

South Shore

Name: South Shore K-8 School	Enrollment: 602
Address: 4800 S Henderson Street	Nickname: Sea Dragons
Configuration: K-8	Colors:



South Shore, 2001 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 130-11

In 1967, Rainier Beach Junior and Senior High School was overcrowded, housing 2,159 students in a building designed for 1,500. The principal, Don Means, led a push for a separate school for grades 7 and 8. Planners felt that 9th graders were too mature to be among the younger students, so they envisioned that the new middle school would serve as a pilot educational center. The middle school would house an interdisciplinary team of teachers who instructed the same group of students throughout the day in basic subjects, thus being “more like elementary schools” than the old junior highs.

In February 1968, the school board authorized planning for a Southeast Education Center, of which the middle school would be the key. Several years of planning and changes in leadership followed. In the meantime, a portable school was constructed. The school was scheduled to open in September 1970, but construction was delayed. That fall the Model Middle School opened for 300 7th graders in portables on the grounds at Rainier Beach.

A contest was held among the middle school students and 6th graders at feeder elementary schools (Dunlap, Rainier View, Emerson, and Wing Luke) to choose a permanent name for the school. The name South Shore, describing the school’s location near the south end of Lake Washington, beat Parkway, Martin Luther King, and Marie McCloud (a past teacher at Rainier View).

The next fall the school was expanded to grades 7 and 8. When additional portables to house the incoming 7th graders were not ready in time, students attended the school in double shifts. When they arrived, the groups of portables were joined together in “pods” of four, divided into “houses,” with a team of teachers in each “house.”

Details:

Name: **Model Middle School**

Location: 8633 53rd Avenue S

Building: Portables

1970: Opened in September

1971: Renamed South Shore Middle School on August 25

1973: Closed as middle school

1974-75: Alternative school site

Details:

Name: **South Shore Middle School**

Location: 8825 Rainier Avenue S

Building: 1-story open concept

Architect: Naramore, Bain, Brady
& Johanson

Site: 11 acres

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- 1973: Opened on December 10
 - 1999: Closed as middle school in June; opened in September to SASS and SBOC
 - 1999: Interim site for Dunlap
 - 2000: SBOC program relocated to Hay; interim site for Emerson
 - 2002: The New School program opened and co-located with South Lake High School program
 - 2007: South Lake program relocated to Hughes as interim site; The New School program relocated to Columbia as interim site
 - 2008: School demolished

The permanent school, designed for 1,200 students in grades 5-8, was the first in the district designed expressly as a middle school. The main room of the open-concept school was roughly a triangle, 1.5 acres in size and about 320 feet across at its maximum width. Of the feeder schools, only Wing Luke was an open-concept school, so the experience was new to most entering students. Eventually the school housed grades 6-8.

At the time, South Shore was heralded as “possibly the most significant new school ever opened in the Seattle School District.” The basic structure of the school was wood frame, with heavy, exposed timber trusses and columns. Open wood-trussed beams were designed by computer for stress tolerance. Bright colors were used throughout the interior. Covering the floor of the main room was a multi-colored rug with stripes of pink, purple, rust, two shades of green, and two shades of blue. Student lockers were made of wood and plastic to reduce noise over the usual metal lockers.

The original building was designed as a single structure with a school and community center, with the Rainier Beach Community Center and swimming pool at one end of the building, along with three special rooms for community center use. Students were given morning use of the parks department swimming pool. The school was completed six months behind schedule, and students shifted over from the portables midway through the 1973-74 school year. American Indian Heritage moved into the portables from Georgetown the following September.

In 1980-81, South Shore was able to attract “voluntary racial transfers from all over Seattle and from suburban school districts” through its Horizon Program for highly capable students. South Shore was the district’s first secondary school to require students to wear uniforms.



South Shore, ca. 1973 SPSA 130-4

In fall 1999, at the request of South Shore's principal, the South Shore program relocated to Sharples (see Kurose). The open-concept floor plan no longer worked for the middle school program, primarily because of noise disturbances. In turn, the South Shore building became the new home of the Sharples Alternative Secondary School (SASS) and the Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center (SBOC) alternative programs that had been housed at Sharples. The SASS program was renamed South Lake High School at South Shore. In the same year, students from Dunlap Elementary were relocated to South Shore as their interim site, while their site was under construction. For that year, the three programs coexisted. Dunlap students returned to their newly renovated school in September 2000. The SBOC left South Shore in 2000 as well when the program was relocated to Hay (see Queen Anne Elementary). Emerson students used South Shore as an interim site for school year 2000-01 and were co-located with South Lake students for that year.

In April 2000, after an equity issue was raised by community members about the fact that there was not a K-8 option school available in Seattle's Rainier Valley, the school board added money to the BEX II levy proposal to remodel South Shore with conventional classrooms. The levy was approved by voters in 2001. In anticipation of a new building, The New School, a K-8 program developed from a public-private partnership between Seattle Public Schools and The New School Foundation, began operating in a portion of the South Shore building in 2001. This new program offered a longer school year, small class sizes, and free preschool. It was co-located with South Lake High School.

In 2003, the district announced that construction would be delayed by at least a year as it studied how to best accommodate both The New School and South Lake. In 2005, due to budget constraints, the funding earmarked for a replacement school for South Shore was reallocated for a new school for South Lake High School. South Lake students relocated to Hughes as their interim location in 2007 while their new high school was constructed on the northeast corner of the South Shore site. South Lake High School opened in 2008 (see South Lake).

Details:

Name: **South Shore K-8**
 Location: 4800 S Henderson Street
 Building: 3-story with shared-learning classroom clusters
 Architect: BLRB
 Site: 11.4 acres (shared campus)

2008: South Lake High School opened on northeast corner of campus
 2009: New school building opened (BEX III); The New School program relocated to South Shore; Program renamed South Shore K-8
 2010: School temporarily closed in April; students relocated to Columbia as interim site
 2010: School reopened



South Shore, 2022 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 291-8



South Shore, 2022 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 291-9

Optimistic that BEX III would be approved, and the construction project would proceed in the coming months, The New School relocated to Columbia in Rainier Valley as its interim site in September 2007 as well. As planned, construction began on a new, state-of-the-art K-8 school in early spring 2008, though the design was flexible enough that it could be an elementary school, K-8 school, middle school, or high school, depending on the need.

The new 139,000-square-foot school building met with rave reviews when it opened in September 2009. The design firm, BLRB Architects, wrote that “student-centered, personalization and active participation are hallmarks of South Shore and evident in the way the facility design is comprised of distinct small learning communities or educational ‘houses.’ Each house has several classrooms clustered around a shared learning space.” BLRB collaborated with a 30-member team of teachers, staff, students, and South Seattle community members to arrive at the final design. Among its many features, the new facility included a student commons, gymnasium, library, music and art classrooms, and an applied technology lab. At the corner of the school property, at Rainier Avenue and Henderson, a community plaza was part of the school project, designed to host community celebrations and events. When The New School program relocated to the new building in 2009, its name changed to South Shore K-8.

The school did not remain open long. Students were required to relocate back to the Columbia school building in April 2010 when issues came up with the carpet that was installed in South Shore. The school reopened in the fall 2010 once the problems had been addressed.

The community center, which had been built as part of the original South Shore, was formally separated by a dividing wall right before South Shore was demolished, which created two buildings and preserved the community center. The Rainier Beach Community Center was rebuilt in 2013 as a separate facility, but it is still closely tied to the South Shore school.

In 2013, South Shore was one of 11 Seattle schools to receive funding from the 2011 Families and Education Levy to support struggling students and help close the achievement gap. In 2014 South Shore became the first school in the state to use RULER, an approach created at Yale University that teaches students how to Recognize, Understand, Label, Express, and Regulate emotions. In 2021, approximately 75 percent of South Shore students identified as students of color, who have historically been underserved and furthest from educational justice.

In 2022, South Shore became the first school in the district to host the pilot All Kids Bike Program, a national movement on a mission to teach every child in kindergarten how to ride a bike in PE class.