845 students in the junior high level and 412 high school students. As was the practice when opening new high schools in Seattle, there was no senior class and only a small junior class entered the first year.



Rainier Beach, 1965 SPSA 021-1

By 1967, the school was overcrowded, with 2,159 students housed in a building designed for 1,500. The principal, Don Means, urged the school district to establish a separate facility for the younger students. The Model Middle School began in portables on the grounds of Rainier Beach in September 1970. The first year only 7th graders attended the middle school; the next year it comprised grades 7–8. The middle school moved to a new permanent building called South Shore in December 1973. The following September, American Indian Heritage School moved into the portables at Rainier Beach.

In 1968, Rainier Beach and its feeder elementary schools developed a K–12 individualized program that became a model for inner city schools. This program included ungraded curriculum in some subjects, small groups of teachers, counselors and students who monitored individual progress, and an alternative program. In 1969, Rainier Beach was selected to participate in the international Model Schools project.

Student activities including clubs and athletics grew to become part of the school's evolving tradition. Over the years, the boys' basketball team has done exceptionally well, winning the 3-A state championship, then the 2-A championship in 1988.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a district policy limiting the percentage of minority enrollment in any one school meant that some neigh-



Rainier Beach, 2000, entrance to Performing Arts Center ©Mary Randlett SPSA 021-84

borhood residents were not able to attend the school. These guidelines, which were put into effect to qualify for federal benefits, are now being relaxed to allow more local participation in the school.

Several innovative programs originated at Rainier Beach. From 1975 to 1983, students in an aviation class built an experimental plane that was eventually auctioned off for over \$3,000. The Boeing Company has been an active partner in this and many subsequent technology programs. Fall 1990 marked the inception of a Model Teaching Academy that prepares students for college and a career in education, one of five such academies in the country. Today the DECA program in marketing education is the premier business program in the district, with students winning both state and national awards. Also at Rainier Beach, the Belief Academy for students with learning and behavioral disabilities has used integrated teaching techniques to create a positive learning environment. Rainier Beach was also the first school in the district with a Teen Health Center, established in 1988.

A long-awaited Performing Arts Center opened in fall 1998. Since the original auditorium had never been constructed, this visual and performing arts magnet school finally got a first-class facility. The new auditorium provides a state-of-the-art stage and comfortable seating. An exterior canopy and entry plaza enhances the appearance of the center's curved blue walls.