

News Release
Everett Public Schools



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Sept. 24, 2010

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Transportation adjustments for 100 students at Penny Creek Elementary
Modification of one bus run and extra pickups for a less-than-full bus

Beginning Wednesday, Sept. 29, 100 Penny Creek students who have been walking to school since Sept. 8, will now have school bus transportation. These are students west of 35th Avenue SE who have been walking along 132nd Street SE.

Also, additional staff time will be provided at Penny Creek and Mill Creek Elementary Schools to help supervise students before and after school.

In a letter being sent over the weekend to a Penny Creek Elementary neighborhood, Superintendent Gary Cohn expressed the difficulty he faces when making transportation decisions.

"As your superintendent, I have responsibilities that bring me great joy and those that cause sleepless nights. I know our school families are making difficult choices during these challenging economic times. The district is also economically challenged to continue providing traditional services and programs.

"The late Rev. Dale Turner was a regular Saturday columnist for the Seattle Times. He once wrote, 'Straddling an issue is like straddling the middle of the road – you are liable to be hit from both sides.' The difficult decisions about transportation this year are likely to be followed with other difficult decisions in the years to come. I will always stand on the side of the road that protects classrooms and protects support programs that allow students to be successful.

"We will also continue our advocacy on behalf of education with our legislators. The legislative session is still two months away, but two of your school board members and I are at the school board legislative conference this weekend. There we will work with school board members and superintendents from around the state who are also facing similar challenges. We hope you will walk the same side of the road we are and that, when you have opportunities to talk to legislators about the importance of education, you speak of the importance of fully funding the cost of getting students to and from school".

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Starting with this school year, Everett Public Schools implemented cost-saving measures that other school districts have been forced to launch in the past. That is, providing student transportation only for students who catch a school bus outside of a one mile radius of a school or who have no adequate walkway to school. This one mile radius decision is driven by the funding formula from the state which pays only for students catching buses more than a mile away from school. For Everett Public Schools, that has meant that approximately 40 cents of every transportation dollar came from local levy funds – the same money that buys textbooks and pays for classroom staff. The district's decision to reduce transportation is based upon a goal of preserving classroom dollars.

This fall Everett Public Schools has approximately 18,700 students. Of those, about 10,250 are eligible bus riders at 753 bus stops on 108 bus routes. During the week of Oct. 11-15 bus riding students will be "counted" to determine how much state transportation money the district will receive. In a message sent through its [email subscription system InTouch](#), and through parent newsletters, the district is urging school bus riders to be on board that week, "That's when drivers will count each student who rides the bus in the morning and each who rides the kindergarten bus at midday. These rider numbers determine the amount of funding for school transportation. When all regular riders are on the buses during *count week*, the district recoups the maximum amount of state funds to which we are entitled and preserves more funding for classrooms."

As families work through adjustments to the transportation changes, the district's transportation department has handled well over a thousand phone calls, investigated approximately 320 specific requests to move or add bus stops, and processed written reconsideration requests from 41 families representing 53 students. This week's route modifications and earlier restoration of bus services for students at Jackson Elementary will increase the number of eligible students whose bus services have been changed through the district's [transportation reconsideration process](#) to about 225.

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