



direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

JAN-FEB 2016

EQUITY CONFERENCE

From the boardroom to the classroom

WSSDA is partnering with other education organizations to increase leadership capacity for equity and access. The goal is to help all students achieve at a high level.

The initial conference "Equity: From the Boardroom to the Classroom" is May 24 and 25, 2016 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at SeaTac. This is a two-day conference for school district leadership teams including superintendents, school directors, central office administration, principals and teacher leaders. The event's focus will be on effective research-based, high leverage core practices.

The Washington Association of School Administrators and the Association of Washington School Principals are WSSDA's partners in this event.

The conference will take participants from exploration to action. Each team will leave with steps for their school district to advance equity. Dr. Pedro Noguera will keynote, sharing five courageous leadership practices.

This will be followed by cycles of learning and application of adaptive leadership and three core practices for equity. There will be an accompanying assessment. Participants will consider proportionality data and examples of the challenges and successes from school districts in the state.

EQUITY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Our Kids, Our Future website celebrates two years, nearly 50,000 visits and 1,400 stories of success in Washington's public schools. **Congrats!**



Dues to stay the same for another year

In January, WSSDA's Board of Directors voted to keep dues unchanged for the fifth straight year. The action came following a review of the 2016 budget.

Revenue of about \$3.3 million covered expenses of approximately \$2.9 million during 2015, based on preliminary budget numbers. The association will have a firmer hand on expenses in the next month as the books are closed on 2015.

Tight control of expenditures allowed the board to set aside \$200,000 in a dedicated fund. This money would help pay for anticipated costs at the aging WSSDA headquarters in Olympia.

"We've worked hard to keep expenses down," said Executive Director Alan Burke.

DUES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Alan Burke



Four things to watch in 2016

2016 promises to be an interesting and perhaps enlightening year on the state educational policy front. Here are four things to watch as the year unfolds:

1 Will the legislature come up with a plan to fund McCleary? The clock is ticking toward the June, 2017 deadline to meet the Supreme Court order to amply fund public schools. Based on bipartisan bills already introduced on this topic, it appears a certainty that the legislature will approve a plan to meet McCleary obligations, but will not agree on a funding source (or an absolute dollar figure) to get there. Funding will be left, or in Olympia language, “punted”, to the 2017 legislature. Whether the 2016 plan will meet with the Supreme Court’s approval is another matter. If it doesn’t, then lots of speculation exists regarding the severity of legislative sanctions that the court likely would impose.

2 What is going to happen with charter schools? When the Supreme Court ruled last Labor Day that the current charter school law was unconstitutional, the decision set off a wave of protests from advocates and legislators from both sides of the aisle. A legislative “fix” is in the works, but just what that is and whether the changes will satisfy the court is up for debate. At this time a major question is whether the charter school commission

will continue in the authorization business. Whatever happens, a charter school bill will likely be in the mix as a bargaining chip for the final deal that will send the legislators home in March. Note: the WSSDA position on charter schools is supportive—as long as the only approved authorizing agencies are local school boards.

3 Will the legislature change assessment regulations? With the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) a reality and the federal government recognizing that politics and popular sentiment point to less—not more—testing, the legislature is, once again, wrestling with the notion of delinking high school assessments with graduation. Last session, HB 2214, a delink bill, passed the House 92-6 but got stuck in the Senate Ed Committee. Clearly there is significant legislative support for the delink—a concept that WSSDA supports—but partisan politics and House vs. Senate disagreements still exist over proposed testing changes.

4 What about the 2017 legislature? As soon as the legislative session ends, the campaign for control will begin. And what a campaign it promises to be! With the Democrats holding a slim 50-48 edge in the House, and the Republicans a similarly small advantage in the Senate, campaigning will be an all-hands-on-deck affair into the summer and fall. The main battle ground will occur in so-called swing districts, where the number of registered Republican and Democratic voters is at or near equal. You can expect some of these key races to see hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on campaigning—possibly eclipsing the current record of over \$1.2 million spent in last November’s special 30th district House race that was won by political newcomer Terri Hickel (R) over incumbent (and Federal Way board member) Carol Gregory (D).

In addition to these four happenings, lots of other legislative action will occur here and in the other parts of Washington. As always, WSSDA and NSBA will be there to monitor developments from Olympia to Washington, DC.



PRESIDENT
Chris Nation

DUES, CONTINUED FROM PG.1

“Budgets are tight for local districts and we want to make sure we can keep our facilities safe and sound without having to ask for a dues increase.”

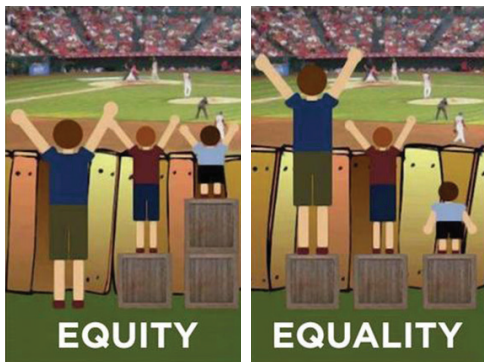
Expenditures in 2015 were close to seven percent above the total for 2008. Adjusted for inflation, expenditures dropped substantially over the seven-year period.

Overall, spending in 2014 was nearly the same as in 2009, despite inflation.

“Our fund reserves should help us keep dues flat for the next few years,” said Christopher Carlile, WSSDA’s Director of Finances and Operations.

Carlile pointed to growth in subscriptions for improved policy services and publications as one of the revenue highlights. Revenue increased for products such as BoardDocs, Policy & Legal News and Policy Online, as well as the WSSDA Annual Conference.

EQUITY, CONTINUED FROM PG.1



Whether this conference is a district’s first step or part of an ongoing initiative, each team will move toward the goal of expanding its capacity for equity leadership.

Registration is now open on the [WSSDA website](#). There is a limit of 250 attendees.

Equity image credit: Please note, this image was adapted from the original graphic: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/449547>

EQUITY: From the Boardroom to the Classroom
MAY 24-25 • CROWNE PLAZA • SEATAC AIRPORT

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Equity in public education

The message in the media today is very clear: Every child who attends a public school deserves an education that is equitable, not simply equal. It must be both fair and inclusive. It must serve every student well.

In 1852, Horace Mann, known as the father of the Common School Movement, argued passionately for a universal education system that would provide an equitable education system for all students. Mann hoped that by bringing children of all classes together, they could have a common learning experience. This would also give an opportunity to the less fortunate to advance in the social scale and education would “equalize the conditions of men.”

However, the public education system continues to struggle to overcome barriers of equity and access.

But what does it mean to provide equity to every child for a school board director? Don’t we state over and over again that we want the best education possible for all children? Isn’t our primary objective to have them graduate with the skills necessary for college or a career and ultimately to become a productive citizen in today’s global world?

I took some time recently to focus on my leadership as a local board director and how the decisions we made pertain to equity in my district. During my reflection I worked through a few simple questions. The basis of this inquiry was to help me truly understand how I think about equity in my discussions and actions with fellow board members and staff.

Here are those questions.

1. When adopting a district policy; do I consider the impacts on all parties and or stakeholders?
2. When discussing district programs or initiatives, do I inquire about inclusion of all students? Do barriers exist for stakeholders due to financial constraints?
3. Do all policies and practices support high achievement for all students?
4. Do achievement gaps exist among different student groups? Is this prevalent in all schools in the district?
5. What policies are needed in order to increase the achievement level of our schools and close an achievement gap among schools and the state?
6. Are resources allocated equally or based upon student and school need?

This model works well for me. However, I encourage you to incorporate a system that works best for you. It is our responsibility to engage the resources necessary to achieve this goal.

WSSDA has made equity and access a priority in our mission. With that in mind, I invite you and your district leadership teams to an upcoming Equity Conference in May focusing on the tools necessary to create a district policy on racial equity. See the article on page 1 for more information.

It is truly an honor to serve as your president and I look forward to accomplishing great things working with you!



The language of learning

When you think of students learning the basics—reading, writing and arithmetic—you might not think of tubas, tenors and timpanis. But in Longview Public Schools, music classes play a growing role in developing students’ literacy and math skills.

Band and choir teacher Erik Edmundson likens the work his music students do at Cascade Middle School to learning a foreign language.

“Though it’s not necessarily a language of words,” he says, “they are looking at symbols, and their brain has to decipher those and put meaning to them.”

Edmundson asks students to read a piece of music and answer questions about it. When his students say a song makes them feel hopeful, Edmundson encourages them to dig deeper. He guides their discussion using language they encounter in standardized tests and Common Core state standards.

“Cite the text,” he tells them. “What’s your evidence for that—not your feeling, not what you think—what’s your evidence from the text?”

Their answers could involve the speed of the notes or the dynamics, whether a phrase is growing louder or softer. Or they might explore the composer’s intent for the song.

At Mark Morris High School, Brian Mitchell’s choir students judge recordings of their own performances, writing critiques based on the music score. These exercises, Mitchell finds, help students take their performances beyond notes and rhythm.

“By exploring what the composer was trying to communicate, the students begin to communicate what’s behind the music at a deeper level,” Mitchell says. “Ultimately I try to get kids to pull this black and white, 2D thing off the page and make it breathe in color.”

The mathematics of rhythm

Younger students, such as those in Dan Reed’s music classes at Robert Gray Elementary, work on fractions.

“Kids are learning fractions in third and fourth grade,” Reed says, “so when they’re doing that, I’m doing time signatures in music, because they’re based on fractions. Quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes—they’re directly related to fractions.”

With even younger students, he works on counting rhythms, throwing in simple math problems: “If I take away two quarter notes from this rhythm, how many beats would I have left?”

“Once in a while I’ll get a kid who blurts out, ‘Why are we doing math in music class?’” Reed says. “And I’ll answer, ‘Because music is full of math.’”

A research-oriented music class

In the Cascade and Monticello middle school orchestra rooms, Lanette Shepherd leads students on explorations of music and also through research projects using the scientific method.

Last year she and her students explored a question that has long niggled at Shepherd: “How do we reach those kids who don’t believe they can learn?”

Crisscrossing school curricula, they designed a study that tested approximately 1,000 middle and high school students in their ability to recognize various rhythms. First, the students took a “pretest.” After the pretest, half of the students received resilience training—designed by Shepherd’s students—to help them learn strategies for bouncing back from stress.

Then, everyone was tested again—both the students who had the training and those who did not. Shepherd’s students helped interpret the test results, write reports and share their findings. They showed that resilience training especially benefitted seventh and eighth graders.

“It really worked,” Shepherd says. “It was a big motivator.”

Teaching a thinking style

At Cascade Middle School, Edmundson describes one student, who receives special education services and struggled with notation and rhythm. As a sixth grader, she was unable to properly form notes or place the correct number of beats in a measure. But by eighth grade, her notes looked good, and every measure had the right number of beats.

“How could somebody progress in that and not progress in understanding the symbols of letters, the math in the sequence and value of the notes?” Edmundson reflects. “I am pretty convinced that literacy is a style of thinking and that a lot of subjects we teach increase our literacy.”

Music, science and math—oh, my!

Some Longview music students find their music classes fortified with science and math. Mark Morris High School teacher Brian Mitchell offers units on the physics of sound, body mechanics and anatomy, and even algebra. Here is one of the problems he works with his students to solve:

$$x^2 + p \cdot x - o = (x + p)(x - o)$$

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.



Innovate. Integrate. Motivate.

The annual WASA Small Schools Conference helps administrators and school board members share innovative solutions and integrate new thinking. This motivates them for the important work they do in their districts every day. The conference, held at the Wenatchee Convention Center March 14-15, promises to connect you with other small school districts from around the state and inspire you with informative breakout sessions and top-notch keynote speakers.

Dr. Milton Chen, an education innovation expert and former executive director of Edutopia, will expand your thinking by sharing *the Six Leading Edges of Innovation in our Schools*. Dr. Gene Sharratt, Executive Director of the Washington Student Achievement Council, will provide additional inspiration with his keynote on "Leading Innovation: Building an Adaptive Culture".

Elissa Dyson, chair of WSSDA's Task Force on Small Schools Issues, encourages school directors to attend. "This outstanding conference, designed specifically to address the unique opportunities and challenges faced by small schools, is an invaluable resource for ideas and connections with folks from small districts around the state."

Registration and additional details are available now at: <http://bit.ly/SmallSchools2016>



COMING SOON

Meet WSSDA's new Leadership Development Consultants. Throughout 2016, *Direct* will introduce you to the 10 newly selected Leadership Development Consultants.



SPRING REGIONAL MEETINGS

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY



Participate in this tremendous learning opportunity and network with other school directors in your area. Visit wssda.org/events/regionalmeetings.



March 16 Eastmont
DIRECTOR AREA 7

March 17 Sunnyside
DIRECTOR AREA 8

**March 28 Stanwood/
Camano**
DIRECTOR AREA 1

March 29 Federal Way
DIRECTOR AREA 2

March 30 Pullman
DIRECTOR AREA 10

March 31 Deer Park
DIRECTOR AREA 9

April 13 College Place
DIRECTOR AREA 11

April 21 Bethel
DIRECTOR AREA 53

April 23 Port Townsend
DIRECTOR AREA 4

April 27 Longview
DIRECTOR AREA 6

May 5 Tumwater
DIRECTOR AREA 5

Looking for a new superintendent? WSSDA signs agreement with Northwest Leadership Associates

WSSDA has contracted with Northwest Leadership Associates to provide superintendent search services to districts in Washington state. The firm was chosen following an open, competitive process that attracted three bidders.

All of the firm's consultants are experienced Washington superintendents. All told, they have more than 200 years of experience working with Washington state school districts. Dennis Ray, Ed.D., started the firm in 2000. He remains owner and president.

"Northwest Leadership Associates has been a leader in Washington educational administrative searches for many years," said WSSDA Executive Director Alan Burke. "Dennis Ray and his associates have earned a well-deserved reputation for excellence in matching the needs of local school

districts with the skill sets of outstanding educational leaders."

As this article goes to press, Northwest Leadership is doing searches for Walla Walla, Castle Rock, Edmonds, Snohomish, Peninsula, Royal and other districts.

Northwest Leadership has conducted more than 200 searches during the past 15 years. Typically, each search includes substantial information gathering before the search begins. This involves:

- An on-line survey to gather input from staff and the community
- Focus group meetings with key stakeholders
- Meeting with each board member.

Based on that information, the firm then develops an advertising and recruitment plan to reach thousands of individuals and districts. It follows

up with aggressive one-to-one recruitment of those who appear to be the most qualified candidates.

Northwest Leadership does preliminary reference checks on qualified candidates by contacting those who have worked closely with them. It also facilitates interviews, communicates with the candidates and conducts pre-negotiation discussions to ensure contract discussions go smoothly.

Throughout the process, the firm works closely with the school board. It also promises to conduct a new search if an initial one does not identify a qualified candidate. It will do a free search if a hire resigns or is dismissed by the board for cause during the first year of employment.

More information is available at the firm's website: <http://www.superintendent-search.com>.

ELECTIONS

Bolt elected, Lavery re-elected to State Board of Education

School Directors selected Kevin Lavery of Mukilteo and M.J. Bolt of Central Valley in the recent State Board of Education elections.

Lavery was re-elected as a Western Washington representative on the board in the first stage of the ballot-by-mail process. He was first elected to the board in 2011. Newcomer Bolt was elected in a run-off with Michael Pearson, a former superintendent of Central Valley School District, to a position representing the east side of the state.

Local school directors elect five members of the board. Lavery and Bolt join Peter Maier of Seattle, Bob Hughes of Kirkland and Dan Plung of West Richland as members chosen by school directors. Judy Jennings of Bonney Lake was re-elected as private schools representative to the board.

In addition to a 35-year career in public relations, Lavery has been a member of several nonprofit education groups.



"I'm grateful for the confidence school board members have placed in me," Lavery said on his election. "I look forward to continuing the work of the State Board of Education on policies that benefit our schools and students."

Lavery was elected to a two-year term as vice chair of the board in July 2015 after serving as a member-at-large of the board's executive committee since November 2014. Both Lavery and Bolt were elected to four-year terms.

"I am happy to be serving our students, schools, and school directors as your newly-elected representative to the State Board of Education," Bolt said. "I aspire to continue the collaborative nature that I have experienced with WSSDA members on the tough issues we face around our State's education policy, to help make Washington State's education system the best and most equitable for every student."

The election process was overseen by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Improving your board through self-assessment



WSSDA board president Chris Nation, left. Board members Larry Ayre and Debbie Long, above, preview the budget at the January board meeting.

Does participating in a self-assessment with your board sound like as much fun as stepping on the scale after the holidays? Don't worry. It is actually an easy and painless process that can yield great results.

WSSDA's free online self-assessment tool is designed to reflect both what your board is focused on and how well you are accomplishing it. This scientifically validated survey is based on the Washington School Board Standards. These are research-based practices of good governance and effective board leadership. They are intended to support increased achievement for students.

How does it work?

School directors complete their individual surveys online in about 15 minutes. The data from all board members is compiled anonymously and analyzed. The result is a customized report for your board. If you've taken the assessment in previous years, the report will add your board's outcomes each year, so you can easily track your board's progress over time.

Spending time reviewing and reflecting on the outcomes helps your board pinpoint its strengths and opportunities for growth. Your board can use the information to set goals for the coming year, thus increasing accountability and productivity. If your board decides to focus on improving its performance within a category, WSSDA can provide additional support. Workshops or trainings can help a board step up its performance within all areas of the five board standards that are assessed.

WSSDA's board self-assessment and accompanying outcomes report are free to Washington school boards. You may request the link to your district's survey from mail@wssda.org at any time. The links are also sent to each board chair and superintendent every January and August.

What school directors like about the self-assessment

"I love the format and the comparison to two years ago. This will give us a good idea of where we as a team need to focus added effort."

"I just finished it and really see the need to up our game in the accountability and professional standards of our board members."

"At our meeting last night everyone said they had taken the survey. Thinking about the questions is already generating some discussion."



Jessica Vavrus is WSSDA's New Government Relations Director.

Jessica joined the WSSDA leadership team in late December 2015. Prior to WSSDA, she spent almost 15 years at the State's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), serving most recently as the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. She has had many opportunities to navigate policy issues with legislators and state education partners. She holds a Master's in Public Administration/Education Policy from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA.



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

- 1** Legislative Conference
- 6** Annual Conference Planning Committee Meeting
- 17** Bylaw and Policy Review Committee Meeting

March

- 5** Nominating Committee Meeting
- 12** Resolutions Committee Meeting
- 16** Spring Regional Meeting - DA7
- 17** Spring Regional Meeting - DA 8
- 28** Spring Regional Meeting - DA1
- 29** Spring Regional Meeting - DA2
- 30** Spring Regional Meeting - DA10
- 31** Spring Regional Meeting - DA9

April

- 13** Spring Regional Meeting - DA11
- 21** Spring Regional Meeting - DA3
- 23** Spring Regional Meeting - DA4
- 27** Spring Regional Meeting - DA6

May

- 5** Spring Regional Meeting - DA5
- 13-14** WSSDA Board Meeting
- 24-25** Equity Conference

