



Consolidation issue resurfaces in Olympia

Proposal: Lack of demonstrated 'efficiencies' would trigger forced reorganization of school districts

The issue of forced consolidation of school districts has reappeared in the Legislature, this time in the form of a bill that promotes district reorganization as a way to “increase efficiency, cost savings and an improved learning environment for students.”

Introduced by Rep. Sam Hunt, D-Olympia, the bill (HB 1325) would set up a two-step process with WSSDA serving as the lead organization on streamlining efficiencies in the administration and operation of school districts and educational service districts.

Last year, Hunt introduced a bill mandating consolidation the state's current 295 districts to a total of 150. The measure died in committee but similar language reappeared as a provision in the state budget bill. At the urging of WSSDA and numerous other organizations, Gov. Chris Gregoire vetoed the provision.

WSSDA supports efforts to promote shared services and efficiencies among school districts, but strongly opposes forced consolidation. The association's position, reaffirmed by the Legislative Assembly, states that “... consolidation of local school districts should occur only through a process of voting by the affected citizens and not by legislative mandate.”

This year's bill includes “efficiency strategies” that must be considered as part of a streamlining process, including:

- consolidation of districts
- consolidation of administration between and among districts

- developing and implementing shared services
- increased use of technologies
- other efficiencies and consolidations as appropriate

Under the bill, any money saved under this process would remain in the K-12 education budget to allow school districts to redirect resources to improve student learning.



Rep. Sam Hunt discusses consolidation at a WSSDA Regional Meeting, Fall 2010

WSSDA would be required to file an annual report beginning Sept. 1, 2011 with OSPI that includes documented and projected annual cost savings resulting from the reorganization initiative.

The bill also would also set up an unusual “trigger” process in which the superintendent of

public instruction could determine that the reorganization initiative led by WSSDA had not resulted in sufficient cost savings and efficiencies. What constitutes “sufficient” is not defined in the bill.

Such a determination would suspend the reorganization initiative under WSSDA and set in place a course of action

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WSSDA: A partner in education governance



Deborah Heart, WSSDA President

In the current conversations about reorganizing Washington's education system, questions sometimes come up about WSSDA's status as a state agency and our universal membership provisions.

A little historical perspective is helpful. It's important to remember that there were—and are—sound public policy reasons for WSSDA's inclusion in the state's education governance structure.

When the 1947 Legislature approved the association's request to be made a state agency, it did so to assist itself (the Legislature) in carrying out its primary duty to provide for the common schools.

The logic then—and now—is that all school boards should be part of a network that a) receives consistent, uniform policy guidance and training from the school board perspective b) meets together to address public education policy issues throughout the state and c) provides guidance to the Legislature on the development of education-related laws and policy.

Under state law, school boards have a joint responsibility with the Legislature (and the Governor, OSPI, SBE and ESDs) in the governance of Washington's public school system. Universal membership ensures that this partnership involves all school boards in the state.

In the conversations about unfunded mandates, it's important to remember that WSSDA's funding structure was specifically created to ensure that the association would not have to rely on direct appropriations from the Legislature. The structure provides stable, cost-effective funding to support WSSDA's statutory responsibilities, and it ensures that the association can be frank and forthright in its guidance to the Legislature on K-12 issues.

(As former WSSDA Executive Director Elmer Stanley put it, school directors wanted their association to have the ability "to speak before the Legislature with complete honesty and candor ... without having to worry about being cut off at the pockets if legislators didn't like what they heard.")

As a state agency, WSSDA is unique in that its enabling act gives its members the authority to govern themselves. Universal membership ensures that all school boards can participate in setting the direction of the association on education policy and issues. It also assures that the association is responsive to its members. Since 1965, WSSDA's constitution and bylaws have been amended seven times to ensure fairness in its dues structure and voting procedures.

Because they are directly responsive to parents, the community and taxpayers, local school boards have a major role to play in developing a world-class system that gives every student an opportunity for success. With the voices of all school boards engaged in WSSDA, the association can continue to be a strong partner in working with the Legislature and other policy makers to make a positive difference for Washington's students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah A. Heart". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Consolidation issue

continued from cover

similar to a military base closure and realignment process, with a target of collapsing the number of school districts to 150 and reducing the number of ESDs.

Under the realignment process, a Commission on Statewide School District Reorganization would be constituted in 2014, with the responsibility of creating a comprehensive reorganization and consolidation plan and a process for appeals for school districts. The commission would be charged with developing criteria, in ranked order, for the reorganization of school districts, which would be placed in administrative rules. Prior to adopting criteria or a plan, the commission would be required to hold at least one public hearing in each of the ESDs.

A final plan would be reviewed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee and then submitted to the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, and the Legislature by Dec. 1, 2016. A two-thirds vote of the Legislature would be required for any changes to the plan. If the Legislature failed to act on the plan by June 30, 2018, the consolidation effort would expire.

WSSDA has just produced a flier on *The Myths and Realities of School Consolidation in Washington State* (see related article page four). The publication tackles many of the issues about consolidation, including questions related to costs, current cooperative initiatives, and the impacts on student learning and community engagement. The flier is available on the WSSDA website at wssda.org.

Board gives direction on state assessment requirements

January's regular meeting of the WSSDA Board of Directors included a discussion on legislative issues that have come up regarding math and science assessments and high school graduation requirements.

A variety of bills have been introduced to modify state laws that will require students in the class of 2013 and beyond to pass end-of-course assessments in math and science in order to graduate. The bills are prompted by concerns that the state's transition to end-of-course assessments in those subjects will force some students to take the tests long after they have completed the courses.

Some bills would postpone the requirements; others would modify how many end-of-course exams would be required. One bill would completely eliminate use of the tests as a high school graduation requirement.

After a lengthy discussion, the board was split on whether to "delink" the assessments as a graduation requirement (similar proposals have been turned down at past WSSDA Legislative Assemblies). The board did, however, come to a consensus that the science assessment should be delayed, and that all end-of-course assessments should take place in the calendar year during which student took the course.

Other highlights from the January board meeting include:

- The board gave final approval to the 2011 association budget in the amount of \$2,920,124. The budget includes

both spending reductions and a one percent dues increase (approved by the Delegate Assembly) to assist in addressing mandatory cost increases in health care, retirement and unemployment insurance.

- The board received a report that WSSDA has received another excellent audit from the State Auditor, with no "findings" or "management letter" items.
- The board endorsed a joint letter with other education organizations outlining concerns and suggestions related to proposed rules implementing a new state law prohibiting discrimination in schools. The letter was presented during public hearings on the rule in late January.
- The board devoted much of its meeting to activities related to strategic planning and board development, including a review of "dashboard" information on the performance of WSSDA programs and services during the past year. The board also crafted for itself a set of governance principles based on BoardSource's *12 Principles of Governance that Power Exceptional Boards*.

Agendas, documents and minutes from WSSDA board meetings are available on the WSSDA BoardDocs website, located on wssda.org under "About WSSDA."

Multicultural workshops offered

The Washington State Association of Multicultural Education offers these workshops in Spring 2011:

- Unconscious Bias in the Workplace: Feb. 25
- Bullying and Bias in Schools: March 11
- Cyberbullying – Dealing with Today's Reality: April 8
- Strategies to Address Racial Harassment: May 6
- Cultural Competence in the Workplace: May 19

All take place at North Seattle Community College. For details, visit www.wsame.org.

Advocacy manual a source of help

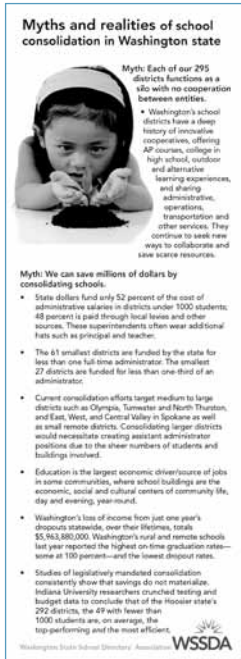
Effective Advocacy for School Directors in Washington State is a timely handbook for school board members in their role as advocates for public education. As an elected official yourself, you share a common bond with legislators; like you, they must hear from their constituents in order to know their key concerns. School directors can have a significant impact on the legislative decisions made in Olympia.

Obtain a copy of the manual by contacting Sheila Chard (S.Chard@wssda.org or 360.252.3011) or download it at wssda.org > Publications.



Funding is available for districts with schools in improvement to receive free Lighthouse training between now and June 30. For more information, please contact Phil Gore at 360.252.3020 or P.Gore@wssda.org.

WSSDA publication tackles 'myths and realities' of school consolidation



When it comes to the volatile issue of school district consolidation, research and data often take a back seat to misperceptions. To bring clarity to the issue, WSSDA has just produced a handy flier on *The Myths and Realities of School Consolidation in Washington State*.

The new publication addresses many of the myths that surround the issue of school district reorganization, including the notion that the state would harvest a bonus of savings by forcing districts to merge. For example, it cites a recent legislative study which concluded that cost savings would be minimal.

The flier also emphasizes the realities of forced consolidation, including the disruption to student learning, parental involvement and community support

for finance measures. It notes that "Indiana's experience showed that all gains being made in student achievement came to a screeching halt when consolidation was mandated, and it took years to regain student achievement levels." The flier is available on the WSSDA website (wssda.org). Copies will also be available at WSSDA Regional Meetings, the WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference and other events.

WSSDA launches 'First Reading' blog

WSSDA is pleased to announce the launch of *First Reading*, a new blog site to bring you news from "the Hill" and other state government developments related to education. The blog supplements WSSDA's comprehensive Legislative Updates with bulletins and news briefs that occur throughout the day, and includes links to more in-depth information.

WSSDA First Reading can be found at www.wssda.org/firstreading or schooldirectors.blogspot.com. It is managed by Governmental Relations Director Marie Sullivan and Communications Director David Brine. We welcome your feedback on this new resource!

50 Washington schools eligible for federal school improvement grants

Fifty schools in Washington state are eligible for federal school improvement grant funds as a part of President Obama's agenda on education reform.

The schools may apply for grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$2 million annually for three years. Washington will receive approximately \$7.3 million for the grants in 2011. The schools, known federally as the "persistently lowest-achieving schools," were ranked using factors such as reading and math scores from 2008-10, Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and graduation rates for secondary schools.

Schools receiving grants must choose one of four intervention models: turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model. For an explanation of the four models visit www.k12.wa.us/improvement/SIG. Four districts with schools on the persistently lowest-achieving list were designated for Required Action by the State Board of Education, as mandated by the Legislature in 2010, which guarantees grant funding for those schools. Those districts are Morton, Onalaska, Renton and Soap Lake.

Applications for the grants are due to OSPI by March 4, 2011.

WELCOME, NEW SCHOOL DIRECTORS!

Congratulations and welcome to the following new school directors:

Roger Cemper, *Brinnon*
Tamarah Hancock, *Enumclaw*
Diana Beckman, *Mary Walker*
Bill Scholl, *Oakville*
Marcus Horak, *Odessa*
Bobby McCalden, *Pe Ell*
Sue Kalama, *Queets-Clearwater*
Michael Pierce, *Skykomish*

Brenda Blessings-Hill, *Soap Lake*
Linda Bryant-Hillman, *Soap Lake*
Steve Peters, *Southside*
Brooke Overstreet, *Sprague*
Martha Bodnar, *Wishkah Valley*

Thanks and best wishes to those who have recently left board service:

Diane Bressler, *Brinnon*
Jan Podris, *Mary Walker*

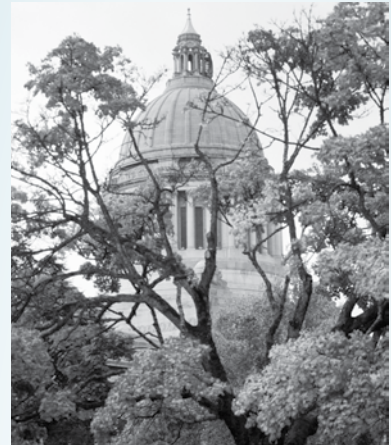
Mary Ellen Hutchinson, *Oakville*
Colleen Broosk-Foster, *Pe Ell*
Wilson Wells, *Queets-Clearwater*
Steve Merriel, *Soap Lake*
Gretchen Rice, *Southside*
Robert Sloane, *Southside*
Leah Ray, *Sprague*
Rodney McDougall, *Wishkah Valley*

WASA's annual Small Schools Conference theme stresses hope

Hope Starts Here is the title of the Washington Association of School Administrators' annual Small Schools Conference, to be held March 14-15 at the Wenatchee Convention Center. Leaders of small districts statewide will assemble for meaningful keynote addresses, best practice concurrent sessions, and ongoing participant dialogue around critical issues and common interests.

The conference targets districts with approximately 2,500 students or less, which have unique challenges regarding district operations, student programming, fiscal limitations and community expectations, and these concerns will be addressed in keynotes and breakout sessions.

Speakers include Dr. Jerry Teplitz, consultant, national speaker and author addressing the stresses of leadership during challenging times; Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn, with a timely look at what is happening in the Legislature, as well as OSP's hopes and hurdles for the next biennium; and Dr. Gene Sharratt, Washington State University, with tools and strategies for a positive, can-do spirit to lead effectively. Marilee Scarbrough, WSSDA's Director of Policy and Legal Services, will present a breakout session titled *Policy and Legal Issues for Small, Rural or Isolated School Districts*. A workshop on consolidation updates and issues is scheduled as well. Register for the conference at wasa-oly.org.



2011 WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference

**February 27 - 28, 2011
Olympia Red Lion Hotel
and the Capitol**

Attend the annual WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference to network with school directors and administrators statewide, receive up-to-the-minute information on what is happening in the Legislature, and talk with your own legislators to influence the debate in Olympia and advocate for the students you serve.

Conference registration opens at the Red Lion at noon on Sunday and the conference begins at 1 p.m. Sunday's events end with a 6 p.m. reception followed by dinner on your own.

On Monday, the majority of the morning is spent at the Capitol, and the conference concludes at noon.

Early registration (through Feb. 18) costs \$205; after Feb. 18, registration will cost \$260. A more detailed agenda and online registration are available at www.wasa-oly.org under "Upcoming Events." Questions? Contact Sheila Chard, 360.252.3011, S.Chard@wssda.org.

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Regional Meetings: Dining, discussion, training and updates



A series of lively WSSDA Regional Meetings are on tap for spring 2011. Save the date, for your opportunity to share a meal and discuss hot-button issues affecting your district right now. Regional Meetings are scheduled in 13 locations around the state to make them accessible for association members. Attend close

to home, or attend in another region. These meetings give school directors an opportunity to exchange success stories, get updates on education issues, and meet other school directors.

All meetings will feature a legislative update and hands-on professional development opportunity on how to communicate tough issues, particularly budget information, to the community. An asterisk by the location in the schedule below identifies where superintendent evaluation workshops will be held as well. (See related article on this page.)

Registration information and preliminary meeting agendas will be posted at wssda.org/regionalmeetings. You may send topic suggestions in advance to your WSSDA Board of Directors representative. (Contact information is found at wssda.org under "WSSDA Information.")

Weekday meetings, which include dinner, are held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday meetings, including lunch, are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Registration is required, and the only charge is for your meal.

Spring Regional Meetings

* Nine Mile Falls	Tuesday, March 1
* Oakesdale	Wednesday, March 2
Medical Lake	Tuesday, March 8
Sekiu	Saturday, March 19
Bremerton	Monday, March 21
* Conway	Tuesday, March 22
* Rainier	Wednesday, April 13
Woodland	Wednesday, April 13**
Carbonado	Thursday, April 14
* Connell	Monday, April 18
* Wapato	Tuesday, April 19
Soap Lake	Wednesday, April 20
* Burien	Thursday, April 21

* indicates locations where a superintendent evaluation workshop will be offered prior to the meeting

** a hosted meeting (no charge for meal)

Superintendent evaluation workshops

Participate in conjunction with Regional Meetings

Superintendent evaluation time is near and two-hour evaluation workshops will precede several of the WSSDA Spring Regional Meetings.

A clear understanding and thorough knowledge of the evaluation process are essential for measuring success and providing guidance to your superintendent. The workshop will cover key elements of the evaluation process, including:

- Establishing goals
- Developing instruments
- Researching best practices
- Reviewing techniques for a successful evaluation
- Building a culture of teamwork

Locations coincide with several Regional Meeting sites:

- Nine Mile Falls
- Oakesdale
- Conway
- Rainier
- Connell
- Wapato
- Burien

All superintendent evaluation workshops will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. The cost for board/superintendent teams is \$200; the cost for those attending individually is \$75.

For further information, contact Phil Gore (P.Gore@wssda.org or 360.252.3020). To register, visit wssda.org/workshops.

NAEP scores show students struggle with science

Results from the 2009 science National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) released in January show the nation's students continue to struggle with science. Washington students were a bit above the national average in fourth- and eighth-grade testing.

Washington's average eighth-grade score of 155 was six points higher—a statistically significant margin—than the national public school average of 149. Six states and one jurisdiction (Department of Defense schools) finished higher than Washington.

In fourth grade, Washington's score of 151 was statistically even with the national public average of 149. A total of 13 states and DoD schools finished higher.

Results from a 2009 questionnaire of fourth-grade teachers in Washington showed that 44 percent are teaching science less than two hours per week—only four states reported less science instruction. Additionally, just seven percent of Washington fourth-grade teachers reported four hours or more of science instruction per week, less than half the national average of 20 percent. On the 2009 science NAEP,

34 percent of Washington eighth-graders and 33 percent of fourth-graders scored at or above proficient, which NAEP defines as “competency over challenging subject matter.” The proficiency level on NAEP is higher than on Washington's Measurements of Student Progress, where proficiency is defined as grade-level performance.

Both Washington fourth- and eighth-graders either outperformed or were equal to their 12-state western region counterparts in most categories.

Science was tested on the NAEP for the first time since 2005. The 2009 science NAEP used a new testing framework and was scored on a different scale than 2005, thus results aren't comparable. For more information visit:

- OSPI's NAEP home page:
www.k12.wa.us/assessment/NAEP/default.aspx
- Washington NAEP results:
www.k12.wa.us/assessment/NAEP/reports.aspx
- The Nation's Report Card (NAEP's national page):
<http://nationsreportcard.gov>

NEWS BRIEFS

NSBA's School Health Programs department helps school policy makers and educators make informed decisions about health issues affecting the academic achievement and healthy development of students and the management of schools. Research shows that when school districts and schools have effective policies and practices that support the health of their students and staff:

- Student and staff absenteeism decreases
- Student concentration improves
- Student behavior problems are reduced
- Children and adolescents establish life-long health habits

NSBA's school health website is a source for information on policy and practice related to school health issues. Explore specific issues such as food allergy policy. Find new health resources and promising practices from across the country, NSBA health-related publications, links and more at www.nsba.org/schoolhealth.

The Department of Defense Education Activity's (DoDEA) Educational Partnership Branch has launched a new website providing information on the work of educators and administrators in military-connected school systems. This website replaces the military student

website, formerly owned and maintained by the Department of Defense, with expanded content about resources available to schools that serve military families. The site also provides information for the military's school liaisons to assist schools in obtaining additional resources. Visit the site at www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu.

Registration is now open for the 2011 Healthy Schools Summit to be held May 24 -25, at the Seattle Airport Marriott. For students to be successful, all their needs—academic, social, emotional and health—should be addressed. Community partners such as public health offices, mental health and social service agencies, local businesses, nonprofits, universities and others can partner with schools to serve youth. The Summit will explore how schools can most effectively build and manage partnerships with the community to create healthy schools and how community partners can most effectively reach and support schools.

Early bird registration ends May 2—\$130 for one day, \$240 for two days. After May 3 the cost is \$160 for one day and \$270 for 2 days. Registration closes May 16. For registration, scholarship applications and hotel links visit www.healthyschoolssummit.org. Questions? Contact Emily Houg, 253.445.4631 or 800.942.4978 or (EHoug@wsu.edu).



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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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- NSBA FRN Conference, Washington DC Feb. 6-8
- Washington State Learning First Alliance, Olympia . . . Feb. 9
- WSSDA Annual Conference Planning Committee
Bellevue Feb. 12
- Paramount Duty Coalition, Olympia Feb. 15
- President's Day Feb. 21
- Western Washington Native American Ed
Consortium's Education Conference, Tacoma . . . Feb. 24-25
- WSSDA Resolutions Committee, Olympia Feb. 26
- WSSDA Legislative Committee, Olympia Feb. 27
- Task Force on Small Schools Issues, Olympia Feb. 27
- WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference, Olympia . Feb. 27-28
- ESD Superintendents and AESD Executive Board
Olympia Feb. 28
- Board of Natural Resources, Olympia Mar. 1
- Professional Educator Standards Board, Lacey Mar. 3-4
- State Board of Education, Tumwater Mar. 9-10

WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

- NSBA FEDERAL RELATIONS NETWORK (FRN)
CONFERENCE
Washington D.C.: Feb. 6-8, 2011
- WASA/WSSDA LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
Olympia: Feb. 27-28, 2011
- WASA SMALL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE
Wenatchee: March 14-15, 2011
- NSBA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
San Francisco: April 9-11, 2011
- WSSDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Bellevue Hyatt Regency: Nov. 18-20, 2011