



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Heather Villars  
425 921 3439  
[heather.villars@wdcsc.org](mailto:heather.villars@wdcsc.org)

### **Workforce Development Council Program part of solution to high school retention**

**Everett, October 30, 2007** -- Arlington School District is pleased to be recognized for “working its way off the list” of the 7.6% of Washington high schools where 40% of the students who enter as freshman don’t graduate in an article published by the Associated Press on October 29, 2007.

Arlington is home to Weston High School, an alternative school whose increasing success stems from programs targeting students who are at risk of dropping out, including the Step Up program, sponsored by Workforce Development Council Snohomish County. The Step Up program offers an intensive academic program with a focused career readiness component to youth in alternative and high schools in Arlington and Lakewood School Districts. Services are also being expanded to Stanwood’s Lincoln Hill High School.

Utilizing proven dropout prevention/intervention strategies including lower class sizes, integrated curriculum, social and study skills training, mentorship, community service learning, education incentives, and paid work experience, Step Up is helping students discover their career aptitudes.

Students at risk of dropping out of school often don’t see the connection between what they learn in the classroom and the skills they will need for employment.

“Step Up helps students see the connection between school and work,” explains Sue Ambler, WDCSC President and CEO. “Once students see how finishing their high school education can help them achieve their long-term goals, they are much more likely to stay in school and graduate.”

The Step Up program is working: a first quarter (July-September) report states that 38 students returned to school and resumed program participation; 12 students earned an incentive based on positive work evaluations and/or earned academic credit; 11 students achieved a work readiness goal; and five students graduated from the program. Of those who completed the Step Up program, two entered post-secondary training, one entered advanced training, and one returned to school (one student exited the program for health reasons).

Over the summer, Step Up was able to provide each of 13 students with 150 hours of work experience throughout the community. It’s the very work experience that helps students

connect basic skills to their practical applications while acquiring work experience they can put on their resumes.

Ambler explains, “Step Up helps students move forward, beyond high school, to the world of work. It’s simple really: show kids that they can make it in the world, and they will rise to the occasion.”

**Workforce Development Council Snohomish County**

WDCSC invests government and private funding to continuously increase the global competitiveness and prosperity of county workforce and businesses, fill current and emerging jobs, and provide full employment. Investments are made through effective business, labor, community-based, educational, and service provider organizations for the opportunity, economic well-being, and benefit of our entire community.

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