



Direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

MAY 2015

High School Graduation Rates Hit Another All-Time High

With over 81 percent of students graduating within four-years of entering high school, the Class of 2013 achieved the highest on-time graduation rate in U.S. history according to the 2015 Building a Grad Nation report.

After graduation rates languished in the low 70s for nearly four decades, rates have accelerated dramatically over the past decade. According to the report, if this rate of improvement continues the national graduation rate will reach 90 percent by 2020, a goal of the authors of Grad Nation.

While attainment gaps remain, the gap is narrowing between traditionally disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers. This is particularly

true for the fastest growing group of students in our nation's schools, Hispanics, whose graduation rate increased from 71 percent to 75 percent between 2011 and 2013. Black students made significant gains during this period as well, improving their graduation rate from 67 percent to 71 percent. Despite these gains the graduation rates for black and Hispanic students are still significantly lower than those of white students (87 percent).

While this is certainly good news it actually doesn't provide a complete picture of the success in raising high school graduation rates. This is because these are only on-time graduation rates

GRADUATION RATES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The picture in Washington state



Washington's on-time graduation rate of 76 percent for the class of 2013 was below the national rate of about 81 percent.

Disparities between state and national rates also exist for Hispanic (66% vs 75%) and black (65% vs 71%) students.

The numbers improved a bit the following year in Washington State.

For the class of 2014, students graduated at a 77 percent rate, overall. Black students had an on-time graduation rate of 68 percent and the rate for Hispanics was 67 percent.

Within Washington, the on-time graduation rate for low income students rose from 65 to 66 percent.

After years of strong improvement in Washington state, the on-time graduation rate has been fairly flat since 2011.



OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

Yacolt teachers reach for Chromebooks to teach reading

The state may set the standards for what students must learn at each grade level, but teachers have the responsibility to determine how they're going to teach those standards. At Yacolt Primary School, the third grade teachers have developed a method for teaching the Washington learning standards for reading informational text that incorporates technology

YACOLT, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

TOP PHOTO: Third grade teachers at Yacolt Primary School have developed a new tool to help their students meet the state's learning standards for reading informational texts.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

BURKE: What's up with the legislature?

NIEUWENHUIS: Achieving educational racial equity

REGISTRATION: WSSDA's 2015 Annual Conference!



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Alan Burke

What's up with the legislature?

THE 2015 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION ADJOURNED ON APRIL 24TH. The first special session of the 64th legislature began five days later and can continue until May 29th. If their work still isn't done, a second 30-day special session may be called, taking us to the brink of a government shutdown at the end of the fiscal year on June 30th at midnight. Some people are calling special sessions the "new normal" – especially during odd numbered years when the biennial state budgets are crafted.

Education spending priorities in the House, Senate and Governor's Operating budgets for the 2015-17 are close; how to pay for them is the problem. The Governor and the House want to raise taxes; the Senate insists that's not necessary. Key senators and representatives are huddled with the governor trying to resolve outstanding issues, but to date, we haven't seen much willingness to compromise.

WHAT'S THE HOLD-UP?

The policies and timelines enacted in ESHB 2261/SHB 2776, and subsequently cited by the Supreme Court in the McCleary decision, only require funding for Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC) this biennium. Both budgets go further, including full funding for all-day Kindergarten and K-3 class size reduction ahead of schedule. However, the State Supreme Court also requires a "plan" for compensation reform and levy relief before the legislature adjourns.

Compensation: The budgets differ significantly on the size of salary increases for teachers and state employees.

Levy reform: A levy swap shifts tax collections from local property taxes to state property taxes, essentially moving money from property rich districts to property poor districts. In McCleary, the Supreme Court ruled that basic education (including salaries) cannot be paid for with local tax dollars. Consequently, if the final budget deal includes compensation reform, it will also include a levy swap.

Regional pay differences: The cost of housing varies greatly across the state; as does supply and demand for teachers. In eastern King County suburbs, teachers have a hard time affording a house anywhere near school, while administrators in rural Washington struggle to find highly qualified teachers willing to settle in remote communities.

WHAT TO DO?

Among a series of bills dropped in the Senate, SB 6109 is the most comprehensive, taking on everything from levies to regional pay differences to statewide bargaining. But as the days and

weeks pass, some of its levy swap provisions are under criticism. District business managers have had time to do cost/benefit analyses and those who see negatives are quick to register concerns. House Bill 2239 takes a different tack, punting compensation and levy reform discussions to an interim workgroup of legislators, the governor, the SPI and the treasurer.

Is the answer a regional pay structure for teachers? Perhaps a fixed salary schedule from the state with levy authority for adjustments to account for housing costs or difficult-to-staff schools and positions? How about variable pay depending on student body demographics? Politically and practically, these are extremely challenging issues and the devil is in the details.

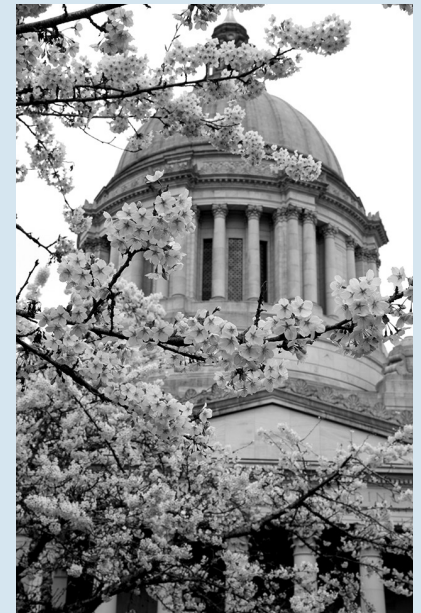
WHAT DOES WSSDA THINK?

WSSDA remains committed to its position that basic education programs and policies should be funded as scheduled in ESHB 2261. Both budget proposals do that and more – getting ahead of the game by funding all-day Kindergarten and K-3 class size reductions. If the legislature is also able to find a solution to the compensation and levy reform requirements of McCleary this session, then so much the better. In all likelihood however, that is a bridge too far.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE END?

The Supreme Court demands a full plan for complying with McCleary before the end of the current special session. The real questions are how comprehensive must the plan be and how long they are willing to wait for it. Is a plan to finish the plan during interim enough?

Some say the closing budget negotiations won't happen until late June. The idea is that hard bargaining will only occur just before the clock strikes midnight on July 1st and state government shuts down. The final deal may come sooner and it may come later, but eventually it will come.





PRESIDENT
Chris Nieuwenhuis

GRADUATION RATES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and do not include those students who take longer than four years to earn a standard high school diploma.

As CPE found in our report about late high school graduates, Better Late Than Never, our national high school graduation rate is likely about 5 percentage points higher if we include students who graduate within six years.

This means that our public schools are likely graduating at least 86 percent of students. And since black and Hispanic students are more likely to graduate late than their white classmates, the attainment gap is likely to be narrower as well.

These are graduates who are far too often overlooked as successes even though, as the Grad Nation report pointed out, districts across the nation have made significant efforts to get students back on the graduation track or re-enroll students who had dropped out completely to help them earn the same diplomas as their peers who graduated on-time.

More details on this report are available online in the May 12 post at <http://blog.centerforpubliceducation.org/>

The above article was produced by the Center for Public Education, the research arm of the National School Board Association.

One step toward achieving educational racial equity

Last month, along with the Puget Sound ESD, WSSDA took some initial steps toward addressing racial equity in our schools through policy development.

Achieving Educational Racial Equity Through Policy and Beyond was the focus of a workshop on April 29. It was the result of work begun at the annual conference last November when school board members from different ethnic backgrounds came together to begin the process of eliminating educational barriers for students, families, and staff of color.

There were three main objectives at this meeting. The first was to help us gain a better understanding of the importance of creating a racial equity policy that will impact all of our students.

Professor Kimberly Johnson, an expert on equal education opportunity, was the keynote speaker and shared guidelines for creating policies that address equity. While policy work in our districts is mostly based on RCW's and WAC's, there still is a need for policies that work to eliminate barriers.

It will be a great challenge because the subject is so broad and district specific. WSSDA hopes to become a valuable clearinghouse for ideas developed across the nation.

The second objective was to begin to forge relationships between districts and community organizations to support the work. We all came away with a better understanding of the issues facing community organizations and how we can work together in moving forward.

The third objective was all about becoming energized.

The best part of the night came when several students participated in a fishbowl discussion about the challenges they face at their schools and in their communities.

These students all have dreams of becoming contributing members of society in spite of the challenges they face. They look to the adults in their lives to step up to this challenge and make their schools a place where every student will have success. The students were very open about specific issues they have encountered and it was a great way to help us gain an understanding of the problem.

As a result of this session, WSSDA will focus on equity at our annual conference in November. There will be a strand throughout the entire conference to help board members gain an understanding of the issue and give direction on how to make the changes necessary in our local districts.

LEFT PHOTO: The recent workshop on achieving educational racial equity drew a solid crowd to Renton Technical College. It was sponsored by PSED and WSSDA.



2014 annual report highlights top accomplishments

The following accomplishments are extracted from the recently completed WSSDA 2014 Annual Report. The entire report, with a summary of the association's financial statements is available online. To view, go to www.wssda.org and select annual report under the About Us tab.

Dues held steady for fourth consecutive year

WSSDA kept a tight rein on its spending in 2014, allowing it to hold dues flat for the fourth straight year. The conservative spending also allowed the association to make needed investments in its policy services and reduce long-term debt. Revenue of \$3.1 million assured the association's financial health. "We are optimistic we'll be able to continue to keep dues steady in the near future and still cover unanticipated emergencies," said then President-elect Chris Nieuwenhuis. Spending in 2014 was about the same level as seven years ago, despite inflation.

WSSDA hires new executive director

In June, the WSSDA Board of Directors officially hired Alan Burke as the association's executive director. Immediately after the announcement,

WSSDA received numerous messages of congratulations. Burke had previously been deputy superintendent at OSPI and before that, a long-time educator with a 35-year career as teacher, principal and, eventually, superintendent of the Yelm School District. The press release announcing his hire was downloaded nearly a thousand times, making it one of the most popular items on the association's website.

Three boards get top honors as Boards of the Year

Union Gap, University Place and Everett got top honors in the 2014 Boards of Distinction program. The three boards were chosen from a field of 23 nominated from across Washington State. "Each of the boards has shown how a commitment to quality education for all kids can translate into real progress, said Mari Taylor, outgoing WSSDA president. Sunnyside was honored for five straight years of recognition as a board of distinction. An independent review panel named 17 boards across the state as Boards of Distinction. In addition to



the above four, they included: Bellingham, Clover Park, Ferndale, Issaquah, Kent, Lake Stevens, Pasco, Pullman, Puyallup, Riverview, Tacoma, Tumwater and West Valley (Spokane).

Annual conference attracts another large crowd and high marks

More than 1,000 people flocked to WSSDA's 2014 Annual Conference in Spokane. Attendance and evaluation marks matched the year before, which was one of the most popular in conference history. The crowd included 710 school directors and 184 superintendents, both well above the number for the year before. Social media was incorporated into the conference for the first time and 660 people downloaded the app, much higher than anticipated. The conference

Frost to retire as WSSDA Director of Finance and Human Resources



After 13 years as WSSDA's chief of business operations, Harry Frost announced this week that he will retire at the end of June.

Frost, who is the Director of Finance and Human Resources, also served three times as the association's acting interim director during times of transition. In his job, he has been responsible for financial, accounting, budget, facilities and human resources.

"Harry stepped up and kept us on an even keel in some trying situations," said WSSDA President Chris Nieuwenhuis. "He has been an exceptional finance director and has ensured that the WSSDA mission is carried out to its fullest."

Frost joined WSSDA in February of 2002.

"During his time at WSSDA, Harry guided the association through staff changes, clean audits and helped put us on a strong financial footing," said Executive Director Alan Burke. "He made a huge difference to me when I came to work here last year. I have relied on him daily and want to thank him for staying on when he might have retired."

Prior to WSSDA, Frost served for 13 years as the Chief Financial Officer for the Washington State Department of Printing. He has also worked as the CFO for several private companies including Georgia Pacific, Peter Kiewit, and Kaiser.

Asked for his proudest accomplishment, Frost said, "We've done a lot of great things. Financial stability has to be one, but I'm also pleased that the organizations I've been with haven't had an audit finding in the 26 years I've worked for the state. I've had the great fortune to have worked with many good people, both staff and board members, over the years and that is what I'll miss most of all."

Frost said he is looking forward to enjoying retirement with lots of travel, trying to improve his golf game, fishing, and watching his grandchildren's sports and other activities.

theme was “Inspire. Celebrate. Lead.” It included 60 breakout sessions and a busload of attendees also took advantage of an opportunity to get a hands-on view of a new skills center, Spokane Valley Tech. New open government training sessions were quickly filled.

WSSDA policy services launches major upgrade

WSSDA launched the upgraded Docs Online system powered by Board-Docs. The system provides districts with cutting-edge policy management technology, featuring exceptionally fast search, sort and download capability. It also delivers two flagship services, Policy and Legal News and Model Policy Online. The upgrade led to a jump in subscriptions and customer satisfaction, as well as traffic to the WSSDA website. The busy year also saw four new policies and procedures and the update of 46 others. Committee work was on time and on budget. Finally, WSSDA contracted with five school attorneys to expand policy services statewide.

Our Kids, Our Future launch leads to new resource for thousands

A WSSDA-led partnership spurred the February launch of a new website to highlight stories of education excellence across Washington State. By the end of the year, the site was visited 11,000 times with 34,000 story views. Districts from across the state - large and small - provided nearly 700 articles and videos. The partnership itself also grew from six to eight organizations. Top stories during the year covered topics ranging from Chromebooks to professional umpiring and from the use of STEM learning in school construction to a music video done to the tune of RESPECT.

WSSDA hires first Eastern Washington representative

In September, WSSDA brought on board Tricia Lubach, a leadership development training specialist. Lubach, a school director and training consultant from Quincy, became the association's first staffer based east of the mountains.

Member Survey

School directors gave WSSDA relatively high marks in the association's second online member survey, which is now done every two years. Most products and services received an 80 percent satisfaction rate, which is above average by industry standards. While awareness of the association's flagship

products remained high, work still needs to be done in some areas. Ninety percent of members said WSSDA has contributed to their understanding of the education system. Three quarters of respondents said their experience on school boards has been “very positive.” Two thirds said they devote 11 or more hours per month to school board work.

Fall Regional Meetings draw large crowds

The 2014 Fall Regional Meetings drew the largest crowds ever when a total of 441 attendees, including 337 school directors, went to 11 Director Area sessions. The total compared to 413 in spring of 2013, a previous high. More districts were also included. One hundred and thirty-six different districts attended the fall 2014 sessions, the most for any set of meetings for which WSSDA has a count. Evaluations of regional meetings have also improved over the past several years, reflecting the increased popularity.

Legislative Assembly prepares WSSDA for big session

September's Legislative Assembly in Yakima attracted 125 delegates from 85 districts across the state. The assembly approved 45 new positions in preparation for what was anticipated as an education-focused legislative session. The event was the inaugural one for new Government Relations Director Deb Merle, who received major help from former school director Kathryn Simpson. The assembly set stable funding, capital construction, learning environments and state mandates as top legislative priorities. Following the assembly, WSSDA established new protocols for weekly legislative updates, bill and budget watches and conference calls with the Legislative Committee, board, and legislative representatives.

WSSDA Website sees sharp growth in traffic

Customers flocked to WSSDA's Website in increasing numbers during 2014. In the second half of the year, users came to the site nearly 200,000 times to view nearly 400,000 items. Visits were up 27% during the six-month period, and users downloaded 55,000 documents. Much of this was driven by the increasing number of subscribers to eClippings, which promoted items at the site. All told for 2014, the site had 380,000 visitors viewing a total of more than 823,000 pages. The six most popular pages included, eClippings, policy resources, the annual conference, board of directors, calendar and superintendent openings.



SMALL SCHOOLS TOUR 2014: Eight districts in two days

WSSDA President Chris Nieuwenhuis, Director Area 9 Board Member Debbie Long, and Executive Director Alan Burke recently visited eight small districts in northeastern Washington.

This was part of the effort begun in 2006 by the Task Force on Small Schools to have WSSDA staff and leadership members visit all schools with less than 2000 students.

Their tour of Pend Oreille and Stevens counties began at Newport, where Superintendent Dave Smith had arranged a meeting with a large group of staff and board members. The visitors heard first hand about some of the great things happening in the district and some concerns about legislative actions pending.

The next stop was in Cusick, where the group met with board members and Superintendent Don Hawpe. They toured the campus and had an excellent lunch in town!

From Cusick, the group drove up the Pend Oreille River to Metaline Falls, to meet with Selkirk Superintendent Nancy Lotze. She shared both her thoughts about rural education and her interactions with parents and students as they arrived for parent/teacher conferences. A brief side trip to visit the Rural Schools Museum in the Cutter Theater - built as the Metaline Falls School in 1912 - was a highlight.

The first day ended with a large gathering of board members and administrators from the north end of Director Area 9 at a wonderful dinner hosted by Colville Superintendent Pete

SMALL SCHOOL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

into the lessons and provides a tool for evaluating student growth.

The teachers are using Chromebooks and Google applications to help students ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for their answers.

A typical lesson requires students to read a passage of text in Google documents and then answer questions about the text in Google Forms. Yacolt's third grade teachers formatted the lessons so that they resemble English language arts portions of Smarter Balanced Assessments. Students' responses automatically populate a spreadsheet in Google Sheets, and teachers evaluate their students' answers based on a rubric that the teachers created during time set aside for collaboration. When Yacolt's third grade teachers enter grades in Google Classroom, students can see them.

The teachers' goal is twofold: 1. they are teaching the standard in a format that lets students learn how to use the same technology used in businesses and familiarizes students with tools they will use for state testing, and 2. teachers have zeroed in on reading informational text as a way to analyze student achievement and make adjustments to their teaching based on what student needs.

"We have taken the things we normally teach and integrated it with the technology," said Jennifer Bucher, a third grade teacher at Yacolt. "Students get used to reading on the screen and taking notes using the keyboard."

Teachers across the Battle Ground Public Schools have access to Google applications and can check out Chromebooks on which students can do the work. Teachers also have access to BGPS Tech Training, which provides classes and resources to teachers who want to learn how to implement these tools into their lessons.

"It's great," said Yacolt third grade teacher Nancy Barney. "Students are doing complete projects on the Chromebooks, from reading and taking notes to writing and sharing their work with other kids in class."

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

Keynote Speakers

Pedro Noguera, Thursday, November 19 & Friday, November 20



Pedro is a nationally recognized expert in the field of equity in education. His latest book, *Excellence through Equity*, is just published and offers a new and positive paradigm regarding all children succeeding and how school systems achieve that goal. He is a positive champion for public education and uses his research to move public education to reach its promise and potential at a national level.

Pedro will speak at a pre-conference dinner reception, give the opening session keynote on Friday, and follow that up with a Q&A breakout session.

Susan Ershler of Kirkland, Washington, Saturday, November 21



Susan Ershler has conquered the seven highest mountain peaks in the world while succeeding as an executive in sales divisions for multiple Fortune 500 companies over a 23 year career. Susan inspires audiences to challenge their perceived limitations and reach new heights of success. In public education, we face the most difficult summit—supporting the most challenged students in becoming college and career ready and reaching a 100% graduation rate. The life lessons Susan has learned about teams and reaching goals provide us inspiration and strategies to reach our summit.

Susan presents the luncheon keynote on Saturday, followed by a book signing and Q&A breakout session.

Jeff Utecht of Seattle, Washington, Sunday, November 22



A native Washingtonian, Jeff began his teaching career in our state, but spent the last ten years at International Schools in the Middle East and Asia as teacher, technology facilitator and administrator. The Bill and Melinda Gates Grant for Technology Leadership that he received in 2001 jump started his becoming an expert in educational technology and what the future requires of our children. He is a collaborative supporter of education and the creator of the Google Ninja Program. This free program supports students and educators using Google Apps and is used across the globe. Jeff shares his perspective on the potential of technology application and what the future looks like for our students.

Jeff is the closing keynote and will also provide a breakout session.

SMALL SCHOOL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Lewis and the Colville School Board. Alan Burke shared comments about the current state of affairs in Olympia and Washington, D.C.

The second round of visits began with a drive from Kettle Falls up along Lake Roosevelt to Northport, where students enthusiastically shared their school with us. This was followed by a meeting with district staff and board members. From Northport, the visit team braved a steep mountain "shortcut" road up to Onion Creek, where they enjoyed lunch with students, staff and board members.

Driving down out of the mountains, the group traveled south on US 395 to Valley, where Superintendent Kevin Jackson, a member of the Valley school board, and several staff welcomed them to the Columbia Virtual Academy offices and the Valley K-8 school.

BY ELISSA DYSON, ONION CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Sample of Early Bird Workshops

BUILDING A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE BOARD THROUGH BALANCED GOVERNANCE

School boards are under increasing scrutiny by a public that demands high levels of board continuity and effectiveness. At the same time, newspaper accounts of “boards behaving badly” have raised questions over whether locally elected school board members are qualified to fulfill their role.

School governance

Thomas Alsbury has been called the top expert in school governance by the Associated Press. He is a professor at Seattle Pacific University and is founder and President of Balanced Governance Solutions. Alsbury will discuss the latest research and help you learn to apply it. Doing so will help you be more effective and avoid the typical political challenges faced by board members.

The session will allow you to discuss and apply tools to improve your own and your board’s effectiveness in improving student learning in your district.

School Finance and Collective Bargaining

This workshop led by Barbara Postumous and Curtis Leonard will unravel the mysteries of school finance and collective bargaining, supporting you in monitoring contract negotiations, your district’s budget, bonds and levies.

The information will advance your board leadership and effectiveness. Posthumous is the Director of Business Services for the Lake Washington School District. She has developed budgets and worked with bonds and levies during her career.

Posthumous is a well-respected member of the Washington School Business Officers, and a frequent presenter. Leonard is Executive Director of the Washington School Personnel Association and facilitates and teaches collective bargaining across our state. He is an attorney specializing in school law and represents school districts across the state including collective bargaining, union grievances and arbitration.

Engaging Families and Community Members in High Diversity Settings

One of the biggest opportunities we face is to ensure that every child, regardless of race, back ground, or circumstance, receives a great quality education. We can only accomplish this by partnering with our ethnically and linguistically diverse families and communities.

The Race to the Top Consortium of school boards and districts has spent considerable time learning and implementing effective strategies. This interactive, adult learning-focused workshop brings you what they learned at Harvard. It will explain how they implemented strategies

that ensure positive relationships and ongoing communication with under-represented families and community members.

Presenters include Mary Fertakis, School Director, Tukwila School District; Claire Wilson, School Director, Federal Way School District; and Bernardo Ruiz of Seattle Public Schools.

New Board Director Boot Camp

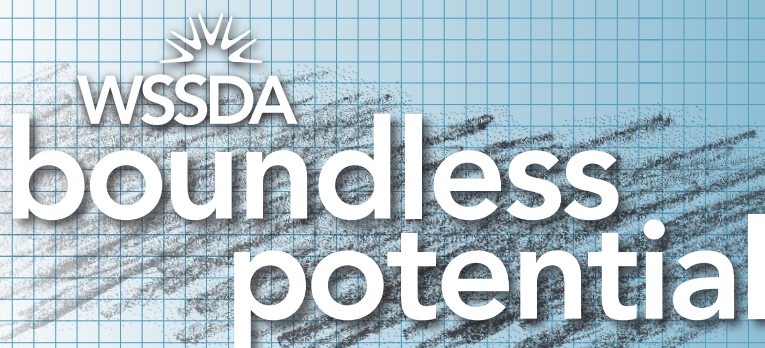
Are you newly-elected and ready to learn how to be an effective school director? Or maybe you have been a board member for a year or two and want to gain new knowledge and skills.

New Board Boot Camp explores the roles and responsibilities of a school director and how school boards do their work.

This invaluable Early Bird workshop offers a day of training to get new directors ready to join their school board leadership teams. Topics include the roles and responsibilities of the governance team, leading through policy, budget and fiscal management and understanding data.

Veteran school directors and superintendents have also found this workshop beneficial, both as a refresher course and an opportunity to support their newly elected or appointed colleagues.

Bring a team to this valued workshop.



REGISTRATION OPENS MAY 20, 2015

▶ Register for the Conference, Early Bird Workshops, Opening Reception, and Dinner with Pedro Noguera.

▶ Secure your hotel room at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue, WA.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

July

- 2 Executive Committee
Meeting
- 16 Executive Committee
Meeting
- 17 Legislative Committee
Meeting
- 24 Board of Directors' Meeting
- 30 Executive Committee
Meeting

June

- 4 Executive Committee
Meeting
- 18 Executive Committee
Meeting
- 19 Legislative Committee
Meeting

