



# Direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

January 2010

## Lawmakers set to begin tough session

### Key K-12 programs on the block as legislators search for ways to cover \$2.6 billion budget gap

As this issue of WSSDA Direct arrives in your mailbox, state legislators are getting underway with what is shaping up to be another challenging session.

It was just eight months ago that the Legislature closed a \$9 billion hole in the state's \$31 billion general fund budget, the worst shortfall in state history. Lawmakers bridged the gap with a combination of federal stimulus funds and spending cuts, including reductions of \$1.5 billion for K-12 education.

Legislators now return to the state capital faced with a budget that is once again out of balance, this time to the tune of \$2.6 billion. While the shortfall is smaller than last year, it is complicated by the fact that any further reductions will have to come from a smaller portion of the budget because a majority of the state spending is considered "protected" by constitutional or federal requirements.

The severity of the state's fiscal situation was underlined last month as Gov. Chris Gregoire complied with her legal obligation to submit a budget proposal that relies on existing state income to close the \$2.6 billion gap. The proposal, which Gregoire immediately disowned, calls for broad reductions in all areas of government, including about \$400 million in K-12 education. The cuts would include:

- Levy equalization funding for property-poor school districts (\$143 million)
- K-4 class size reductions (\$110 million)
- The remainder of I-728 student achievement funds (\$78 million)

### WSSDA board endorses Iseminger Plan



WSSDA President Kevin Laverty (right) makes a point during the Dec. 18 board meeting. Looking on is Director Area 6 board member Roy Parsons (Kelso)

In a special meeting held last month, the WSSDA Board of Directors unanimously endorsed a comprehensive K-12 education finance plan developed by Lake Stevens School Director David Iseminger. See the full story on Page 3.

- State funding for all-day kindergarten (\$33 million)
- The last state-funded Learning Improvement Day (\$15 million)
- Gifted/highly capable program funding (\$7 million).

"This is not a budget I can live with, nor is it one I believe Washingtonians can live with," said Gregoire, who promised to submit a second budget that will be a combination of budget reductions and new revenue. At the same

*(continued on following page)*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Iseminger Education Funding Plan

School Board Recognition Month

Spring Regional Meetings

# Legislators need to hear from you now!

Kevin Laverty, WSSDA President



Fellow School Directors,

The unveiling of an all-cuts state budget plan by Gov. Gregoire last month dramatically illustrated both the severity of our state's financial condition and the potential for harm to our K-12 education system.

In complying with her legal obligation to propose a no-new-taxes budget, the governor underlined the kinds of K-12 cuts that will be on the table in the next two months: *wiping out levy equalization, eliminating funding for K-4 class size reductions, and cutting what's left of I-728 student achievement funds.* Also in danger are state funds for all-day kindergarten, early childhood education, and the last remaining Learning Improvement Day.

The governor made it clear she does not support this version of the budget. We wholeheartedly agree. It would add insult to injury for our already underfunded public school system.

The governor promised to deliver a second budget to the Legislature this month, one that will include a revenue package. **As these and other budget proposals take shape, this is a critical time for school directors to step up and tell lawmakers how further cuts will impact our districts and our students.**

As the locally elected school leaders in our communities, we have a responsibility to communicate with the governor and legislators about how their actions in Olympia can undermine our efforts to improve student learning. While we recognize that these are tough times, we strongly believe the state must live up to its responsibility to provide an ample and stable investment in our children's future.

As lawmakers prepare to get the session started in Olympia, I ask you to take the time to get in touch with the governor and your lawmakers to explain how these draconian cuts will impact your district, and to share your views on funding for our schools. This is a short 60-day session, which means legislators will be making tough decisions right away. With that in mind, *your action is needed now.*

If you need assistance with contact information for your legislators, visit the Legislative Information section of the WSSDA Web site at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org), or contact the WSSDA governmental relations team at 1.800.562.8927.

Many thanks for your work on behalf of our children!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Laverty'.

## Legislative session

(continued from cover)

time, she cautioned that the second budget will still include more cuts than revenue to address the shortfall.

WSSDA President Kevin Laverty (Mukilteo) said the all-cuts budget submitted by Gregoire offers a preview of the K-12 reductions that will be on the table during the 2010 session.

"The governor made it clear she does not support this version of the budget, and we wholeheartedly agree," said Laverty. "It would add insult to injury for our already underfunded public school system." (See column at left for additional comments from Laverty.)

While the budget is the primary focus of the 2010 session, other education issues will be under consideration. Legislators will be receiving reports and recommendations for work groups formed under ESHB 2261, the basic education finance reform law passed last year. Also, the State Board of Education will be submitting its recommendations for a K-12 performance accountability system.

WSSDA's daily and weekly legislative updates, available via e-mail and on the Web, will resume on Jan. 11 (the first day of session). The reports are available in the Legislative Information section of the WSSDA Web site ([wssda.org](http://wssda.org)), where you'll also find a link to sign up for the association's e-mail ListServ service. Also, look for posts on key legislative happenings on WSSDA's Twitter page ([www.twitter.com/wssda](http://www.twitter.com/wssda)).

If you have questions or need assistance during the session, contact the WSSDA Governmental Relations team at 360.252.3011 or 800.562.8927.

## WSSDA board endorses 'Iseminger Education Funding Plan'

In a unanimous vote, the WSSDA Board of Directors has endorsed a comprehensive K-12 education funding plan developed by Lake Stevens School Director David Iseminger. The vote was taken during a special meeting of the board Dec. 18.

The plan, crafted by Iseminger during the past year, sets forth a no-new-taxes approach to transitioning the state to full funding of basic education as required by the state constitution. Elements of the plan would be phased in over the next eight years.

Iseminger represents school directors on an advisory group formed under House Bill 2261, a new law that commits Washington to an eight-year process of reforming the state's basic education finance system. The advisory group is one of several working to provide recommendations to the Quality Education Council, which in turn has overall responsibility for recommending strategies to implement a new definition of basic education and the financing necessary to support it.

Iseminger's plan is based on five core elements:

- Dedicate 50% of annual increases in state revenues for K-12 education, until full implementation of basic education reform is complete in 2018
- Shift the existing 24 percent local-district levy lid to state collection using existing state tax authority, and set every district to 24 percent
- Use increased state bonding authority for K-12 capital improvements, such as school construction and remodeling
- Prioritize implementation of basic education finance reform to provide resources to students with the highest needs
- Reform local-district levy lids to 10 percent or \$1 per \$1000 of assessed value, whichever is more

"Collectively, these elements could fund education reform without creating a new tax," said Iseminger. "In fact, the plan decreases property taxes by an average of 60 cents per \$1,000 statewide. Best of all, implementing the plan wouldn't cost our Legislature anything."

"While there is no silver bullet to fund basic education, the Iseminger plan addresses the most challenging dimensions of fully funding K-12 education in our state and demonstrates how the Legislature can rationally fund it over the long term," said WSSDA President Kevin Laverty (Mukilteo). "This well thought out proposal helps us move beyond the cycle of basic education funding studies followed by inadequate financial support."

Detailed information about the Iseminger Education Finance Plan is available on Iseminger's Web site at [www.isevinger.com/The\\_Iseminger\\_Education\\_Finance\\_Plan/Summary.html](http://www.isevinger.com/The_Iseminger_Education_Finance_Plan/Summary.html).



Steele

## WSSDA's first Webinar

More than 45 school directors from around the state took part in WSSDA's first-ever Webinar last month. (A Webinar is a live online presentation in which participants use their computers to hear the presenter, view presentation slides and documents, and ask questions.) The Webinar, which ran just over an hour, featured a presentation from WSSDA Governmental Relations Director Dan Steele (pictured at left) previewing key education issues that will be considered in the coming legislative session. The Webinar was recorded and is available as online video at [wssda.na4.acrobat.com/p89562230/](http://wssda.na4.acrobat.com/p89562230/)

# Question of the Month

## Calling a special board meeting



**Q:** An issue has come up and we need to handle it immediately but our next board meeting is a month away. What do we do?

**A.** The board chair or a majority of the members can call for a special meeting. Twenty-four hours written notice must be given to the members of the board and to any media organization that has requested written notice of special meetings. The notice can be sent either through the mail, by fax, by electronic mail, or personally delivered. The notice must include an agenda and the meeting can only include those items on the agenda.

## FRN Conference backgrounder available online

Federal Relations Network members can go to [www.nsba.org/frn2010/](http://www.nsba.org/frn2010/) to download registration and background information on NSBA's priority issues, as well as logistical information for the Jan. 31 - Feb. 2 conference to be held in Washington, D.C.

The 2010 FRN Conference theme is *Educate our Children Today For a Strong America Tomorrow*. School districts are facing tighter budgets, and both the Department of Education and some members of Congress have voiced support for alternatives to local school board governance, as they discuss expanding charters and school district takeovers. With policy decisions and billions of education dollars at stake, the school board message to legislators is extremely significant this year.

Questions about FRN membership or the FRN Conference? Contact WSSDA FRN Coordinator Sheila Chard at [S.Chard@wssda.org](mailto:S.Chard@wssda.org) or 360.252.3011.

## Recipients of energy grants announced

A grant program funded by the Legislature will provide 59 school districts with \$16.7 million for energy efficiency improvements.

Upgrades to heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, repair and upgrade of controls, and replacement of inefficient lighting, for example, will be covered.

To qualify for the funds, districts were required to conduct facility audits to identify projects that could demonstrate guaranteed energy savings; they had to commit local financial resources to the project as well. About \$6.6 million will be added in the form of incentives provided by utility companies.

The projects will save an estimated \$2.1 million in energy costs each year. OSPI administers this program, and received 81 applications. See a list of grantees at [www.k12.wa.us/Communications/PressReleases2009/Energy-GrantRecipientList.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/Communications/PressReleases2009/Energy-GrantRecipientList.pdf)

## NEWS BRIEFS

**The Washington State Association for Multicultural Education offers these workshops in the upcoming months:**

- Strategies to Address Racial Harassment: Jan. 14
- Sugar and Spice, But Not Always Nice: Gender, Bias and Aggression in Adolescent Girls: Feb. 26
- What I Said and What I Meant: Improving Cross-Cultural Communications: March 12
- Cultural Competence in the Classroom: April 23
- The Role of Whites in a Multicultural Society: May 14

All workshops take place at North Seattle Community College. Further information can be found at [www.wsame.org](http://www.wsame.org).

**NSBA announced the speaker line-up for its April 10-12 Annual Conference in Chicago.** Keynoters include Charlie Rose, Emmy-winning broadcast journalist; Wynton Marsalis, Grammy-winning jazz musician and arts education advocate; and Steve Wozniak, Apple Computer co-founder and education advocate. For thorough information on the conference go to [nsba.org](http://nsba.org) and click on "Conferences and Training."

**The Legislative Youth Advisory Council, composed of 22 students from across Washington state, advises the Legislature on issues important to students.** LYAC conducts surveys and meetings with youth, builds relationships with legislators, advises them on legislative issues, and drafts legislation. Recently they produced a video about the LYAC-sponsored 2009 Civic Engagement Forum and Action Day, in which council members met with legislators to provide input on youth concerns.

During the forum, held Feb. 8-9, 2009, LYAC brought together 46 youth from various areas in Washington to discuss dropout issues including school health, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, mental health, gang violence and civic engagement. The video is being shown on TVW, Washington's statewide public affairs station; check [www.TVW.org](http://www.TVW.org) for broadcast times. In addition, it is available online at [www.tvw.org/media/mediaplayer.cfm?evid=2009120076](http://www.tvw.org/media/mediaplayer.cfm?evid=2009120076).

# Work of school directors celebrated this month



Gov. Chris Gregoire has declared January 2010 to be School Board Recognition Month in the state of Washington, coinciding with a nationwide effort to spotlight and honor the important role of elected school directors in public education and student achievement.

There are 1,477 school board members in Washington state's 295 public school districts, each elected by the citizens of their respective communities. The districts they lead serve more than one million students, have a combined annual budget of \$6 billion, and employ nearly 100,000 people.

As school directors govern their districts, they contribute hundreds of volunteer hours making decisions with the overall aim of promoting student achievement. They have a multitude of responsibilities, including vision- and goal-setting, establishing standards for what students should learn, adopting policies and budgets, and collaborating with administrators, teachers, parents, students and the community to foster a safe and productive learning environment.

Several ideas and tips for celebrating School Board Recognition Month can be found at [wssda.org/sbrm](http://wssda.org/sbrm). In addition, personalized certificates for each board member have been mailed to every district based on WSSDA's existing database. To request a new certificate with updated information contact Sheila Chard, [S.Chard@wssda.org](mailto:S.Chard@wssda.org), or 360.252.3011.

## Governor Gregoire's Proclamation School Board Recognition Month January 2010

WHEREAS, the mission of Washington's public school system is to assure that all students achieve at high levels and possess the knowledge and skills to be responsible citizens and enjoy productive and satisfying lives; and

WHEREAS, Washington's 295 locally elected school boards are the core of the public education governance system in our state; and

WHEREAS, the districts they lead serve more than one million students, have a combined annual budget of \$6 billion and employ nearly 100,000 people; and

WHEREAS, school directors play a crucial role in promoting student learning and achievement by creating a vision, establishing policies and budgets, and setting clear standards of accountability for all involved; and

WHEREAS, school directors are directly accountable to the citizens in their districts, serving as a vital link between members of the community and their schools; and

WHEREAS, school directors provide a passionate voice of advocacy for public schools and the welfare of school children; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to recognize school directors as outstanding volunteers and champions for public education;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Christine O. Gregoire, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim January 2010 as

### **School Board Recognition Month**

in Washington State, and I urge all citizens to join me in this special observance.

Signed,

Governor Christine O. Gregoire

# Compassionate schools help students overcome trauma

The stress and trauma students face can impact their academic success. How schools deal with those students is the subject of a recently published handbook.

*The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency and Academic Success*—a collaborative effort of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Western Washington University with funding from the Washington State Mental Health Transformation Grant—describes how schools can help students overcome trauma and succeed academically.

Often, students suffering from trauma such as abuse, family illness or death, drugs, and homelessness, don't know where to turn for help and support. Schools and communities

can provide the needed connection. Creating "compassionate schools" is at the heart of the handbook.

"In compassionate schools, staff are aware of the diversity of student experiences and the different backgrounds they have," said Mona Johnson, director of learning and teaching support at OSPI. "They don't judge those students. Rather, they try to understand their backgrounds and their unique circumstances. Staff act as coaches, as friends, as mentors, but most of all, they listen and they care."

*The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency and Academic Success*, illustrated throughout with personal stories and examples, is available for download free of charge at [www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/default.aspx).



## WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference

### The Paramount Duty

February 7 – 8, 2010  
Olympia Red Lion and the State Capitol

The WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference is your opportunity to:

- Join other school district leaders actively engaged in the democratic process.
- Become informed about budget and revenue options.
- Hear from legislators about education finance reform (QEC and 2261).
- Get up-to-date on McLeary vs. the State—the school funding lawsuit.
- Take a message to “The Hill:” support our students and schools.

Detailed information regarding agendas, registration and accommodations is found at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) under “What’s New,” and in the Legislative Information area of the WSSDA Web site.

Questions? Contact Sheila Chard ([S.Chard@wssda.org](mailto:S.Chard@wssda.org) or 360.252.3011).

## Spring Regional Meeting line-up taking shape

Mark your calendars for valuable gatherings with peers



Every spring and fall, WSSDA members, along with staff and presenters, gather to share a meal and discuss the issues

that affect your district

and others close to home. WSSDA’s 2010 Spring Regional Meetings have been scheduled in 12 locations around the state to make them as accessible as possible for association members. These meetings will give school directors an opportunity to talk about current issues, exchange success stories, discuss challenges, and get to know other directors from around their region.

You may bring your questions and concerns to your regional meeting, and receive instant feedback from peers during open discussions and networking sessions. You may also send your ideas in advance to your WSSDA Board of Directors representative. (Contact information for your representative is found at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) under “WSSDA Information.”)

### Spring Regional Meetings

Renton	Monday, March 8
Port Angeles	Saturday, March 13
Tumwater	Monday, March 15
Gig Harbor	Tuesday, March 16
Stevenson	Wednesday, March 17
Chattaroy	Tuesday, March 23
Granite Falls	Thursday, April 8
Pasco	Monday, April 19
Sunnyside	Tuesday, April 20
Ellensburg	Wednesday, April 21
Cashmere	Monday, April 26
Colfax	Tuesday, April 27

Weekday meetings, including dinner, are held from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday meetings, including lunch, are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Registration is required, and the only charge is for your meal. (The Stevenson meeting is hosted; there will be no meal charge.)

## Health risks predict lower student achievement

*Research Review: School-based Health Interventions and Academic Achievement* analyzes data from Washington's 2006 Healthy Youth Survey. The report looks at 13 health risk factors and cross-references them with self-reported grades. It confirms what many educators and parents have suspected: healthier kids get better grades.

The research showed that the more health risks a student has, the more likely he or she will be at academic risk (reporting an average grade of C, D or F). About 10 percent of those with a single risk factor were at academic risk. But about 50 percent of students with six health risk factors were at academic risk, and more than 67 percent of students with at least nine risk factors were at academic risk.

The health risks examined for the study were: insufficient fruit and vegetable consumption, fewer than eight hours sleep at night, not eating breakfast, watching TV three or more hours on an average school day, being depressed for at least two weeks in the past year, insufficient exercise, feeling unsafe at school, alcohol use, drinking two or more soda pops per day, obesity, marijuana use, cigarette smoking, and severe asthma.

Each health risk has an independent effect, so eliminating even one can improve a student's success in school. The report lists evidence-based health interventions that can improve academic performance. It also makes a strong case for delivering health programs in a comprehensive way, addressing the school environment, instruction, and supportive services.

The Healthy Youth Survey is given in even years to students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 in public schools. In 2006, about 200,000 students participated.

The report was issued by the State Board of Health, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Department of Health. It is available at [www.sboh.wa.gov/Pubs/docs/Health&AA.pdf](http://www.sboh.wa.gov/Pubs/docs/Health&AA.pdf).

Introducing  
**WOW!**

**The All New BoardDocs.**  
Faster. Easier. Remarkably Powerful.

Some call it remarkable;  
others call it extraordinary.  
We call it WSSDA BoardDocs®.

It's the next generation of eGovernance.  
And it's from the world leader of paperless agenda solutions, and the only provider utilizing Web 2.0 technology. The all new BoardDocs will dramatically improve the way you create and manage packets, access information and conduct meetings — even if you currently use a paperless agenda solution.

For more information or to arrange a demonstration, call 800-407-0141 or visit us at [www.boarddocs.com](http://www.boarddocs.com).



Washington State  
School Directors' Association

© 2009 Emerald Data Solutions. All rights reserved. BoardDocs is a registered trademark and may not be copied, imitated or used, in whole or in part, without prior consent.

## Districts encouraged to assist with 'Race to the Top' application

Gov. Gregoire's decision to bypass the first round of the federal Race to the Top application process has given the state some breathing room, but there is still plenty of work to be done as the state works to submit a Phase 2 application by June 1 of this year.

Washington state could receive up to \$250 million for a winning proposal, with at least 50 percent going to school districts that agree to implement the plan. State applicants must document past accomplishments in four areas of

education reform and present a comprehensive plan for improving student achievement. Winning proposals must prove there is extensive support for the plan through Memos of Understanding signed by local school boards, school district administrators and teacher unions.

In a meeting with the state's RTTT Coordinating Committee last month, WSSDA leaders were asked to encourage school districts to submit ideas, suggestions and proposals for

the state's application. Details of the committee's request to districts are available on the WSSDA Web site at [wssda.org/wssda/WebForms/En-Us/News/2009/20091222\\_rtttmemo.htm](http://wssda.org/wssda/WebForms/En-Us/News/2009/20091222_rtttmemo.htm). Updates on the state's RTTT efforts are provided at [www.recovery.wa.gov/rttt/](http://www.recovery.wa.gov/rttt/).

Also, school directors are encouraged to review the National School Boards Association's tips for school boards on navigating the RTTT process, available on the NSBA home page at [www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.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.

Kevin Laverty, *President* . . . . . 206.498.8726  
Deborah Heart, *President-elect* . . . . . 509.773.6334  
Mary Fertakis, *Vice President* . . . . . 206.767.6053  
Harry Frost, *Interim Executive Director* . . . . . 360.252.3001  
David Brine, *Communications Director* . . . . . 360.252.3013  
Kate Vikstrom, *Communications Specialist* . . . . . 360.252.3015

### WSSDA DIRECTORY

General Information . . . . . 360.493.9231  
Association Services . . . . . 360.252.3002  
Leadership Development Services . . . . . 360.252.3009  
Governmental Relations . . . . . 360.252.3011  
Communications . . . . . 360.252.3011  
Policy and Legal Services . . . . . 360.252.3019  
Toll Free (In-State) . . . . . 800.562.8927  
E-Mail . . . . . mail@wssda.org

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Professional Educator Standards Board** . . . . . Jan. 7-8
- WSSDA Legislative Committee**, Olympia . . . . . Jan. 9
- State Board of Education**, Tumwater . . . . . Jan. 13-14
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday** . . . . . Jan. 18
- WSSDA Board of Directors**, Olympia . . . . . Jan. 22-23
- NSBA Federal Relations Network Conference**  
Washington, D.C. . . . . Jan. 31 - Feb. 2
- WSSDA Resolutions Committee**, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 6
- WSSDA Legislative Committee**, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 7
- WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference**, Olympia . . Feb. 7-8
- AESD Executive Board**, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 8
- ERNN Conference**, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 8-9
- Presidents' Day** . . . . . Feb. 15

For event details, visit [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) and click on "Calendar of Events."

## WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

- NSBA FEDERAL RELATIONS NETWORK CONFERENCE**  
Washington, D.C.: Jan. 31 - Feb. 2
- WSSDA/WASA 2010 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**  
Olympia: Feb. 7 - 8  
Olympia Red Lion Hotel and the State Capitol
- WASA SMALL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE**  
Yakima: March 1 - 2
- NSBA Technology Site Visits**  
Fayetteville, Arkansas: March 14-16  
Magog, Quebec, Canada: March 28-30  
Wilmette, Illinois: April 7-9  
Golden, Colorado: May 5-7