



Direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

FEBRUARY 2014



Sunnyside High School was the recipient of a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in 2010 for use in raising its graduation rate.

OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

Amazing turnaround at Sunnyside High

The Sunnyside School District's (SSD) graduation rate for the Class of 2013 has risen to 85.1 percent, more than double the district's 2007 graduation rate of 41 percent. This amazing turnaround, from one of the state's lowest graduation rates to one of its highest, has been the result of some innovative programs and supports the school district has implemented in recent years.

"We have made some incredible gains towards our vision of success for all students," said Superintendent Dr. Richard D. Cole. "This work has been difficult and required our staff to think and work in new ways, but they have risen to the challenges put before them, and we are now closer than we have ever been to reaching our overarching goal of success for all students."

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The Power of Math

BY KATHRYN BLUMSACK AND TERRY MCCABE

Educators and parents have long known the importance of early literacy to preschoolers' later academic success. What they may not know is that their math skills are equally important.

A major study shows that young children's math abilities are far more predictive of their academic achievement throughout their school years than their social or emotional behaviors, neither of which, it turns out, has much effect on later achievement. Math also has a slight edge on literacy in its long-term influence.

The research team, led by Northwestern University's Greg Duncan, analyzed six studies including data for more than 35,000 preschoolers. The team found that knowledge of numbers had the most impact on students'

academic achievement through age 14, followed closely by early reading and language skills.

Math-related skills do not just predict later math performance, but reading achievement, too. Moreover, early mastery has a lasting impact. Duncan found that students who struggled with math in elementary school were less likely to graduate from high school and far less likely to attend college later on, by 13 and 29 percentage points, respectively.

Mathematical development in fact starts in infancy. Psychologists such as Alison Gopnik at the University of California, Berkeley, are showing that babies are natural statisticians who use data to make sense of the world. In one study, 2-year-olds were able to infer

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K-12 funding, 1080 hours and professional development hot issues at conference

More than 440 school directors from across Washington converged on Olympia in late January for the annual Legislative Conference and Day on the Hill activities. The events were sponsored by WSSDA, the Washington Association of School Administrators and the Washington Association of Business Officials.

School directors and other education officials met Sunday, January 26, for a business session covering a wide range of

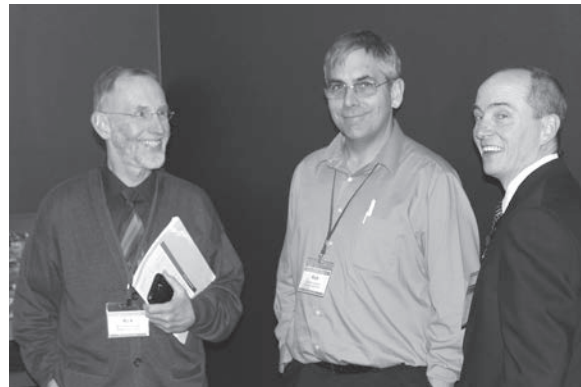
legislative issues involving schools. The following day, they met with legislators from their districts and networked.

OSPI chief Randy Dorn opened the conference with a strong pitch for more K-12 funding and changes to the 1080-hour rule. He encouraged directors to get to know legislators and push hard during the session.

David Schumacher, budget czar at the Office of Financial Management, followed up by emphasizing the economy in the state

is not growing fast enough to pay the costs of implementing the McCleary decision without new sources of revenue. There is room to change, he hinted, pointing out that Washington has gone from one of the highest taxed states to a low-taxed state in recent decades.

And from the Governor's Office, Marcie Maxwell, a former school director and member of the House, urged directors to become a year-round voice for school funding.



Additional photos from the Legislative Conference are posted at www.flickr.com/wssda



WSSDA is your policy superstore

In late January we learned a bit more about the value of one of WSSDA's services to local school districts.

The Senate Education committee had asked for an estimate of the cost of developing a policy for the state's 295 school districts. The Office of Financial Management fiscal note estimated that if WSSDA drafted a model policy, the statewide cost would be \$145,894. If the association did not draft a model policy, the statewide cost to districts would be \$437,682.

According to OFM's calculations, that's a savings of \$291,788 per model policy. Last year WSSDA produced six new model policies, albeit with a varying degree of complexity, for an OFM estimated savings of \$1.75 million to districts statewide.

OFM estimated that developing a policy district-by-district would require 885 attorney hours and 5,667 additional staff hours. By contrast, a model policy developed by WSSDA for statewide use would require 295 attorney hours and 1,889 staff hours. The cost of an hour of attorney time was estimated to be \$200 and staff time was valued at \$46 per hour.



PRESIDENT
Mari Taylor

Our future depends upon public education

A good friend explained to me the reason that the walls in our state capitol are made of marble; so that when you bang your head in frustration, you don't leave a mark.

It can be tough for public education advocates to see our progress through the fog of detractors. When you consider the constant battle with policy challenges, increasing demands and diminishing resources to support student learning, you have to ask yourself: Has the struggle produced any significant result?

We have ample hard evidence to demonstrate that our collective efforts have made a difference for Washington's kids. I was a child in public school during the Doran decision in 1977, my children saw the benefits of the Education Reform Act of 1993, and my granddaughters will see the benefits of EHSB 2261, a 2009 bill that reformed our approach to basic education. Today, only four states score higher than Washington's fourth graders in math. Only five score higher in eighth grade math and just two in eighth grade reading. Overall, our students improved in every category in the 2013 national tests and score above average on both the ACT and the SAT.

Great statistics. Anecdotally, I think you will also find that today's informed parents and grandparents find schooling a vastly more rigorous and comprehensive experience than they themselves had.

"Our 'failing' public schools" may sound like a familiar refrain these days, but it has been heard since the mid 1900's. Proponents of a quality public education system knew that the future of our nation depended upon an educated citizenry. Detractors didn't believe it

was necessary to educate all children – similar thinking to those who considered my friend three-fifths of a man and me unworthy of the vote based on my gender. Certainly, the initial design of this great experiment has required adaptation, but the purpose and power of universal public education is truer today than ever.

Amid the noise and chaos from politicians, privatization advocates and education reform hobbyists, it's easy to lose sight of the importance of a quality universal public education system. The answer is simple: Democracy. More than nine out of ten of Washington's children are educated in public schools. Together we are building a well-educated citizenry: voters, leaders, workers, decision-makers, entrepreneurs and artists. Our future is brighter because of countless individuals' relentless commitment to quality universal public education.

Inspiring evidence of the success of this commitment can be found on our new Our Kids/Our Future website. This site is a collaboration of education groups representing parents, teachers, school directors, school administrators, state education officials and others.

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has embarked on a public advocacy campaign featuring prominent supporters of public education beginning with Sal Kahn, founder of Kahn Academy. For more information on how you can use this resource to support kids and schools in your community, go to StandUp4PublicSchools.org

We all have a stake in public education. Encourage your community to support quality universal public education like our future depends upon it – because it does!

In 2008, SSD received a Summit Grant from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Those funds allowed the district to develop comprehensive curriculum guides in math and literacy that align to state standards. Since then, the district has also developed aligned curriculum in science, social studies, and the arts. In addition to aligning curriculums across each of its schools, SSD also developed a system of effective instructional practices that are used in every classroom in the district.

Sunnyside High School (SHS) was the recipient of a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in 2010 for use in raising its graduation rate. As part of the grant, SSD partnered with Gonzaga University to place one of their education professors, Dr. Chuck Salina, as the high school's principal from 2010-2012. During this time, SHS added an hour to the school day and developed a support and early-intervention program that engaged school counselors in a case management approach to supporting students and teachers.

The incredible success has garnered SSD and SHS attention from state and national education leaders. Last year, representatives from the U.S. Department of Education visited the school district to learn more about the system of continuous improvement that has been created in Sunnyside.

Visit the Our Kids Our Future website, www.ourkidswa, to see other inspirational stories from K-12 schools in Washington.



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OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

Brand new site highlights excellence in education

Seven education organizations have launched a new website aimed at capturing and communicating excellence in the state's K-12 schools.

The "Our Kids, Our Future" website is designed to give greater exposure to successful education programs and innovative models. The effort has been championed by the state's Learning First Alliance, which includes your association. Members of the alliance represent parents, teachers, school boards, school administrators, state education officials and others. The site has a companion page at www.facebook.com/ourkidswa.

"We realized that there is no single place for people to see what is really working in our schools," said former WSSDA President Debbie Long, who first proposed the idea last year. "This site helps people find successful models that are already helping kids succeed."

Parents, schools, lawmakers, educators, or prospective residents can discover how public schools take innovative approaches to learning through compelling stories, pictures, and videos. These range from dramatically increased graduation rates in Sunnyside High School to the innovative whole-school approach practiced at Aviation High School in SeaTac.

More than 70 examples of program and student success, contributed by about 30 school districts, are already on the site, and more are flowing in every day. The partners expect those totals to grow dramatically as word gets out.

The site includes a keyword search tool that allows people to look for articles and videos by school district or subject. The site also has links to a regularly revised selection of media-generated articles on schools.

The partner organizations include the Association of Washington School Principals, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington Education Association, Washington Association of School Administrators, Washington State School Directors' Association, Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Washington State Parent Teachers Association.

The website is located at www.ourkidswa.com.



Dear Colleague letter may be canary in the coal mine

BY HEIDI MAYNARD, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND LEGAL

On January 8, the U.S. Department of Education released a Dear Colleague Letter on the topic of Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline. This is a joint effort with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Dear Colleague Letters, according to the departments, are “significant guidance documents.” To school districts nationwide, they are canaries in the mineshaft, a warning, perhaps, of new legal mandates or Office of Civil Rights (OCR) investigations to come.

The letter highlights the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which has determined that African-American students without disabilities are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers without disabilities. According to the letter, the data revealed significant racial disparity not explained by more frequent or serious behavior by students of color.

School districts nationwide have seen this data and begun reviewing their approaches to exclusionary discipline, but not without controversy. The resounding argument in favor of reasonable use of exclusionary discipline points to school safety concerns. What do you do, districts are asking, with angry or violent students that have committed a serious offense but need to remain in school? And what do you do with victims?

The Dear Colleague letter turns this concern on its head: “...fair and equitable discipline policies are an important component of creating an environment where all students feel safe and welcome. Schools are safer when all students feel comfortable and are engaged in the school community, and when teachers and administrators have the tools and training to prevent and address conflicts and challenges when they arise...The goals of equity and school safety are thus complementary, and together help ensure a school free of discrimination.”

The appendix lists 53 recommendations to help schools “identify, avoid and remedy discriminatory discipline based on race, color or national origin.” Interestingly, the letter does not limit its criticism to the students’ actual exclusion from school.

“It is incumbent upon a school to take effective steps to eliminate all racial discrimination in initial discipline referrals,” According to the letter.

The implication is that some teachers illegally set in motion the events that lead to exclusionary discipline. The statement supports a belief among education experts that appears to be gaining traction: that lack of classroom management skills is the root of racial disparities in school discipline. Whether the unions, who traditionally consider a teacher’s control of his/her classroom sacred ground, will agree remains to be seen.

WSSDA will be updating its Policy/Procedure 3241 Corrective Action and Classroom Management, which addresses discipline and the discipline appeals process, upon promulgation of the new discipline WACs this spring. At the same time, we plan to provide guidance on the new laws and regulations as well as new approaches to discipline in Washington schools and the safety concerns that remain.



ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Dr. Jim Koval

School board members are our unsung heroes

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your association’s acting executive director. I have great admiration and respect for the work you do as school board members each and every day. You support staff and students across our state in their efforts to become the very best they can be.

I spent 40 years in the North Thurston School District, the last 11 years as Superintendent of North Thurston Public Schools.

I taught, coached and served as assistant principal and principal. Just before coming to WSSDA, I was project director in the state’s Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project.

These wonderful experiences have given me the chance to see, close up, how you live and work in your communities. Your involvement translates into greater and much broader participation by your constituents. That participation helps make sure that best practices will work locally and assure all students are successful.

You work so hard and so intentionally to gain your public’s trust. Parents place the hopes and dreams they have for their children’s education in your hands. You are expected to maintain a quality school system at a reasonable cost, all the while listening to parents, teachers, students and just about everyone else. No wonder not many people want your job!

When I think of all of the above, I come to one conclusion. Each of you is truly an unsung hero, volunteering your time, talents and energy in the best interests of all those you serve. Your values, resiliency, sense of responsibility and courage are what I personally admire most.

You have a powerful impact on student achievement, school safety, community relations, making fiscal ends meet and keeping your school districts and schools moving forward. I look forward to meeting each of you — perhaps at the upcoming regional meetings. Until then, please know how much I continue to appreciate your leadership and the difference you make.

probabilities—for example, the likelihood a toy will light up—and revise predictions based on new information. Other studies have identified babies as young as 8 months showing a basic understanding of random sampling.

Math should be central

Despite the importance of early numeracy, the math conversation in education policy circles tends to focus on course taking in high school. To date, 23 states and the District of Columbia have established graduation requirements that align with college- and career readiness, including three to four years of math at least through Algebra II.

These policies enjoy wide public support, as well. According to a survey by Achieve, Inc., nearly nine in 10 voters support having college and career graduation requirements for all students.

There are good reasons for this support. A large body of research—including studies from NSBA's Center for Public Education—points to high-level high school math as a strong predictor of success in college and the workplace—in addition to making better citizens as measured by voting, volunteering, and healthier lifestyles.

But we're also learning that attention to math skills can't start too early. If we're serious about improving all students' chances for success after graduation, we really need to grant mathematics a central spot in comprehensive education policies covering pre-k through high school students.

Common Core applications

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) could be a good place to start. The CCSS are intended to be internationally competitive, and have college- and career readiness in mathematics and English language arts as their ultimate goal.

Starting with that end in mind, the CCSS map backwards to establish grade level benchmarks all the way down to kindergarten. This means that the math skills children learn in the earliest grades are designed to set them on the path toward success after high school.

The CCSS are now the standards of record in 46 states and the District of Columbia. But the widespread adoption of CCSS does not make them immune to debate. Some of the objections are political: Opinions vary over whether we even

should have national standards, voluntary or otherwise. But the CCSS also have prompted some controversy about their educational content, particularly in math.

The CCSS differ from most state math standards in important ways. One, they define specific mathematical practices for students at all levels. These practices include the ability to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; construct viable arguments using mathematics; reason abstractly and quantitatively; and use appropriate tools strategically.

The CCSS also place more emphasis on data, probability, and statistics than U.S. students typically receive, and it begins early. Kindergartners, for example, will be asked to classify objects such as organisms with wings and without wings, sort them, and compare the numbers. By third grade, students will be organizing and graphing their data to scale.

Throughout elementary school, there is also more attention to algebraic thinking so students will be ready for the demands of algebra in high school. And there are clearer expectations for learning fractions, a topic that U.S. students have struggled with for decades.

Common Core critics

Most of the criticism is aimed at the CCSS' treatment of high school math. Ze'ev Wurman, a high-tech industry executive and former official in the U.S. Department of Education, and Sandra Stotsky of the University of Arkansas reviewed the CCSS for the Pioneer Institute, a libertarian think tank.

In their view, the math standards are not on a par with those of high-achieving nations, mostly because Algebra 1 content was deferred to ninth grade. Looking through the lens of four-year college admissions offices, they also were concerned that the standards do not precisely follow the algebra-dominated college prep curriculum.

W. Stephen Wilson, a mathematician at Johns Hopkins University, picks up on this line of thinking. Regarding the CCSS emphasis on data, Wilson wrote that "statistics and probability [are] probably irrelevant for college preparation."

Their proponents, however, point out that the CCSS are intended to prepare students for a range of postsecondary options, including but not exclusively for four-year colleges.

The Educational Policy Improvement Center at the University of Oregon conducted a survey of higher education faculty who had reviewed the CCSS for how well they aligned to the skills needed to succeed in both general education and career-focused courses.

Unlike Wurman, Stotsky, and Wilson, the instructors—representing both two and four-year institutions—found a great deal to admire, particularly in the standards for mathematical practices.

William Schmidt of Michigan State University is the leading expert on TIMSS—The International Math and Science Study of fourth- and eighth graders—and was the first person to alert the U.S. on its problems with a math curriculum that is "a mile wide and an inch deep." He has found that CCSS math standards "closely mirror those of the world's highest-achieving nations." He especially commended the CCSS for being focused and bringing badly needed coherence to how our students will learn math.

The debate no doubt will continue and won't be settled until the CCSS have had a chance to be fully implemented. As educational consultants Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins have written, "The standards come to life through the assessments." The two state consortia developing CCSS assessments have begun to release sample items that tangibly show what students will be expected to know and do. Schmidt cautions: "The key ingredient in the implementation of standards is whether districts, schools, and, most importantly, teachers, deliver the content to students in a way that is consistent with those standards."

Obviously, school districts have a lot to do to prepare. Elementary teachers in particular have traditionally been less comfortable with math than with other subjects. They will need content-rich, ongoing professional development to learn the new math standards and engaging ways to teach them. And don't forget the little ones. Districts should reach out to the pre-k providers in their communities to align their math programs so that kindergartners are ready when they arrive. As research shows, one of the best things we can do to prepare young people for a successful life is give to them a good, early start in math.

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Diving In!

Working Together to Implement Education Reforms

WASA Small Schools Conference | March 10–11, 2014

SPRING REGIONAL MEETINGS

WSSDA has scheduled eleven regional meetings for Director Areas across Washington.

Beginning in March, the regional meetings provide a great opportunity to network and share information with school directors from around each region and to hear presentations on current issues from education leaders.


Satisfaction rates for the regional meetings held this past fall, averaged well over 80 percent based on responses from the member survey and session evaluations.

Meetings will cover a variety of topics, including legislative initiative updates and association updates from WSSDA officers and staff. Detailed agendas will be made available prior to the events.

Registration is now open online at www.wssda.org/events/regionalmeetings.


March 4 DIRECTOR AREA 9

Deer Park
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Deer Park High School Library
800 Weber Rd.
Deer Park, WA 99006


March 6 DIRECTOR AREA 11

Richland
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Richland High School Library
960 Long Ave.
Richland, WA 99352

March 15 DIRECTOR AREA 4

Quilcene
10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

 Administration Building Room #9
294715 US Hwy 101
Quilcene, WA 98376


March 19 DIRECTOR AREA 6

Camas
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Hayes Freedom High School Commons
1919 NE Ione St.
Camas, WA 98607

March 20 DIRECTOR AREA 3

Eatonville
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Eatonville High School South Hall
302 Marshall Ave. N.
Eatonville, WA


April 29 DIRECTOR AREA 2

Kent
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Administration Building Boardroom
12033 SE 256th St.
Kent, WA 98030


April 30 DIRECTOR AREA 1

Lake Stevens
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Administration Building Boardroom
12309 22nd St. NE
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

May 1 DIRECTOR AREA 5

Elma
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Elma High School Library
1011 W. Main Street
Elma, WA 98541


May 5 DIRECTOR AREA 8

Naches Valley
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Naches Valley High School Cafeteria
101 W. 5th St.
Naches, WA 98937


May 6 DIRECTOR AREA 7

Omak
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Omak High School Commons
20 South Cedar St.
Omak, WA 98841

May 7 DIRECTOR AREA 10

Cheney
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

 Betz Elementary School Viking Room
317 N Seventh
Cheney, WA 99004



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

February

27 Webinar for New Directors

March

4 Regional Meeting: DA 9
6 Regional Meeting: DA 11
12 Webinar
15 Regional Meeting: DA 4
19 Regional Meeting: DA 6
20 Regional Meeting: DA 3
27 Webinar for New Directors
31 Regional Meeting: DA 1

April

25, 26 Board of Directors' Meeting
29 Regional Meeting: DA 2
30 Regional Meeting: DA 1

May

5 Regional Meeting: DA 8
6 Regional Meeting: DA 7
7 Regional Meeting: DA 10
14 Regional Meeting: DA 5
17 Average to Excellent
Workshop: Arlington

June

20, 21 Board of Directors Meeting
Legislative Committee
Meeting

July

17 Average to Excellent
Workshop, Rochester
18, 19 Legislative Committee
Meeting

August

22-24 Board of Directors' Meeting
29 Regional Meeting: DA 2

September

18 Board of Directors' Meeting
18-20 Legislative Committee
Meeting

October

25 Legislative Committee
Meeting

November

19-22 Annual Conference