

Five schools that are changing education.

# IN THE VANGUARD

## Ecosmarts

### BERTSCHI SCHOOL

**GRADES** PK-5  
**LOCATION** Seattle  
**ENROLLMENT** 227  
**STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO** 5 : 1  
**ACCEPTANCE RATE** 32 percent  
**ANNUAL TUITION** \$16,190  
**INFORMATION** [www.bertschi.org](http://www.bertschi.org)

Over a quarter of a century ago Brigitte Bertschi took her one-room class of 17 students and transformed it into a community of over 200 children in seven grades, occupying half of a block in North Capitol Hill. More recently she has envisioned the long-term future of her school: using and teaching environmentally sustainable practices. The school recently doubled in size, adding a playground with a rainwater recapture system, solar panels, and recycled or sustainable materials throughout. Students also have space to get their hands dirty in the garden, take field trips to farmers markets, and estimate the carbon footprint of their homes.

## Real-Life Civics

### GIDDENS SCHOOL

**GRADES** PK-5  
**LOCATION** Seattle  
**ENROLLMENT** 200  
**STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO** 11 : 1  
**ACCEPTANCE RATE** School did not provide  
**TUITION** \$9,450-\$13,275  
**INFORMATION** [www.giddensschool.org](http://www.giddensschool.org)

Last year over half of the families and faculty at Giddens School marched in an immigrant-rights rally that started near campus. “You can’t really lecture to three- to twelve-year-olds,” says teacher Daron Henry, “you have to give real-life examples.” Students also role-played as immigrants applying for citizenship to the United States (a parent who’s an immigration lawyer helped make the game true to life). Lately they’ve harvested the campus garden’s produce for the neighborhood food bank. And some students volunteer at a nearby Asian-American retirement home. Says Henry, “People here want to be involved with their kids, and they want to create community.”

## Interdisciplinary Studies

### EASTSIDE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

**GRADES** 5-12  
**LOCATION** Kirkland  
**ENROLLMENT** 140  
**STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO** 6 : 1  
**ACCEPTANCE RATE** 70 percent  
**ANNUAL TUITION** \$18,000-\$21,000  
**INFORMATION** [www.eastsideprep.org](http://www.eastsideprep.org)

Eastside’s faculty integrates curricula that revolve around questions like “What is the world made of?” and “What does it mean to be human?” What the student learns in biology, for instance, will be calibrated to that day’s lesson in history. When the Dead Sea Scrolls came to town last year, the math, science, history, art, and literature departments collaborated to come up with curricula that tackled the topic from all angles. “An astonishing moment for the faculty,” says academic dean Jeff Sanderson, “is when a kid raises his hand in science class and says ‘You know, in English we were just reading about something that’s relevant here.’”

## Lives in Transition

### ZION PREPARATORY ACADEMY

**GRADES** PK-8  
**LOCATION** Seattle  
**ENROLLMENT** 375  
**STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO** 9 : 1  
**ACCEPTANCE RATE** 99 percent  
**ANNUAL TUITION** \$7,000  
**INFORMATION** [www.zionprep.org](http://www.zionprep.org)

Zion Prep produces the kind of dramatic success stories you expect from TV. There’s the one about the kid who was once so violent that staff at his public school had to handcuff him; at Zion he made the honor roll. Or the girl who came to Zion in fifth grade after being recommended for special ed, only to apply to prestigious Kennedy High three years later. Principal Jack Parriera credits teachers and an Afrocentric curriculum. “Like the neighborhood, most of our staff and student body are African American.” Teachers use call-and-response methods to engage kids who, says Parriera, often experience the first successes of their lives at Zion.

## Podium Kids

### LAKE WASHINGTON GIRLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

**GRADES** 6-8  
**LOCATION** Seattle  
**ENROLLMENT** 53  
**STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO** 11 : 1  
**ACCEPTANCE RATE** School did not provide  
**ANNUAL TUITION** \$9,900  
**INFORMATION** [www.lwgms.org](http://www.lwgms.org)

Started in 1998 by parents who wanted a safe space for their daughters to cultivate intellectual and social confidence, Lake Washington Girls Middle School emphasizes public speaking. An oral student presentation is required in every class. Debate and theater classes are required. Mock trial is an option. Over fifty percent of the students are of color. Says head of school Patricia Hearn, “We’re genuinely diverse, simply because we started out that way.” This inclusiveness and the emphasis on public speaking have earned LWGMS a devoted following of alumni who—calling it the most useful school experience of their lives—consistently return to visit, volunteer, and teach.