

Leschi

Name:	Leschi Elementary School	Enrollment:	343
Address:	135 32nd Avenue	Nickname:	Bulldog Pups
Configuration:	K-5	Color:	Lime green



Leschi, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 244-217

Long ago Indians landed on the Lake Washington shore where the Leschi neighborhood is now located and portaged their canoes along a trail leading to Elliott Bay. Henry Yesler, who operated Seattle's first sawmill, acquired a narrow strip of land roughly corresponding to the Indian trail and used it to transport logs to Puget Sound. Logs were pulled by ox teams to the top of the hill and then skidded down the hill to his mill on the saltwater. In January 1856, at the Indian camp on the east end of this "skid road," a few hundred rebellious Indians gathered to plan their attack on the small town of Seattle. Among this group was the Nisqually leader Leschi, who was later executed for his role in the rebellion.

This route between saltwater and freshwater became a cable car line that by the 1890s transported passengers from downtown to a ferry landing where they could cross Lake Washington to the east side. Skid Road was first renamed Mill Street and later became Yesler Way. By 1891, the events 35 years earlier had been sufficiently romanticized that the owner of a cable car company suggested naming a park at the Lake Washington end of the line after Leschi.

In the early 1900s, Leschi Park was a popular destination for Sunday recreation. The park featured a small zoo with sea lions and a panther to delight children, along with a casino and dancehall for adults. In 1906, the Seattle School Board purchased a parcel of land where a florist named O'Brien had operated a rose garden and greenhouses.

Construction of Leschi School began in February 1909. The building was similar in style to Greenwood, Hawthorne, and Emerson, with Jacobean details, including steeply-pitched roofs, red brick with terra cotta trim, and pointed archways.

Name: **Leschi School**
Location: 135 32nd Avenue
Building: 8-room brick
Architect: James Stephen
Site: 0.83 acres

1909: Opened
1922: Site expanded
1930: Site expanded to 1.65 acres
1953: Site expanded to 2.8 acres
1961: Addition (Bindon & Wright)
1988: 1909 building demolished;
addition (Church/Suzuki)

The eight-room school served approximately 300 students in grades 1–8 until 1918–19 when enrollment rose to 371. At that time, the boys’ and girls’ playrooms in the basement were converted to two additional classrooms. Because the school had no facilities for manual training or home economics, once a week older students hurriedly ate their lunches and walked over to Walla Walla School (later Horace Mann) for instruction in these subjects.

Parkland opened at 32nd S Avenue and Charles Street in 1925 as an annex to Leschi. Two portables were used for classrooms until October 22, 1939. The Parkland property was sold in November 26, 1941.

When Washington Junior High School opened in 1938, Leschi became K–6 and enrollment dropped. In 1940–41, enrollment rebounded to 374. The closing of Rainier meant that Leschi’s area extended further west to 19th Avenue and encompassed a multiethnic neighborhood. Portables appeared on the schoolgrounds, including one used as a lunchroom and as many as six used for classrooms. In 1954, Leschi served 509 students taught by 15 teachers, and the kindergarten operated on triple shifts.

The playfield was blacktopped during the 1950s and the school’s site enlarged to the south along 32nd Avenue. Enrollment peaked at 592 in 1958–59. A house standing on the enlarged site was used as an annex during 1958–60. During the 1960–61 school year, a much-needed addition was constructed, adding seven classrooms, an administrative-health unit, a lunchroom-auditorium, a gymnasium, and covered playcourt on the south side of the building. The original structure was also remodeled and modernized at this time.

On property adjoining the school is Peppi’s Park, named by the students in honor of a classmate, Peppi Braxton, who died in 1971. The



Leschi, 1972 SPSA 244-86



Leschi, 1963 SPSA 244-91

park contains a wading pool, swings, and large free-form objects for climbing. With its trees and panoramic view of Lake Washington, the park was often used as an outdoor classroom.

Beginning in 1968–69, as part of the district’s 4-4-4 Plan, Leschi housed grades K–4. In September 1978, Leschi became K, 4–5 in a triad with Decatur and Wedgwood, both of which housed grades K–3. This configuration continued through spring 1988.

In 1984, as part of a district-wide Capital Improvement Program, Leschi became one of 16 schools identified as needing renovation. Over the next few years, meetings were held with the community. Ultimately the decision was made to demolish the 1909 structure. Leschi students found a temporary home at Broadview-Thomson for the 1987–88 school year.

The new addition, a steel frame structure with brick veneer, is a wing on the 1961 structure. The building now contains 18 classrooms plus arts/science and resource rooms, and a library. Also included are two kindergarten classrooms, an auditorium/lunchroom, a gym, and an administrative area.

Currently at Leschi, a magnet program offers instruction in marine science, television production, speech, and drama. The Leschi Community Council provides financial assistance and volunteer tutors. Proceeds from an annual rummage sale have paid for library books and musical instruments. Students are required to wear uniforms.