

# Building the Fair

How was the Century 21 Exposition site transformed from a mixed-use neighborhood into the Seattle Center we know today?



## UNIT-AT-A-GLANCE

**Primary Objectives:** Students will understand that the built environment they inhabit is the product of human decisions, negotiations, triumphs, and sacrifices. They will identify structures significant to the 1962 Seattle World's Fair and determine which were torn down, which were retained, which were built, which remain.

**Student Activities:** Students will analyze historical photos and other primary documents; analyze clues in public records (such as property records and newspapers); analyze future predictions from 1962; and participate in simulated decision-making activities

**Materials Included:** Primary and secondary sources, including maps, photographs, property records, newspaper articles, and other documents; worksheets

**Materials/Equipment Needed:** Photocopies of provided handouts, projector, and Internet access

**Time Management:** 3 weeks for all activities in six lessons

**Lesson 1: What Was There?** Analyzing Historic Maps

**Lesson 2: Where Did It Go?** Reading Historic Photographs

**Lesson 3: Connect the Dots** Interpreting Clues in Public Records

**Lesson 4: Pointed Prose** Reading for Point of View in Historic Documents

**Lesson 5: Decision-Making Process** Where would YOU put the fair?

**Lesson 6: The World of Tomorrow** Predicting the future

**Grade/Subject Recommended:** Grades 5–8

# Content and Performance Objectives

## **Content Objectives:** Students will...

- understand that the built environment they inhabit is the product of many layers of human decisions, negotiations, triumphs, and sacrifices.
- understand the decisions, negotiations, triumphs, and sacrifices that went into the construction of the Century 21 Exposition site, understand the players and processes at work in the design and construction of the fair.
- be able to identify the structures that were retained or repurposed, and the major ones that were torn down to make way for the fair. They will know who was responsible for the design and construction of the major structures that remain on the site today.

## **Performance Objectives:** Students will learn...

- how to analyze primary documents and use them as historical evidence to support conclusions about the past.
- to pull out relevant and interesting information from those sources and present it to an audience in a meaningful narrative through written and spoken communication.



# Key Terms

- **Assessor** – a person who makes assessments, especially for purposes of taxation.
- **Authority** – the right to control, command, or determine
- **Bomb shelter** – a room or area, usually underground, especially reinforced against the effects of bombs, used as a shelter during an air raid
- **Caption** – a title or explanation for a picture or illustration
- **Chronological** – arranged in the order of time
- **Condemnation** – to judge or pronounce unfit for use
- **Corroboration** – to confirm or support
- **Eminent Domain** – the right of a state to confiscate private property for public use, payment usually being made to the owners in compensation
- **Hypothetical** – highly conjectural; not well supported by available evidence
- **Manifesto** – a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives
- **Obituary** – a notice of the death of a person
- **Optimistic** – disposed to take a favorable view of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome
- **Pessimistic** – having a gloomy outlook
- **Propaganda** – the deliberate spreading of such information, rumors, etc
- **Prose** – the ordinary form of spoken or written language
- **Stakeholder** – a person or group that has an investment, share, or interest in something, as a business or industry
- **Threat** – a declaration of an intention or determination to inflict punishment, injury, etc., in retaliation for, or conditionally upon, some action or course
- **Threshold** – any place or point of entering or beginning
- **Title** – the legal right to possession of property, especially real property
- **WPA (Works Progress Administration)** – a program of the New Deal during the 1930s that employed people who could not find work





# Lesson 1: What Was There? Analyzing Historic Maps

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time Management:** 1-hour session

**Objective:** Students will use historic maps to determine what was at the Seattle Center site prior to the Seattle World’s Fair. They will learn to read historic maps and align them with current maps in order to discover what buildings are still in existence today. They will create a series of layered transparencies that depict the changes to the site over time.

**You will need:**

- One set of historic maps for each small group (provided).
- One copy of Sherry Stripling’s *Guide to Seattle Center* for each small group (provided). Each group should have 2–3 buildings highlighted, so the list of 13 buildings is divided up among the groups.
- One copy of current map of Seattle Center for each student (provided).
- Blank transparencies.
- Fine-point sharpie pens in several colors.
- Projection, Internet access (optional).

**Activity:**

Divide the class into 4–5 small groups. Each group gets a packet of historic maps. Give students a chance to shuffle through the maps, and pass them around.

**Step 1:** Working as a class, figure out which is the most recent map. Project it at the front of the class. Have you been to this place? Make sure everyone is clear about where this is. Have them imagine walking from the fountain to the Science Center. Look at the names of the streets.

If you have Internet access, compare to Google satellite maps. Use Google street view to look at major intersections.

**Step 2:** Working in small groups, students will put remaining maps in chronological order. Hint: it helps to work backwards from most recent to oldest, locating the same streets and intersections on the historic maps.

Can you find the place where the fountain is now? Science Center? Space Needle? Key Arena? What was in each of these locations before 1962?

Can you find any buildings on the 2011 map that were there before the fair was built? What were they? Can you figure out when those buildings were built, and what was there before them? (You probably won’t be able to figure it out exactly, but you may find a range...)

**Step 3:** Come back together as a class. Hand each group a copy of Sherry Stripling’s guide to the history of 13 major buildings on the Seattle Center site, with 2–3 buildings highlighted for their group to focus on. Have each group locate their assigned buildings on their historic maps. Then have a representative of each group present their 2–3 buildings to the class, pointing out their locations on the projected map for the whole class.

**Step 4:** Using current map of Seattle Center as a base, each small group creates a series of transparency maps aligned on top of the current map, showing what was on the site at different points in time.

Instructions: Each student gets a copy of the current map, a blank transparency, a fine-point sharpie (different colors, ideally), and a historic map from a different era. Lay the transparency on top of the current map. Transfer the information (streets, buildings, other features) from the historic map onto the transparency. Now layer your group’s transparencies in order on top of the current map. Voila!

# Lesson 2: Where Did It Go? Reading Historic Photographs

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time Management:** 1 one-hour session, 1 2–3 day project  
(in class or homework)

**Objective:** Students will examine and analyze a collection of historic photographs of the construction of the Century 21 Fair site, using them to glean information about what was there before, what was built, the process of demolition and construction, and the different points of view at play in the process. They will create a panel display, slide show, web page, or movie showing the construction of the fair using a selection of photographs from the collection.

**You will need:**

- Set of 30–40 photographs, numbered randomly (provided).
- Worksheet: Questions for Analyzing Historic Photographs (provided).
- Materials for panel display (posterboard, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, etc.) OR equipment/software for slide show, web page, or movie.

**DAY ONE: Analyzing Photographs**

Hand a photograph to each student as they walk into class. After they have had a chance to look at the photographs, show them to each other, and hand out worksheet with of questions for each student to answer about his/her photograph. Let them know that their work will be shared with the rest of the class, and will be the basis for other people’s presentations. Go over the questions, giving suggestions for how to find answers.

**Questions For Analyzing Historic Photographs**

1. What’s the first thing you notice about this photograph?
2. Do you recognize anything in this photograph? What?
3. Where was the photograph taken?  
(Use evidence from the photo’s caption, or from the photograph itself: street signs, identifiable buildings, geographic features, etc.)
4. When was the photograph taken?  
(Again, the caption may tell you this... though captions are not always accurate! Can you date the photograph based on the event

it depicts? If there are buildings in the picture, do you know when they were built or torn down? Are there cars in the photograph? People? Automobiles and clothing styles are good clues for dating photos.)

5. Who took the photograph? Who were they planning to show it to?
6. Why was the photograph was taken?  
(For publicity? For official documentation? For private use?)
7. Write your own TITLE and CAPTION for this photograph.  
Your TITLE should be no more than 25 words long, and should describe the content of the photograph. The CAPTION can be up to 150 words long, and should explain the significance of the photograph in showing the development of the Century 21 site. Include any relevant information you figured out about the photograph. (Note: this means leaving out information that isn’t relevant to the story.)

**DAYS TWO–FOUR** (could be homework, if groups can get together outside of class)

**Project:** Divide class into 4–5 small groups. Each group gets a full set of photographs, along with copies of the photo analysis sheets for each one. You can also include the maps from the previous lesson. Have each group select 10–20 of the photographs and create a panel display, slide show, web page, or movie. The final product should include:

- TITLE for the piece
- INTRODUCTION: A paragraph explaining what the slide show/panel display is about.
- CAPTIONS for each photograph (edit the captions written by your fellow students as needed).
- CREDITS listing the names of your team members and their roles, and a list of sources for the photos you included (included with each photograph).

SHARE the final products with the rest of the class and the rest of the school, in a public event or online.

**Extension Activities:**

Students can do additional research to dig up more photographs and information to include in their presentations. Presentations could be more elaborate, depending on the interests, skills, and stamina of the students: imagine a stop motion animation movie of the site's development, a clickable map with links to historic images, etc.



# Lesson 3: Connect the Dots— Interpreting Clues in Public Records

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time Management:** 2 one-hour sessions, with homework to complete assignments

**Objective:** Students will undertake an abbreviated version of the process of research and imagination used by historians. They will be introduced to the idea of corroborating evidence. They will examine a set of public records that present an incomplete picture of the houses that were torn down and the residents that were displaced to make way for the Century 21 Exposition site. They will read a story about one of the property owners and identify the information in the story that could be corroborated, as well as the interpretation the author has added to the story. Then they will choose one of the houses and/or residents and write their own story, using both historical evidence and their own imaginations.

**You will need:**

- Set of historic records (provided).

**Activity:**

## **DAY ONE: Finding Clues in Public Records**

As a class, look at documents regarding demolition:

- list of addresses to be demolished
- cost estimate
- letters regarding condemnation process

We're going to think about what this whole process might have meant for individual property owners and residents of these homes.

Hand out a property record card to each student. Explain that this document was produced as part of a King County survey in 1937, documenting every standing structure in the County as a WPA project. This is how the value of the property was determined so the County knew how much the owners should pay in property taxes. The records were updated by hand until the process was computerized in the 1980s. These records, with accompanying photographs, are available at the Washington

State Archives, Puget Sound Regional Branch, located at Bellevue College. Anyone can make an appointment to go there and get the property record for their house.

**See if they can find:**

- Address of house/building.
- Name of property owner when record was created in 1937. (The date next to the name indicates when that owner purchased the property.)
- Names of subsequent property owners, dates purchased.
- Date house was built.
- How many rooms did the house have?
- How many toilets?
- Did the house have a basement?

3. Present other evidence about some residents/owners:

- City Directory pages.
- Frank J. Hart's obituary:
- Dorothy Isaac's letters.
- [Edward Shui Ping Chow's obituary](#)
- [Ruby Chow's obituary](#)
- Other?

Let students choose names from the property records to research on the internet. Who knows, they may find something! Or they may learn that Google has limits...

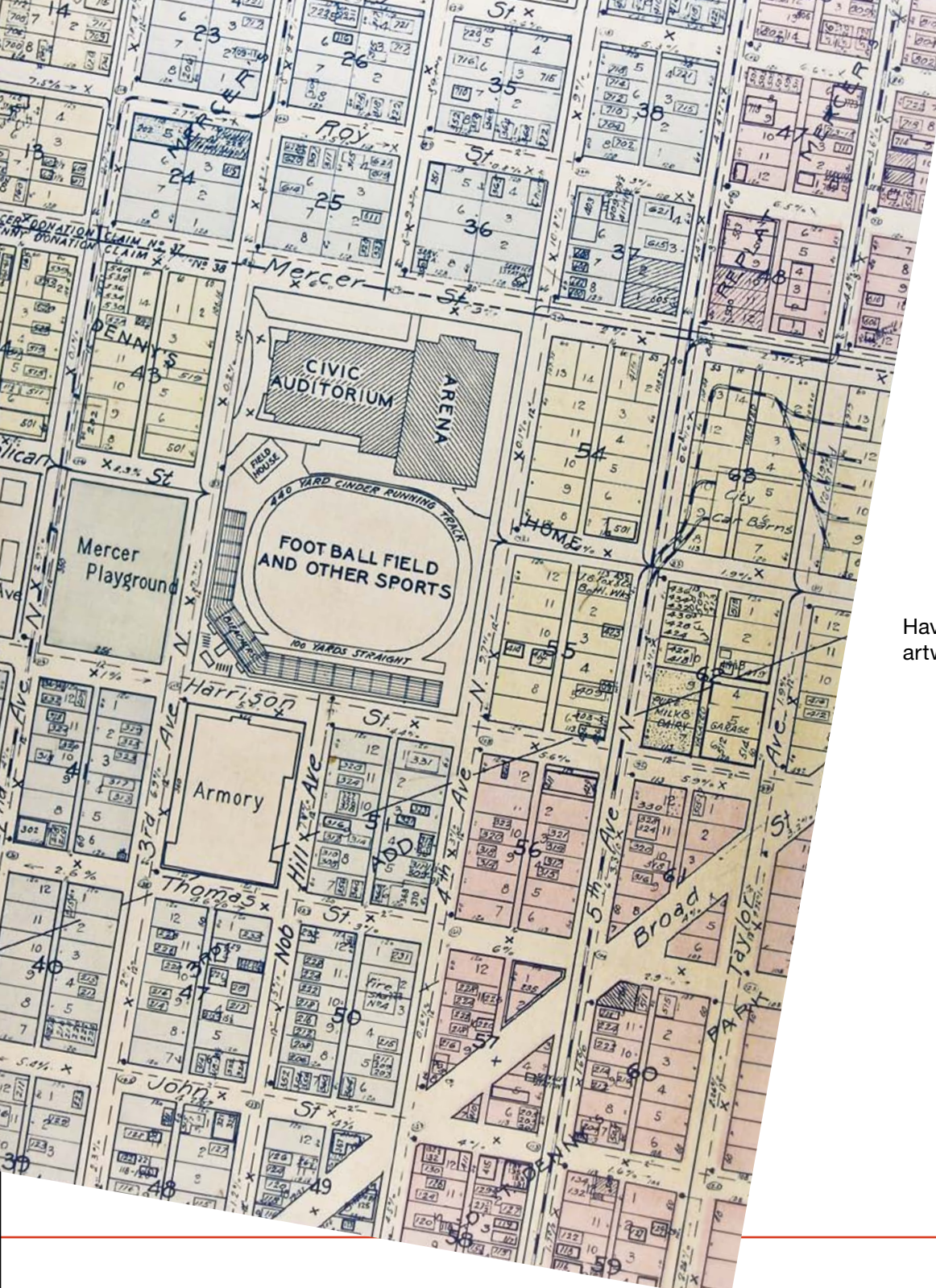
## DAY TWO: Imagination and Interpretation

1. Read aloud—or have students read aloud—two inspirational stories about Gunder Birkeland. Class discussion should address the following questions:
  - What information did you learn about Gunder Birkeland from these stories? What are the “facts” here? (He was born in Norway, he had polio, his kids gave him a car for Christmas...)
  - Do you think these stories could be used as historical evidence? Are they a reliable source? Why or why not? (Was your confidence shaken by the fact that the author spells Birkeland’s name wrong at least once, and claims that it was the space shuttle, rather than the Space Needle that was built on his property...)
  - Historians like to have three sources confirming something before they can be sure about it. How could you corroborate the information in this story?
  - Was there anything in these stories that you think the author made up or imagined? Why did the author tell the story this way? What point was he trying to make?
  - Could you imagine a different story that would fit the “facts”?
2. Now choose someone represented in the property records—either someone you found some evidence about, or someone you really know nothing about except that they owned a certain house in a certain year. Write a vignette about them—a scene or story from their life. You can make the story as realistic or unrealistic as you want—be creative. You can do more research about life in the 1950s—or whenever your story is set—to flesh out your story. You can make details up if you want to—something inspirational like the one you read about Gunder Birkeland, maybe! Just be sure your story fits the limited facts you have at hand.

## Here are some ideas to get you started:

- The property record for the house at 219 Nob Hill Ave has a note attached, a complaint that the house has been abandoned for four years. Why do you think the house was abandoned? Do you think the neighborhood kids made up scary stories about it? Imagine a group of kids trick-or-treating in the neighborhood on Halloween. One of the kids dares another one to go up to the porch and ring the doorbell. What if someone answered? Write a story about what happened next.
- Ping Chow and his wife Ruby Chow were major figures in the Chinese American community in Seattle. Research their lives—you can start with the obituaries. According to the property record for 334 2nd Ave N, Edward Shui Ping Chow bought the house from Anna Hopkins in 1955. At that time the Chinese community in Seattle lived almost exclusively in Chinatown and on Beacon Hill. Queen Anne was almost entirely white. Write a scene where the Chows come to look at the house, thinking they would like to buy it. What would they like about it? What would their concerns be? (Note: According to the City Directories, the Chows did not live in the house. They may have bought it with the intention of renting it out, not living in it.)
- Dorothy Isaacs—along with many other people—was forced to sell her property to the City so they could build the fairgrounds. But then the City decided to make the fairgrounds smaller than they originally planned, so they wrote letters to some of the former owners, offering them the chance to buy back their property. How do you think you would feel if this happened to you? Grateful? Resentful? Confused? Read these two letters Dorothy wrote in response to the notice she received offering her the chance to buy back her house. Write a scene where you imagine the conversation she had with her husband in between the two letters. What do you think they decided to do in the end? (Note, the answer can be found... in one of the documents included in this lesson.)





- Read Frank J. Hart's obituary—the kamikaze attack, the little league coaching, law school, etc. He was born in 1924—how old was he when he owned the property at 129 5th Ave? Write a scene where Frank and his family are sitting down to dinner, and one of his war buddies stops by to say hello...
- How about the King County Tax Assessor who went around and took all these notes? Remember, they were trying to figure out a fair value for the property so the county could charge the owner the right amount of property tax. Read the descriptions of the properties—can you get a sense of what this person's personality was like? How did s/he feel about the job? Imagine the inspector knocking on the door of one of these houses and asking to come in and count the toilets... Write a story about what happened next.

Have students illustrate the stories with historic photographs or their own artwork—maybe as a comic. Publish the stories in a book or online.

# Lesson 4: Pointed Prose— Reading for Point of View in Historic Documents

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time Management:** 4 one-hour sessions, or 2 one-hour sessions with homework

**Objective:** Using primary and secondary sources (newspaper articles, Century 21 staff reports, etc.), students will review the process by which the Warren Avenue School was acquired and demolished to make way for the Washington State Pavilion, which is now Key Arena. They will create a timeline of events and a list of stakeholders and their specific interests. They will write an objective summary of the events, and then write a subjective, slanted, opinionated version from the point of view of one of the stakeholders. This could culminate in a public debate, with the class voting on the winner.

**You will need:**

- Seattle Times articles, editorials, letters to the editor (provided).
- Documents from Century 21 Staff (provided).
- Resolution of Sports Arena Committee (provided).
- [2011 Interview with Ida Russell](#), who went to Warren Avenue School.
- *Questions for Analyzing Primary Documents* Worksheet (provided).
- [Official history of Warren Ave School](#) from *Building for Learning*, published by Seattle Public Schools, 2002.

**DAYS ONE and TWO: Creating a Timeline & List of Stakeholders**

Students will work in pairs to read and analyze documents, but the class will work as a whole to create the timeline and list of stakeholders.

**Step 1:** Hand out newspaper articles and documents—one for each pair of students. Explain what these documents are: newspapers, reports, etc.

**Step 2:** Post an empty timeline at the front of the room that runs month by month from January 1957 to December 1959. If you can't do a long horizontal timeline, a chart will work:

	JAN–MAR	APR–JUN	JUL–SEP	OCT–DEC
1957				
1958				
1959				

**Post an empty chart to record stakeholders and their interests:**

STAKEHOLDER	INTERESTS

Tell the students you will be filling these two charts in as a class, using the documents they have in front of them.

**Step 3:** Start off the timeline by noting that in the spring of 1957, the state legislature passed a bill that gave the Century 21 Committee the right to acquire property by eminent domain. End it with June 1959, when Warren Avenue School was torn down. Point out that this isn't really the end of the story: The Washington State Pavilion was built on the site, and it is now the Key Arena. And eventually, who knows, maybe it'll be something else.



Make sure everyone is clear about the meaning of eminent domain and condemnation. If there is interest and time, you can ask the students what they think about the idea of the government forcing people to sell their private property in order to achieve some public purpose. (In the old TV series *Star Trek*, they had a saying: “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.” The government often has to balance out the needs of individuals against group goals—or the needs of the present against the needs of the future. Can you think of any examples of this today?)

Let’s see how this process played out for Warren Avenue School. The school was owned by the Seattle School District, a public institution with public obligations of its own. Decision-makers had to consider the building’s location, age, and condition. But you might say it was a case of the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few.

**Step 4:** Have each pair of students work together to read their document to see what information they can glean from it. Have them use the *Questions for Analyzing Primary Documents* worksheet to record their findings.

**Questions for Analyzing Primary Documents**

1. Who wrote this?
2. When was it written?
3. Who was the audience?
4. Why did they write it? Do they have a particular point of view? If so, what is it?
5. What might be missing from this story?
6. What information are you skeptical about? How could you confirm or disprove it?
7. What information here are you pretty sure is true?

**Step 5:** Have each pair of students report what they learned from their document (the answer to Question 7 on the worksheet is a good start). If they had trouble figuring out exactly what was going on, have them ask questions and see if the class can help. Most of the items from *The Seattle Times* are straight reporting, reasonably objective. A few are letters to the editor or editorials, or silly little fluff pieces. Some of the other documents have quite strong points of view, or are written for very

particular audiences (the author’s boss, say). Point these out, or have students point them out, as they come up.

As each pair reports out, add the information to the timeline on the board, like this:

Timeline				
1957	State grants C21 power of eminent domain (Book)			
1958	Court rules state can condemn Warren Ave School (ST 3/14/58)			Plan to convert Lowell School to accommodate CP students (ST 10/23/58)
1959	PTAs “scout” Warren Ave School (3/2/59)			

**Post an empty chart to record stakeholders and their interests:**

STAKEHOLDER	INTERESTS
School District	Need to serve neighborhood kids Need to serve blind kids Need to serve CP (“spastic”) kids Responsibility to public trust, get fair value for property
Century 21	
State Government	
City Government	Need land to build World of Tomorrow pavilion for Century 21—time is short!
Sports Arena Committee	Wants sports arena for Seattle
Blind/CP students and their families	
Neighborhood families	
Principal and teachers at school	Don’t want disruption in job, school community

To fill any glaring holes in the story, you can refer to the official [Warren Avenue School history](#) from *Building for Learning*, published by Seattle Public Schools (SPS).

It's worth going over the *Questions for Analyzing Primary Documents* for the SPS history too!

### **DAY THREE** (or homework)

Have students write a one-page summary of the events leading up to the demolition of Warren Avenue School. This is to be an objective history, trying to represent the perspectives of all the stakeholders.

### **DAY FOUR** (or homework)

Have the students choose one of the stakeholders (or assign them). Have them write a letter to the editor, a resolution, a manifesto, a propaganda flyer—some piece of persuasive prose that advocates for their position in the strongest possible terms, and makes mincemeat of the other side in any way it can—without actually lying. Review some of the opinion pieces the students looked at before—have them identify the techniques used to make a strong case—heartwarming stories, leaving out information that doesn't support your case, etc.

### **Extension Activity:**

Stage a public debate around the question, “Did the benefits outweigh the costs of tearing down Warren Avenue School?”

**Extension Activity:** Research newspaper accounts and official documents about the recent school closures in the Seattle Public Schools (2007 and 2009). Or the routing of Link Light Rail through Bellevue. Or some other local public project. Notice the different perspectives of the different stakeholders, and how people presented their case to the public. How has the process changed since the closure of Warren Avenue School in 1959?

### **Worksheet: Questions for Analyzing Primary Documents**

1. Who wrote this document?
2. When was it written?
3. Who was the audience?
4. Why did they write it? Do they have a particular point of view? If so, what is it?
5. What might be missing from this story?
6. What information are you skeptical about? How could you confirm or disprove it?
7. What information here are you pretty sure is true?





# Lesson 5: Decision-Making Process— Where Would YOU Put the Fair?

**Grade Level:** 5–8

**Time Management:** 4 one-hour sessions, with homework to complete the assignments

**Objective:** Students will identify different decision-making processes that might be used to site a major civic project such as Century 21. They will experiment with these different processes to site a hypothetical *Awesome Student Lounge* at their school. They will discuss the pros and cons of each decision-making process.

## Activity:

### DAY ONE: Identify Decision-Making Processes

Laurene Gandy, wife of Century 21 Director Joe Gandy, said of the fair: “Anything is possible if the citizens will agree to it and everyone will work on it.” Write this quote on the board for discussion.

**Discussion:** Do you agree with this? Have you ever been part of a group that would not go along with a plan, or work on it together? What does it take to get everyone to agree to something, and work on it?

Present this quote from Albert Rosellini, the governor whose support made the fair possible—with funding, promotion, etc. Five decades later he had this to say about his decision-making philosophy:

*A lot of things go back and forth, there's two sides to everything. The primary one [that came up when I was governor] was the bridge—520. A second Lake Washington bridge had been authorized by the legislature ten years before I got elected governor. And the thing dragged on because nobody could make up their mind where it should be. The Mayor and the City said no, we should extend I-90. The engineers said they thought [building a second bridge] would be more feasible. So I took the position during the campaign that I was gonna quit this haggling and arguing about it, I was gonna build it, and I was gonna build it where the engineers said it would be more feasible. The first day I got in I fired the toll bridge authority, put my own people in, got it started. Ten years later!*

*There's a lot of things like that I could point out. The World's Fair was the same thing, I guess. There was a lot of naysayers who said oh no we can't do it because we've never had a fair on such small territory... I said no, I'm gonna build it, I'm gonna do it.*

*The most important thing is to be decisive enough to make a decision. And you know that you're gonna be wrong sometimes. It's not easy, but I think whether it's the governor or the president, whoever has the authority, should listen, study carefully all sides of any question, but make a decision. Hopefully you make the right decision. Like I say, sometimes you make the wrong one. But if you make fifty percent of them right, you're all right I guess.*

**Discussion:** Do you agree with this? Have you ever been in a situation where a group of people had a really hard time making a decision, because nobody was willing to take charge and just decide?

Present this quote from Ewen Dingwall, the Vice President and General Manager who pulled so many, many people and organizations together to make the fair a reality. Here's his take on decision-making:



*There were so many people and organizations involved, each mindful of separate interests and rights—and with time pressing and everyone anxious for quick decisions, one of the toughest things was to allow each person and agency time to reach the decisions they had a right to make. I did my share of firing from the hip, but deciding when not to come to a decision was for a long time one of my most useful functions.*

**Discussion:** Have you ever needed time to make a decision, but someone was rushing you? Have you ever had to make a decision without having all the information you needed?

### **Activity: Find a Site for a Super Awesome Student Lounge**

Let's imagine we are going to turn one of the classrooms in the school into a student lounge, with couches, vending machines, a bouncy house, video games, whatever. Awesome, right? But there's bad news... You can't make an omelet without breaking any eggs, after all. Unfortunately, the teacher and students in that classroom are going to have to move to a different school. Which classroom will it be?

We're going to try three different processes.

#### **DAY TWO: Dictator**

One person is going to be in charge. That person will look at whatever information s/he thinks is important, decide what to put in the student lounge, and decide which classroom it's going to be in. That's it—done. Have each student write a one-page description of the lounge as they would build it if they were the dictator—including which classroom gets displaced.

#### **DAY THREE: Democratic Process**

We will have a suggestion box for people to contribute their ideas about where to put the student lounge what should be in it. Then we will have a hearing, where we list all the ideas, and everyone who wants to can talk for two minutes about which ideas they like and which classroom they think the student lounge should be in. Then everyone will vote on the location and contents of the student lounge. And that's final.

#### **DAY FOUR: Empowered Team**

TOGETHER we will brainstorm ideas for an awesome student lounge. We will prioritize the ideas and agree on the best ones. One team member will write a compelling description of the student lounge, explaining just how awesome it's going to be.

TOGETHER we will identify important criteria for locating the student lounge (for example: far from the library so noise doesn't bother people, has water supply to fill pool at bottom of proposed water slide, displaces smallest number of students, or only displaces students who are about to

graduate anyway, etc.) We will assign people to gather information about each classroom, according to the criteria we chose.

TOGETHER we will decide which classroom makes the most sense, based on the criteria we agreed on and the information we gathered.

We will brainstorm ideas for displacing the teacher and students in that classroom. Maybe we can squeeze the students into other classes? Maybe instead of having to leave, the teacher can now be in charge of programming fun activities in the student lounge?

We will assign someone to write a letter to the classroom we chose, explaining our decision-making process, the public benefit of the project, and what will happen to them next.

#### **Class discussion to assess the results:**

1. What were some good things about each process?
2. What were some problems with each process?
3. Was the result the same for each process—did the same classroom get picked? Was the vision for the lounge different each time?
4. How long did it take to make the decision in each case?
5. How did the decision-makers feel about the process?
6. How do you think the people in the classroom that got chosen would feel about each process?
7. Which process do you think will give people a stake in the student lounge, make them feel like it's their place, like they want to help make it happen?

# Lesson 6: The World Of Tomorrow Predicting the Future

**Grade Level:** 9–12

**Time Management:** 1 one-hour session, plus extension activities/  
homework

**Objective:** Students will analyze primary documents (*World of Tomorrow* script, photographs, newspaper articles, films) in order to understand the hopes and fears people had about the future in 1962 and what those hopes and fears revealed about life at that time. Students will compare those hopes and fears with the reality we live in today (1962’s actual future), and also with the hopes and fears people have about the future today.

## Activity:

1. Hand out copies of script. Students can read it if they want, but let them know it’ll be a lot easier to make sense of if they have a little background information.

Washington state’s contribution to the Seattle World’s Fair was the Washington State Pavilion, which housed the *World of Tomorrow* exhibition. The people who developed the exhibit described what they thought they were doing in a memo.

Read the two paragraphs that describe the purpose of the script (you don’t often get to hear the creators of a document actually saying what they thought they were trying to do with it!).

Construction began in 1959. Show photos of the exhibit’s construction, completion.

Discuss as a class (briefly, no need to dwell if students are ready to move on): What do we know so far about this exhibit? Are these people optimistic or pessimistic about the future? Do you have any comments or questions about the language? Example: the way they use “man”)

2. This script is called *The Threshold and the Threat*. Let’s see if we can figure out why.

Assign roles, read the “prologue” section of the script aloud. Discuss as a class:

- a. First of all, it’s a really strange document—was there anything in there that was confusing to you?
  - b. Pull out phrases that seemed particularly powerful or interesting—or just plain nutty. List on the board.
  - c. What’s the threshold?
  - d. What’s the threat? What do you make of this scene in the bomb shelter? (Review [Duck and Cover](#) video, newspaper articles about the Cuban Missile Crisis which began just days after the fair closed.)
3. Divide class into 5 small groups. Each group gets a section of the script to study.

**Sections are:** The City, The Home, Transportation/Food/Industry, Education & Communications, Recreation & Leisure. (If groups are too large, you can pull Education & Communication apart. Transportation/Food/Industry can also be pulled apart into two or even three groups.)

**Small Groups:** You will be reporting back to the rest of the class about your section. Start by reading it aloud—take parts, however you want. Talk about things that are confusing—again, this is an odd document. Ask for help if you are stuck. Prepare to present answers to four questions:

- d. What did the script predict about the World of Tomorrow?
- e. What did it get right about the future?
- f. What did it get wrong?
- g. Are there important things about the future that these guys missed?

4. Read the *Epilogue* aloud as a class.

**Discuss:** What did you think of the ending? Do you think it was optimistic or pessimistic? What was the message to the “child of the future”? What was the message to the adults of the present?

### Extension Activities:

5. **Do some research:** find out what people are predicting now about the future of The City, The Home, Transportation, etc. Do you think they are right? What do those predictions say about where we are right now as a society?
6. Write your own message to the “child of the future”—and the adults of the present.

### Alternate Activity grades 5-8:

“At the ceremony [dedicating the start of Space Needle construction] various objects that might be ‘candidates for extinction’ by the year 2000 were displayed. Those included a telephone, a typewriter, a pack of cigarettes, false teeth, a mousetrap, a Seattle city map, a ukulele, a diet formula, and a federal income tax form.”\*

Assemble these items, or photographs of them. Divide class into groups of 3-4, divide items more or less evenly among them. Each group will present its items to the class, answering these questions.

1. What is this? What’s it for?
2. Why do you think they thought it would be extinct in the 21st Century?
3. Have you ever used this? Do you know anyone who uses this? Would you say it is extinct?
4. Has this item been replaced with something new that performs the same function?

Make a list of things you think will be extinct in 2100. Bring them in. Make your case: What trends or events happening now make you think this is going to be obsolete? Create a display for your school—or online—to show the items and your reasoning.

\*from *The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World’s Fair and Its Legacy*, page 44

