

**Thank you to voters who approved a 2006 bond to fund several capital projects throughout the Bellingham School District, which included seismic retrofitting of Whatcom Middle School.**

Whatcom was first constructed in 1903, making it the oldest existing school building in the Bellingham School District and one of the oldest in the state. Therefore, the seismic and historic preservation work required at Whatcom has been extensive and badly needed.

### **Substantial Project Completion by End of December**

The first two phases of seismic work for improved earthquake safety at Whatcom Middle School have been completed. The final phase of retrofitting at Whatcom is continuing this fall with substantial completion by the end of December. The vacated areas that are currently under construction — which include classrooms in the basement, first and second floors, and the library area — will be ready for occupancy at the start of the new semester in January.

We recognize that this construction project has presented challenges and disruptions for the Whatcom community and want to express our sincere appreciation for the patience and resilience demonstrated by students, staff and families. This project substantially improves the structural integrity of the historic Whatcom School building, which will result in a safer school for students and staff in the event of earthquake.

### **Phase 3: Completing the Seismic Work**

The seismic project at Whatcom has been divided into three phases. The first two phases are complete. The final phase of work started in June 2009 and is continuing through the end of December. Some of the most extensive retrofitting work occurred during the summer and continued into the first several weeks of the school year. The bulk of this work, which is now complete, involved steel reinforcement of exterior walls that spanned from new footings to the second floor in the front and back of the school and to the corners. This steel reinforcement and the injection of concrete to form the exterior shear walls is highly specialized work. Because of an unanticipated scheduling conflict with the subcontractor who does this type of



shotcrete work, it was not possible to complete all of it during the summer. Other work occurring during this final phase, such as connecting floors to the ceilings above or below, involves substantially less noise and construction activity.

In areas that the seismic work has been occurring, Whatcom's interior classrooms are being painted and new flooring is being installed. Whatcom's 1915 gym received brand new maple flooring with improvements to the historic auditorium.

**SEE REVERSE**

## **Monitoring to Ensure Health and Safety**

In order to allow students to continue to attend Whatcom during the project, staff and students have been housed in areas of the building where construction is not occurring and in six portables on the school property. Interior areas where construction is occurring have been blocked off and sealed with ongoing adjustments and improvements to barriers as needed. Ventilation and dust counts are being monitored as well as additional cleaning and the use of HEPA filters.

The health and safety of students and staff has been monitored by district personnel and the Whatcom County Health Department. Testing in the sealed construction areas, in the occupied parts of the building and outdoors has included dust monitoring, asbestos testing, carbon monoxide testing and lead paint testing. Test samples are analyzed by third-party certified, independent labs. The results of all test have been negative (meaning no asbestos, no carbon monoxide, and no lead paint in occupied areas.) The State Department of Labor and Industry (L & I), which focuses on construction worker safety, collected dust particles recently inside the sealed construction zone with results pending. As an additional quality control measure, all steps taken by the district have been sent to an independent expert in Spokane for additional review.

The health and safety of students and staff are a top district priority. We continue to take the steps necessary to ensure the health and safety of the building's occupants.

**For additional information or if you have concerns, please contact Principal Jeff Coulter at 676-6460.**