



Direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

APRIL 2015

Proposals to set legislative agenda due by May 15

Each spring the Legislative Committee of WSSDA asks school boards to submit ideas in the form of proposals to help develop the association's top Legislative Priorities for the coming year. After review by the Committee, proposals are presented for a vote at the Legislative Assembly in September.

Proposals that "pass" become WSSDA legislative positions. These positions and our Standing Legislative Positions — proposals that have passed three years in a row — are ranked in order of importance by the districts present at the assembly. The resulting ranked list is WSSDA's Legislative Agenda for the coming session. The highest ranked positions and SLPs on the list become WSSDA's Legislative Priorities.

Your participation in this process strengthens WSSDA's influence in Olympia. Having more districts represented at the Legislative Assembly gives us a louder voice on the hill. So, please plan to attend in September even if your board does not submit a proposal. We need your district's vote on proposals submitted by other districts and your opinion about how the SLPs and new positions should be ranked.

Be sure to use the WSSDA Proposal Submission Form found on the Legislative page at www.wssda.org.

Submission Instructions

Every proposal submitted by a school board member, a school board, a WSSDA standing

PROPOSALS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

American Revolution, tablet style. Meeker MS propels STEM in the class

American Revolution, meet the technology revolution. Meeker Middle School teaches the Tea Act and the Boston Tea Party, George Washington and King George III with a modern twist: every social studies student uses a tablet computer.

The "Transition to Tablets" initiative highlights the school's transition to a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) school. The STEM education integrates into the entire curriculum and empowers students for success through innovation, collaboration, creativity and problem solving.

Studies show increasing demand for STEM jobs but not enough workers qualify for the high-skilled, high-paying

positions. Washington state has at least 25,000 unfilled STEM and health care jobs due to a lack of skilled workers and analysts predict the number will rise, according to the office of the governor.

"The tablets are introducing our students to one of the new tools of technology," said Principal Tim Berndt. "It ties into the overall building commitment to using technology and making sure all kids are familiar with it."

The Meeker PTA raised more than \$11,000 to purchase 28 tablets for one social studies class at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. In addition to the PTA donation, Meeker and the

STEM, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

BURKE: Let's make the shift to Common Core work

NIEUWENHUIS: Small schools, big challenge

Call for Candidates: Brave leaders step forward



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Alan Burke

Let's make the shift to Common Core work

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been around for several years. In fact, Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn officially adopted CCSS in July of 2011. This established the Common Core as Washington's K-12 academic standards for English/Language Arts (ELA) and math.

Two years earlier, CCSS was launched by a group that included the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). The CCSSO is a 50-member group that represents the head of state educational agencies.

With help from Project Achieve and non-profit college testing giants ACT and SAT, the CCSS group chose top educational experts in math and ELA and began a two-year effort to develop subject-based standards for K-12. When followed and mastered, the students would leave high school career and college ready.

The planning group sought input from classroom teachers, curriculum experts and university professors as it developed the standards. It specifically chose to focus on fewer topics than were present in most existing state standards, getting away from the "mile-wide and inch-deep" format that characterized what American students often saw in textbooks aligned to older standards.

The planners found that in high performing countries depth was often emphasized in lieu of breadth. It is impossible—and unwise—so the argument goes, to expect students to know and learn everything—especially in the 21st Century World where information is available with the click of a mouse. Notably, a large group of practitioners from Washington, working with OSPI Teaching and Learning staff, were involved from the start in providing feedback on CCSS drafts.

In the end, CCSS was adopted by 42 states. For the first time, academic standards in the majority of the country were similar. The Obama Administration and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan were not involved in the writing of the standards, but certainly provided incentives for states to adopt them through Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind waivers.

After a strong beginning, the politics surrounding CCSS implementation has become challenging over the past two years. First, as criticism of the heavy federal hand in K-12 education grew, CCSS became associated with President Obama and Secretary Duncan. The standards became the focal point for those who believe strongly in a very limited role of the federal government in educational policy and practices. Education, the argument goes, is a state and local responsibility that should not be controlled or influenced from Washington DC.

Second, as CCSS implementation occurred in districts as the 2012-13 school year started, state testing continued to assess the old standards with existing tests. In Washington, those tests were the MSP, HSPE and End of Course exams in algebra and geometry. Starting this academic year, testing switches to CCSS exams,

using the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test that will be employed in 20+ states, including Washington.

SBAC is a different test that assesses different academic standards. It is meant to be administered through a computer—not paper and pencil. It is adaptive, meaning that as students answer questions correctly or incorrectly, they get harder or easier questions as the test progresses. It also is meant to measure career and college readiness, not like the older tests that measured high school proficiency. The career and college readiness level is a significantly higher "bar" to scale than high school proficiency. Therefore, fewer students will meet it. In order to make old vs. new comparisons, later this summer OSPI will do a "crosswalk" between SBAC and HSPE so that student and parents can better understand that the two tests measure different standards and have different cut scores.

All of this is to say that the transition to CCSS and SBAC is and will be challenging. In addition to the adjustment to different standards, new technology invariably means that some frustrating technical glitches are likely to show up during exams. Like most new innovations, it will take some time to work out the bugs. Patience will be the word of the day in some testing locations.

But there is good news to share. For the first time in the history of K-12 testing, the colleges will value results from state-mandated exams. Students who score a three or a four on the ELA and math SBAC exams will be placed in credit bearing courses in community colleges and state public universities. Importantly, those students will be able to skip the dreaded ELA and math placement exams that often result in required—and costly—remediation. In addition, K-12 students who move from one state to another—and there are lots of them—will be taught to the same standards. Finally, the system will adjust once the testing bugs are worked out, publishers refine their instructional materials to better align with CCSS, and teachers received additional training in CCSS lessons and approaches.

And, for now, all of us in public education must do what we can to smooth the CCSS transition. Common Core are the adopted standards for ELA and math in the state. Teachers are working diligently to change their practices to meet them. Students, for the first time, know that SBAC scores mean something to higher education. We owe it to the kids and teachers to make this change work.





PRESIDENT
Chris Nieuwenhuis

Small schools, big challenge

I would like to extend a special thanks to Elissa Dyson for her continued commitment to small schools and their importance in educating all children.

I had the opportunity this week to spend a few days on a small schools visit organized by Elissa. We visited eight districts with enrollments ranging from 34 to 1,100. We spent time in the Northeast corner of our state and, in spite of the challenges, I was truly amazed at the excellent work that is taking place in each of the districts we visited.

The districts included: Newport, Cusick, Selkirk, Colville, Northport, Onion Creek, Valley and Loon Lake.

We had the privilege of taking part in a tour given by two students at the Northport School District, located not far from the Canadian border. They took us around their school and spoke to us as if they owned the place! And they do! They were very proud of their school and the work they are able to accomplish. They knew every corner of the district and the history behind their school. It was such a pleasure to have them speak with us.

Thanks to Austin and Paggett for a great morning!

The main theme we heard from every district we visited was about the struggle to find and keep highly qualified teachers.

Teachers in small schools wear many hats and with retirements of teachers that have grandfathered certificates, it is quickly becoming impossible to replace them with teachers that have the same qualifications.

We heard from a district that will be out of compliance in a subject area and there is nothing they can do to fix the problem. They are keeping good records and are just hoping for understanding. I suspect every district will be in this situation soon unless the federal government fixes the ESEA requirement that every teacher is highly qualified in the area she or he is teaching.

Let's hope they do... and soon!

PROPOSALS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

committee or a WSSDA task force, will be reviewed by the Legislative Committee and given a 'do pass' or 'do not pass' recommendation. Proposals with a 'do pass' recommendation are presented for a vote at the Legislative Assembly in September. Proposals with a 'do not pass' recommendation also go to the assembly for a vote, unless they are withdrawn or changed by the submitter to address the committee's rationale for its 'do not pass' recommendation.

Check WSSDA's Standing Legislative Positions first. If the topic of your proposal is already included among the SLPs, do not submit another proposal that replicates it. The Standing Legislative Positions and Priorities can be found on the legislative page at www.wssda.org.

Proposals and supporting materials must be received by WSSDA no later than Friday, May 15, 2015. Please provide any information you would like the Legislative Committee to consider along with your submission.

Concentrate on the policy issue and be flexible about exact wording. Sometimes more than one district has a similar issue they wish to address with a legislative proposal. When this happens we ask them to work together to combine their proposals with agreed-upon wording.

Legislative Committee members and WSSDA staff are here to help. For assistance with wording or anything else, contact one of your Director Area's Legislative Committee members, or Deb Merle or Tricia Kimbrough at WSSDA. You can also check the "I need help" box on your proposal submission form and we will call you.



Tacoma School District purchased tablets for four more classes to provide for every social studies student.

Tablets provide a quick, relevant way to boost learning during lectures, social studies teacher Doug Rupe said. His seventh-grade students look up documents from the Library of Congress' primary document archive, use online video archives and take notes that they can access on other computers.

"I've noticed that the tablets have helped kids with learning and behavioral issues to be more engaged with the class," Rupe said. "Having the tablets has helped develop a classroom community."

Meeker put tablets into social studies classes first because staff want to integrate technology into classes with less obvious connections to STEM education — and the social studies teachers developed a compelling proposal for using tablets.

3D printers, drones and more

Meeker's staff team has incorporated STEM curriculum into all classes at Meeker, popping up in art, music, PE and more.

In music class, teachers explain the science of sound's frequency, wavelength and pitch. Eighth-grade art students design window latches for a competition sponsored by local business Milgard Windows & Doors. The elective "Exploring Technology" teaches students Computer Aided Design (CAD), an electronic design software widely used by engineers, architects and movie animators.

The school also offers a popular afterschool STEM club, where participants use three brand new 3D printers, which build three dimensional solid objects from digital files designed by students.

"The process of 3D printing looks like a cross between a hot glue gun and a paintbrush," said art teacher David Bader, whose students used the machines to design and print Seahawks rings.

Principal Berndt seeks out new tools for students — and recently purchased inexpensive, remote-controlled flying drones for the film and journalism class.

"We're finding the items that best meet the needs of the kids to help them become creative problem solvers," Berndt said. "We also talk about the responsibility that goes along with technology, and proper use of all our tools is a cornerstone of that."

Sixth-grade student Quinn Springstead likes engineering, tinkering and building. He proudly described how he learned to use CAD software now to design and build a Seattle Seahawks logo puzzle in class.

"It's cool to make something and print it out," he said. "I selected pre-engineering for my seventh grade elective, and I hope I get it."

Our Kids Our Future



This story and many more can be found at www.ourkidswa.org. Be part of Our Kids, Our Future's first anniversary. Send stories of your school district's successes to M.Wilson@wssda.org.

2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Boundless Potential theme set to inspire

Spring break may be barely over, but we're already making plans for another fantastic conference in November. Do you have success stories or areas of expertise that you'd like to share with others?

Share them with others at the 2015 WSSDA Annual Conference.

The call for proposals for breakout sessions opens April 22 and closes June 5. Now is the time to think about sharing how your district or educational organization is making a difference.

This year's theme is Boundless Potential, inspiring attendees to consider the limitless possibilities for public education. Submit a proposal around one of the following strands:

Equity in education: Practices that ensure accessible and equitable education for every student regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status or other characteristics. Consider how access can increase equity, and help every student meet his or her potential. Programs to engage all children, close the achievement gap, and boost achievement.

Governing with excellence: Knowledge and practices needed to effectively govern school districts. These include setting policy, overseeing the budget, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, using data appropriately, board-superintendent roles, clear communication, and setting parameters for a district's success.

Contemporary issues in education: TPEP, Common Core, STEM, SBAC and other new state assessments, education legislation, privatization vs. public education, and college and career readiness.

Success and well-being: Well-being for both children and adults, relationships that inspire us to be our best, policies that create safe environments in which to excel, and practices to help negotiate the stresses and demands we face.

Advocacy and community engagement: Opportunities and techniques to help school boards inform, engage, and partner with community members, parents, local and state government, and the media.

Change for the better: Arts innovation, flipped learning, creative uses of technology, and other practices that create a springboard for success. What's new and promising in public education. The strand also invites discussion of how leaders articulate the value of exploring and embracing new ideas, and the need to take risks in order to improve.

The WSSDA Annual Conference is a premier educational event for school board members in Washington state. Attendees include school directors, school superintendents and administrators, state officials, and others.

For more information, visit www.wssda.org. The deadline for proposals is Friday, June 5.

Vancouver Public Schools repeats as Magna Award Winner, West Valley receives honorable mention

For the second year in a row, Vancouver Public Schools was one of five winning districts among schools with more than 20,000 students in this year's Magna Awards.

The district was honored for its back-to-school readiness festival, which was inaugurated in 2014. It was organized by the district's Family-Community Resource Center team, which worked in concert with community partners. It was designed to help families prepare for the school year.

Go Ready! provided more than 2,100 students and families with everything from backpacks and school supplies to shoes and haircuts. It also exposed families to the programs and services offered at the 13 school-based FCRCs all year long and, by extension, the wealth of food, housing, health, literacy and other resources offered in the Vancouver area.

"Removing barriers to learning is a top priority for the district and the VPS board of directors, and we're honored that NSBA has recognized the value of our efforts. We also hope that this recognition provides other school boards with ideas for providing similar wraparound support to their families," said Board President Mark Stoker.

A description of Go Ready! will appear in a special section of the April 2015 issue of American School Board Journal, published by the National School Boards Association, a not-for-profit organization representing state school board associations and local school board members. The annual awards recognize best practices in school district leadership.

VPS and the other Magna Award honorees were recognized at the School Leaders Luncheon March 21, in Nashville during NSBA's annual conference. West Valley School District in Yakima was also honored with an honorable mention for schools with fewer than 5,000 students. West Valley's Pre-K Initiative is helping align child care and pre-school facilities throughout Yakima County. They want to maximize the number of students who enter Kindergarten — "Kindergarten Ready."

West Valley has had more than 120

providers attend quarterly trainings in topics such as literacy, numeracy and identification of students with special needs. Advanced diagnosis helps address the disability. In some cases, the student may enter kindergarten without IEP identification.

"Our goal is to ensure that the maximum number of five year olds in Yakima County have the necessary skills to enter kindergarten with the best opportunity for success," said Superintendent Mike Brophy. "Without universal preschool, the next best thing is ensuring that preschool and childcare facilities are equipped with kindergarten readiness skills,"

The Magna Award program includes three grand prize winners. This year they were Swan Valley School District in Michigan, Albemarle County Public Schools in Virginia and ABC Unified School District in California. Kent School District was a grand prize winner in 2014 and Vancouver earned a first place award.

"In a time when public schools are under attack, we are pleased to showcase schools and their leaders who are dedicated to innovation and excellence," said Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director of NSBA. "The winning programs are proof that public education is leading the way to advance student achievement."



TOP PHOTO: In West Valley, all Mountainview Elementary kindergarten families participate in a WaKIDS parent-teacher conference prior to the first day of school. Pictured above from left to right: Linda Miller, kindergarten teacher; Erika Orvald, parent; Molly Day-Orvald, student; and Georgia Bonari, principal.



MIDDLE AND BOTTOM PHOTOS: Vancouver School District captured its second Magna award in as many years, this time for its community partnership to help make sure students have the shoes, backpacks, school supplies and haircuts they need to start school each year.



About 500 people attended this year's Legislative Conference, on par with some recent highs. They got the latest information on the budget, legislative moves and heard from Governor Inslee, who tipped his hat to school boards for efforts to increase diversity. They also visited with their legislators, pushing for full K-12 funding, no more mandates and other priorities.

www.flickr.com/photos/wssda

More students graduating now than ever before

BY JIM HULL

One of the great secrets in education is the fact that our nation's high schools are graduating more students on-time than ever before. Even after it was first reported last year that the national high school on-time graduation rate reached 80 percent it still seemed like this news was all too-often overlooked by critics and proponents of public education alike. Maybe this will change with President Obama highlighting this fact in his State of the Union speech last night. But the fact that the latest graduation rates were released last week by the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) without many noticing doesn't give me much hope.

So, in case you hadn't heard already here are the facts. Our national on-time high school graduate rate reached another all-time high of 81 percent for the Class of 2013—the most recent year graduation rate data is available. This represents an increase from 79 percent for the Class of 2011. Keep in mind as well, this is an actual graduation rate not an estimate that NCES and most states had used for years. Since states have developed data systems in recent years that can determine which individual students entered ninth-grade and graduated four years

later with at least a standard high school diploma it is now possible to calculate an actual on-time graduation rate.

Yet, this rate doesn't even include late high school graduates who took more than four years to earn the same diploma. If the number of late graduates remains similar to what I found in my Better Late Than Never report it is likely that including students who take longer than four years to earn a standard high school diploma would increase the national graduation rate above 85 percent. Keep in mind, the national graduation rate hovered around 70 percent between the mid-1970s and early 2000s, making these gains all the more impressive.

Just a decade ago, few thought that reaching the 90 percent mark would even be possible, even if late graduates were included. However, now it appears the 90 percent mark is within reach. In fact, Iowa has already achieved a 90 percent on-time graduation rate according to NCES data. And five other states—Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin—are getting close to that marker, boasting 88 percent on-time graduation rates. Again, if late graduates were included it is likely that these states are graduating over 90 percent of their students.

And a number of states not as close to

the 90 percent threshold also have reason to be optimistic. Particularly Nevada, Alabama, and New Mexico who have ranked among the bottom of states in terms of graduation rates. From 2011 to 2013, each of them improved their on-time graduation rates by 9, 8, and 7 percentage points, respectively. Such increases represent thousands more students earning the minimal credentials needed to be prepared for life after high school.

Of course, no one should be satisfied until all students leave high school with a high school diploma, even if it is as likely as a baseball player hitting a thousand. Everyone wants all students to be college and career ready and our nation's high schools have made tremendous strides toward meeting that goal. A high school diploma may not guarantee success after high school but without one the chances are minimal. While there is more work to do, our high schools should be congratulated for this tremendous accomplishment. Fortunately, it looks like they are heading towards another record next year. If given the support they need, there is no reason our nation's schools can't obtain and surpass the 90 percent graduation rate. When they do, hopefully it won't be such a secret.

Jim Hull is senior policy analyst for the Center for Public Education. CPE is an initiative of the National School Boards Association.

Is there a portfolio strategy in your district's future?

Districts contemplating becoming a charter school authorizer, as Spokane has done, may be interested in an upcoming event from the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) at the University of Washington.

The center has been working with 45 school systems around the country. These districts are implementing a portfolio strategy to offer school options. It is holding a small event May 19 in the Seattle area to talk with interested district and community leaders.

The session will address questions such as “what is the portfolio strategy” and “why are some school districts using it as a framework for school improvement?”

To find out more about the event, please contact Jordan Posamentier, Deputy Policy Director at CRPE at jpos@uw.edu

For a short article about the portfolio strategy, here is a recent piece from Educational Leadership: How a Portfolio of Schools Meets Students' Needs. (<http://bit.ly/19BG52Z>)

Time to speak out on ESEA

Politicians on both sides of the aisle are turning up the heat for passage of a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act this year. There has never been a better time to make your voice heard.

As this edition of the Direct went to print, nearly 170 school boards had passed resolutions calling for amendments to ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act. The boards come from all across the state and represent nearly 60 percent of all school directors in the state.

“No other state in the country has been louder on this issue,” said Alan Burke, WSSDA's Executive Director. “It's important that we make sure that the next version of ESEA makes a lot more sense than the last one did.”

To see the latest count and view a model resolution on ESEA, visit <http://www.wssda.org/ResolutiononESEA>. The site also includes a frequently asked questions or FAQ on the issue.

CALL FOR CANDIDATES

Be brave: WSSDA seeks leaders

Nominations and applications for WSSDA officer positions of President and Vice-president are now being accepted.

The 2014 WSSDA Annual Conference closed with Angela Maiers' challenge to “Be Brave.” Many of you walked out of that session charged up and ready to act outside of your comfort zone. Stepping up to WSSDA leadership is exactly the type of brave action that will allow you to grow, exceed your self-expectations, and help ensure students' success.

WSSDA members elected to officer or representative positions on the WSSDA Board of Directors sometimes started out by applying to run. In other cases, they were nominated by fellow directors.

Those nominated were experienced board members who were respected by their peers and encouraged to run for office. Some may not have felt they were ready, but accepted the challenge and went on to become excellent role models and spokespeople for their association and for the children of Washington. Others knew they were ready, pursued their goal of being WSSDA President, and continued on to other statewide and national leadership positions.

Now is your opportunity to run for office or nominate a fellow board member for one of these two positions:

President-elect

This position is open to a member from any area of the state. He or she becomes WSSDA President for 2017.

Vice president

This position alternates yearly between members from the east or west sides of the Cascades. This year it is open to a member from the west side.

The WSSDA Nominating Committee will accept nominations until May 26. Candidate applications will be accepted until June 13.

More information on officer responsibilities is available at www.wssda.org/AboutUs/OfficersBoardofDirectors/WSSDAElections

SPRING REGIONAL MEETING: HOQUIAM (See back page for dates)





WSSDA Direct is published monthly by the Washington State School Directors' Association to provide information of interest to school directors and the education community. The views expressed in opinion articles appearing in WSSDA Direct are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent WSSDA policies or positions. If you have a disability and need this publication in an alternate format, please contact the WSSDA Communications Department.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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- 16 Spring Regional Meeting DA 2
- 17 Leadership WSSDA
- 21 Become a School Board Member Workshop
- 21 Become a School Board Member Workshop
- 22 Become a School Board Member Workshop
- 23 Become a School Board Member Workshop
- 23 Executive Committee Meeting
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- 30 Spring Regional Meeting DA 1

May

- 5 Spring Regional Meeting DA 7
- 6 Spring Regional Meeting DA 10
- 7 Executive Committee Meeting
- 7 Spring Regional Meeting DA 11
- 21 Executive Committee Meeting

June

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- 19 Legislative Committee Meeting

July

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