

Thornton Creek

Name: Thornton Creek Elementary School	Enrollment: 573
Address: 7712 40th Avenue NE	Nickname: n.a.
Configuration: K-5	Colors: n.a.



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In 1961, the Seattle School District built a new elementary school on a three-acre parcel of the Shearwater site called Stephen Decatur Elementary School (see Decatur). In December 1965, the federal government transferred an additional 6.91 acres of the Shearwater property to the school district. As the school board was approving the resolution to acquire the quitclaim deed for this property, they were also discussing an additional .83 acres that had recently become available when the City Water Department withdrew its application for the property. A few weeks later, in January 1966, the board resolved to acquire this additional land, expanding the site to 10 acres.

In June 1989, Decatur closed as a regular elementary school and became the home of the Alternative Education School No. 2 (AE II). In 2008, the name of the AE II program was changed to Thornton Creek, a name that honored the surrounding Thornton Creek watershed. The watershed is the largest in Seattle and encompasses unique kettle bogs and a stream environment capable of supporting all five species of Pacific Salmon. Unlike other urban watersheds, over 90 percent of the creek main channel, more than 15 miles, flows above ground, through more than 700 backyards and over 15 parks and natural areas, on its way southeast across town toward Lake Washington.

Details:

Name: **Thornton Creek Elementary School**
 Location: 7712 40th Avenue NE
 Architect: Mahlum Architects, Inc.
 Site: 10 acres (shared campus with Decatur)

2008: AE#2 Program at Decatur changed name to Thornton Creek
 2014: Construction began
 2016: School opened in September (BEX IV); Thornton Creek students transferred from Decatur

After Seattle voters approved the BEX IV capital levy in 2013, final planning began for a new elementary school at the 10-acre Decatur site. Eventually it was determined that the Decatur building would be retained, and a new school for Thornton Creek Elementary would be built on the adjacent property. Mahlum Architects, Inc. designed the new school with extensive engagement from an advisory board of stakeholders, including school staff and parents.

The project included construction of a new 92,490-square-foot multistory K-5 elementary school building, designed to support 660 students and the Thornton Creek School learning environment, which engages students through exploration and discovery. The program, called Expeditionary Learning, asks students to complete projects and work cooperatively in small groups and across grade levels. Small learning communities with individual classrooms surround open shared-learning areas. The school also features designated areas for special education, art, science, music, childcare, a library, and a gymnasium. Additionally, the dining commons has been divided into two areas for different scaled eating and socializing experiences, with two music room/stages that engage the spaces for expeditionary learning performances.

Meanwhile, the Decatur building was retained and re-purposed (see Decatur). Each school site sits on its own parcel of land and the playfield is on a third parcel. However, design elements blend the two schools to create a cohesive campus, with ballfields and a walking track, covered play structures, a playground, an outdoor learning area, and a rain garden.

In the 2022-23 school year, Thornton Creek was an option school with a looping model in which students stayed with the same teacher in grades 2-3 and 4-5.



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