

# Sacajawea

Name: Sacajawea Elementary School	Enrollment: 198
Address: 9501 20th Avenue NE	Nickname: Eagles
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Green, black, and silver



Sacajawea, 1960 SPSA 268-4

## Details:

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Name: **Victory Heights School**  
 Location: (N)E 95th & 20th Avenue NE  
 Building: Portables  
 Site: 3.31 acres

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1955: Opened October 17 as annex to Maple Leaf  
 1956: Officially named Sacajawea School on July 31  
 1959: Closed in spring

With the expansion of Seattle's city limits north to 145th Street in 1953 came the problem of how to provide classroom space for students living in the Maple Leaf neighborhood between Bothell Way and 15th Avenue NE, and between NE 85th Street and NE 105th Street. That fall, almost 200 children from that area, called Victory Heights, were transported to University Heights in the University District.

Thus, in 1954, the district began looking for property in the neighborhood. After some difficulty in securing title, site preparation began in summer 1955. However, the installation of nine portables was postponed because of problems connecting to the Lake City Sewer District. In the meantime, a footbridge was constructed over

Thornton Creek to provide access to children coming from the north.

When the school was not ready in September 1955, older children attended half-day sessions at Maple Leaf, while kindergartners delayed starting school. A month later, the school opened with 204 students in eight classroom portables. The school was officially named in honor of the Shoshone Indigenous woman who helped to guide the Lewis and Clark Expedition over a portion of their route to the Pacific Coast. It is one of three district schools honoring Indigenous individuals (see Leschi and Sealth) and the only one named for a Native American woman.

Plans for a permanent building were completed but construction was delayed, this time because of difficulties vacating NE 96th Street. This problem was solved when a bypass road was built on the north side of the school site. When the new Sacajawea School opened in 1959, its attendance boundary was extended to 12th Avenue NE to bring in some students from Pinehurst and Olympic View, raising the total to 364. The building was constructed on two levels to take advantage of the sloping site.

In September 1961, two portables were added to handle increased enrollment, which was over 500. However, the student population declined over the next decade. By 1972-73, enrollment was 320 with only 40 children in kindergarten. That school year 15 percent of the student body was from a minority group, half from the neighborhood, and half voluntary transfers from the Central Area. Portable buildings were no longer needed, and four classrooms became centers for individualized instruction in math and reading.

The physical education program at Sacajawea became a model for the city and the region because the school was the first elementary building in the area with Southampton and Essex frames in the gym. This equipment, together with the assignment of a highly qualified PE specialist, provided improved instruction, which included a program of movement exploration.

On June 18, 1975, a fire occurred as the result of a defective electric heater that severely damaged the custodial receiving room and portions of the auditorium. A resolution passed in July and the facilities department was tasked with repairing the damaged areas of the building.

Enrollment dropped to 204 in 1975-76 but rose to 250 the next year with the addition of special education classes from Pinehurst. In 1979, enrollment at Sacajawea was down to just 202 students while Sand Point had only 176. The schools were deemed reasonably close in distance, so the Sacajawea principal was assigned a dual-principalship.

Under the district's desegregation plan, Sacajawea became a K-3 school in 1981-82, in a triad with Madrona (K, 4-6) and Rogers (K-3). A childcare center opened at Sacajawea in June 1987, a joint project of the City of Seattle and the Seattle School District. The school district provided two portables, and the city contracted with childcare specialists and offered a subsidization program. Sacajawea launched an artist-in-residence program in the late 1980s. This program developed into an examination of art around the world, with an annual rotation to a new continent.

When Harry Nelson arrived as principal in the mid-1990s, the school adopted a committee system for determining how the annual budget should be spent, in hopes of finding innovative ways to attract new students. The various committees were composed of parents, faculty, and the principal.

In 2018, planning began for a future building replacement, which will have a capacity for 500 students. The construction will be funded in a future capital levy.

## Details:

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Name: **Sacajawea Elementary School**  
 Location: 9501 20th Avenue NE  
 Building: 15-room brick  
 Architect: Waldron & Dietz  
 Site: 3.8 acres

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1959: Opened in September  
 1989: Transitioned to a K-5  
 2015: Seismic upgrades  
 2018: Planning for future building replacement began (BEX V)



Sacajawea, 1960 SPSA 268-2