

## Dearborn Park

|                |  |             |                     |
|----------------|--|-------------|---------------------|
| Name:          | <b>Dearborn Park Elementary School</b> | Enrollment: | 327                 |
| Address:       | 2820 S Orcas Street                    | Nickname:   | Dragons             |
| Configuration: | K-5                                    | Colors:     | Navy blue and white |



Dearborn Park, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 251-3

In the late 1950s, the Seattle School Board realized there was very little undeveloped land remaining in the Beacon Hill area. One vacant site was adjacent to the City of Seattle's Dearborn Park, and the board decided to purchase it for a future school.

It took about 20 years for the school to become a reality. Neighborhood activists helped bring attention to the "unbuilt school" that they wanted for their children. The closure of Georgetown in 1970 and overcrowded conditions at nearby schools forced the board to act.

Principal Robert Middleton and seven teachers from Georgetown had the unusual opportunity of working with the architects in designing the new "open concept" school. The building was divided into large teaching areas called "pods" for use by topical groupings of children from various grades. Dearborn Park Elementary was named for the 4.5-acre city park that adjoins the school grounds.

Students from overcrowded Van Asselt, Brighton, and Columbia schools were assigned to the new school and placed in separate classrooms at those schools while awaiting the opening of Dearborn Park. The school opened in spring 1971 with about 500 students.

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Name: **Dearborn Park  
Elementary School**  
Location: 2820 S Orcas Street  
Building: Brick  
Architect: Fred Bassetti & Company  
Site: 10.3 acres

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1971: Opened in spring

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The student body quickly exceeded the capacity of the building, and portables were added behind the gymnasium. At first, 3rd through 6th graders rotated classes like middle and high schoolers, but this system was abandoned after several months because of the lost time.

The school staff's philosophy was "The tie that binds us is the child and we are here to help him realize the fullness of his potential." About 25 percent of the students were transported to the school by bus from the Rainier Vista Housing Project area. Under the district's desegregation plan, Dearborn Park held grades 4–6 and was paired with Magnolia (K, 1–3) from 1978 until 1984. After Magnolia closed in June 1984, Dearborn Park was paired with Lawton.

Today the school maintains the "open concept" organization, and students are required to wear uniforms. Staff and students are involved with many performing arts programs, including vocal music, instrumental music, and Dance Chance sponsored by Pacific Northwest Ballet. A physical education group called SCATS performs in schools throughout the district.

The Children's Forest project combines environmental education with hands-on science lessons at the neighboring city park. The Washington Forest Protection Association provides a naturalist and helps write the curriculum. Students plant vegetable seeds in an International Garden, which represents countries in Africa, South America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Mexico, and the Philippines. Help in collecting and identifying the seeds is provided by the Seattle Parks Department.



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