

# Whitworth

Name: **Whitworth Elementary School**  
 Address: 5215 46th Avenue S  
 Configuration: K-5

Enrollment: 435  
 Nickname: Wildcats  
 Colors: Green and yellow



Whitworth, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 283-13

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Name: **Whitworth School**  
 Location: 5215 46th Avenue S  
 Building: 8-room brick  
 Architect: James Stephen  
 Site: 1.7 acres

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1908: Opened  
 1916: Site expanded to 2.67 acres  
 1918: Addition (Edgar Blair)  
 1958: Addition (Carlson, Eley, Grevstad)  
 1968: Addition  
 1987: Closed in June; demolished

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Ernest A. Hadlock, an early resident of the Columbia City area, related that a schoolhouse once stood to the northeast of 44th Avenue S and Brandon Street. When he arrived in 1891, the former site of the schoolhouse was just an empty cleared space, and the sawmill that once operated on Rainier Avenue between Dawson and Brandon, where a stream went over a waterfall, was abandoned.

The history of the next school in the area is only slightly better known. A one-room schoolhouse opened in 1880 at the southwest corner of 50th Avenue South and Brandon. Nearby was a large hop field, where Indians came by canoe down the Black River to pick hops. When the school closed in 1891, the students were transferred to Columbia City School.

The next school in the area was called Hillman School because it was located in Hillman City, on Orcas Street between 39th and 42nd Avenue South. Two teachers used a single room, each for half-day sessions. It was annexed into Seattle School District in 1907. In April 1907, Hillman housed 123 students in grades 1-4 in three classrooms. A new site was purchased at 46th Avenue South and Dawson Street, and portables were moved there for temporary use.

In October 1907, about the time a permanent school building was being constructed, Reverend George F. Whitworth passed away. Whit-

worth had arrived in Washington Territory in 1853, become president of the Territorial University of Washington in 1866, and later served as Superintendent of Schools in Thurston and King Counties. The new school was named in his honor. Whitworth School opened on the 40th Avenue site in 1908 with grades 1–8 and the portables were moved to Van Asselt.

Emma C. Hart served as the first principal, from 1908 to 1938. Under her supervision, Whitworth achieved the highest award for the most advanced ideas in education in Washington three times in five years.

In 1916, the site was expanded with the addition of a playfield. A 1918 addition had eight classrooms, plus an auditorium and lunchroom. Kindergarten was added in 1919–20.

In 1945–46, two vacant rooms at Whitworth were used to temporarily house 6th and 7th grade classes from Brighton School. Whitworth became a K–6 school in 1952–53. A south wing with six classrooms was added in 1958. During the 1958–59 school year, enrollment peaked with 853 students.

The main structure of the school was on the district list for replacement or remodeling. Still, Whitworth was one of the most popular elementary schools in the district in 1983–84, because it was K–6 and not in the busing plan. Parents and staff did have complaints for the school board, however. With 647 students, Whitworth was the city’s largest elementary, and the parents and staff threatened a boycott unless more paid staff were added. The district responded with new staff. Another shortcoming of the school was its small playground, the smallest in the district due to the small site.

Whitworth students released 500–600 balloons on May 15, 1985, as part of a National Science Week project to study winds and air currents across the country. Whitworth represented Seattle, one of only ten cities participating. Each balloon carried a postcard that identified its point of origin and requested notification of where the balloon landed.

In September 1986, Whitworth was awarded a prestigious exemplary school award by the U.S. Department of Education as one of the country’s 271 best elementary schools. This Excellence in Education award was the first given to an inner city elementary in Washington. Principal John Morefield credited the school’s strength to an attitude embraced 15 years earlier when Principal Al Cohen and a group of teachers agreed “to go the extra mile and support each other” in making the school better. Whitworth was very popular among teachers with a waiting list and many current staff remaining there over 10 years. Principals had relatively short tenures, however, with seven principals serving in nine years.

Whitworth students and staff moved to Monroe in September 1987 while their old building was demolished and replaced with a new structure. On September 6, 1989, they moved into their new school. The site was expanded to increase the size of the playground.

The entire community is proud of the new facility and looks to the future with continuing commitment to quality education. As a member of Powerful Schools, a coalition of schools and neighborhood associations, Whitworth offers a variety of after school classes and programs.



Whitworth, 1960 SPSA 283-6

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Name: **Whitworth Elementary School**

Location: 5215 46th Avenue S

Building: 22-room, 3-story brick

Architect: WMFL Architects and Engineers

Site: 3.48 acres

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1989: Opened on September 6

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Whitworth, 1960: 1958 addition (left), 1908 building (center), 1918 addition (right) SPSA 283-5