

Administration Buildings

Available records suggest Seattle School District #1 was officially formed in 1861 or 1862 with a three-member school board. School buildings designed and constructed by the district began to open in the 1870s. However, it was several years before the district had a space established exclusively for administration and operations.

The first district offices were out of a one-story brick building constructed in 1889 on the southeast side of the Central School grounds (see Central II). Operations continued there until 1914 when offices moved to a different Central Building at 3rd and Marion, which was the site of a former Central School (see Central I). The Health Department moved into the old office space.

“Some idea of Seattle’s growth may be had from the city’s school system and the efforts that have been made by the school district’s management in the outlying sections to meet constantly increasing demands in providing adequate school facilities,” The Seattle Post-Intelligencer wrote July 19, 1914.

In 1916, the district prepared a bill for submission to the state legislature to permit the erection of an administration building, including shops, storerooms, etc., from the proceeds of bonds.

In 1921, the district purchased a warehouse at 810 Dexter Avenue and architect Floyd A. Naramore helped redesign it into a temporary administration building. The district’s medical department moved there the following year, though district offices didn’t follow until 1934 when the district outgrew their old leased space at 3rd and Marion. A reception was held on September 12, 1934, which gave teachers and members of the community an opportunity to inspect the new quarters.

District operations remained at 810 Dexter Avenue for the next 15 years until some of the administrative and business functions such as Superintendent and Board Office and Finance moved to a new administrative building at 815 Fourth Avenue North in 1949. The 810 Dexter building continued to be used by the district for the next 40 years by various departments. The warehouse and some other functions remained for a short period before those were relocated to the Cascade School in the mid-1950s (see Cascade). District Facilities and associated operations remained at 810

Timeline of Administration Buildings

1889-1914:

Central School building at 7th and Marion

1914-34: Central Building at 3rd and Marion, leased space

1934-49: Administration Building, 810 Dexter
1949-89: Facilities and Operations, 810 Dexter

1949-2002:

Administrative & Service Center, 815 Fourth Avenue North

1969-2002:

Instructional Service Center at Fourth Avenue North

1989-2002:

District Facilities Center, 4141 Fourth Avenue South

2002-present:

John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence, 2445 3rd Avenue South



810 Dexter, ca. 1940 SPSA 601-03

Dexter until the spring of 1989 when District Facilities and associated operations moved to a new building at 4141 Fourth Avenue South, along with Purchasing, Security, and Warehouse. This new building came to be known as the District Facilities Center (DFC).

810 Dexter, along with the main portion of the Cascade School property were exchanged for the new property on Fourth Avenue South, which had been an eight-acre Ford Plant. PEMCO Mutual Insurance Company owned the Cascade School site, until 2006 when it was sold (see Cascade). 810 Dexter was demolished and an apartment building was built in its place.

Planning for the district's new administrative building at 815 Fourth Avenue North began in 1946 after consultations with staff and principals revealed a favorable reaction toward the construction of an administration building. The new administrative building was named Seattle Public Schools Administrative and Service Center (A&S) on May 20, 1949. Lister Holmes & Associates was the architect. The building dedicated a large percentage of space for direct services to pupils and teachers, even though some services were still decentralized. The Center was completed and occupied that August, and formally dedicated in a ceremony on September 25. When this 60,000-square-foot administrative building was dedicated, the District had 87 buildings and what is now Memorial Stadium. The operating budget was \$13.8 million.

A&S was the first administration building specifically designed for district use. The building was constructed on the site of Mercer School, demolished just the year before (see Mercer).

Promotional materials for the dedication stated that less than 30 percent of the building had routine business and administrative activities and association offices and conference rooms, while the remaining 70 percent, housed departments that served children directly, including medical, guidance and home visiting. Also included were a Department of Instructional Aids, a library, auditorium, a board room, and offices for teaching consultants. That service center model over a traditional facility was what led the school board to ultimately authorize the new building.

"Hundreds of visitors crowded through the \$800,000 structure for its first public house and dedication ceremonies," The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported the next day. "The ceremony was brief and to the point, with good wishes from State School Superintendent Pearl Wanamaker, Mayor William F. Devlin, Mrs. Edna Mundt, president of the Seattle Public School Council, and other notables."

"The Raven and the Salmon Lady" legend pole was dedicated at the Administrative and Service Center on August 22, 1973. The pole was created by master carver Morrie Alexander, who was born on the Lummi Reservation near Bellingham, Washington, in 1915. Alexander carved totem poles for presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy through commissions from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Other works were displayed at the State Capitol Museum in Olympia, the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, and the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. "The Raven and the Salmon Lady," however, was Alexander's last major work as he died on his way to the dedication at the age of 57. The legend pole had been commissioned by the Washington State Cultural Enrichment



Administrative & Service Center, 815 4th Avenue N, ca. 1970 SPSA 601-11

Program and Alexander was honored at the dedication with acting CEP manager Jack Kukuk saying, “there is no greater tribute to an artist than to have his work honored by people after he is gone.” The legend pole moved with the administrative offices in 2002 and is prominently displayed to this day at the entrance of the current district headquarters.

The district headquarters remained on Fourth Avenue North until 2002 when the district purchased a 1954 U.S. Postal Service Distribution Center at 2445 Third Avenue South to convert into the new district headquarters and to house all administrative and operations departments. The project cost \$52.4 million including \$12.1 million to buy the property and \$40.3 for the renovation. DLR Group was hired as the architect. The design was an open concept with a mix of small and large conference rooms and informal meeting spaces meant to promote teamwork across the departments, with capacity for 925 employees. The A&S site was sold in 2004 and is now the site for a retirement home.

In addition to the administrative offices, the district was able to consolidate functions and employees that were previously housed in as many as 20 school-district buildings across the city in the new 350,000 square-foot central office. Technology services was relocated from the Computer Center (i.e. educational data services) which



John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence (JSCEE), 2013 SPSA 601-42 (2)



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had been constructed in 1969 across the street from A&S on 4th Avenue North. When departments formerly located at the DFC were relocated in 2002, the Fourth Avenue South property was sold to Costco.

Features of the renovated central office building included a 19,000-square-foot training center, a central kitchen which had previously been split between three sites, data center, school board offices, an auditorium, television studio, a central warehouse, publishing center, and shops including carpentry, plumbing, auto and instrument repair.

Dedicated space was also created for the Records and Archives Center, which had been housed at a few different locations since 1978, most recently at Wilson-Pacific. The Records and Archives Center is a 7,000 square foot facility located at the north end of the second-floor, and houses inactive, permanent, and historical records. The facility was renamed the Eleanor Toews Records and Archives Center in 2022 in honor of the district's first archivist.

The new central office located at 2445 3rd Avenue South was dedicated and named the John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence (JSCEE) after the late superintendent. This honor was bestowed on Stanford for many reasons, not least of which was the fact that the consolidation of school-district offices had been one of Superintendent John Stanford's long-term goals.

Stanford, a former U.S. Army major general, was recruited in 1995 from Fulton County, Georgia to become the first Black superintendent at SPS. A year after becoming superintendent, he gave an address at the Democratic National Convention on the importance of public schools. Less than two years later, in 1998, Stanford announced he'd been diagnosed with leukemia. He died November 28, 1998 while still in office. "John dedicated every ounce of himself to our children," Seattle Mayor Paul Schell told *The Seattle Times* shortly after Stanford's death. "He put public education at the top of the civic agenda and leaves us with a legacy of community responsibility to our children and their education. It is now up to all of us to continue the fight, to strive to achieve the goals John laid out for Seattle's families and children."



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