

Gatewood

Name:	Gatewood Elementary School	Enrollment:	345
Address:	4320 SW Myrtle Street	Nickname:	Gators
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	Green and gold



Gatewood, 2000 © Mary Randlett SPSA 225-12

It seems fitting that the namesake of this West Seattle school was a real estate developer, because its origins are closely tied to the growth of the surrounding neighborhoods. In 1907, a streetcar line began operating along California Avenue and down Myrtle Street, in some places traveling above ground on a trestle. This vital transportation link was financed by Carlisle Gatewood, who also platted Gatewood Acre Tracts and Gatewood Gardens, two up-and-coming residential districts.

As families began settling in the Gatewood area, it was evident that a local school was needed because children were traveling quite a distance to attend Lafayette. In 1908, residents established a “pioneer school” for 12 students in a contractor’s old barn. In the meantime, the Seattle School Board purchased land to the west of the two Gatewood residential tracts. During the 1909–10 school year, students in K–4 and teachers occupied portables on the site while their permanent building was being constructed.

The new nine-room Jacobean-style building epitomized the district’s improved standard of three-story brick fireproof construction

and was similar to Muir and West Woodland. Gatewood opened in September 1910 with 268 students in grades 1–8. The first principal, A.N. Thompson, said that the school’s name suited its location on an open spot surrounded by woods with a gate leading to a nearby park. At lunchtime, soup was prepared in the home of a neighbor, Mrs. McClary, and carried down to the school.

Enrollment at Gatewood increased gradually in the years prior to World War I. By 1920, enrollment reached 654 and several portables dotted the grounds. The board agreed to purchase the rest of the block west of the school to make room for expansion.

A new west wing opened in 1922 with eight classrooms and a lunchroom/auditorium. Two playcourts provided shelter for outdoor activities. The school’s population remained stable for several years but, by 1937, it had dropped to 425 pupils.

During World War II, Gatewood experienced rapid growth as enrollment jumped to 768 in April 1943. The High Point Housing Project for defense workers had opened in 1942 and, until a school could be built at High Point, children traveled by bus to Gatewood and Cooper. To accommodate the influx at Gatewood, the old shop and sewing room were converted into classrooms.

Wartime activities included a Victory Garden Store where once a week children did their “shopping” amongst emptied cans of rationed goods. An unfortunate event of this time was the circulation of a petition calling for the removal of Japanese-American clerks from their jobs in Seattle public schools. This drive was led by the PTA at Gatewood, where one clerk subsequently lost her position.

Another burst in enrollment occurred in the 1950s. Portables once again appeared as over 800 students attended Gatewood. In 1959, the playfield was blacktopped.

Under the district’s desegregation plan, Gatewood housed grades K, 4–6 and formed a triad with Arbor Heights and Van Asselt beginning in 1979. An engineering study conducted in the 1980s indicated that

Name: **Gatewood School**
 Location: 4320 SW Myrtle Street
 Building: 3-story brick
 Architect: Edgar Blair
 Site: 1.67 acres

1910: Opened
 1920: Site increased to 3.6 acres
 1922: Addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
 1988: Exteriors designated city landmark
 1989–91: 1922 addition demolished; site increased to 4.2 acres
 1991: Addition and renovation (ECI Architects)



Gatewood, 1960 SPSA 225-8

Gatewood would be unsafe in the event of an earthquake and the building received top priority rating for replacement or renovation. In 1988, community members petitioned to save the historic structure and it was designated as a city landmark. Subsequent renovation, undertaken in 1989–91, received an award from the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation because it preserved the building’s Jacobean character while “maintaining a respectful, contextual relationship between the original and new addition.” The existing brick walls were reinforced and the brick additions trimmed to resemble the original terra cotta decoration. During the renovation, Gatewood students were temporarily housed at Genesee Hill.

The renovated building includes 16 modern classrooms in a wing to the east and a new gymnasium and auditorium/lunchroom in the west. The 1922 addition was demolished. A new staircase to the playfield was built down the hill on the west side. In the course of remodeling, a plaque in memory of Clara A. Kermode was discovered and moved to a new location. Kermode taught at Gatewood from 1919–1955 and was fondly remembered by her former 3rd graders.

The current program includes team teaching classes with a mix of grade levels. Special education students are taught in regular classes.