

High Point

Name: **High Point Elementary School**
 Address: 6760 34th Avenue SW
 Configuration: K-5

Enrollment: 253
 Nickname: Huskies
 Colors: Purple and gold



High Point, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 236-50

During World War I, many families moved into West Seattle because of its thriving industries. In 1918, a Seattle School Board committee recommended placing a school in the general vicinity of 35th Avenue SW and SW Juneau Street, “near the Ridgewood Addition.” By 1922 Jefferson was overcrowded, so a small portable school, called Ridgewood, opened to handle the overflow. The site was originally leased from owner Henry M. Clay with an option to purchase.

Ridgewood’s single classroom housed students in grades 1–3 until 1925–26 when it combined 1st and 2nd graders only. When Ridgewood closed in 1939, its students were sent to Hughes, Gatewood, and Jefferson.

Two years after Ridgewood closed, the federal government took over the property as part of a 175-acre housing project. Originally it was to be called Gatewood Heights, but that name drew protests from Gatewood residents near the California and Fauntleroy junction. Named High Point instead, it was designed to house workers and their families who came from around the country to work in Seattle’s shipyards and airplane factories during World War II. Families started moving into the project’s 1,300 apartments in April 1942. It is said to have been the second largest housing project west of the Mississippi River.

Early on, it became clear that provisions were needed to educate the approximately 300 children moving into High Point. In 1942–43,

Name: **Ridgewood School**
Location: 35th Avenue SW &
SW Juneau Street
Building: 1-room portable
Site: 5.0 acres

1922: Opened as an annex
to Jefferson
1939: Closed on October 2
1941: Sold to U.S. government on
April 9

Name: **High Point School**
Location: 6760 34th Avenue SW
Building: 12-room wood
Architect: Stuart, Kirk & Durham
Site: 3.47 acres

1944: Opened in September
1947: Acquired from federal
government
1953: Addition (n.a.)
1959: Site expanded to 5.64 acres
1987: Closed in June; demolished
in summer



High Point Annex, ca. 1948 SPSA 236-7

Name: **High Point Annex**
Location: 2900 SW Graham Street
Building: 4-room wood
Site: 0.5 acre

1948: Opened in September
1951: Acquired from federal
government
1972: Closed in spring

kindergarten was taught in the community hall, while older children went by bus to Cooper and Gatewood.

In August 1943, the school board decided that the High Point School would only serve children living in the High Point Project. Additionally, it would “be operated separately from other schools of the neighborhood.” That fall, classes for grades 1–3 and kindergarten were held in living units at the project; each teacher taught in a separate apartment. On the first day, they were presented with their classroom materials in underwear boxes donated by the University District J.C. Penney store. Because classroom furniture was not yet ready, the 306 children sat on the floor. The principal’s office was housed in the first apartment north of the east entrance of the school building, which opened in 1944. The custodian stored supplies in the apartment’s back bedroom.

In 1944, a new High Point School opened just five blocks from the site of Ridgewood. Constructed with federal funds with an architectural style similar to the housing project, it was designed to accommodate kindergarten and grades 1–4; upper grades still went to Gatewood. Although Seattle Public Schools operated the school from the beginning, it was not until fall 1947 that the property was deeded to the district by the federal government.

In September 1948, two classrooms in the High Point Child Care Center were rented for use as kindergarten classes. This building became the High Point Annex.

By 1953, many of the wartime workers had moved out of the High Point Housing Project and the apartments were converted into low-income housing. That same year, eight classrooms, a gymnasium, and two playcourts were added to the main school building and the student body was expanded to K–6. During the period between 1953 and 1956, approximately 40 of the 1,100 students attending the school lived outside of the High Point development. In 1959, the district purchased 2.17 acres west of the main building for a playground.

Enrollment at High Point continued to grow. Some time during 1960–63, in addition to the main building and four classes in the annex, 12 portables were situated at 32nd Avenue SW and [S]W Willow Street to accommodate up to 1,263 pupils. In 1964, enrollment began to decline, at first due to the redrawing of boundary lines with the opening of Fairmount Park. By 1972–73, for the first time in many years, the main building housed all classes. The housing project was reduced to 1,100 apartments, and school enrollment dropped to 340.

High Point School was first recommended for closure in 1974 for four reasons: a decline in enrollment, space in adjacent schools, cost reduction, and the goal of achieving a “desired racial balance.” A 1974 plan called for busing of High Point children to Sanislo, Gatewood, Cooper, and Fairmount Park. While many residents considered the old, dull, lime-green building depressing, they wanted their own school. At a public meeting, one resident argued, “High Point is a community, it should have a community school. . . .” Nevertheless, the school was closed at the end of the 1975–76 year, only to be reopened the following fall as a result of a lawsuit.

Under the district’s desegregation plan, High Point was paired with Hughes. From 1979–81 High Point housed grades K–2, while Hughes housed K, 3–5. High Point then went to K–3 and Hughes to K, 4–6 for 1981–88.



High Point, 1963 SPSA 236-2

Name: **High Point
Elementary School**
 Location: 6760 34th Avenue SW
 Building: 20-classroom, 2-story steel
 frame with brick veneer
 Architect: Northwest Architectural
 Company
 Site: 6.45 acres

1988: Opened in September

Although the old Hughes building could be repaired for a relatively low price, the wood-frame High Point was not thought worth repairing. A proposal for a new High Point School surfaced in late 1983 when Superintendent Steele recommended consolidating Hughes and High Point at the High Point site. The name Emerald City Elementary School was selected in “an unofficial contest” involving students, parents, and staff at Hughes and High Point. In the end, the newly built school remained High Point and served children from that community. While the new building was under construction, classes were held at Boren. High Point was the first new school in West Seattle in 18 years, since Sanislo opened in December 1970.

The new High Point School was already under construction near the southwest corner of 31st Avenue SW and SW Holly Street, on property owned by the Seattle Housing Authority, when a land swap deal failed. The district leased the property for \$1 a year for 50 years. A year later the Housing Authority agreed to the deal, which gave the district one acre at High Point in exchange for the one-quarter acre site of the first Alki School at SW Carroll and 59th Avenue SW.

A new technology grant brought a computer lab and a full-time teacher to High Point. Today, a Success-for-All program links reading and writing to all academic subjects. Extended-day reading programs are also offered.