



Photo by Marla Tolliver

The 2011 Neah Bay High School football team celebrates its first state championship in any sport in the history of the school.

## Neah Bay High School: A mindset for success

Neah Bay is located on the Makah Native American Reservation which includes the furthest northwest point in the continental United States. Some may call it the end of the world. Neah Bay High School principal, Dr. Ann Renker, likes to call it the beginning.

In 2005, just 4.3 percent of tenth graders at the high school passed the state math test and none passed the state science test. Tenth grade test scores are now above the state average in reading, writing, math and

science, and the school has received numerous awards, championships, and accolades.

It was in 2008, after three years of inconsistent progress in students' mathematical skills, that Renker read the article, *The Secret to Raising Smart Kids*. She realized she had found the tool to increase student motivation and performance. The article focuses on the concept that hard work — not

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## Registration opens for WSSDA's Annual Conference

Conference and hotel registration opens May 16 for the 2012 WSSDA Annual Conference. Join your fellow board members and superintendents November 14-17 for WSSDA's premier learning and networking opportunity at the Spokane Convention Center and Double Tree Hotel.

Program development is underway for another set of relevant, highly informative sessions. Partnering for success, along with online and blended learning, are two featured subjects. The program also includes sessions that will focus on advocacy, STEM, governance, leadership, and educating the whole child.

Sessions will highlight the innovations and replicable practices with

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**Left:** Students in the Catalyst Corps/Mentor Buddy program steer a research vessel during a field trip in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The field trip was made possible by an award from the Washington STEM program. **Right:** Mentor/buddy pairs partner for tutoring sessions three times a week.

natural intelligence — is the key to success in school and in life. Staff and students soon embraced this growth mindset philosophy with measurably improved results.

As students at the high school were thriving, it became apparent that the middle school students were not having the same success. The growth mindset philosophy was appropriate for the older students, but was not working for the middle school age group. They would need a more age-appropriate program to help them engage.

With the help of a \$5,700 Entrepreneur Award grant from Washington STEM, a statewide non-profit dedicated to advancing schools through focus on science, technology, engineering and math education, Renker introduced the Catalyst Corps/Math Buddy mentoring program in 2011. The program partners a Neah Bay High School student who has been highly successful in math and science with a Markishtum Middle School student who hasn't quite achieved the same success.

Each mentor meets with his or her "buddy" for tutoring sessions three times a week for an hour and a half. The pairs also take several high-profile science and math-related field trips together. One particular field trip had them on a

research vessel in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The students spent time collecting, sampling and examining plankton, exploring habitats and ecosystems, and even steering the ship.

There are 20 mentor/buddy partnerships this school year plus a waiting list of middle school students. "The mentors are hip, technologically advanced, goal-oriented, and fun. They are athletes, leaders, volunteers. They are the ambassadors of our school," Renker said.

Middle school students who went into the program kicking and screaming are now saying, "It's cool to be smart." Selected for the program by parent and principal intervention, they are partnered with highly accomplished students, eight of whom are members of the championship football team. "Their status has been elevated," Renker explains. "They are pumped up. These were the kids who were out the door as soon as the bell rang. Now they are arranging mentoring sessions before school and participating in after school activities."

This year, the Catalyst Corps students entered the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest, a national competition that attracts more than 1,500 teachers and students for a chance to win \$100,000. Neah Bay was one of 12 finalists selected

and was the only Washington school and one of two schools on the West Coast to earn that distinction. They were awarded \$70,000 in technology and software. (See story on page 3)

The students aren't just seeing success in the classroom. Last year, the football team won the school's first state championship in any sport. At the game, a large crowd including hundreds of Makah Tribe members cheered them on. Shirley Johnson, Cape Flattery School Board Member, described how Neah Bay senior citizens filled up two vans to

### NEAH BAY HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS/ CHAMPIONSHIPS

#### 2011

- School of Distinction Award
- Washington STEM Entrepreneur Award
- State Football Champions: Class 1B

#### 2012

- Finalist, Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest
- Third place: State Boys Basketball Championship, Class 1B
- Fourth place: State Girls Basketball Championship, Class 1B

make the nearly four-hour trip to the Tacoma Dome. “Many of them are there to support their grandchildren, but most of them are there just because they truly love to watch them play.” Many others volunteered to take students who otherwise wouldn’t have a ride.

Although the championship game was quite far from home, Makah traditions were not lacking. In lieu of traditional cheers, tribal members sang one of their war songs to pump up the team. “We were given special permission to play the tribal drums, but they had to stay in the band section.” Johnson said.

Titus Pascua, a senior last year, was quoted in *The Seattle Times* as saying, “This isn’t just for our team, this isn’t just for the seniors, it’s for our whole community, and all Native Americans.” Makah Tribe members presented each team member with a championship ring engraved with their name, date and final score of the game.

Parent involvement is at an all-time high. With the establishment of a booster club earlier this year, Johnson said parents would like to be able raise enough money to establish a scholarship fund.

In the classroom, parents are keeping a close eye on their children’s grades. “We used to have parents calling us, asking how they could help change their child’s F to a D,” Renker said. “Now, we have parents saying, ‘My child has a B. What can I do to help them achieve a higher grade?’”

Students are realizing that it feels good to work hard and it’s the right thing to do. In fact, for the second year in a row, one hundred percent of the graduating senior class will attend college in the fall. Pausing to steady her quivering voice, Renker describes the drive and determination of the current graduating class.

“I remember when only a handful of students went off to college,” Johnson said of her time just starting as a school board member 25 years ago.

In this small, rural school of 170 students, Renker and her staff are preparing students for the beginning of the rest of their lives.



Tatoosh Island is the largest of a small group of islands just offshore of Cape Flattery. Access to the island requires written permission of the Makah Tribe.

## Neah Bay High School awarded \$70,000

Students from Neah Bay were awarded \$70,000 in technology and software for their school after being chosen as one of 12 finalists in the Samsung sponsored contest, Solve for Tomorrow.

The contest required applicants to write a proposal and then make a documentary about a local environmental project focusing on math and science.

For Neah Bay’s entry, students from the Catalyst Corps proposed documenting a portion of the restoration of Tatoosh Island, a sacred Makah island off Cape Flattery. The island is heavily polluted by diesel fuel from years of government use of the island.

For thousands of years, Tatoosh Island was inhabited seasonally by Makah fishing camps. When the island was later used by the United States Coast Guard, Weather Bureau, and Navy, the soil became contaminated from generators supplying power to the island.

The clean-up process uses a specific type of mushroom to leach the diesel fuel from the soil.

While the students did not participate in the actual clean-up, they conducted various experiments in the classroom using the same fungi.

The two-minute video can be seen at [www.samsung.com/solvefortomorrow](http://www.samsung.com/solvefortomorrow).



The Cape Flattery lighthouse, built in 1854 and automated in 1977, is owned by the US Coast Guard.

# 2012 NSBA Annual Conference: A better tomorrow starts today



A better tomorrow starts today. This was the theme for the 2012 NSBA Annual Conference. The entire conference was very good, but

I want to share one event that stood out to me.

In her speech, outgoing NSBA President Mary Broderick laid out the following challenge to school boards to reach the goal of student success for all.

“Board members, working as a team with our superintendents, can move mountains,” Broderick declared. “If we are not teams, we flounder. When we wallow in our disagreements, circle the wagons and shoot inward, our children suffer. So let’s get beyond what divides us and come together around a vision that unites us. Let’s look for models of the ideal. That will bring out the passions of our staffs, the enthusiasm of our students, and the confidence of our communities.

Mary also shared parts of her open letter to President Obama, in which she shared a vision for public education. She called upon the President, and really, all of us, to:

- Inspire excellence, recognizing that our most important resource is our children’s minds;
- Cultivate a spirit of innovation and

inspiration;

- Use our vast technological know-how to inspire learners;
- Recognize that children born with the least must have rich learning environments to make the greatest progress in closing achievement gaps;
- Invest in teacher training and professional development embedded in the work;

Schools won’t become great through threat or intimidation, she emphasized. They need to be safe places to take risks. They need to be places where staff and students feel valued for their ideas and talents, and are empowered to fail so they can grow.

The last point I quote in its entirety.

“Though we need some testing to gauge learning, we are at the point of damaging teaching and hurting children. We will never be first in the world on standardized tests, nor is that something to which we should aspire. We are not a compliant people, and that is our strength.”

Challenges and the vision to overcome them are the essence of “hero work.” I know we are leaders capable of both meeting the challenges we face in our local districts and articulating a powerful, shared vision for our schools. Go for it!

Broderick’s speech, along with her letter to President Obama are available on the [WSSDA website](#).

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MARY FERTAKIS, WSSDA President

## Nomination deadlines approaching quickly

School directors have until May 22 to nominate another person for this year’s officer elections and until June 8 to apply as a candidate themselves. Please give serious consideration to who you would like to lead your association, and ensure that person’s name is submitted.

WSSDA will hold elections for president-elect and vice president electronically this year. Members voted in this new change to enable all Washington school directors to have a voice in selecting leadership.

Elections for open positions on the association’s board of directors and committees will continue to take place during caucus sessions at the WSSDA Annual Conference in November.

The president-elect is a member from either side of the state. He or she will become WSSDA President for 2014. The vice president position alternates between directors from the east and west sides of the Cascades. This year it is open to a member from the east side.

Once candidates are in, the WSSDA Nominating Committee will interview candidates and select the slate of candidates for the ballots. Those who disagree with the proposed slate of candidates will have a two-week opportunity to nominate other candidates. This replaces the “nominations from the floor” process

Candidates will have the opportunity in August and September to campaign for the posts. They will have the opportunity to make statements, both written and in video. These statements will be posted to the Web.

Electronic balloting will start August 27 and close on September 28. If necessary, run-off elections will occur in early-to-mid October. The new officers will be announced at the WSSDA Annual Conference in November.

[Visit our website](#) for nomination forms and applications.

## President’s shout-outs

- The Clover Park School District received an Honorable Mention in the American School Board Journal Magna Awards this year for their community partnerships;
- The Federal Way district led a session on their Academic Acceleration for All program at the NSBA Annual Conference;
- WSSDA staff members Phil Gore, Colleen Miller and Marie Sullivan, were presenters at the NSBA Annual Conference.

# Turning around Washington's lowest performing schools



A new study on low performing schools in the state was published in March.

The interview-based research was done by the Center on Reinventing Public Education, which is affiliated with the University of Washington. It focused on nine of 17 Washington schools in the federal School Improvement Grant program to see what could

be learned one year after implementation.

Critics of the study point out that it is impossible to fully evaluate the findings since the schools were never identified and it is unclear what grade level of schools were included. In addition, they ask, how much can you learn from a turnaround effort with only five months of data?

This study was qualitative, not quantitative. It relied on individual interviews of teachers and administrators at the school, district and state level. It can't claim to represent the schools that weren't evaluated and one would be hard pressed to use the information to compare Washington to other states.

Still, the study does report the views of individuals, identifies issues and makes one recommendation that might help inform districts embarking on changes in their schools to help all students be more successful.

Researchers noted that time and time again, those interviewed said the grant program was rushed toward implementation. Schools, districts and the state had scant months to come up with an approach meant to dramatically change the way a school operates and performs.

Communication, negotiation, staffing changes and study were often tossed aside because there just wasn't time.

Researchers were dismayed that so many schools seemed to choose an approach the researchers thought made the smallest footprint on their school environment. In addition, once the grants were made, their analysis said the focus was more on compliance with federal rules than trying innovative approaches. They were "conservative."

Well that doesn't seem like a big surprise given the amount of time they had to come up with a proposal and navigate their local politics, as well as be realistic about what could be done in their district.

The lesson: No one should embark on any big change like this without thinking it through. The system is just too complicated and has too many players.

There are more lessons to be learned in the SIG school experiences, and we hope that additional research will be done on all these schools after they've had some time to do some course corrections and implement new strategies.

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DR. JONELLE ADAMS, WSSDA Executive Director

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## Attendance, satisfaction up during spring regional meetings

WSSDA's Spring Regional Meeting showed strong gains in attendance in 2012. The 424 people who participated represented a 35 percent increase over the total of 315 in spring of 2011.

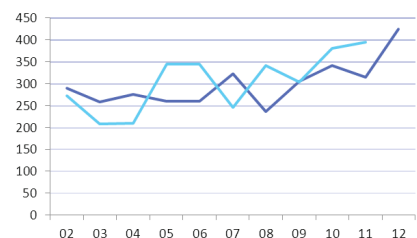
In general, attendance has been on an upward trend for both the spring and the fall meetings, and this spring's total was the highest in at least 10 years.

The meetings not only attracted more people, they were also rated higher by those who attended. The sessions scored an average 8.6 on a 1-10 scale. By comparison, the spring 2011 sessions averaged 8.4 and the fall sessions that year averaged 7.5. This spring's rating

was the highest in a decade.

In their evaluations, attendees repeatedly praised the WSSDA legislative updates and presentations by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and others. At the same time, they wanted more information on big issues, particularly the Teacher Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP), and more time for organized networking with school director peers.

"It is always tough to pack everything into the limited time, but networking is clearly a high priority of this group," said Executive Director Jonelle Adams. "We'll be looking for some creative



Attendance rose significantly at WSSDA's Spring Regional Meeting in 2012.

changes for the fall."

This year's session started March 1 and ended April 11. The meetings were held in Edmonds, Richland, Cheney, Columbia (Hunters), Union Gap, Tumwater, University Place, Moses Lake, Port Angeles, Tukwila and Battleground.

## Collective bargaining vs. open public meetings



It is that time of year when many districts are engaging in collective bargaining. I can tell because a number of districts have called me with essentially the same question. How can we comply with the

Open Public Meeting Act, but still hold private strategy discussions necessary to protect the district's provision? Luckily, in this area the law provides clear guidance.

Districts often tell me they plan to go into executive session to discuss these strategy matters. My response: Don't do it! The only reasons for which a district can meet in private during an executive session are set forth in RCW 42.30.110. Reading through that list you will see that there is no mention of collective bargaining. Don't panic!

In RCW 42.23.140 (4), the law provides that the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act do not apply in the following situations:

1. Actual collective bargaining sessions with employee organizations and
2. The portion of a meeting during which the school board is planning or adopting collective bargaining strategies or reviewing proposals.

The district thus can hold these discussions in private.

Rather than stating the board is going into executive action, the board chair should announce that, as allowed by RCW 42.23.140, the board will close the meeting to the public while it discusses collective bargaining strategies or review proposals, whichever the case may be. This allows the board to hold its private discussion while accurately telling the public the legal basis for the closure.

For guidance on this topic, refer to **WSSDA Model Policy 1410, Executive or Closed Session**.

STACIA HOLLAR, *Director of Policy and Legal Services*

## Sign up for June TPEP Workshops

Sign up now to attend one of three June workshops designed to help school directors understand the new teacher-principal evaluation components.

"All districts must start implementing the new law in the 2013-14 school year," said Dr. Jonelle Adams, WSSDA's executive director and member of the TPEP Steering Committee. "The law will have some wide ranging effects on school operations, including budgets, data collection and administration."

The workshops are scheduled for June 9 in Yakima, June 14 in Renton and June 19 in Aberdeen. WSSDA is holding the workshops in partnership with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The law establishes eight evaluation criteria and requires a four-level rating system. Many districts are already deciding which of three instructional frameworks to use. The evaluation measures will be summed for one comprehensive rating. All classrooms teachers will need to have the full evaluation at least once every four years.

### WORKSHOP: PREPARING YOUR BOARD FOR TPEP

- June 9: Yakima
- June 14: Renton
- June 19: Aberdeen

The instructional framework provides a common language for the district and aligns with teacher or principal criteria, according to Michaela Miller, TPEP project manager for OSPI. Having a common language is important for both those who are evaluated and those doing the evaluation. It will promote consistency and accuracy.

"There's a lot of work to get done pretty quickly and we are encouraging districts to begin work now," said Miller. "These workshops are a great place to start."

School directors can [sign up for the workshops online](#). Seating is limited, so directors are encouraged to register as soon as possible.

## New Director News not just for new directors

The second issue of *New Director News* is now online and available to all elected school board members in the state.

"We designed this new publication to help new school directors with their board responsibilities," said Phil Gore, Director of Leadership and Development Services. "However, it also includes short articles that

are relevant to those who have been serving for years."

The May issue, for example, includes articles on balancing the roles of board member and parent, as well as understanding the state's open meeting law.

Look for current and past issues of the [online-only publication](#) on our website.

proven success you can use to lead the change for kids.

Your school district flourishes when you lead with vision, innovation, information and the courage to make the change needed to face the future. This conference will help you focus those resources for success.

Register at [wssda.org/conference](http://wssda.org/conference). You save money by registering early.

## New leadership workshops scheduled

WSSDA has two new workshops for all school directors in Washington State.

In these workshops you will explore topics of boardmanship, leadership and governance through learning and in-depth discussions. You may choose to attend either or both.

**July 14: *Highly Capable Board/Superintendent Teams:*** Smooth and effective school district governance is not automatic. You must focus on positive working relationships and on the work at hand. Develop a plan and processes to improve the work of your district board. Learn how to move the work of the board forward despite criticism or opposition. Consider models of success and create action steps to improve your team.

**September 15: *Policy Governance:*** Many Washington school districts have adopted this trademark governance model for their districts. Others practice a form of modified policy governance. Discover how your district could benefit by adopting part or all of this model and develop a plan to improve the governance in your district.

Workshops are scheduled to take place from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the WSSDA conference center,\* located at 221 College Street NE, Olympia, Washington 98516.

[Register for these workshops online.](#) Prices are discounted for groups of three or more.

If you are unable to register online, please call WSSDA at 360.493.9231 for assistance.

\*Let us know if you are interested in hosting a workshop in another location.

## Attend WSSDA's 2012 Legislative Assembly

Help set WSSDA's legislative agenda by attending the 2012 Legislative Assembly at the Seattle Marriott in SeaTac September 20–22.

School directors will hear about the most current legislative topics on Friday at the pre-Assembly, followed by a reception that will allow them to network with colleagues on issues of interest.

On Saturday, join boards from around the state to vote and rank proposals for

the 2013 legislative platform.

The Legislative Committee is considering a reprise of two successful ventures from last year. It may incorporate them into the 2012 Legislative Assembly as optional events.

Look for more information about a Legislative Boot Camp on Thursday and a tour of innovative schools in the area on Friday morning. This will be included in registration materials – coming soon!

## WSSDA financial and performance data reviewed by board

Revenue was up and expenses down for WSSDA in 2011, according to WSSDA data provided to the association's board in April. Financial information was one of many areas covered during a presentation of the data dashboard.

The improved financial picture, Executive Director Jonelle Adams said, has allowed the association to hold dues flat in 2012, after a marginal increase the year before.

The dashboard provides performance and financial information on a wide variety of WSSDA services and products. This includes workshops, subscriber publications such as *Policy News* and *Legislative Digest*, the annual conference, and many other areas.

For example, data shows:

- The 2011 annual conference had one of the highest satisfaction ratings ever.
- There has been an increase in demand from districts for customized services.
- The number of subscribers to eClippings, the daily round up of education news articles, has continued to grow.
- Website traffic increased significantly during the year.

All of the data dashboard information is available as a [PowerPoint presentation](#) at [www.wssda.org](http://www.wssda.org) under the *Resources* tab. Navigate to *Resources by Topic* and then *WSSDA Data Dashboard*.

## Annual Conference student involvement

Please help us showcase the artistic talents of your students this November's WSSDA Annual Conference. The audience will include school directors and superintendents from all over Washington state.

There are two ways to participate:

- We are seeking student entertainers from the east side of the state

to perform at annual conference general sessions.

- School groups may also choose to submit non-returnable table centerpieces for general session tables (about 95 of them).

Please send your recommendations or inquiries to [C.Lauderdale@wssda.org](mailto:C.Lauderdale@wssda.org).



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

WSSDA WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

- Preparing your board for TPEP June 9
Preparing your board for TPEP June 14
WSSDA Legislative Committee June 15
WSSDA Legislative Committee June 16
Preparing your board for TPEP June 19
WASA Summer Conference June 24
Annual Conference November 14
Elections: Nominations Deadline May 22

- ENHANCING LEADERSHIP SERIES
Olympia
July 14: Highly Capable Board/Superintendent Teams
September 15: Policy Governance
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
SeaTac: September 21 – 22
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Spokane: November 14 – 17