

Whitworth

Name: Orca K-8 School at Whitworth	Enrollment: 424
Address: 5215 46th Avenue S	Nickname:
Configuration: K-8	Colors:



Whitworth, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 283-13

Details:

Name: **Whitworth School**
 Location: 5215 46th Avenue S
 Building: 8-room brick
 Architect: James Stephen
 Site: 1.7 acres

1908: Opened
 1916: Site expanded to 2.67 acres
 1918: Addition (Edgar Blair)
 1958: Addition (Carlson, Eley, Grevstad)
 1968: Addition
 1987: Closed in June for construction; school demolished; Students relocated to Monroe as interim site

Ernest A. Hadlock, an early resident of the Columbia City area, reported that a schoolhouse once stood to the northeast of 44th Avenue S and Brandon Street, but by the time Hadlock arrived in 1891, the schoolhouse site was just an empty cleared space.

The next school in the area was a one-room schoolhouse, opened in 1880 at the southwest corner of 50th Avenue South and Brandon. Nearby was a large field, where Native Americans came by canoe down the Black River to pick hops. That school closed in 1891 and its students were transferred to Columbia City School.

Hillman School opened in the area of Hillman City on Orcas Street between 39th Avenue and 42nd Avenue S. Two teachers used a single room, each for half-day sessions. In April 1907, Hillman housed 123 students in grades 1-4 in three classrooms. The area was annexed into Seattle in 1907, and a new site was purchased by Seattle School District to replace this school in August 1907 at 46th Avenue S and Dawson Street. Portables were moved to the new location for temporary use while a permanent building was constructed.

On January 17, 1908, the new school was named for Reverend George F. Whitworth, who died in October 1907. Whitworth had arrived in Washington Territory in 1853, became president of the Territorial University

of Washington in 1866, and served as superintendent of schools in Thurston and King counties. Whitworth School opened on the 40th Avenue site in 1908 with grades 1-8. The portables were moved to Van Asselt.

Though designs were drawn up for both brick and wood-framed buildings, a bid for brick construction was accepted. The school design was also modified slightly to reduce costs. The work was awarded to F. S. Cannon for \$30,618 on February 10, 1908, and was completed by August 1, 1908.

Emma C. Hart served as the first principal from 1908 to 1938. Under her supervision, Whitworth achieved awards three times in five years for implementing the most advanced ideas in education in Washington.

In 1916, the site was expanded with the addition of a playfield. A 1918 addition had eight classrooms, plus an auditorium and lunchroom. Kindergarten was added in 1919-20.

In 1945-46, two vacant rooms at Whitworth were used to temporarily house 6th and 7th grade classes from Brighton School. Whitworth became a K-6 school in 1952-53. A south wing with six classrooms was added in 1958. During the 1958-59 school year, enrollment peaked at 853 students.

The main structure of the school was on the district list for replacement or remodeling. Whitworth was one of the most popular elementary schools in the district in 1983-84 since it was a K-6 school and not in the busing plan. With 647 students, it was the city's largest elementary school, but it had the smallest playground in the district due to its small lot size.

Details:

Name: **Whitworth Elementary School**

Location: 5215 46th Avenue S

Building: 3-story brick

Architect: WMFL Architects
and Engineers

Site: 3.43 acres

1989: New school opened;
site expanded

2007: Whitworth Elementary
School closed; ORCA
K-5 School moved to
Whitworth from Columbia
and became K-8 program

2020: Seismic updates



Whitworth, 1960: 1958 addition (left), 1908 building (center), 1918 addition (right) SPSA 283-5

On May 15, 1985, Whitworth students released hundreds of balloons as part of a National Science Week project to study winds and air currents across the country. Whitworth represented Seattle, one of only 10 cities participating. Each balloon carried a postcard that identified its point of origin and requested notification of where the balloon landed.

In September 1986, Whitworth received an exemplary school award from the U.S. Department of Education as one of the country's 271 best elementary schools. This Excellence in Education award was the first given to an inner-city elementary school in Washington. Principal John Morefield credited the school's strength to an attitude embraced 15 years earlier when Principal Al Cohen and a group of teachers agreed "to go the extra mile and support each other" in making the school a better place.

Whitworth students and staff moved to Monroe in September 1987 while their building was demolished and replaced with a new structure. On September 6, 1989, they moved into the new school, whose site had been expanded to include a larger playfield. The new three-story brick school with 22 rooms was designed by WMFL Architects and Engineers. One unusual feature was its self-contained special education classrooms designed for medically fragile students.

Whitworth Elementary closed at the end of the 2006-07 school year, along with four other elementary schools. At the time, Whitworth served 231 students in grades K-5. Former Whitworth students were combined the following year as if they lived in the Dearborn Park reference area. In September 2007, the Orca K-5 program moved from Columbia to Whitworth. At the same time, Orca became a K-8 school, though it enrolled only K-6 students for the first year.

Orca K-8 is a progressive alternative public school serving Columbia City, Hillman City, and Seward Park, some of the most diverse neighborhoods in Seattle. Orca originated in 1972 as the Allen Free School (see Allen). When it moved to Day in 1981, its name officially changed to Orca, although it has been called the Allen-Orca Alternative School since 1977. The name Orca was intended to call attention to the endangered marine mammal. From Day, Orca relocated to Columbia in 1989 before moving to Whitworth.

Although the program has evolved over the years, hands-on education continues to be a hallmark. The greenhouse, garden and science building opened at the school in 2008. In 2020, building modifications were made to meet the updated needs of special education students.



Whitworth, 1960 SPSA 283-6