

Voters approved a bond in 2006 to fund several capital projects, including these:

Wade King Elementary School Opens

Wade King Elementary School on Yew Street Road opened on the first day of school this fall to 325 students in grades K-5. Students performed and led tours for community members at an open house on Sept. 29. The two-story, 52,000-square foot school was built with sustainable and energy-efficient features, including a passive solar design that takes advantage of natural light. It complies with the Washington State Sustainable School Protocol (the school building equivalent to LEED certification). It appears that due to a revenue shortfall, Whatcom County will not be able to complete road and sidewalk improvements south from the school to Samish Way. Until that project is completed, students within walking distance where there are no sidewalks will receive bus transportation. The school is pursuing an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) program for all students. Read more at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/schools/king/Profile.htm>

Progress Report on New Shuksan Middle School Construction

Whatcom County-based Colacurcio Brothers Construction Company Inc. started building the new Shuksan Middle School this spring just west of the current school. In September 2008, workers poured walls for the new facility and are planning to have the new structure under roof by winter. The new two-story Shuksan will include teaming areas for students and staff to collaborate. The “green” design will comply with the Washington State Sustainable Schools Protocol (equivalent to LEED certification for schools). The current Shuksan is housing students during construction, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in portable classroom costs, and will be torn down as soon as possible to restore space for playfields. The new Shuksan is scheduled to open in fall 2009. Shuksan staff, students, parents and community members are working together during the 2008-09 school year to build a mission, vision and explore program options for the new school.

Seismic Safety Update for Columbia, Larrabee, Lowell, Whatcom and Roeder

The first of two phases of seismic retrofitting was completed prior to the start of school at Columbia and Larrabee Elementary Schools to improve the structural integrity of the older buildings and increase safety in the event of a major earthquake. The second phase of work at Larrabee, scheduled for summer 2009, will include re-enforcement of exterior walls and the roof, new floors, paint and new exterior front stairs. Columbia’s seismic work was completed during summer 2008. Seismic retrofitting work at Whatcom Middle School will begin this winter and continue through late 2009 or early 2010. Designated sections of Whatcom will be closed off at a time to allow the contractor to work inside the school during the school year. Students and staff will temporarily be relocated elsewhere in the school or in portable classrooms until the work is complete. This is necessary because the work at Whatcom requires a longer period of time to complete and cannot be accomplished only during summer months. Planning is occurring now and Whatcom families will receive more information soon. Seismic work has begun at Lowell Elementary

SEE REVERSE

School, which is temporarily closed this school year for this purpose. Lowell's exterior walls will be reinforced and attached to the roof and floors. During this construction period, Lowell kindergarteners through fourth graders are attending Happy Valley Elementary School and Lowell fifth graders are attending Larrabee. Happy Valley and Larrabee have created numerous transition activities to welcome new students and families. Roeder staff will also relocate to another location due to the extensive retrofitting needed for that building, which is planned either for the 2009-10 or 2010-11 school year.

Aldrich Road Elementary School Update

The design for the Aldrich Road elementary school is complete and plans were submitted in December 2007 to the City of Bellingham for review. While the Aldrich Road elementary school was scheduled to open in fall 2009, the district continues to work on permitting issues related to wetlands mitigation that will be resolved, but not according to the anticipated schedule. The district will provide more information about the revised construction timeline as soon as mitigation issues are resolved. Meanwhile, the district will continue to closely monitor enrollment in northside elementary schools to determine if the rate of growth in this area is occurring as quickly as forecasted. September 2008 enrollment numbers for northside elementary schools do not reflect an urgent need to open Aldrich next school year. This will help the district plan accordingly to meet the needs of students and families, and time the future construction of this school with other facilities projects. New elementary school boundaries for north Bellingham will take effect when the new Aldrich Road elementary school opens. To view boundary maps online: www.bham.wednet.edu/district/attendance.htm

Sudden Valley Property Purchase Update for Future Elementary School

The district has reviewed four sites in Sudden Valley for a future elementary school and is now focusing on one site to determine the feasibility for building prior to land purchase. Known as a former airport landing strip, the site is off Lake Whatcom Boulevard north of the main gate. The district is working with county and state agencies to determine the feasibility of eventually building a school in the Lake Whatcom watershed.

Summer Facility Project Update

District painters, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and utility/grounds crew members completed more than 4,000 work orders last school year to provide safe, healthy and comfortable learning environments. Major projects completed during summer 2008 include a refinished gym floor at Alderwood Elementary, a new path from Alderwood to the Alderwood Early Childhood Center, new unit vents at Alderwood, Parkview and Happy Valley Elementary Schools, new flooring and cabinetry at Columbia Elementary, new fire panel at Happy Valley, boiler maintenance or repair work at most buildings, and new playground installation at Geneva, Roosevelt and Wade King Elementary Schools.

To receive district news via e-mail, which includes facilities updates, sign up at www.bham.wednet.edu. See "E-News Registration."