

Construction Update: December 2013

Many exciting developments have occurred at the Washington Elementary School site since construction began in July. This month, steel has been erected in the northwest corner of the site where students will eat their lunches and participate in gym class. The northern exterior of the lunch room will be transparent and pay homage to the historic building. Shallow foundations and stem walls are being poured in the side of the addition, which faces the Wheelock Library. This addition will house the new library and instructional activities wing. Both the cafeteria and library additions have been placed purposefully so that they create a sense of symmetry from the old boiler room entrance, which will soon be the main entrance to Washington Elementary School. Along the western exterior, the windows have been enlarged to provide ample light for the main office and lobby areas.

The new kindergarten wing is well underway along the northeast area of the site. This wing will be connected to the historic building at the northeast stairwell, nine feet below the lower level of the building. A "quiet play" area will sit above that addition and have a connection to the more "active play" area of the playground. With Washington Elementary School being the smallest site in the Tacoma Public Schools, it was critical that every square inch was utilized to its maximum potential. This addition was placed below ground level so as to respect the character defining features that make the historic exterior cherished within the community.

Much work has been done inside the historic building as well. Concrete, shear walls are currently being formed and poured along the corridor and classroom walls. Other structural improvements such as wall repairs, masonry repair to wall ties known as helifix anchors, and miscellaneous seismic upgrades are ongoing as well. Portions of the attic and roof have been reframed to comply with current codes and to provide space for air-handling units and a heat exchanger in the attic. Installation of those units will be starting shortly.

The exterior of the historic building has been getting a facelift as well. Maintenance and mortar repair to existing bricks, known as tuckpointing, and repair to the exterior molding (cornice), has been progressing quite nicely. Future work includes rebuilding the ventilators on the roof, re-roofing, re-lining the existing gutters, replacing the downspouts, painting the window frames and cornice and cleaning of the sandstone and brick. Though there's much work to be done, Washington Elementary School is on schedule to open September 2014.