

A is for Ample

BY DEB MERLE

It's hard to grade the legislature this year. On one hand, they earned an "A" for amply funding education without creaming other parts of the budget. On the other hand, they deserve an "incomplete" for failing to comply with the Supreme Court's demand for a plan to *fully* fund education by 2019.

While we wait for the court's next move, let's see how the legislature did fulfilling WSSDA's legislative priorities in the 2015 session.

Amplify fund K-12 education

The 2015-17 operating budget includes \$1.3 billion in new money for K-12 education. The governor and legislature adhered to the funding schedule in HB 2776, and then some. Having dealt with transportation funding in 2013-15, they only had to come up with about \$750 million for materials, supplies and operating costs this biennium. But they went much further, paying also for all-day kindergarten and K-3 class size reduction, both scheduled for funding in 2017-19. That leaves only the elephant in the room - compensation and levy reform - to ensure that local taxes are not spent on basic education programs or salary enhancements.

Facilitate facilities

The legislature acknowledged that all-day kindergarten and smaller K-3 classes can only be realized with additional classroom space in most districts and new schools in some.

Some progress was made with the passage of Senate Bill 6080, which established a K-3 construction grant pilot program seeded with \$200 million from the state operating budget. SB 6080 increased funding per square foot to more accurately reflect actual costs of construction and to allow more space per student. However, those changes were not made



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Changes for 2015

- An expanded professional development section
- A more specific focus on the achievement gap to better share the board's success
- A rating process revised to give a lower percentage of the score to boardsmanship and a higher percentage to achievement gap success
- Removal of the consecutive years criteria to achieve the Five-Year Merit Award

The 2015 Boards of Distinction application and supporting materials are available at www.wssda.org. From the WSSDA Home page, select [Services > Leadership Development > Boards of Distinction Awards](#). Applications are due by September 21.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Alan Burke



Timber!!!!

“...ALL districts will keep ALL of their federal timber money for the next two years.”

Hard work and patience pays off. Even with the legislature! A great example is the victory this session resulting from the efforts of a team of school directors, WSSDA staff and others who made it their mission to stop the state from supplanting federal funds that districts receive for their timber lands.

Every year, over half of Washington’s school districts receive mitigation funds from the federal government for forested land owned by federal agencies, and therefore not subject to state or local property tax levies. Until recently, the state took back every dollar. That just wasn’t fair. During the 2014 session, WSSDA seized an opportunity to put this issue squarely before the legislature.

Led by Lee Anne Riddle (Ferndale) and Russ Pfeifer-Hoyt (Mt. Baker), and with the help of former government relations staffers Marie Sullivan and Will Clark, the team drafted and worked a bill that would set things right. Bill Wallace (Burlington), Cindy Kelly (Port Angeles), Patty Wood (Kelso), Neal Kirby (Centralia) and many others, spent countless hours and days educating legislators.

By the end of the 2014 legislative session, those efforts began to pay off with the passage of HB 2207 sponsored by Senator Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale). The new law allowed districts with 57% or

more of their students receiving a free or reduced lunch to keep the first \$70,000 in timber money from the feds each year. But that still left a lot of money on the table.

Our legislative champion that year was Representative Kathy Haigh (D-Shelton) who stepped up to fight for our cause and cracked the door for another victory this session. With encouragement from Senator John Braun (R-Centralia), the 2015-17 operating budget contains a proviso that removed the \$70,000 cap and the poverty threshold. So, ALL districts will keep ALL of their federal timber money for the next two years.

WSSDA played a huge role in all of this. Congratulations are in order! But, our work is not finished. The next step is to get another bill passed in 2016 to make the Braun budget proviso permanent policy.

The timber money win is truly an example of democracy in action. It is difficult, time consuming and frustrating to enter the legislative fray. But our system demands that kind of work. It usually takes more than a couple of legislative sessions to see an idea all the way through, and this story is no exception. But that does happen—just ask the Trust Lands Taskforce!

NEEDED: Voices and Votes for 2016

Let your district's voice be heard.

Every district should send at least one board member to WSSDA's Legislative Assembly September 18-19, that will form the foundation of WSSDA's advocacy efforts for 2016. Some of the issues under consideration include WSSDA's positions on:

- State vs. local bargaining for staff salaries and benefits
- Simple majority for bond passage in November
- Strikes by school employees

The Pre-Assembly program Friday afternoon will include:

- Nick Brossoit, Edmonds Superintendent and President of the Network for Excellence in Washington Schools (NEWS), and NEWS lead attorney Thomas Ahearne of Foster Pepper
- Panels of legislators to bring us up to the minute on hot topics including what's next for Compensation and Levy Reform

Two additional options for attendees on Friday morning include:

- An Innovative School tour at the Technology Access Foundation (TAF) in Federal Way
- New-to-Assembly Luncheon



Have you registered yet?

September 18-19

Seattle Airport Marriot

www.wssda.org/events/legislativeassembly.aspx



PRESIDENT

Chris Nieuwenhuis

Legacy of commitment and involvement

As my year serving as President of WSSDA begins to wind down, I am struck with feeling a little, actually a lot, in awe! I am amazed with the work that many of you put in throughout the year.

Committees work tirelessly on issues that are important to them without any expectation of compensation or fanfare. WSSDA is a member-driven association and our members are remarkable in their commitment to improving the education of over one million children.

Two recent victories come to mind as I am writing this. Yesterday, the Senate in the other Washington passed its fix of the much delayed No Child Left Behind law. This is a huge victory for schools across the nation, and I can report that some very strong willed board members from Washington State got the fire started last summer and kept the pressure on throughout the process.

While there is still much work to be done, this is a huge victory and it should be celebrated. This is the first time in eight years that our voices were finally heard! To all of you who called, met with, emailed, tweeted, Facebooked our message to our Legislators...thank you and keep it up with HB 5!

The second victory comes from the diligent work of the School Trust Lands Task Force. This extraordinary group of board members has worked for years to correct a 30-year-old injustice to districts affected by timber lands. The legislature has been taking money that was intended to help districts with untaxable timber lands and using it as part of basic education funding.

Beginning July 1 of this year, no more basic education dollar deductions due to timber revenue will occur. I remember hearing about this issue during Leadership WSSDA over seven years ago. It seemed like something that should not be occurring, but it was. Thanks to those on the task force who worked diligently to correct this problem!

My point here is to encourage all 1,477 of you to get or stay involved. We are the largest group of elected officials in the country and our voices cannot be ignored. Please consider joining a task force or committee and putting your skills to work for the children of Washington State. Each of you has a passion for kids and this will help you in your work. You don't need a degree in education to make a difference.

Please consider attending the Legislative Assembly this September where you will learn about trending issues and have the opportunity to speak for your local community. Also, a great way to get involved is to attend your Regional Meeting happening this fall. This is an opportunity to meet other board members and learn from one another about the wonderful things happening in your director area.

Finally, please attend Annual Conference this November in Bellevue. This year's conference promises to be one of the best yet. It is brought to you because of the great work of the Annual Conference Committee, which is made up of, you guessed it, board members.



The Third-Grade Deadline

BY SALLY BANKS ZAKARIYA, *former editor-in-chief of American School Board Journal*

Early interventions for struggling readers can increase graduation rates, boost student achievement, and save money in the long run.

The research is clear: if children cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade, they face daunting hurdles to success in school and beyond. Third grade marks a pivot point in reading. In fourth grade, students begin encountering a wider variety of texts. By then, able readers have learned to extract and analyze new information and expand their vocabularies by reading.

Struggling readers rarely catch up with their peers academically. They are four times more likely to drop out of high school, lowering their earning power as adults and possibly costing society in welfare and other supports.

Those who struggle to read are disproportionately poor students and students of color. An analysis of reading scores on the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, commonly known as the Nation's Report Card) found that the score gap between children from higher- and lower-income families was 29 points. For children of color, the gap—while reduced by a single point since the 2009 test—was still 25 points.

Faced with these unequal outcomes, many states are working to improve third-grade

reading through assessments to pinpoint problems, interventions for struggling readers, and possible retention of third-graders who do not meet grade-level markers. At the local level, some 350 school districts—representing 16 percent of all children in U.S. public schools—have committed to actions designed to help more children from low-income families read at grade level by the end of third grade.

EARLY LITERACY RESEARCH

Reading is key for acquiring knowledge: Learn to read, and you can read to learn just about anything. But learning to read is a complex process that begins long before a child starts school. In fact, researchers now know that the foundation for reading lies in the oral language children are exposed to and develop in the first three years of life.

Much of the research on early literacy grew from concern over the high numbers of students who do not complete high school. Failure to read proficiently by the end of third grade is linked to ongoing difficulties in school and failure to graduate. Recognizing that a child's literacy begins early—not just in kindergarten and the primary grades, but in the home—researchers have identified a number of factors that affect reading readiness:

Parents: Both the quality and the quantity of verbal interaction between parent and child are major factors in developing literacy skills and reading readiness. Researchers Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley observed a number of what they called “quality features” in this regard. Diverse vocabulary and sentence formation are among them, as are initiating conversation, prompting response, and listening actively to the child. In addition, children whose parents were more highly educated earned higher NAEP reading scores in 2009, but fewer minority students had college-educated parents.

Income: Hart and Risley also found striking differences in the verbal abilities of children from affluent families compared to those from low-income families. Poor children, they found, heard as few as 3 million words in their first three years of life, compared to 11 million words for children in wealthier families—a verbal gap that predicted an achievement gap by the time children reached the age of 9 or 10. Again, the NAEP data reveal proficiency gaps, in this case between students from moderate- and high-income homes and those from low-income homes, as measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch.

Community: Students in preschool and the early elementary grades learn anywhere and anytime, not just at home and in school. Libraries, recreational facilities, museums, and other community-based organizations share with families and schools some of the responsibility for children's learning and development. The Harvard Family Research Project has linked student achievement to early learning experiences at home and in the community and to meaningful engagement of families in schools and other community organizations.

Early learning: Children who attend prekindergarten programs do better in kindergarten. This outcome holds true for children of all racial groups, but the impact is greatest for children of color, children from low-income families, and English language learners. A longitudinal study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, for example, found that, at age 5, virtually half (49 percent) of students who attended pre-k programs went on to read at the

THIRD-GRADE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

in the School Construction Assistance Program formula used to calculate funding for projects in the capital budget.

Two WSSDA priorities that have been simmering on back-burners for a long time heated up this year. They are likely to boil over in coming sessions given the class size reductions and all-day kindergarten mandates. Bills were dropped and hearings held on bond approval with a simple majority during November general elections and on changes to the Growth Management Act (GMA) to allow building outside Urban Growth Areas. While neither bill passed this year, they will be back. An interim taskforce was established to keep the GMA discussion going.

Enable great teaching and learning

Full funding of materials, supplies and operations costs was a long time coming. This investment should enhance the learning environment and classroom experience for all students in Washington when they return to school this fall. And, while the legislature did not include the 80 hours of teacher professional development per year that WSSDA called for, the topic will be squarely before them as they contemplate levy reform and the definition of “basic education” in the coming months.

Fully fund programs and services that are required by law

Huge, long-standing unfunded mandates

for special education and Becca (truancy law) compliance were left unchecked again this session.

No new mandates

The impossible dream. Legislators legislate. However, in spite of a torrent of education bills early in the session, few actually passed, and those that did are light on new duties for schools and districts.

Also rans...

While not among the top priorities for WSSDA during the 2015 session, some of the association’s standing legislative positions were acted upon this year.

■ WSSDA’s multi-year campaign to prevent the state from taking federal timber land funds from 200 school districts was rewarded this year with a budget proviso prohibiting the “claw back” for the next two years.

■ WSSDA’s long-standing opposition to linking high school graduation with statewide testing requirements wasn’t fully addressed. However, a last-minute deal allowed seniors who had not passed the biology exam to graduate this year. A bill to accomplish the full delinking of testing and graduation will be front and center again next year.



FALL REGIONAL MEETINGS 2015

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September 23 Vancouver
DIRECTOR AREA 6

September 29 Edmonds
DIRECTOR AREA 1

September 30 Issaquah
DIRECTOR AREA 2

October 1 Pasco
DIRECTOR AREA 11

October 5 Selah
DIRECTOR AREA 8

October 6 Oroville
DIRECTOR AREA 7

October 7 Pullman
DIRECTOR AREA 10

October 14 Napavine
DIRECTOR AREA 5

October 20 Steilacoom
DIRECTOR AREA 3

October 24 Port Angeles
DIRECTOR AREA 4

October 29 Colville
DIRECTOR AREA 9

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“ Give all children a head start on learning—especially disadvantaged children. ”

basic level or higher by the time they were 14, compared with only 15 percent of those who did not have the benefit of pre-k.

Teachers: What teachers know about reading instruction, how they focus their teaching, and how much time their classes spend on reading can all affect students' reading skills. Effective practices include a focus on phonics instruction in kindergarten and, in first grade, a focus on phonics and integrated language arts activities—vocabulary, discussion, and explaining what is read. Unfortunately, in their study of trends in professional development, Ruth Chung Wei and her colleagues found a sharp decline in the amount of funding for professional development in reading instruction.

WHAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN DO

What strategies can school districts employ to ensure students read proficiently by the end of third grade? Research and real-world experience suggest a number of promising policies and practices:

- **Give all children a head start on learning—especially disadvantaged children**
- **Engage parents in their children's literacy** by reaching out to them about ways they can help build skills through reading, talking, and playing games with their children. Florida's Palm Beach County Schools encourage parent engagement through a number of initiatives, including home visiting, mini-libraries at family gathering spots set up by the district, and enlisting local pediatric offices to promote early literacy.
- **Strengthen teachers' skills** by making research-based reading instruction a primary focus of professional development. NAEP recommends that elementary school texts be equally divided between literary reading and reading for information. An Education Commission of the States review of effective reading instruction reports that San Diego City elementary students benefitted most from a teacher's focus on higher-level meaning of texts through questioning and discussion. Also effective was writing instruction.
- **Provide struggling readers with opportunities for intensive remediation.** Florida requires that summer reading programs

be available for students who are held back; the students also must be assigned to high-performing teachers, have individual academic improvement plans, and spend 90 minutes daily in research-based reading instruction.

Yes, all this is costly, but economic analyses show real cost-benefits. Giving children a strong early start on literacy provides significant savings to federal,

state, and local governments—not only reducing the need for special education, but also increasing the likelihood of healthier lifestyles, lowering the crime rate, and reducing overall social costs.

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2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NEWS

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The upcoming school board elections have some districts wondering how to register their potential new directors for conference. Here are some tips:

- If the member will be seated by the time of the conference, no special arrangements need to be made. To get the early discount, consider registering them under the name of a currently-seated board member, then changing the name on the registration once elections are finalized.
- If the newly elected director will not be sworn in by then, the board may pass a resolution allowing him or her to attend the conference. WSSDA can provide a sample resolution upon request at mail@wssda.org.

NEW AND IMPROVED

The conference app, introduced for the first time last year, was a great success. This year, we are bringing back an improved version by a different vendor.

At your request, we made sure it will work on all platforms, let you easily and quickly rate a session, and still support networking and sharing the important information you pick up during the conference.

Watch for more information closer to November.

IT'S BACK

We are happy to announce the return of the WSSDA Services Booth. This will be the place to pick up key publications, get assistance on your App, charge devices, and meet staff.



Meet your WSSDA officer candidates

For president-elect (Listed alphabetically)

Joanne Greer
Deer Park



Nancy Truitt Pierce
Monroe



For vice-president (Listed alphabetically)

Marnie Maraldo
Issaquah



Debbie Winskill
Tacoma



Four candidates are running in this year's elections for the positions of WSSDA President-elect and Vice President. These board members have volunteered to represent all WSSDA members at the local, state and national levels. Three candidates were interviewed and forwarded to the slate of candidates by the Nominating Committee. The fourth candidate was nominated by email to be added to the slate.

You can get to know each of the candidates by viewing their speeches, bios and statements online at www.wssda.org > About Us > WSSDA Elections 2015.

Committee Nominees Joanne Greer of Deer Park and Nancy Truitt Pierce of Monroe are running for president-elect. The person in this position automatically becomes president the following year. Greer is currently vice president on the WSSDA Board of Directors. Truitt Pierce is a member of the WSSDA Legislative Committee.

Committee Nominee Debbie Winskill of Tacoma and Floor Nominee Marnie Maraldo of Issaquah are running to succeed Greer as vice president. The vice president position alternates between directors from the east and west sides of the Cascades. This year it is open to a member from the west side. Winskill is currently a member of the Interscholastic Activities Committee. Maraldo is a member of the WSSDA Board of Directors.

Information for accessing the online ballot will be emailed to each board director on August 28. Voting begins August 31 and will continue through September 25.

The most important part of the voting process is knowing who to choose. Take a few minutes to view the candidate pages at www.wssda.org. Click the About Us tab, and WSSDA Elections under the Officers/Board of Directors link.



Christopher Carlile is WSSDA's New Director of Finance and Operations.

Christopher comes to WSSDA from the Washington State House of Representatives, where he has been the Financial Services Manager since 2009. Before that he worked for the Department of Labor and Industries as the Workers Compensation Financial Manager and the Office of Financial Management (22 years) as a Financial Consultant. Christopher earned a Bachelors' Degree from St. Martins in Accounting and Business Management, and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM). Please join us in welcoming Christopher to WSSDA.



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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Toll Free (In-State) 800.562.8927
E-Mail mail@wssda.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August

- 13** Executive Committee Meeting
- 27** Executive Committee Meeting
- 31** Balloting opens for WSSDA officer elections

September

- 10** Executive Committee Meeting
- 11-12** Leadership WSSDA
- 17** Board of Directors' Meeting
3rd Meeting of the Resolutions Committee
Legislative Committee Meeting
- 18-19** Legislative Assembly
- 23** Fall Regional Meeting - DA6
- 24** Executive Committee Meeting
- 25** Balloting closes for WSSDA officer elections
- 29** Fall Regional Meeting - DA1
- 30** Fall Regional Meeting - DA2

October

- 1** Fall Regional Meeting - DA11
- 5** Fall Regional Meeting - DA8
- 6** Fall Regional Meeting - DA7
- 7** Fall Regional Meeting - DA10
- 8** Executive Committee Meeting
- 14** Fall Regional Meeting - DA5
- 20** Fall Regional Meeting - DA3
- 22** Executive Committee Meeting
- 24** Legislative Committee Meeting
Fall Regional Meeting - DA4
- 29** Fall Regional Meeting - DA9