



direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

MAY-JUNE 2016

Preparing for bargaining season

by Tricia Lubach

Throughout Washington, spring brings sunny skies, warm temperatures... and contract negotiations. Many school districts will find themselves facing a challenging negotiating environment where they will be asked to fund salary increases that failed to materialize in the state budget. If your neighboring districts approved new contracts last year with salary increases or more TRI days, you can expect pressure to match those agreements this year. It is difficult to make good decisions under the pressure of contentious negotiations or in a pre-strike environment. Planning ahead for these scenarios helps your board clarify its goals and set the framework for productive teamwork. Here are some guidelines to assist your board/superintendent team:

1. Understand the bargaining process and the recent history of collective bargaining in the district. Knowing what led to this moment will help you navigate it more effectively. What recent changes have been made to reach the current contract and what requested changes might you anticipate? If your contract differs greatly from neighboring districts, be ready to explain why.

STEPS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Sarah Kay

Jeff Utecht

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Meet the keynotes

An exciting line-up of keynote speakers highlights WSSDA's upcoming annual conference, "Lead to Inspire" to be held in Spokane, November 17-19. These educators reach out to inspire students and adults with passion and creativity.

Sarah Kay co-founded Project VOICE and now travels the world as a writer, teacher and performer of spoken-word poetry. She and her fellow poet-teachers use this art form to improve literacy, encourage empathy and empower students, while developing programs to help teachers do the same.

KEYNOTES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

ARTS EDUCATION

43rd annual high school art exhibit

State Superintendent Randy Dorn hosted the 43th Annual Superintendent's High School Art Show in Olympia last month. WSSDA, one of the sponsors of the event, selected the work of



Emily Burns, a junior at Bellevue High School, to add to its permanent collection. Emily created a digitally enhanced photograph titled *American Dream* (shown above), as a tribute to her father, grandfather and veterans everywhere. This year's event honored 128 regional winners, including 15 award-winners and 10 honorable mentions. **SEE PG. 9 FOR MORE PHOTOS**

Inside this Issue

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NATION: Countdown...4,3,2,1 WSSDA welcomes a new ED

Final days for WSSDA officer applications



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Alan Burke

What now?

As spring turns to summer, the political winds move inexorably toward the November general election—perhaps with a bit more velocity as the primary season nears conclusion.

On the state front, the candidate sign-up period ended May 20 and we now know the incumbents and challengers for important races like the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, and the all-important legislative races that, when decided, will determine control of the state Senate and House in 2017.

The latter will go a long way toward determining a final solution to the McCleary conundrum. If the Democrats hold the governor's mansion and House, and flip the Senate, then a single party would have full control and McCleary conversations probably would focus on a revenue-based solution. However, if the Republicans take control of the House—now just 50-48 in favor of D's—and hold the Senate, then McCleary discussions likely would be very different.

Of course, any combination of wins/losses for the R's and D's in the legislative or governors' races is possible, and each outcome comes with interesting speculation about just how and when the legislature would finally take a stand on McCleary. On the federal side, the likely Trump vs. Clinton race has all sorts of implications for educational policy. If Donald Trump prevails, U.S. Department of Education (USED) policy direction would certainly change. But how is a big question, especially considering that Mr. Trump has been silent on most educational issues—except being clearly against the Common Core and just about any federal involvement in K-12 education. As for Ms. Clinton, she certainly is closer to the NEA and AFT than is President Obama, but just how much she would change the current role of the USED—especially in advocating for educational civil rights—is up for debate.

In spite of this political uncertainty in both Washingtons, a few things are clear. First, our state will have a new superintendent of public instruction. Second, the USED will have a new secretary. These appointments

will be extremely important because both have significant input into state and federal rule making and policy guidance with respect to the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and state accountability formulas.

On the home front, OSPI and the State Board of Education are working diligently with stakeholders to review and revise the current school accountability system, an effort that is set to conclude in November in order to give Superintendent Dorn, who leaves office in January, and Governor Inslee time to weigh in on the proposed changes prior to USED review and final implementation next spring. The spring deadline is important so that districts will have adequate time to establish budgets for implementing the new rules that go into effect at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. Of course, the USED review will take place under the guidance of a new secretary in 2017—and perhaps new agency direction as well.

In the meantime, OSPI accountability planning, under the direction of Deputy Superintendent Gil Mendoza, has established 12 separate committees to make recommendations on ESSA implementation issues for Superintendent Dorn's review in November. WSSDA has nine members or staff who sit on many of those committees. Progress is reported periodically at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/ESSA/default.aspx>. Note the place where citizens can sign up for automatic electronic updates. You are encouraged to read through the various ESSA updates. If a topic piques your interest, please pass comments to OSPI personnel per the instructions, or email me and I will put you in touch with the particular WSSDA committee member who represents school directors on that issue.

So, lots to do and watch this summer in state and federal politics! **Have fun.**

“ In spite of this political uncertainty in both Washingtons, a few things are clear. ”





PRESIDENT
Chris Nation

Getting to know your WSSDA consultants:

SCOTT DOLQUIST



Scott Dolquist is a founder and co-director of an educational consulting firm partnering with schools and organizations to imple-

ment research-based programs with a high impact on student achievement. He began his career as a middle school teacher and, after completing a master's degree in educational administration, served as a middle school principal for 13 years. Scott then worked with a national school reform organization based in New York City, first as an instructional coach and regional director, and then as National Director of Program Design and Professional Development. In this capacity, he led the design and delivery of professional development for a network of over 100 schools throughout the country, partnered with school boards and superintendents to open new schools, and co-developed tools to capture implementation and outcome data.

PATTY WOOD



Patty has served as a leadership consultant for seven years, focusing her work on basic board skills essential not only for veteran directors,

but also the newly appointed. A formal education in physics and engineering precede her career as a school director with service at the local, regional, state and national levels. She has served on WSSDA's Legislative Committee, Board Standards Task Force, Trust Lands Task Force and chaired the Federal Relations Network. She currently serves on the WSSDA board of directors and the board of Education Northwest.

Meet more of WSSDA's consultants in the next issue of *Direct*.

Countdown... 4,3,2,1...Liftoff!

Ground Control to WSSDA1: We show all systems green
WSSDA1 to Ground Control: All systems good at our end
Ground control to WSSDA1: Initiate launch sequence

Our rocket ship WSSDA has left the platform and begun its journey into the educational outreaches of space. On our trip we will discover unknown planets, meet new species, have encounters with rogue asteroids and overcome operational challenges.

Just another day in the life of a school director.

This last January the WSSDA Board of Directors embarked upon a mission to recruit and hire a new executive director to lead our organization. With the input of the membership and staff, the board developed a list of eight characteristics that directed our search. Somewhat shortened, they were:

1. A visionary, an innovative and entrepreneurial thinker, a positive problem solver, who is able to honor the WSSDA mission, vision and goals.
2. Demonstrated commitment to educational equity.
3. Strong written and verbal communication skills. Open and approachable.
4. Strong moral and ethical character.
5. Actively engages education stakeholders on behalf of public education.
6. Strong organizational skills marked by a collaborative management style to work with the board and staff.
7. Proven financial management skills, fiscal responsibility and an entrepreneurial approach.
8. Effective advocate who can build strong working relationships with key legislators.

After working through the written applications and narrowing our candidate list, the board and staff conducted a series of interviews to help select the individual that would best help shape our organization's future.

It is my honor, on behalf of the board, to welcome Timothy Garchow as our new executive director. He was our unanimous and enthusiastic choice.

Tim's impressive credentials are detailed in a separate article in this newsletter. Suffice it to say, he is a creative and energetic educator who knows the Washington's K-12 system inside and out. He is smart, driven and a strong champion of our public schools.

As we continue on this new journey, the future of WSSDA looks bright and in good hands. Sit back and hold on. This is going to be one amazing trip.

Join us for the NEW WSSDA 2016 LAW CONFERENCE

Space is limited.
Pre-registration
is required.



**REGISTER
TODAY**

Visit [www.wssda.org/events/
annualconference/registration](http://www.wssda.org/events/annualconference/registration)



2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE WSSDA's annual conference opens for registration

Is your team registered for Annual Conference yet? The conference will be held in Spokane this year from Thursday, November 17 through Saturday, November 19, with a new law conference and early bird workshops beginning at 11 a.m. on Wednesday.

Attend as a team to connect as a board and share in this valuable opportunity for school-director-focused learning around the theme of "Lead to Inspire." Full conference fees have remained unchanged since 2013. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks are included.

To register or learn more about other aspects of the conference, check out the conference website at <http://www.wssda.org/Events/AnnualConference/Registration>.



Nathan
Gibbs-
Bowling

KEYNOTES, CONTINUED FROM PG.1

Jeff Utecht was a teacher on track for his dream job as a principal. But, thanks to some twists and turns of life that involved computers, he ultimately found his true niche in integrating technology into education. Currently, he spends much of his time coaching adults on educational technology – inspiring them to think in new ways for the benefit of kids – and helping implement systems that work for everyone.

Nathan Gibbs-Bowling is the 2016 Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for the National Teacher of the Year. He teaches AP Human Geography and AP Government & Politics at Lincoln High School in his hometown of Tacoma. His passion for reaching all kids shines in his classroom, in his advocacy for teacher professional development and in his efforts towards placing the best teachers where they are most needed.

WSSDA names Garchow next ED

The Washington State School Directors' Association Board of Directors has named Rainier School District Superintendent Timothy Garchow as its next executive director. Garchow will begin his new job at the start of August, when current Executive Director Alan Burke, plans to retire. The 16-member WSSDA board unanimously chose Garchow after a series of interviews with three finalists. He will become the association's eighth executive director in its 60-year history as a state agency.

"We are thrilled that Tim has agreed to help lead our association," said WSSDA President Christopher Nation. "He is a creative and energetic educator who knows the Washington's K-12 system inside and out. He is smart, driven and a strong champion of our public schools. We



Chris Nation welcoming Tim Garchow to the June Board of Director's meeting.

are excited about what the future holds for WSSDA and the benefit to our 1,477 school board members."

Garchow has been superintendent of the Rainier School District in Thurston

County for the past six years. Before that he was the superintendent (2006-2010) and principal (2004-2006) of the Southside School District in Mason County. He began his career teaching special education, sixth grade and science in the Peninsula and Sumner school districts.

"I am truly honored to be selected for this position," said Garchow. "It is an opportunity to support the efforts of our state's school directors as they continue working together to make Washington's public education system a place where each child succeeds."

He sits on a number of boards and committees devoted to education issues, including among others, the ESD 113 Executive Advisory Committee, the New Market Skills Center Executive Committee and the State School Safety Advisory Committee, of which he is chair. Garchow holds a B.A. from Pacific Lutheran University and a M.E. from City University of Seattle. He also received his superintendent certification from Washington State University.

Final days for WSSDA officer applications

Let's make this year's officer elections exciting! Please consider applying for the position of vice president or president-elect.

WSSDA is a member-led association. The WSSDA officers and board of directors are all board members. That means you! If you can envision yourself filling one of the positions listed above, send in your application today!

The vice-president must be from the east side of the Cascades this year. The president-elect may be from anywhere in the state.

Applications are due by June 12. You may get your application or more election information at <http://www.wssda.org/AboutUs/Elections.aspx>.

Are you a Board of Distinction?

New BOD application is shorter and faster to complete

The Boards of Distinction awards program honors outstanding school boards that demonstrate understanding of their leadership roles, follow through on their responsibilities, and value educational excellence and equity for all students. It is based on the Washington School Board Standards.

The call for entries will open in July, with refinements to make the application process quicker and easier to complete. The application is accessed online and includes basic board information, a section of analysis on your board's choice of data, and several essays.

To make the application process accessible for districts of all sizes, we have reduced the number of essays needed. Focus will be on only three benchmarks of the Washington School Board Standards per year, rather than five. This change will increase the time it takes to cycle through all benchmarks from five to eight years.

Other revisions will help make the information more directly relevant to board governance practices encouraged in the standards.

Past applicants have told us the program has helped board members communicate with each other and with their communities more effectively.

WSSDA honors exemplary boards in three categories based on district size. We encourage all boards to consider applying for this honor. From these winners, one or more will be chosen as a Board of the Year.

Equity social media moments

TWEETS FROM THE EQUITY CONFERENCE

- Happy to participate in the #equityb2c in Seattle. Real change is happening here” - *Pedro Noguera*
- “Ensure the “work” we ask of students comes w/the support they need to do it ” - *Scott Larson*
- “Education is completely linked to how we think about the American Dream. ” - *Burlington-Edison Principal*
- “Teach kids the way they learn, not the way it is easier for adults to teach!”- *Amelia Van Name Larson*
- “When you know your WHY your WHAT has more PURPOSE.” -*T’wina Franklin*
- “Commitment to changing discipline policy & practice is working.” - *Susan Enfield*



2016 Legislative Session Summary

It's a wrap (for now)!

Although the first (and only) Special Legislative Session for 2016 ended quietly after 20 days on March 29th, now is the time to gear up for 2017! In anticipation of the monumental 2017 Session, here are some ways to get primed for summer relationship building:

Check out what was (or wasn't) accomplished during the 2016 Session by reviewing WSSDA's [2016 Session Summary](#) and final Bill Watch.

Reflect on your district's priorities in light of [WSSDA positions](#) and your local context.

Reach out to legislators (incumbent and prospective) – invite them to end-of-year events, summer schools and summer galas, August professional learning activities, or even just for coffee. Make sure they are in tune with your needs and feel comfortable coming to you when the heat is on in January!

WSSDA's "Strategies for the 2016 Interim" is a resource to help you with this outreach. This document can also be found on WSSDA's [Legislative Session Resources](#) web page.

What Can You Do With WSSDA BoardDocs?

As a WSSDA Member, You Can Do a Lot

WSSDA BoardDocs web applications eliminate paper and streamline the processes used to manage board packets, access information and conduct meetings. You'll save time, improve your board's effectiveness and receive a specially discounted price for being a WSSDA member. If your decisions affect the lives of others, call us. We'll help you do what you do best, even better.

It's their future. It's your choice.



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Senator Bruce Dammeier was elected to represent the 25th legislative district (Puyallup, South Hill, Summit, Midland, Fife) in the House of Representatives in 2008 and to the Senate in 2012. He served on the Puyallup School Board from 2001-2009. Senator Dammeier will not be running for re-election to the Senate this fall. Instead, he will be seeking a new office as the Pierce County Executive.

Bruce Dammeier

25th District

How did your experience as a school board member prepare you for serving in the state legislature, especially in shaping your views on education?

Serving on the Puyallup School Board gave me strong understanding of school funding and the impact of unfunded mandates – two things few legislators understand. However, I also learned that my experience at Puyallup was not necessarily reflective of the other 294 school districts. As a legislator working on K-12 policy and funding, I gained a deep understanding of the tremendous differences between the districts and their communities, and the challenge of developing policy that can fairly apply to all of them.

The 2017 session will be critical for districts as the Legislature takes action to fully finance K-12 education. With this in mind, what do you see as the most important issues for school directors to have a voice in?

Our students, staff, parents, and taxpayers need and deserve a fair and equitable program of education and funding of our schools. The over-reliance on local levies for nearly 1/3 of school funding, and the incredible inequity resulting from the dramatic differences in property values must be resolved. Resolving this fairly and equitably for all 295 school districts is incredibly complex. And the politics are even more difficult than the policy. School directors should insist it be resolved, but understand that no solution is perfect for all districts and compromises must be made.

What suggestions do you have for school directors to effectively build relationships with legislators (and candidates) this summer and fall?

Get to know your legislators over coffee outside of the legislative session. Invite legislators to a range of school and district events – school tours, drama productions, civics classes, and school board work sessions. Getting them into your schools will help them better understand the issues you are facing. Consider attending your local legislators’ campaign kick off or at least one event.



Senator Rosemary McAuliffe was elected to the Washington State Senate in 1992 to represent the 1st legislative district (Bothell, Brier, Mountlake Terrace). She served on the Northshore School Board for 14 years, from 1977 to 1991, and for two years was board president. She announced in April that she will not be running for re-election.

Rosemary McAuliffe

1st District

How did your experience as a school board member prepare you for serving in the state Legislature, especially in shaping your views on education?

Prior to the Legislature, I had a deep history of experience with local school board issues. My experience as a school board director gave me a perspective on student needs; teacher challenges; parent involvement and struggles; and the special education needs of children with disabilities. That experience also gave me great insight to the on-the-ground challenges school districts face with respect to budgeting and state revenue.

The 2017 session will be critical for school districts as the Legislature takes action to fully finance K-12 education. With this in mind, what do you see as the most important issues for school directors to have a voice in?

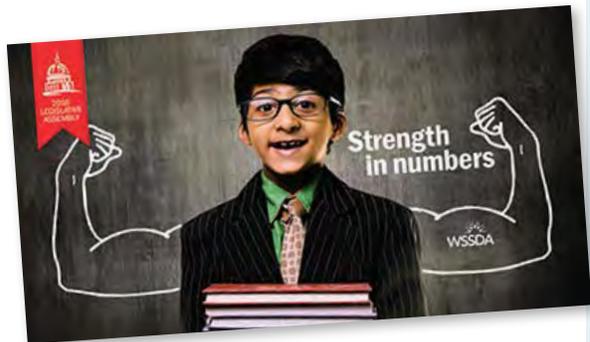
Levy reform and keeping districts whole. Underlying both of these issues is dealing with teacher compensation. It is concerning that districts now have to compete for teachers because of the inequity of pay and the uncertain stability in their employment. All teachers need equal and fair pay that is competitive with the outside market. This is critical to provide the stability necessary for our students.

What suggestions do you have for school directors to effectively build relationships with legislators (and candidates) this summer and fall?

School directors and district leaders should annually define district goals and concerns. These can be the foundation for local outreach and relationship building. What is more important than listening to the education community? In meetings with legislators, it is good to include parents, teachers, and students to share their perspectives. Ask candidates, “How would you build relationships with the education community?” We may all learn something.

It's time to register for the 2016 Legislative Assembly!

The 2017 Legislative Session is just around the corner. Registration opens **June 6th!**



Now is the time to get involved in setting the course for WSSDA's legislative positions and priorities! WSSDA's Annual Legislative Assembly is the event where every district's school board has a voice.

The legislative assembly cycle begins each April to form WSSDA's legislative priorities for the next year's legislative session. Thank you to those of you that submitted new or continuing position proposals for consideration this year! This summer WSSDA's legislative committee will review proposals and bring them forward for consideration by the assembly in September. Active participation from every district in this process strengthens WSSDA's voice and message. All school directors are encouraged to attend the legislative assembly, regardless of whether their board submitted a proposal. At the assembly, every district is eligible to vote on every issue.

Mark your calendars to join us on September 23rd and 24th in Spokane for the 2016 WSSDA Legislative Assembly! Here's how to get involved:

- Review WSSDA's current positions - Identify areas that your district cares about. What would you like to support more of?
- Participate in the assembly - Sept. 23-24 in Spokane!
- Work with your board and superintendent prior to attending so you are equipped with the knowledge you need to strongly advocate for the things your district cares about!
- Register and reserve lodging starting June 6th!

For more about the assembly process and WSSDA positions, visit WSSDA's legislative assembly page @ wssda.org/events. There you will find registration information and resources including a short informational webinar as a refresher for seasoned members and/or to help new board members get up to speed with this important WSSDA process.

2. Carefully choose members of your bargaining team, in part based on membership of the union bargaining team. Personalities and relationships matter in negotiations. Be strategic in thinking about who will bargain effectively for the district, while being aware of the importance of sustaining good relationships during and after bargaining.

3. Be aware of the critical items that are being bargained and set goals for your bargaining team - goals in the best interests of the children, the schools and the public that the board serves. Get a detailed list from your superintendent or bargaining team. If the district has to give something up, what does it want in return? Discuss what the board's goals and parameters are and ensure the bargaining team understands them. This includes considering future encumbrances. Future boards and your community will have to live with the agreements for many years to come.

4. Make sure that bargaining ground rules are set and understood before substantive bargaining takes place.

Ask your superintendent and/or bargaining team to go over the strategy to ensure everyone is in agreement. The time to discover differing opinions is now, not once bargaining has begun.

5. Look for signs that negotiations may be challenging. Districts that have new or inexperienced local association presidents may be more prone to non-local involvement. State-level attention is also paid to districts that offer fewer TRI days or lower salaries than surrounding districts. The negotiation process may be longer and more difficult if your local association's bargaining team is following the lead of professional negotiators who don't live in your community.

6. Stay cohesive and avoid a board split. It is vital that your board presents a unified stand in public. If there are concerns or differences of opinions, keep them behind closed doors and work them out together. Keep communication open between board members to ensure teamwork and a shared understanding of your goals.

7. Support your superintendent, district bargaining team and fellow board members, and seek support from them too. Difficult bargaining and being involved in a strike are very stressful and often challenge your values of cooperation with and appreciation for teachers. Have board members check in with each other frequently to provide support and encouragement.

Communication is Key

Planning for good communication during negotiations is critical to your success. Here are some tips to ensure your communication strategy covers all bases:

Pick a spokesperson, ideally a communications professional, and have all correspondence go through him or her. Agree on how board members will respond to questions, emails, personal contact and difficult. Write and use agreed-upon talking points.

Revisit and adjust your communication strategy frequently. This is especially important as the tone changes or the possibility of a strike increases. Ensure that your board and negotiating team have strategies to address issues if the situation escalates.

Develop an FAQ document and keep it updated to help the public understand the process and bargaining points.

Stay informed. Make sure that board members receive regular progress updates and have the opportunity to talk through options. Uncertainty about any aspect of negotiations or the items being bargained can create doubt and second-guessing. You can have meetings for the purpose of discussing negotiations any time you need them to ensure everyone understands the issues and the process is critical to your success.

WSSDA has many resources to assist you with bargaining and communicating effectively. Contact Leadership Development Services for more information

Let's Get Physical: Hands-on Science

Andy Slater knows what it takes to be a scientist. The Mount Rainier teacher examined drug impurities in the biotech and pharmaceutical industry for over a decade before becoming an educator.

"[As a scientist] you are presented with a problem and you need to figure it out. What we challenge students to do every day is to really copy how these careers play out in the real world," said Slater.

The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were designed to better prepare students for college and careers in the STEM industry.

"It's about testing ideas, putting your ideas out on paper, brainstorming with a group, and sharing your thinking. Modeling and explaining are the two big themes this year," said Slater.

Today in Slater's class, students are trying to answer why is oil so hard to clean up? They begin by brainstorming as a class and in small groups. Then, they break off for a lab where they look at how different liquids interact when dropped on a penny.

Student Janeth Apodaca got 29 drops of oil on a penny before the liquid dome broke.

"I like science because you're not just reading the answer. I am the one who gets to figure out the answer and how something works," said student Janeth Apodaca.

The standards expect students to ask and answer more questions through lab work.



“‘Don't worry about being right or wrong,' Slater tells students. 'Just do your best thinking.'”

"I like being able to plan to the standards. There is more than one way to teach the progression of the standards, and the way you teach each standard, so you can tailor it to your teaching style," said Slater.

Earlier this year, Slater's students used springs to better understand waves. In another unit, students learned about energy by building moving models. An engineering unit is coming later this spring.

After they finish the penny experiment, Slater asks students to record what they saw and start looking for explanations — detailing the different liquid dome sizes, number of drops, and any other observations of the liquids.

"Don't worry about being right or wrong," Slater tells students. "Just do your best thinking."

Once students finish collecting data, they will create a hypothesis and back it up with evidence—something scientists do every day.

Above: Teacher Andy Slater reviews student's lab results during class.



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.

ART, CONTINUED FROM PG.1



Above: Alan Burke with artist Emily Burns at the OSPI awards reception. Center: Arts Program Supervisor Anne Banks with James Andrews, an art teacher at Kingston HS, and retired visual arts teacher Carl Clausen. Right: Bellevue junior Emily Burns accepting her award with WSSDA sponsor Alan Burke, Superintendent Randy Dorn and art teacher Doris Cooke by her side.

A LOOK BACK AT 2015

WSSDA's top accomplishments



No More No Child Left Behind

The long-awaited reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was completed in mid-December when President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act. It marked the culmination of an eight-year campaign by WSSDA, NSBA and almost every educational policy organization to update and improve the law that directs the federal role in K-12 education. New regulations will demand that states set up individual accountability measures and assure that low performing schools are assisted. However, the new procedures are far less prescriptive than what states have endured under the current version of ESEA. The effort benefited from the many WSSDA members active in the Federal Relations Network who have long advocated for reauthorization. The change also reflected the wishes of 170 boards in Washington state that passed resolutions calling for changes.

Dues unchanged for 5th straight year

Careful budgeting allows board to keep dues unchanged for 5th straight year
Careful budgeting in 2015 allowed WSSDA to keep its dues flat for the fifth straight year. The conservative spending also allowed the association to continue to make investments in its policy services

and reduce long-term debt. Revenue of about \$3.3 million covered expenses of \$2.9 million. Tight control of spending allowed the board in January 2016 to set aside an additional \$200,000 in a dedicated fund to help pay costs at the aging WSSDA headquarters and give the association room to continue to keep dues steady. During the year, mortgage debt dropped by \$80,000.

Annual Conference draws through to Bellevue

Attendance at WSSDA's annual conference was the highest in more than 10 years. Over 1,000 came to Bellevue. This included a pre-conference record of 322 registrants. The strong pre-conference program, sponsorships and increased focus on education law-related sessions all contributed to the success. Conference ratings were strong for a fifth year running, with 93 percent of participants rating the event as good or excellent. Sessions on finance and collective bargaining, balanced governance, community engagement and the new director boot camp each scored higher than 95 percent. On the flip side, participants let organizers know they want all keynoters to cover subjects relevant to the work of school directors and lower survey participation rates are likely lead to some changes in how the evaluations are conducted.

School Boards of the Year

The University Place, West Valley (Spokane) and Issaquah School Boards were named the 2015 school Boards of the Year. The three boards were chosen from a field of 15. Six other school boards were earlier named Boards of Distinction. They come from districts in Auburn, Ferndale, Kent, Puyallup, Riverview and South Kitsap. The West Valley (Spokane), Auburn, Kent and Puyallup boards also earned special awards for attaining Board of Distinction honors five times. The school boards who are recognized as a Board of Distinction each hold high expectations for academic achievement, college and

career readiness, and productive citizenry. But what really set these boards and school districts apart was their unified approach to vision, resource alignment and monitoring of progress.

Equity activities take center stage

School directors ramped up attention to equity issues in K-12 education. WSSDA partnered with the Puget Sound Educational Service District for an initial session in April. That event attracted more than 200 directors and other education professionals. A follow-up convening in November brought even more participants. An equity and access caucus created in 2014, met three times. Finally, the November annual conference featured an equity strand to help directors explore equity issues and educational barriers. Meanwhile, leaders joined with AWSP and WASA to organize a statewide equity conference for May 2016, as well as a third PSESD/WSSDA convening in the spring.

A solid year for education legislation

It took a record number of days to finish, but the 2015 Legislature did accomplish some pretty big things for education. A hefty investment in early childhood education will help more of our littlest learners prepare for kindergarten and a substantial tuition reduction will make higher education accessible for more high school graduates. Still, the legislature failed to cure the Supreme Court's contempt order in the McCleary case because it did not agree to a plan to fully fund basic education without benefit of local taxes. The court followed up that inaction by imposing a \$100,000 per day fine on the legislature. Lawmakers made great strides in funding for all-day kindergarten, K-3 class size reduction, and operating costs, but were unable to clear the last and highest hurdle – employee compensation.

Policy & Legal Services expand reach

The continued popularity and value of WSSDA's two flagship policy services,

Policy & Legal News and *Model Policy Online* resulted in 272 out of 295 school districts subscribing to one or both services and helped drive up web traffic. The busy year also saw six new policies, five new procedures, revisions to 70 current policies and procedures and a series review of the personnel policies. Committee work was again on time and on budget. The 2015 Delegate Assembly ran smoothly and efficiently. WSSDA contracted with 14 school districts for policy manual review services and contracted with school law firms in Seattle and Spokane to build a policy consulting cadre.

Strong member engagement in 2015 Legislative Assembly

In September, 168 school leaders representing 82 districts attended WSSDA's annual Legislative Assembly. The assembly approved 39 new positions, added nine Standing Legislative Positions, amended six, and eliminated seven. Then, the districts in attendance voted for their top 10 legislative priorities. A "short list" of top priorities for the 2016 Legislative Session was adopted by the Legislative Committee and WSSDA Board of Directors.

WSSDA Web improved to work better on smartphones and tablets

WSSDA upgraded its website in November to be friendlier to those using their smartphones and tablets. The board of directors asked for the change after reviewing data showing that the proportion of those users was increasing. With that change came some slight adjustments to the look and feel of the site and the development of a prototype WSSDA App, set to launch in 2016. Overall, the WSSDA website is visited about 1,000 times each day, with documents downloaded about 2,000 times per week. The most popular pages in 2015 were eClippings, policy resources, annual conference and superintendent searches. In addition to those who view eClippings and Legislative Updates on line, the two publications have more than 3,200 subscribers.

Our Kids, Our Future continues growth in second year

The *Our Kids, Our Future* website showed continued growth in its second year with

nearly 16,500 visits from people who viewed the stories from local schools more than 35,500 times. Districts from across the state - large and small - provided nearly 900 articles and videos detailing successful classrooms, programs and students. Top stories during the year ranged from a video debunking myths about public education to Blaine's "cycle of inquiry" intended to improve teaching practices. Most-viewed pieces included Wenatchee's GLAD program, Puyallup's enrichment for homeschoolers and the BEATS program in Bellingham.

Regional Meetings draw strong crowds, good reviews

Fall and Spring Regional Meetings draw strong participation in 2015. Nearly 350 attended the fall sessions and about 325 for the spring events. During the spring, nearly 40 percent of districts were represented, with meetings at Wapato (48%), Walla Walla (41%) and Quincy (41%) leading the

way in Director Area participation. In terms of total attendees, the largest crowds came to Ridgefield, 50; Selah, 49; Edmonds, 47; Colville, 45; and Wapato, 43. The evaluations for most meetings were good to excellent. The most consistent message was that members like hearing from legislators, OSPI on legislative updates and WSSDA's executive director. They also consistently asked for more networking opportunities.

WSSDA sets new lineup of consultants

The association reset its team of consultants in 2015, starting with a request for qualifications to establish its lineup for 2015-16. Eleven experienced and highly qualified consultants were selected with skill sets that include change management, adult learning, strategic planning, governance, superintendent evaluation and broad understanding of contemporary issues in public education.

See the entire annual report [online](http://wssda.org/aboutus/budgetandfinance) at wssda.org/aboutus/budgetandfinance.

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221 College Street N.E.
Olympia, WA 98516-5313

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Chris Nation, President	425.322.6630
Joanne Greer, President-Elect	509.991.5634
Marnie Maraldo, Vice President	428.220.3389
Chris Nieuwenhuis, Immediate Past President	509.290.1824
Alan Burke, Ed.D., Executive Director	360.252.3001
Michael Wilson, Communications Director	360.252.3013

WSSDA DIRECTORY

General Information	360.493.9231
Association Services	360.252.3002
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Communications	360.252.3013
Policy and Legal Services	360.252.3018
Toll Free (In-State)	800.562.8927
E-Mail	mail@wssda.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

- 11-14** NSBA Federal Advocacy Institute, Washington, D.C.
- 17-18** Legislative Committee Meeting, Ramada Hotel

July

- 15-16** Legislative Committee Meeting, Ramada Hotel
- 22-24** Board of Directors Meeting, Tulalip Resort Casino
- 31-8/4** NSBA Executive Directors Summer Institute, Lake Tahoe, CA

