

# Seward

Name:	<b>TOPS @ Seward</b>	Enrollment:	596
Address:	2500 Franklin Avenue E	Nickname:	Falcons
Configuration:	K-8	Colors:	Baby blue, white, silver



Seward 2000: 1999 gym (left), 1905 building (center), 1917 building (back), 1895 building (right) ©Mary Randlett SPSA 271-386

In the 1890s, the northwest Capitol Hill area was still thick with trees, and houses were few and widely scattered. A wagon road ran along the hillside parallel to what is now Eastlake Avenue. Realtor Henry Fuhrman owned most of the land from Edgar Street to the channel between Lake Union and Portage Bay, while David T. Denny owned land to the south. In 1892, the school board purchased property in what was called the Denny-Fuhrman Addition.

Three years later, a small, two-room wood pavilion was built on the eastern side of the property. The school was called Denny-Fuhrman after the real estate division. In the beginning, all eight grades occupied just one classroom. In 1899, the second classroom was put into use. That room soon filled, and a third classroom was added.

By 1903, Franklin Avenue (along the west side of the school) was part of a bicycle path from Lake Union to Madrona Park. A streetcar line ran as far as where Louisa Street is today. Portables were needed at the school in 1904-05. With steadily increasing enrollment, the board recognized that a new building was necessary.

The “model school” built at Denny-Fuhrman was similar to others completed in the first decade of the century. It featured a Tudor-style design with stucco and half-timbering on the second floor.

The new school was named after William Henry Seward, U.S. Secretary of State who initiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. The furnace was located in the basement, and every Wednesday the teachers brought in T-bone steaks, which they barbecued on coals prepared in the furnace by the janitor.

Seward School grew rapidly in its first decade, from 254 students to 462 in 1915-16. The school became so crowded that at least one class

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Name: **Denny-Fuhrman School**  
Location: Franklin and Louisa Streets  
Building: 2-room wood  
Architect: Chamberlin & Siebrand  
Site: 1.61 acres

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1895: Opened  
1899: Addition (James Stephen)  
1905: Closed  
1908: Building moved to SE corner; used as annex  
1917: Building moved to SW corner; used as annex  
1981: Exterior designated city landmark in April  
1998: Closed for construction  
1999: Reopened after renovation (Duarte Bryant)

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Name: **Seward School**  
Location: 2515 Boylston Avenue E  
Building: 8-room wood  
Architect: James Stephen  
Site: 1.61 acres

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1905: Named *Marcus Whitman School* on July 7; renamed *Seward School* on September 11; and opened in September  
by 1910: Site expanded to 1.83 acres  
1925: Site expanded to 2.08 acres  
1981: Exterior designated city landmark in April  
1989: Closed in June  
1989–91: Interim site  
1991–98: Alternative school site  
1998: Closed for construction  
1999: Reopened with addition (Duarte Bryant)

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Seward, 1905 MOHAI 83.10.7456

was held in the upstairs hall and another in a portable. In March 1908, a committee from the Eastlake Avenue Improvement Club urged the school board to tear down the 1893 schoolhouse. Instead, the old wood pavilion was moved to the southeast corner of the grounds and used as an annex for primary grades. In 1911, 8th grade students went one afternoon a week to Lowell for shop and home economics.

The growth of the University of Washington and especially the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (AYPE) held on the university campus in 1909 spurred city growth and encouraged the building of new roadways and streetcars in the Eastlake neighborhood. William Seward was honored with a statue unveiled at the AYPE as Seattle celebrated its close ties with the northernmost territory. The statue is now in Volunteer Park. The Exposition also spurred the parks department to develop Rogers Playfield, located across Franklin Avenue to the west of the school, in 1912.

In 1917, a brick building was constructed on the eastern portion of the property, and the 1895 annex moved again, this time to the southwest corner. It became a shop and home economics classroom. The brick addition, similar to those built at Latona and John B. Allen the same year, contained eight classrooms, an auditorium, and two playrooms. Since this time, Seward has consisted of three buildings representing three different eras of school construction. By 1922–23, the original building was used as the school's lunchroom.

Seward became a demonstration school in 1932, and its staff was exchanged for the staff at Summit. District teachers came to Seward to observe the latest teaching methods and materials during half-day sessions.

Enrollment over the next two decades fluctuated between 400 and 600 students. In 1950, the school's boundaries changed after an earthquake destroyed Cascade. Seward then served an area from the University Bridge on the north to Denny Way on the south. The demonstration school was discontinued in the early 1960s.

Construction of Interstate 5 immediately to the east of the school had a negative effect during the 1960s. The neighborhood was cut in two, and many homes had to be removed to make way for the freeway. Enrollment dropped to 395 in the 1964–65 school year. Special education classes began in 1966 and continued through 1969. When Horace Mann closed in 1968, some students from that school transferred to Seward.

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Name: **Seward School**  
 Location: 2515 Boylston Avenue E  
 Building: 8-room brick  
 Architect: Edgar Blair

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1917: Opened  
 1981: Exterior designated city landmark in April  
 1998: Closed for construction  
 1999: Reopened with addition (Duarte Bryant)

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In the early 1970s, a program called “Friday Choice” was initiated by parents. Each Friday afternoon students participated in activities, such as woodworking, chess, cooking, and stamp collecting in small groups led by parents, volunteers, and teachers. At this time, the school was K–4, part of the Central Area’s 4-4-4 program.

In June 1988, the school board voted to close Seward, an action, which had been threatened for at least ten years. At this time, the suggestion was made that the TOPS alternative program move from portables at Stevens to Seward.

Seward’s last regular classes were dismissed in June 1989, but the school immediately became the temporary home of Colman (see Thurgood Marshall), which was awaiting completion of its new building. Meanwhile, TOPS parents endorsed the plan to move their program to Seward and expand it to K–8 once the Colman students left. The alternative program moved in for the 1991–92 year, and thereafter its initials stood for The Option Program at Seward. The middle school program carries on TOPS’ emphasis on integrated studies, academic achievement, and parent involvement.

From September 1997 to June 1999, while a major renovation and expansion project was underway at the Seward site, TOPS was housed at McDonald. The interiors of all three landmark buildings were demolished and replaced by new rooms and materials. Project contractors faced many challenges in the historic structures, such as compensating for the 1895 building’s shape, which was completely “out of square.” A new learning resource center (connecting the 1905 and 1917 buildings) and gymnasium were also constructed. The school reopened in September 1999.



Seward (1917 building), 2001 ©Mary Randlett  
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Seward (1895 building), 2001 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 271-385