

## News release



Everett Public Schools

**March 29, 2011**

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### **Come rain or shine: Kids will walk and bike to Hawthorne Elementary, March 30** *Event highlights safety and healthy exercise, cuts down on motor traffic*

Students and their parents from Hawthorne Elementary will step and pedal to class on "Walking Wednesdays" that begin on Wednesday, March 30. Between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m., participating students will receive a special welcome from Everett Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Gary Cohn, and Snohomish Health District Health Officer, Dr. Gary Goldbaum, at the school, located at 1110 Poplar St., Everett, WA, 98201. Each of the first 200 walkers to arrive will receive a free safety vest to wear while walking to and from school, and the first 100 cyclists each will receive a free helmet and bike lock.

Families are encouraged to form a "walking school bus," which puts a parent volunteer at the "wheel" to lead the "bus" full of kids to school safely along a designated route.

The Walking Wednesday is a joint effort of Hawthorne Elementary and Snohomish Health District, funded by a \$40,000 two-year federal grant to develop Safe Routes to School policies and programming at Hawthorne. The program is planned to continue for the rest of this school year, and will resume for school year 2011-12.

"I encourage more children to safely walk and bicycle to school as often as possible," said Superintendent Cohn. "Students and families who make this a regular practice are 'walking the talk' and helping make their communities to be more livable while improving their minds and bodies."

The additional regular exercise also will benefit youth health. "A program such as Walking Wednesday takes many steps in a healthy direction to boost exercise, reduce childhood obesity, and thus lower the chances of chronic diseases associated with obesity," said Dr. Goldbaum. "This is community health in action."

Recent public health reports indicate the need for improving physical activity among Snohomish County's children:

- Students who are obese or overweight report lower grades, lower expectations to go far in school, and more disabilities than students who are not obese or overweight. (Snohomish Health District, "Obesity" fact sheet, May 2010)
- 34% of Snohomish County eighth-graders report engaging in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes, five or more days per week. (Healthy Youth Survey 2008)

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*Come rain or shine: Kids will walk & bike to Hawthorne Elementary, March 30*

- One in 10 of Snohomish County 10th-graders are obese or overweight, double the national goal of 5%. ("Obesity" fact sheet, May 2010; Healthy Youth Survey 2008)
- 25% of Snohomish County sixth-graders report watching three or more hours of TV/computer time on school days. (Healthy Youth Survey 2008)

Please visit [www.saferoutesinfo.org/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/) for more information about Safe Routes to Schools. Find out about local public health programs and services at [www.snohd.org](http://www.snohd.org).

Incorporated in 1959, the Snohomish Health District works for a safer and healthier community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats.

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