



## **Update on Lowell Elementary School**

*Updated: 3/27/09*

The Bellingham School District recognizes the impact on students and families who have been looking forward to returning to Lowell Elementary School this fall. District staff and School Board members express heartfelt compassion for all of those impacted by budget decisions created by a \$9 billion state budget shortfall. The district's [adopted Budget Savings Plan](#) aims to save as many jobs as possible and keep reductions as far away from classroom instruction as attainable.

### **Q: Will Lowell Elementary School reopen this fall?**

No, unless the current economic situation changes by noon on Friday, April 3 or donations totaling \$450,000 are received by the district no later than noon, Friday, April 3 ([please click here for details](#)). Any gift to the district, an individual school or department of money, materials or equipment having a value of \$1,000 or greater is subject to Board approval as stated in [Board policy 6114](#). Following months of public input as part of the Bellingham School District budget's savings process, the School Board adopted a Budget Savings Plan on March 17, 2009 that included saving at least \$450,000 in operational costs by temporarily delaying the reopening of Lowell Elementary School for one year. Lowell is currently closed for seismic retrofitting work to improve earthquake safety. Upon adoption of the plan, the School Board directed Superintendent Kenneth Vedra and staff to immediately begin planning for and implementing the Budget Savings Plan. The district will need to reduce its operating expenses by at least \$2 million for the fall to help offset a growing state budget deficit, now at \$9 billion. **To view the district's adopted Budget Savings Plan and a budget FAQ, [please click here](#).**

### **Q: Why can't the district wait until late spring when the Legislature adopts a state budget to make a decision about reopening Lowell in the fall?**

The district has legal deadlines – defined by Collective Bargaining Agreements and in state law [RCW 28A.405.210](#) – for notifying staff about their job status for next school year. There are multiple steps to notifying staff regarding job status, including an appeals process. Many weeks are needed to carry out this extensive process, which must move forward on April 3. The district needs to give our staff proper notification. It also needs to assign K-12 staffing to create elementary, middle and high school and program schedules – which are all impacted by one another. Middle and high school students throughout the district also need to register for courses, which must be staffed. The district must make decisions regarding the staffing of its schools at this time in order to prepare for an on-time and successful start to the new school year.

**Q: Where will Lowell children attend school next year?**

**A:** Children in the Lowell attendance area will continue to attend Happy Valley or Larrabee elementary schools for the 2009-2010 school year. This year, Lowell fifth graders are attending Larrabee Elementary School. For 2009-2010, all Lowell students currently attending Happy Valley may continue to attend Happy Valley. Lowell students currently attending Happy Valley do not need to complete any registration paperwork unless they are requesting to change schools. Due to the new attendance area school boundaries implemented last year and the opening of Wade King Elementary School, Happy Valley will be able to serve students in the Happy Valley and Lowell elementary school attendance areas based on projected enrollment.

Lowell parents/guardians who want their children to attend other elementary schools may submit the form for Request for Student Area Transfer between Schools in the Bellingham School District **by the end of the school day on Friday, March 27** to the school in their current attendance area for priority consideration for the 2009-10 school year. Principals will then meet to review the first round of transfer requests. Families will be notified of the transfer request decision in mid-April. For details: <http://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/420/260219/>

**Q: Lowell Elementary School was designated as a full-day kindergarten pilot program site. Where will Lowell full-day kindergartners attend school?**

**A:** Happy Valley Elementary School is also a full-day kindergarten pilot program site. Due to the temporary delay in reopening Lowell and popular demand for enrollment, Happy Valley will open an additional section of full-day kindergarten. Happy Valley staff members are contacting Lowell families that registered for kindergarten.

**Q: Will Lowell Elementary School be used for another purpose during the 2009-2010 school year?**

**A:** No. The school will remain temporarily closed to save on operational costs, including utilities.

**Q: Will the new Lowell playground be accessible to the neighborhood community during next school year?**

**A:** Yes. The district heartily endorses the continuation of the Lowell playground improvement project, spearheaded by the dedicated and caring Lowell community. The district will continue to fully support this project and encourages others to do the same. For details, please contact parent Rachel Budelsky at (360) 393-3269; [budelsky@comcast.net](mailto:budelsky@comcast.net).

**Q: Who should I contact with other questions or concerns?**

**A:** Happy Valley Elementary School Principal Karen Tolliver and Larrabee Elementary School Principal Eric Paige will continue to work closely with Lowell families to support them and their children. Please contact them with additional questions or concerns. Principal Missy Ferguson has been named as the future principal of Lowell Elementary School. She will remain as principal of Columbia Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year and will work with the Lowell community during next school year to plan for reopening.