

NEWS RELEASE**February 26, 2008****For more information:**

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Everett High reading project spreads to other schools and community

A year ago in May, about 30 students and teachers gathered during the first Everett High School (EHS) *Readers'Café*. Organized by EHS librarian Deborah Payne and literacy facilitator Tessa O'Connor, that first session of spirited conversations about reading sparked more interest in reading, forged new friendships and is now repeated each month at EHS. The *Readers'Café* success is the catalyst for this year's schoolwide *One Book* project now spreading into the EHS neighborhood and to North Middle School.

"*One Book* projects are a kind of super book club," notes O'Connor. "Hundreds of people read the same book at the same time and talk about it. Reading is a social activity, and group conversations about a book can be profound and life-changing. Our students are expanding their minds and their experiences through the pages of books. They are also connecting, through these discussions, with people they might never have otherwise considered speaking to."

The *One Book* of choice for EHS and its neighborhood is *We Beat the Street* by Sampson Davis, George Jenkins and Rameck Hunt, with Sharon M. Draper. The book tells how Davis, Jenkins and Hunt could easily have followed their childhood friends into drug-dealing, gangs and prison. Instead, these three boys made a pact to "beat the street " and make a difference in their lives and in their community.

As part of the growing energy around the *One Book* project, Payne and O'Connor met with Everett Neighborhood Group leaders who have promoted the project in their neighborhood newsletters. The names of EHS students reading the book are posted in the EHS library which has checked out all but 30 of the 400 available book copies. Some NorthMiddle Schoolteachers will be using the book with their students this spring.

Everett Public Library is supporting the project with a '*We Beat the Street*' display, and the city library books were all checked out on the first day. Everett High classrooms have been reading stories about Everettcommunity residents who have made a difference and will be working with the Everett Public Library to bring in speakers.

A common question connected with the project and published on all project promotion is, "*What would happen if we all read 'We Beat the Street'and decided to make a difference?*" Principal Catherine Matthews notes. "The idea of making a difference, of *being* the difference has been central to EverettHigh Schoolthe last three years. Our annual *Challenge Day* events empower students and adults to understand and overcome differences. Some of our classes are using this book and related titles to learn about being positive change agents. A group of students went last month to hear *We Beat the Street* authors speak at the University of Washington."

On *Read Across America Day*, Monday, March 3, Everett High student members of Bookworms Anonymous will visit Whittier Elementary. There they will read stories to elementary students. "Each story will be tied to the theme 'Be the Change.'" said Payne.

The project grant was received from The Washington State Libraries. The school has had additional help from the Blue and Gold Club and Alderwood Barnes and Noble. "Blue and Gold helps us with refreshments for the Café each month," says Payne. "And Barnes and Noble has provided on demand, top notch customer service and has given us incredible price breaks. The copies of *We Beat the Street* are circulating like crazy!"

Please visit the [EHS library Web site](http://www.everett.k12.wa.us/everett/2-26-08c) to learn about how people are reacting to the book project and for information about ways to make a difference in this community.