

Kurose

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| Name: Aki Kurose Middle School | Enrollment: 720 |
| Address: 3928 S Graham Street | Nickname: Peace Cranes |
| Configuration: 6-8 | Colors: Blue and gold |



Sharples, ca. 1960 SPSA 112-3

In 1952, Casper W. Sharples Junior High School opened to serve a large area in south Seattle, taking in students from Beacon Hill, Muir, Whitworth, Hawthorne, Van Asselt, Emerson, Brighton, Dunlap, Columbia, and Rainier View. In addition to over 1,220 students in grades 7-9, 130 sixth graders attended the new school that first year.

Casper Wistar Sharples was a prominent Seattle physician who was one of the first nine to take the state medical examinations in Washington. He was also the long-time Chief of Staff at Children's Orthopedic Hospital. His wife, the former Anne Goodrell, was the physical education supervisor for Seattle Public Schools, and, beginning in 1922, Dr. Sharples served for nine years on the Seattle School Board.

The site comprised 4.8 acres owned by the district and 12.9 acres of Brighton Playfield, which was leased for 99 years from the Seattle Parks Department. On February 11, 1955, a ceremony was held to commemorate the selection of a school flower. Sharples' granddaughter helped plant a wisteria bush to the left of the main entrance. It was selected because Caspar W. Sharples was named for Dr. Caspar Wistar, an anatomy professor at the University of Pennsylvania. The flower, wisteria (commonly known as wisteria), was named for Wistar.

Enrollment increased to 1,839 in 1956-57, but in September 1957 it dropped to 1,550 with the opening of Asa Mercer Junior High, which drew from Beacon Hill, Muir, and parts of Van Asselt and Columbia. In 1959-60, enrollment peaked at 1,878 with 17 portables in use. Rainier Beach Junior High School opened in

Details:

Name: **Casper W. Sharples Junior High School**
Location: 3928 S Graham Street
Building: 40-room, 2-story brick
Architect: William Mallis
Site: 4.8 acres

1952: Opened
1981: Closed as a middle school in June
1981-87: Alternative program site
1988-90: Interim site for Franklin
1989-99: Alternative program site
1994: Seismic updates
1999: Became Sharples Middle School; renamed Aki Kurose Middle School
2010: Science and library upgrades
2023: Design work began for modernization and addition (BEX V)

September 1960 for students coming out of Rainier View, Dunlap, and Emerson, lowering Sharples' enrollment to 1,290. By 1974, enrollment had dropped to 950.

In the 1970s, Mandarin Chinese was taught as a foreign language. The district's desegregation plan, which began in 1978, brought in students from the Broadview Elementary School and Wilson Junior High School areas.

In 1981, the school board was dealing with declining district-wide enrollment as well as the shift from junior high schools to middle schools. The board chose to close Sharples as a middle school in favor of the newer South Shore. South Shore opened in 1971 and was designed as a middle school. Sharples then became the site for several special programs.

Sharples Alternative Secondary School (SASS) opened in 1981-82. Students came mainly from the central and southeast portions of the city. The program served students who began 9th grade, were under age 21, and were generally behind in credits. Sharples also became the home of a reentry program for students who had dropped out or had been suspended, the Project Transition vocational program for handicapped youth, and the Teenage Parent Program. The school made an "attempt to accommodate anything in their lives that might prevent them from finishing school — including children, jobs or brushes with the juvenile justice system." It made "an extra effort to make

students aware of vocational training and job opportunities."

Sharples housed a bilingual orientation program, also known as the Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center (SBOC), for a large number of newly arrived immigrants who came from many countries and needed an intensive English language program. This program was designed to ready them for entrance to regular schools and to help them adjust to life in a new country.

From September 1988 to June 1990, students from Franklin were housed at Sharples while their high school was being renovated. The SBOC was relocated to three different schools in the district, and the SASS moved into leased space at Washington Institute for Applied Technology (the former Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center Building) at 22nd Avenue and Jackson Street. A proposed move of the Alternative Secondary School to Boren did not materialize after a survey showed 86 percent of the students would drop out if that happened.

In September 1990, the SBOC, the SASS, the reentry program, teenage parent program, and Samoan Integration Services, all returned to Sharples. The African American Academy relocated to Sharples from Colman for the 1992-93 school year because it needed more space. It moved to Magnolia the following year because of problems encountered in sharing the Sharples building with older students.

In spring 1998, South Shore principal Bi Hoa Caldwell was awarded the Seattle Alliance for Education A+ award. In September 1999, at the request of principal Caldwell, the South Shore middle school program moved to Sharples and assumed the name Sharples Middle School, and the various special programs previously located at Sharples moved to South Shore Middle School. The move was requested as the more traditional classrooms and corridors of Sharples were considered to better serve the needs of the students, as opposed to the open concept design of South Shore.



Sharples, 1960 SPSA 112-37

Shortly after Sharples became a middle school again, the school was renamed to honor Aki Kurose in November 1999. It was the first school to be named after an Asian American woman. Kurose taught in the district for 25 years and inspired many with her actions for peace and understanding among all cultures. She received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Education and the United Nations Human Rights Award. Her favorite saying was, “If we are to teach real peace in the world we will have to begin with children.” After Sharples was renamed Aki Kurose, the district changed its policy on renaming buildings, to include more community engagement and consultation with family members of the original honoree.

In 2007, Kurose was one of three schools identified to participate in the district’s Southeast Initiative, which aimed to improve student performance, along with Rainier Beach and Cleveland high schools. In December 2008, SPS superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson proposed merging the two high schools and moving Kurose into the Rainier Beach building. The South Seattle community resisted, and the plan was abandoned.

In 2010, funds from the BTA II capital levy approved by voters in 2004 were used to improve Kurose’s science and gym facilities. In 2020, the adjacent Brighton Playfield was renovated by the Seattle Parks Department, and artificial turf—marked with lines for soccer, baseball, football, and ultimate frisbee—was installed on the sports field.

In March 2013, Kurose principal Mia Williams received the coveted Thomas B. Foster Award for Excellence and a \$50,000 grant for Kurose from the Alliance for Education. The alliance “selected Williams for her work to improve test scores and foster partnerships with the community during her five years as principal. One of those partnerships is with the academic mentor program Rainier Scholars, which shares Aki Kurose’s building.” In 2016, Williams was named the state’s Middle Level Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals.

Kurose has long been one of the most diverse schools in the district. In 2022, more than 25 home languages were represented. Kurose is one of six schools in the district (Mercer, Denny, Franklin, Cleveland and Interagency) that offers the Kingmakers of Seattle Program, which is an elective for Black male students, who are taught and mentored by Black males. They study a curriculum that is African-centered and emphasizes increasing literacy, building self-esteem, and teaching Black history.