

## Montlake

Name:	<b>Montlake Elementary School</b>	Enrollment:	246
Address:	2409 22nd Avenue E	Nickname:	none
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	none
Newspaper:	<i>Montlake Mountaineer</i>		

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Name: **Portage School**  
 Location: 22nd Avenue N &  
 E McGraw Street  
 Building: Portable  
 Site: 1.65 acres

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1914: Opened  
 1923: Renamed *Montlake School*  
 on September 21  
 1923-24: Operated as annex to Stevens  
 1924: Closed

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Portage, ca. 1915 SPSA 255-87

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Name: **Montlake School**  
 Location: 2409 22nd Avenue E  
 Building: 9-room brick  
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore  
 Site: 1.65 acres

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1924: Opened

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Today's Montlake neighborhood, a small strip of land between Lake Union and Lake Washington, was originally known as the Portage because Duwamish Indians had to carry their canoes over it to get from one lake to the other. In 1883, Chinese workers contracted by David Denny and other businessmen dug a canal at Portage to float logs from Lake Washington to the mills on Lake Union.

In the early days of Seattle, the region between the two lakes was known as Interlaken. It was covered with large stands of timber and houses were clustered in small groups along the Portage on Shelby Street, along McGraw Street, around Boyer Avenue, and to the east of 24th Avenue. Children from the area had to hike up the north side of Capitol Hill, through brush and woods, to attend Stevens School, which opened in September 1906.

During the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909, a small dock was erected at Madison Park so visitors could take steamers to the exposition grounds on the University of Washington campus. The creation of a streetcar line and further growth in the Interlaken area soon followed.

Interlaken parents appealed to the board for a new school based on safety concerns. A site was purchased in 1914, and a portable school was set up. Portage School started out with 25 pupils in grades 1-3.

As the area grew, the number of portables at the school increased. The name was changed to Montlake School, selected because of the view of the Olympic and Cascade mountains on either side and because of the proximity to the two lakes. In 1923-24, 135 students attended in grades 1-7.

A permanent building was built on the same site and opened in





Montlake, 1960 SPSA 255-98

1924. It was constructed as an initial unit, arranged so that additional units could be added later on the north (with an auditorium) and south ends.

Enrollment peaked in 1935–36 with 487 students. Kindergarten was added the following year. In early 1937, Montlake parents petitioned the school board for an addition to the building. They pointed out that 35 percent of the 470 pupils were forced to attend classes in 10-year-old portables with inadequate lighting and heating facilities. The addition, however, was never built.

In September 1941, Montlake was reduced to a K–6 school; the 7th and 8th grades were transferred to an intermediate center at Meany, reducing the student body to 278. Enrollment climbed again to 439 in 1956–57. It was not until the late 1960s that a hot lunch program was established at Montlake. Meals were prepared at Roosevelt High School, brought to Montlake, reheated, and served.

In September 1970, the school went to a K–4 configuration with an ungraded curriculum. At the same time, the student body increased when Madrona became half of the Meany-Madrona Middle School, housing 5th and 6th graders only. At this time, Montlake parents, community members, and students painted the interior of their school building in bright colors with supergraphic designs. By 1978, Montlake changed to a K–5 configuration.

In 1983–84, Montlake had the highest proportion of African-American students of any elementary school in the district, with 45 percent of the 230 students. About 70 percent of the student body was bused into the predominantly white, middle-income neighborhood.

That year was La Vaun Bent's first as principal, and she began to make an impact by placing all certificated staff in classrooms each morning, focusing on reading. This reduced the size of the student groups from 30 to 20, allowing for more individualized attention. She also eliminated special programs for "at-risk children" and "special education" children, instead grouping children by ability. As a result, test results went up significantly and there were dramatically fewer disciplinary problems.

This innovative approach, which reduces class size and provides a challenging and enriching program for all children, is now referred to as the "Montlake Model." All students are grouped in multi-age classrooms with team teachers. Montlake is recognized as a leader in educational reform and was awarded the Schools for the 21st Century project.

During the 1991-92 school year, the Safeco Corporation offered Montlake students \$10,000 provided that half went to school equipment and/or programs while the other half was donated to worthy projects. The students did lengthy studies on a number of charities and then voted for their favorites. They chose to contribute to the Progressive Animal Welfare Society, the Nature Conservancy, the Seattle Food Committee, and Childhaven.

Montlake is known in the local community for its festive annual Artwalk where students' artwork is displayed throughout the school building and in neighborhood businesses. A greenhouse and garden constructed with the assistance of parent volunteers has also become part of a comprehensive environmental studies program.