

King

Name:	Martin Luther King Elementary School	Enrollment:	268
Address:	3201 E Republican Street	Colors:	Purple and white
Configuration:	K-5	Nickname:	none



Harrison, 1960 SPSA 232-7

Name:	Harrison School
Location:	32nd N and E Harrison; 3201 E Republican
Building:	6-room brick
Architect:	Edgar Blair
Site:	1.6 acres

1913:	Named on April 16; opened in September as annex to Longfellow
1924:	Became independent school
1934:	Closed in fall
1936:	Reopened in September as annex to Longfellow
1942:	Site expanded to 1.93 acres
1942-50:	Operated as annex to Stevens
1950-52:	Operated as annex to McGilvra
1952:	Became independent school in September
1958:	Addition (Bindon and Wright)
1970:	Became <i>Harrison Early Childhood Education Center</i>
1974:	Renamed <i>Martin Luther King Early Childhood Education Center</i>
1989:	Became <i>Martin Luther King Elementary School</i>

In the 1880s, the Madison Valley was sparsely settled and, in places, heavily forested. One of the early African-American settlers was William Grose, who owned a restaurant, hotel, and barbershop.

After the turn of the century, the Madison Street cable car ran above the neighborhood on a high trestle. In November 1914, agents for the Columbia & Puget Sound Railroad Company, which operated the cable car, approached the Seattle School Board with an offer to sell the district a prospective school site for a school in the valley.

The new school was named for Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd President of the United States. The original blueprints indicate there were plans to expand the building from its humble six-classroom beginning to 25 classrooms, but the expansion never materialized. In fact, the school was simply the first floor of the standard nine-room school used by the school district.

Harrison School started in 1913 with grades 1-4. In 1918, the PTA petitioned the school board to complete the planned additions so children above 5th grade wouldn't have to go to other schools, such as McGilvra and Longfellow. The community around the school was growing with an influx of shipyard and other industrial workers during and immediately following World War I. Harrison School expanded in the 1920s to grades 1-6 after portables were moved in.

During the early Depression years, with a decline in industrial employment and population, enrollment at Harrison decreased until it reached a point where the cost per pupil became prohibitive. In July 1932, the board closed Harrison, except for a single room housing the 1st grade. All other children were assigned to Longfellow or Madrona. The entire building was closed one month into the 1934 school year because of insufficient enrollment. Members of the neighborhood besieged the board with requests to reopen the school. Two rooms for grades 1-3 were reopened two years later.



Harrison, 1928 SPSA 232-1

In 1954, a group from the Harrison community approached the school board requesting that the school's boundaries be expanded to maintain a racial balance. Superintendent Fleming responded that "Harrison School had been reopened and extended only as a means of avoiding overcrowding and portable construction at Madrona and McGilvra Schools and that the grounds and facilities at Harrison were not adequate for much further expansion." In spite of this statement, a modern addition was made in 1958. It included eight classrooms, a gymnasium, playcourt, and lunchroom-auditorium. The new construction expanded the front of the building outward to run the full length of 32nd Avenue between Harrison and Republican. Thereafter the boundaries were extended to include students living north of Madison Street.

Headlines in the November 2, 1970 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* proclaimed: "Parents 'Revolt' at Harrison," referring to the active involvement of over 250 parents in the operation of the school. Parents made visual aids and instructional materials, provided counseling, and served as cafeteria assistants, hall monitors, and tutors. Under the leadership of Principal Louise McKinney, the Harrison Early Children Education Center employed ungraded, continuous-progress educational methods. Harrison was a demonstration school for grades K-3 and many of the 365 children came from other parts of the city.

In spring 1974, a school-wide election supported changing the school's name from Harrison to honor Martin Luther King Jr., and the renaming was subsequently approved by the school board. The following January 30, one hundred students from Lake City School came to attend special classes and programs relating to Dr. King's life. The schools were paired in a federally funded program aimed at "increasing contact between school-age children of different backgrounds."

King was returned to being a K-5 neighborhood school in 1989. In the early 1990s, King was the smallest elementary school in the Seat-



Harrison, 1960 SPSA 232-5

tle School District. Its small size and special programs, such as English proficiency, were seen as beneficial to students. A proposal to house the African American Academy at the site was made in May 1993, but there were objections claiming that such a change would threaten the small school's independence.

After the decision was made to move the academy to Magnolia, the school still faced a challenge to bring its enrollment up to the district's 200-student minimum. This challenge has been met and today King is sometimes referred to as the "best kept secret" in the district, with its preschool program, special education class, new computer lab, and occupational therapy program. A federal grant helped it become the first magnet school for performing arts and technology in the district.

Today, the school remains a focus for its community. Every year the Community Council throws a fundraising dinner for the school. The school maintains a special relationship with nearby Bush School whose high school students come to King to tutor elementary pupils.