

Sanislo

Name:	Captain Stephen E. Sanislo Elementary	Enrollment:	313
Address:	1812 SW Myrtle Street	Nickname:	none
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	Teal blue



Sanislo, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 273-1

In the late 1960s, a new school was planned for the Riverview area to reduce the distance to school for children who previously attended Cooper, Highland Park, and Hughes. The school was named for long-time West Seattle resident Stephen E. Sanislo, a 54-year veteran of the Seattle Fire Department. Captain Sanislo spent 31 years educating Seattle schoolchildren on fire safety and, in 1942, was officially named education director for the fire department. His talks, accompanied by his imaginary dog “Skipper”, combined storytelling and harmonica-playing. The results of his work are evident in the city’s excellent fire safety record during his tenure.

In September 1969, a year before the new building opened, Sanislo Elementary students were housed in portables at Highland Park and Cooper. Groundbreaking took place on February 6, 1970, with Sanislo’s widow helping with a shovel. Although it was not ready for the start of the following school year, Sanislo opened a few months later for 325 pupils in K-4.

The design for Sanislo was so unique it was featured in an architectural magazine in Paris. It had few walls between classrooms; a design aimed at accommodating innovation and flexibility. Electrical and mechanical systems were housed not within walls but in brightly colored and visible overhead and wall space.

The educational theory used at Sanislo lets children develop at their own individual pace. In its first years, it was a showplace for the

Name:	Captain Stephen E. Sanislo Elementary
Location:	1812 SW Myrtle Street
Building:	Brick
Architect:	Sullam, Smith and Associates
Site:	8.9 acres

1966:	Named on November 9
1970:	Opened on December 14
1998:	Addition (Donald Carlson)



Sanislo, ca. 1973 SPSA 273-2

district. However, by the mid-1980s, some educators questioned whether the school should retain its “open concept” design. At that time, there was movement toward a “return to basics,” favoring standardization. Some 140 children assigned to Sanislo in 1983–84 transferred to other schools. The open concept arrangement was retained, however, and today it is staunchly defended. Sanislo considers itself a community that fosters cooperation and mutual respect. It emphasizes integrated, thematically-focused instruction with team teachers.

Sanislo won the state championship for physical fitness in 1990, with all students scoring above 85 percent on tests, which include running, pull-ups, and toe-touching. Sanislo also is the home of SCATS, a circus acrobatics team originally headed by Bud and Sue Turner, PE teachers. The SCATS group performs Double-Dutch jump-roping, unicycling, juggling, and tumbling.

A remodeling and expansion of the school was launched in summer 1997. The remodeling, which increased classroom size and the amount of natural light entering the main teaching areas, was completed before school started the next fall. Next came an addition west of the original building. Included were a new 2nd grade classroom, a multipurpose room, an art and science area-music room, and a learning resource center. Work was completed in time for graduation ceremonies to be held in the new multipurpose room in June 1998.