Joseph and Catherine (Henderson) Dunlap arrived in the Puget Sound region in September 1869, having traveled by covered wagon from Iowa. According to family legend, when they arrived in the Puget Sound region, they followed a road over Beacon Hill and sent their son George up a tree to view the land to the south and east. There he spotted a flat valley and Lake Washington. The Dunlaps decided to homestead in that valley, located to the south of the Van Asselt and Mapel families. They claimed 120 acres extending east toward Rainier Beach.

Several streets in the area today are named for the Dunlap family: Fontanelle, after their hometown in Iowa; Henderson, after the mother's maiden name; and Pearl, after several daughters in later generations. The family house was located between Henderson and Cloverdale at 47th Avenue S. There they established a stopping place for newcomers who had crossed the Cascade Mountains via the old Snoqualmie trail. They built a large corral to hold travelers' herds of cattle. By 1886, Joseph Dunlap had cultivated a sizable field of tobacco.

The first Dunlap School began operation in Columbia School District No. 18 in the late 19th century. This one-room frame schoolhouse at Kenyon & Rainier Avenue was open by 1898. Originally, the old school was set for expansion with a three-room addition. However, the Dunlap family then donated property for a new, larger school, directly across the creek to the north of the old homestead, which for years was marked by a few old apple trees.
The new school opened in 1904 with four classrooms. Dunlap was annexed into the Seattle School District in 1907 and became an annex to Brighton. Another classroom was added in 1908. After 1909, Dunlap was used as an annex to Emerson. Grades 6–8 from Dunlap were sent to Emerson as needed through the years to reduce overcrowding in the smaller school. Dunlap did not house the entire range of grades 1–8 until the 1922–23 school year.

A third Dunlap School opened on a different site in 1924. The building was constructed in the 20th Century Georgian style and was copied shortly thereafter at Hughes. The main difference in the two buildings was that Dunlap had stone detailing, while Hughes had terra cotta detailing.

Kindergarten classes were added in the 1936–37 school year. Spurred by a post-World War II boom in enrollment, Southeast Beacon Hill School was opened in January 1953 as a portable annex to Dunlap (see Rainier View). An International-style addition at Dunlap followed in 1953–54, with seven classrooms and a gymnasium. Additional land was purchased to the south for a playfield in 1954. Enrollment peaked at about 715 from 1957 to 1959.

Ferne Daily retired in 1965 after serving as principal of Dunlap for 18 years. In December 1973, at the same time South Shore Middle School opened, Dunlap became a K–4 school. From 1978 to 1981, Dunlap (K, 4–5) comprised a triad with Roxhill (K, 1–3) and Fauntleroy (K, 1–3). After Fauntleroy closed, its place was taken by Lafayette for 1981–89.

Dunlap School was closed for a complete renovation in June 1999,
Name: **Dunlap School**  
Location: 8621 46th Avenue S  
Building: Brick  
Architect: Floyd A. Naramore  
Site: 3.1 acres

1912: Site purchased  
1924: Opened  
1945: Site expanded to 3.6 acres  
1953–54: Addition (John Graham & Co.)  
1954: Site expanded to 4.89 acres  
1998: Exterior of 1924 building designated City of Seattle landmark  
1999: Closed in June for renovation; portion of 1924 structure demolished; entire 1953–54 addition demolished

and its students were sent for one academic year to South Shore while the work was finished. The 1953–54 addition was demolished along with part of the 1924 structure, and an addition of approximately 53,000 square feet was constructed. The school will reopen in fall 2000.