

African American Academy

Name: Rising Star Elementary at African American Academy	Enrollment: 382
Address: 8311 Beacon Avenue S	Nickname: Panthers
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Green and white



African American Academy, 2001 © Mary Randlett SPSA 503-1

In January 1990, the African American Academy was approved by the Seattle School Board, one of 10 board-approved programs to eliminate disproportionality and increase academic achievement. The creation of the academy program was a response to the Friends of the African American Academy, consisting of activists advocating for a learning environment comprising African American teachers and support staff specifically for African American male students and a specialized curriculum that acknowledged cultural differences in teaching and learning styles. The student program expanded to include African American female students.

The African-centered curriculum recognized that humanity started in Africa and emphasized the history, culture, and heritage of Africans and African Americans through an interdisciplinary approach. The focus of the academy was to develop in each student a strong sense of self and a strong sense of heritage. Of the students, 91 percent were African American. Classes mixed students of different grade levels, and middle school students served as mentors. All students wore uniforms. Activities at the academy began with a family potluck orientation.

Details:

Name:	African American Academy
Location:	8311 Beacon Avenue S
Building:	32-room brick and metal
Architect:	Streeter & Associates Architects AIA, PLLC
Site:	11 acres

2000:	School opens; African American Academy program relocates from Magnolia
2009:	African American Academy program discontinued & Van Asselt Elementary School K-5 program moved in; Renamed Van Asselt at African American Academy
2019:	Renamed Rising Star Elementary at African American Academy
2020:	Seismic improvements

It opened as a K-5 at Colman School in September 1991 (see Thurgood Marshall), then moved to Sharples for the next school year and became K-6 (see Kurose). From 1993-2000 its home was Magnolia School.

In September 2000, the academy moved into a new facility designed for a K-8 program. Designed by Streeter & Associates Architects AIA, PLLC, with Soltek Pacific serving as contractors, the three-story building has capacity for 650 students, comprising two classroom wings, a 90-seat lecture hall, cafeteria, and a gymnasium with stage.

In 2009, the Seattle School Board voted 5-2 to close the African American Academy program. In the fall of 2009, students from the Van Asselt Elementary School K-5 program located at 7201 Beacon Ave. S. (see Van Asselt) moved one mile south to the African American Academy building. Then known as Van Asselt at African American Academy, the student population peaked at 553 students in 2010, reducing to 382 students in 2020.

In 2019, the school's name changed from Van Asselt Elementary at African American Academy to Rising Star Elementary at African American Academy. The name was changed to eliminate confusion and other issues related to another Seattle Public School campus sharing the Van Asselt name less than a mile away.