

# Columbia

Name:	<b>Orca @ Columbia</b>	Enrollment:	329
Address:	3528 S Ferdinand Street	Nickname:	none
Configuration:	K-8	Colors:	none

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Name: **Columbia City School**  
 Location: 3540 S Ferdinand Street  
 Building: 8-room wood  
 Architect: n.a.  
 Site: n.a.

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n.a.: Opened by Columbia School District  
 1907: Annexed into Seattle School District  
 1910: Renamed *Columbia School*  
 1922: Closed and demolished

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Name: **Columbia School**  
 Location: 3528 S Ferdinand Street  
 Building: 16-room stucco  
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore  
 Site: 2.0 acres

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1922: Opened  
 1923: Site expanded to 3.22 acres  
 1989: Closed as regular school in June; alternative school site starting in September

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Columbia City, ca. 1900 MOHAI 3121

Columbia City began as an independent milltown in the Rainier Valley. Columbia City School started out in Columbia School District No. 18, which was organized in 1876. A large belltower stood above the main entrance of the two-story building.

When Southeast Seattle became part of the city in 1907, Columbia City School was annexed into the Seattle School District. At this time, its enrollment stood at 514 students in grades 1–8. At the same time, two other smaller schools from Columbia School District, Hillman, at 39th Avenue S and Main Street, and Southeast Seattle, at Rainier Avenue and Genesee Street, operated as annexes to Columbia City for a brief time. Hillman closed in 1908 while Southeast Seattle closed in 1909. The Southeast Seattle site was condemned by the Seattle Housing Authority in 1943).

Over the next few years, Columbia's enrollment declined to about 300. The name of the school was shortened to Columbia School in 1910 after the original Columbia in the Seattle School District was renamed Lowell.

A new Columbia School was built on the same site in the early 1920s. It was a unique single-story building in the Mission Revival style with stucco exterior. After the old school building was demolished its location became the new playfield.



Columbia, 1963 SPSA 213-5

In 1942–43, enrollment jumped because of an influx of wartime workers, many living in the Rainier Vista Housing Project. The following year 8th graders were moved to an 8th grade center at Franklin High School. At the same time, two programs at Columbia were discontinued and their space was remodeled for other uses. The home economics area was turned into classrooms plus art and science laboratories. The industrial arts area was remodeled to provide an extended physical education program. In fall 1944, the Rainier Vista School was opened as an annex to further relieve overcrowding (see Columbia Annex below). The 7th grade was removed from Columbia in 1952.

In 1957, the 300-pound bell from the first school was restored and placed on display in the second building. Enrollment peaked in 1957–58 at 849 in the regular program and 33 in special education.

In 1960–61, there were still over 800 students at Columbia and nine portables in use. Dearborn Park School opened in fall 1971 with half of its inaugural student body coming from Columbia. In 1973–74, enrollment was down to 375 but 10 portables were in use, including space for three special education classes.

The 1978 desegregation plan paired Columbia with Olympic View and established a K, 4–6 grade configuration at Columbia. At the same time, a Science/Technology magnet program was added.

In September 1989, the Orca K–5 alternative program moved to Columbia from Day. Orca specializes in visual and performing arts and

individualized learning. A high level of parent participation is a notable feature of the school's many programs. It has expanded to K-8 and has launched a fundraising drive to enlarge and renovate the main building. The historic bell from the original Columbia City School was recently given to the Rainier Valley Historical Society, which displays it in their annual parade.