

A Brief History of Seattle Waldorf School

The founding of Seattle Waldorf School is due largely to three individuals who were inspired by the ideals of Waldorf education.

- **Ron Moss**, an electrician by trade and deeply interested in Anthroposophy and Waldorf education, started a bookstore in 1976 in his Seattle basement called Rudolf Steiner Books.
- **Suzanne Szekely**, a Vienna native who moved to New York City shortly after the beginning of World War II and taught music at the Rudolf Steiner School there. In the 1970s she landed in Seattle, where she worked as a musician and accompanist for opera singers.
- **DoloresRose Dauenhauer**, a mother, artist, and puppeteer who found that Waldorf education allowed her middle-school son to finally thrive, sparking a desire to make this healing education available to children in Seattle.



STANDING: RON MOSS,
DOLORESROSE DAUENHAUER
SEATED: SUZANNE SZEKELY

In 1975 Ron, Suzanne, and DoloresRose attended the first public lecture on Anthroposophy in Seattle organized by Ron and met soon thereafter. DoloresRose began helping Ron take books to local fairs. At the Good Earth Faire in 1978, she posted a flyer, and more than 100 people signed up to indicate their interest in Waldorf education and the opening of a Seattle school. Suzanne opened her home to host many big names in the Waldorf movement, giving lectures for those interested parents. At one of these gatherings the speaker proclaimed, "You will need at least \$8,000 to start a school," a seemingly impossible amount at that time!

In February 1980, the **Waldorf School Association of Seattle** was formed, and thanks to the dedication of these original Board members, Seattle Waldorf School opened its doors in September 1980, with pioneering teacher Joan Grissing. In the same year, a second initiative, was started by Elana Freeland. Kinderhaus, a Waldorf preschool program, was an independent endeavor, but governed by the same Board as SWS.

A nomadic journey followed, passing through many temporary homes—from the Central District (Mount Virgin Church) and Wallingford to Edmonds, to Phinney Ridge (Community Center), to Capitol Hill (Temple D'Hirsch), back to the Central District (Islamic School), and finally in 1989 to the current **Meadowbrook campus**, which was



1988: FULL NATIVE GOSPEL MISSION, BEFORE PURCHASE

purchased in 1988 from the Full Gospel Native Missionary with the support of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation. Much work was invested to transform each new location into a beautiful space for the students, with parents, faculty, staff, and Board members working side by side.



2009: SETTLED IN

In 1991, SWS celebrated its first eighth grade graduation amid great fanfare at the Nordic Heritage Museum, because Huckleberry Hall was not able to accommodate all the families and friends who wanted to attend in honor of class teacher Keith Jefferson and his nineteen students.

Kinderhaus formally merged with SWS in 1984 and found a permanent home at its current location near Woodland Park in 1986, thanks to the generosity of Audie and Hunter Black, parents at the school. The Blacks bought and lovingly remodeled and expanded this home and leased the building to SWS for many years until the school was in a position to purchase the property in 1994.

Briar Rose was purchased initially by SWS parents who lived in the house for a time and then leased it to the school until SWS purchased the site in 1993. In addition to the kindergarten, it provided space for other uses such as a school store, an office, and a preschool classroom. Later, this space was transformed into an after-school care space.

"The New Wing," with three spacious classrooms for the lower grades, was added to the grade school building in 2000 to accommodate growing enrollment. This expansion was made possible by a successful capital campaign led by Paul Lippert and Andy Barker, and with the help of many volunteers who put finishing touches on the classrooms or worked on the landscaping.



1986: KINDERHAUS



2008–2014: SEATTLE WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS NEAR SEATTLE CENTER

In 2002, the first five-year strategic plan, *Toward SWS in 2020*, was created. The plan identified three primary objectives—creating and sustaining relationships; establishing, developing, and maintaining a permanent site; and providing adequate financing. The plan included several other goals such as the addition of a high school, the implementation of a campus master plan, and accreditation by the Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS) and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA).

The addition of the high school came in 2008, after the SWS Board of Trustees was approached by **Hazel Wolf High School**, an independent local Waldorf school that could no longer sustain its endeavor alone. Careful consideration and thoughtful planning made this acquisition a success. Now, Seattle Waldorf School could fulfill the vision of its founders and the goal laid out in the strategic plan, to provide the complete Waldorf curriculum to children from preschool through high school. The high school started on the campus of Sacred Heart Church near the Seattle Center

and now flourishes in Building 11 of the Magnuson Park complex under a long-term lease with the City of Seattle.

The renovated space at Magnuson Park includes light-filled classrooms, science labs, an art loft, a practical arts studio, a commons with a kitchen, a spacious Eurythmy hall (named Hazel Hall), and use of 350 acres of park space on the shore of Lake Washington. Park amenities include ball fields, community gardens, theater and gym access, and collaborative partnerships with other park organizations. The renovation of Building 11 in 2014 was made possible by a loan from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, donations from parents, alumni, and friends of the school.



2014: SEATTLE WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL AT MAGNUSON PARK

The **expansion and renovation of the Meadowbrook campus** in recent years has been guided by a Campus Master Plan developed in 2012.

Donors supported the remodel of the **Garden House** in 2012, the home at the northwest corner of the grade school grounds originally purchased in 2006. The work created new spaces for handwork and practical arts programs and a preschool classroom on the lower floor. The upstairs offers a large kitchen and work area for faculty; a much-needed meeting space for staff, parents, and volunteers; and offices for our administrative team.



2013: GRADE SCHOOL EXPANSION AND REMODEL COMPLETED

In 2013, the main grade school building was expanded and completely renovated to create larger classrooms and update mechanical systems. Improvements included a bigger, brighter lobby and reception area, clutter-free hallways, a large kitchen, and updated outdoor play areas. This major undertaking would not have been possible without the leadership support of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, the community members who invested in our Room to Grow, LLC, and many other supporters. In 2015, the **Farm House**, located just to the north of the grade school building, was remodeled with the help of gifts from generous donors. The upstairs of this home, which was

originally purchased in 2012 with help from an anonymous gift, was transformed into the "Nest," a space for Parent-and-Tot classes, a preschool class, and early childhood extended care. In the summer of 2018, the downstairs was renovated to update an existing early childhood classroom and add an international language classroom and the school's first dedicated library space.

In January of 2016, Seattle Waldorf School merged with **Three Cedars Waldorf School** in Bellevue, WA to create a single program with the largest Waldorf school enrollment in the country, serving more than 550 students. The Three Cedars community brought with them a rich history of serving early childhood through grade 8 families on the east side of Lake Washington since they opened as a parent-led initiative in their first temporary space in 1995. They acquired and grew into their permanent home in the Wilburton neighborhood of Bellevue starting in 2001. In 2009, they achieved candidate status with the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). In June

2017 the SWS Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to close the Three Cedars campus at the end of the 2017–2018 school year due to significant, ongoing financial losses and low enrollment.

Seattle Waldorf School maintains its approval with the State of Washington and is a member of the Washington Federation of Independent Schools (WFIS). In May of 2013, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) granted full accreditation to SWS, successfully completing a process the school began in 2010. And, after a number of years as a candidate school, SWS achieved fully accredited status from the Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS) in January of 2018.