

Leschi

Name: Leschi Elementary School	Enrollment: 338
Address: 135 32nd Avenue	Nickname: Bulldog Pups
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Lime green



Leschi, 1972 SPSA 244-86

Details:

Name: **Leschi School**
 Location: 135 32nd Avenue
 Building: 8-room brick with two-story addition
 Architect: James Stephen
 Site: 3 acres

1909: Opened
 1922: Site expanded
 1930: Site expanded to 1.65 acres
 1953: Site expanded to 2.8 acres
 1961: Addition (Bindon & Wright)
 1988: 1909 building demolished; addition (Church/Suzuki)
 2006: Library improvements
 2016: Geothermal wells, and Phase I seismic improvements
 2018: Phase II seismic improvements
 2022: Two-story, 4-classroom addition (Thomas Cook Fitzgerald; Washington State Distressed Schools Grant)

Long ago, Native Americans landed on the Lake Washington shore where the Leschi neighborhood is now located and portaged their canoes along a trail leading to Elliott Bay. Henry Yesler, who operated Seattle’s first sawmill, acquired a narrow strip of land corresponding roughly to the Indigenous trail and used it to transport logs to Puget Sound.

Logs were pulled by ox teams to the top of the hill and then skidded down the hill to his mill on the saltwater. In January 1856, at the camp on the east end of this “skid road,” a few hundred Native Americans gathered to plan their attack on the small town of Seattle. Among this group was the Nisqually leader Leschi. Leschi was later executed for his role in the rebellion.

This route between saltwater and freshwater became a cable car line that by the 1890s transported passengers from downtown to a ferry landing where they could cross Lake Washington to the east side. Skid Road was renamed Mill Street and later became Yesler Way. By 1891, the events 35 years earlier had been sufficiently romanticized that the owner of a cable car company suggested naming a park at the Lake Washington end of the line after Leschi.

In the early 1900s, Leschi Park was a popular destination for Sunday recreation. The park featured a small zoo with sea lions and a panther to delight children, along with a casino and dance hall for

adults. In 1906, the Seattle School Board purchased a parcel of land in the neighborhood where a florist named Philip D. O'Brien had operated a rose garden and greenhouses.

Construction of Leschi School began in February 1909. The building was similar in style to Greenwood, Hawthorne, and Emerson, with Jacobean details, including steeply pitched roofs, red brick with terra cotta trim, and pointed archways.

The eight-room school served approximately 300 students in grades 1-8 until 1918-19, when enrollment rose to 371. At that time, the boys' and girls' playrooms in the basement were converted into two additional classrooms. Because the school had no facilities for manual training or home economics, once a week, older students hurriedly ate their lunches and walked over to Walla Walla School (later Horace Mann) for instruction in these subjects.

Parkland opened at 32nd S Avenue and Charles Street in 1925 as an annex to Leschi. Two portables were used for classrooms until October 22, 1939. The Parkland property was sold November 26, 1941.

When Washington Junior High School opened in 1938, Leschi became K-6 and enrollment dropped. In 1940-41, enrollment rebounded to 374. The closing of Rainier meant that Leschi's area extended farther west to 19th Avenue and encompassed a multiethnic neighborhood. Portables were placed on the school grounds, including one used as a lunchroom and as many as six used for classrooms. In 1954, Leschi served 509 students taught by 15 teachers, and the kindergarten operated in triple shifts.

The playfield was asphalted during the 1950s and the school's site enlarged to the south along 32nd Avenue. Enrollment peaked at 592 in 1958-59. A house standing on the enlarged site was used as an annex during 1958-60. During the 1960-61 school year, a much-needed addition was constructed, adding seven classrooms, an

Details:

Name: **Parkland**
 Location: 32nd Avenue S and [S] Charles Street
 Building: Two portables
 Architect: James Stephen
 Site: 3 acres

1925: Opened as annex to Leschi

1939: Closed

1941: Property sold

Present: Residential homes



Leschi, 1963 SPSA 244-91

administrative-health unit, a lunchroom-auditorium, a gymnasium, and a covered play court on the south side of the building. The original structure was also remodeled and modernized.

On property adjoining the school is Peppi's Park, named by the students in honor of a classmate, Peppi Braxton, who died in 1971. The park contains a wading pool, swings, and large free-form structures for climbing. With its trees and panoramic view of Lake Washington, the park was often used as an outdoor classroom.

Beginning in 1968-69, as part of the district's 4-4-4 Plan (see Stevens), Leschi housed grades K-4. In September 1978, under the "Seattle Plan," the district's student-assignment plan designed to desegregate schools, Leschi became K, 4-5 in a triad with Decatur and Wedgwood, both of which housed grades K-3. This configuration continued through spring 1988.

In 1984, as part of a district-wide Capital Improvement Program, Leschi became one of 16 schools identified as needing renovation. Over the next few years, meetings were held with the community. Ultimately the decision was made to demolish the 1909 structure. Leschi students found a temporary home at Broadview-Thomson for the 1987-88 school year.

The new addition, a steel-frame structure with brick veneer, is a wing on the 1961 structure. The addition contains 18 classrooms plus arts/science, resource rooms, and a library. Also included are two kindergarten classrooms, an auditorium/lunchroom, a gym, and an administrative area.

In 2007, Leschi was recognized with a Washington State School of Distinction award.

Geothermal wells and Phase I seismic improvements were made in 2016. That same year, Leschi initiated the "Best of Both" model, merging the mostly white students in the onsite Montessori program with the "contemporary" classes of primarily non-white students. Students spend part of the day with instruction blended into both programs.

Currently [2023] at Leschi, general education classes offer instruction to kindergarten through 5th grade students, with a focus on social justice and racial equity. Some annual events include the Taste of Leschi, Jog-a-thon, and Black History Night and Dinner. Each week, Leschi holds an event for families in need with food support and other services and resources.

With funding from the Washington State Distressed Schools Grant, Thomas Cook Fitzgerald (TCF) Architecture designed a two-story addition with four new classrooms, which blended in with the existing masonry school building. The project included new landscaping, bio-filtration, and a secure bicycle storage area. The major construction was completed in time for the 2022-23 school year.



Leschi, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 244-217