



## 'Short' session looks at long-term changes

### Proposals driven by 'Race' competition and Washington state's own K-12 reform law

While this year's legislative session may be short on time, there's no scarcity of proposals to make significant changes in the state's K-12 education system.

Lawmakers are moving on a number of education bills in the 60-day session, in part because of the "Race to the Top" competition for federal stimulus funds and also because of the Legislature's own requirements under HB 2261, the basic education finance reform law approved last year.

The Legislature's primary task between now and March 11 is adopting a supplemental operating budget to bridge a \$2.6 billion gap between state expenditures and projected revenue. With more spending cuts and possible tax increases on the horizon, legislators are paying close attention to the state's efforts to compete for as much as \$250 million in Race to the Top (RTTT) funds.

Those efforts include proposed legislative changes aimed at enhancing the state's eligibility for RTTT dollars. Washington is among a handful of states which chose not to apply for funds in the first round, opting instead to wait until June to allow time for K-12 policy changes to be made in the Legislature.

Those proposed policy changes attempt to address RTTT's four priority areas: standards and assessments; teacher/leader quality; data collection and use; and support for struggling schools. Omnibus legislation introduced by Gov. Chris Gregoire, state Superintendent Randy Dorn and State Board of Education Chair Mary Jean Ryan would:

- Establish a new teacher and principal evaluation system, with an emphasis on student learning.



State Representatives Pat Sullivan and Marcie Maxwell speak with WSSDA's Board of Directors in late January

- Extend the provisional period for new teachers from two to three years, and provide additional teacher support.
- Strengthen parent involvement and feedback.
- Expand alternative certification providers for teachers and principals.
- Implement a new system of district and school performance accountability, including authority for school turnarounds, known as "required action." (See related article on page 2.)
- Require movement to national common core standards.
- Add "innovation" to teacher "TRI" pay, aimed at Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the achievement gap.

Meanwhile, the Legislature is receiving recommendations from various working groups it established with last  
*(continued on following page)*

# Accountability legislation: A closer look

One of the many elements of the “Race to the Top” legislation is a plan to create a K-12 accountability system in Washington. While the idea has been in the works for years, it may finally be headed for legislative approval as the state implements HB 2261 and competes for federal grant money.

The current accountability proposal, developed by the State Board of Education, lays out a system for identifying schools which are struggling to meet student achievement standards (it is also intended to identify and reward successful schools). At the heart of the plan is a program of “required action” for the lowest-performing schools and districts—a departure from current law, in which district participation in state improvement programs is strictly voluntary.

In the first phase of the plan, federal measurements would be used to identify low-achieving schools. SBE has developed its own Accountability Index, but will need federal approval to use it in future years.

The plan targets the lowest five percent of persistently low-achieving schools. SBE officials estimate there are one to five districts (or about 50 schools) that would fall into this category. Under the proposal, these districts could volunteer for the program this year. Starting in 2011, the program would be mandatory.

Districts designated for required action would undergo an independent “academic audit” to identify the reasons for low performance, and then would be responsible for developing a plan—in collaboration with teachers, parents, students and community members—to address the audit findings. These districts would be eligible for federal funding and state technical assistance. SBE officials emphasize there will be no required action if funding is unavailable.

District action plans would have to include proposed changes in policies, structure and contracts to improve student achievement. The plan would also have to conform to one of four federal improvement models. SBE officials believe districts will opt for the federal “transformation” model, which uses multiple strategies to improve student achievement. Those strategies include more latitude in hiring, rewarding or replacing teachers and principals based on student performance, better use of achievement data, more flexibility to restructure the school day, and use of research-based instruction. (Failure to submit a plan could result in reallocation of a district’s Title I funds by OSPI).

A central element of the proposal requires districts to reopen their collective bargaining agreements (or negotiate an addendum) to make any changes needed to implement the required action plan. An impasse would require mediation through the state Public Employment Relations Commission; issues unresolved through mediation would be decided in Superior Court.

Districts could be removed from required action status if they make required progress and, after three years, no longer have a school that is identified as persistently low-achieving.

For details and developments on accountability legislation and other education issues, see WSSDA’s daily and weekly legislative reports at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org).

## ‘Short’ session, long-term change

*(continued from cover)*

year’s adoption of HB 2261, a new law which lays out an eight-year blueprint for reforming the way Washington state defines and pays for basic education. Among those groups is the Quality Education Council, which released an initial report to the Legislature in mid-January.

The QEC report includes 13 recommendations, including language that urges the Legislature not to cut the overall K-12 funding level in this year’s budget, and to devote half of any state revenue growth to implementing the new program of basic education envisioned in HB 2261. The report also calls for implementation of a prototypical school funding formula and a new pupil transportation funding formula by September 2011. Other issues addressed include new teacher support, early learning and full-day kindergarten. (The full report is available at [www.k12.wa.us/qec](http://www.k12.wa.us/qec).)

State Representatives Marcie Maxwell (former Renton school director) and Pat Sullivan visited with the WSSDA Board of Directors in late January to provide an update on implementation of HB 2261 and issues related to the RTTT legislation. Both legislators noted that, despite the significance of the K-12 bills moving through the Legislature, lawmakers are not hearing much from the education community. Both emphasized the need for school directors to be in touch with their legislators throughout the session on these and other issues that impact their districts.

For WSSDA’s daily and weekly legislative updates (including video reports), visit [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) and look for the links under “Legislative News.” WSSDA’s legislative section also offers links to legislator contact information, committee meetings, and bill reports.

## Executive director search takes shape

Selection of a new WSSDA executive director will take place by the end of May under a process and timeline reviewed by the WSSDA Board of Directors this past month.

The Jan. 22 board meeting was preceded by the first meeting of an executive search committee appointed by WSSDA President Kevin Laverty (Mukilteo). The committee is chaired by Immediate Past President Martha Rice (Yakima) and includes Laverty, WSSDA board members Chuck Namit (North Thurston), Miguel Puente (Sunnyside) and Anne Golden (Walla Walla), school directors Tom MacIntyre (Monroe) and John Hergert (Pasco), and WSSDA Interim Executive Director Harry Frost.

The board heard a presentation from Hagel and Company, which the board retained as its executive search consultant. Hagel representatives met with the search committee earlier in the day to firm up action steps and finalize a timeline for the search process.

Rice and the consultants reported that the completed timeline calls for an executive director to be selected by May 24. In the coming weeks, the consultants will be interviewing and surveying various stakeholders to assist the board in establishing a position profile, which will be finalized at a special meeting of the board Feb. 20 in SeaTac.

The timeline calls for recruitment of candidates to be completed by the end of March, followed by a review and initial selection of candidates in April. Finalist interviews, reference checks and site visits by search committee members

are planned for May. During the meeting, it was decided that the full board of directors will take part in interviewing finalist candidates.

WSSDA's Web site now includes an information section to keep association members up to date on the search process. Look for the link to Executive Director Search under "Spotlight" on the WSSDA home page ([wssda.org](http://wssda.org)).

In other news from the Jan. 22-23 WSSDA board meeting:

- The board approved a final association budget for 2010. The budget totals \$2,894,468. (Budget details will be posted on the WSSDA Web site under "WSSDA Information.")
- The board approved continuation of association task forces on small schools issues and trust lands. A proposal to create a task force on safe and secure schools was deferred.
- The board agreed to move forward with a review of the WSSDA Bylaws this year. Board members Andy James (Onion Creek) and Anne Golden (Walla Walla) will serve on a working group to review and make recommendations regarding potential revisions.
- Board members received training in the BoardDocs paperless meeting application. The board will moving to paperless meetings beginning in April.

As noted above, the WSSDA Board of Directors will hold a special meeting Feb. 20 in SeaTac. The next regular meeting of the board is scheduled for April 23-24, and will be held in the Seattle area.

## SBE hears WSSDA presentation on Lighthouse, board standards



Phil Gore addressed the SBE last month

Members of the State Board of Education heard a presentation this past month on WSSDA's initiatives to strengthen school board leadership for student learning. At the invitation of SBE member Warren Smith, WSSDA Leadership Development Services Director Phil Gore briefed the board on the Washington Lighthouse Project,

the new Washington School Board Standards, data dashboards for school directors and other projects designed to help school directors use their policy role to promote student achievement. For more information on these programs, see the "Spotlight" section on the WSSDA home page at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org).

# Question of the Month

## Advocacy for public schools via the news media



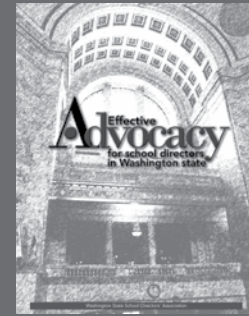
**Q:** How do I write an effective letter to the editor or guest opinion column for my local paper?

**A.** Letters and guest opinions are often read by legislators and can do double duty as advocacy tools. Here are some hints for writing effectively in the news media:

- Be brief and focus on one issue. If the letter is too long, the newspaper may edit out some important facts. How long is too long? Look at your newspaper's opinion page for guidelines on submittal and word limits. If this isn't available, count the words in an average letter-to-the-editor. The average op-ed is usually longer, between 500 and 750 words.
- For a letter-to-the-editor, refer to a recent event or an article that appeared in the newspaper and include the article's date and title.
- When applicable, close your letter or op-ed by asking readers to contact their legislator or other policymakers about the issue.
- Give your address, title and phone number so the newspaper can verify authorship.
- Clip your published letter-to-the-editor or op-ed and mail or fax it to your legislators.

Even a letter or op-ed column that does not get published can be useful, because your topic may be considered by the newspaper's editorial board for a column of their own, or as the subject of a news story.

Advocacy manual a source of help for school directors



*Effective advocacy for school directors in Washington state is a timely handbook for school board members*

in their role as advocates for public education. As a school director, you can make a difference and have a significant impact on the legislative process. As an elected official yourself, you share a common bond with legislators; and like you, they must hear from their constituents in order to know their key concerns.

To obtain a copy of the manual contact Sheila Chard (S.Chard@wssda.org or 360.252.3011). It is available for download as well at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) > Publications.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**This year 1,248 Washington teachers achieved National Board Certification, placing Washington state second nationally in new National Board Certified Teachers, behind North Carolina.** Washington's 3,974 total NBCTs place the state fifth in the nation, up from eighth in 2008. In addition, three districts ranked in the top 20 nationally in new NBCTs. Bellevue ranked 10th (64 new NBCTs), Spokane was 12th (63), and Seattle 15th (57).

In 2007, the state Legislature awarded a \$5,000 bonus to each NBCT. About 23 percent of Washington teachers receive an additional \$5,000 bonus for teaching in "challenging" schools, defined as having a certain percentage of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (50 percent for high schools, 60 percent for middle schools and 70 percent for elementary schools).

National Board Certification requires teachers to submit a four-part portfolio and a six-exercise content and pedagogy

assessment. The 10 entries document a teacher's success in the classroom as evidenced by student learning. The portfolio is then assessed by a national panel of peers.

Created in 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization devoted to advancing the quality of teaching and learning.

**The state Department of Health is offering free portable indoor air quality stations to K-12 schools around the state.** Designed to be placed in classrooms, offices and other rooms, the stations collect information about room ventilation, cleanliness and comfort, and assist in evaluating the heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) system. Measurements are transmitted anonymously to DOH via a secure Web server; the information does not identify the participating school or facility. For detailed information, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/School/iaqmonitor.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/School/iaqmonitor.htm).



## Online learning policy required

For many years, OSPI implemented rules governing digital learning programs. Last year, the Legislature reexamined online learning and the roles and responsibilities of school districts in supporting it. The resulting new law mandates specific actions:

- Provide information to students, parents and educators regarding online learning opportunities, including program and course content, how to register, teacher qualifications, student-to-teacher ratios, and prior completion rates;
- Create an approval process for multi-district online providers;
- Enhance statewide equity of student access to high quality online learning; and
- Require school boards to develop policies and procedures for student access to online learning.

OSPI's role is to provide comprehensive information on online learning opportunities and to manage the approval and monitoring process. Districts are responsible for facilitating access for students and disseminating appropriate information to students, staff and community members. WSSDA and OSPI were charged with developing a model policy and procedure detailing how districts will provide access to online learning.

WSSDA and OSPI convened a workgroup of stakeholders: principals, teachers, superintendents, online learning advisors, program coordinators, alternative learning program directors, and WSSDA and OSPI staff. Kevin Laverty, WSSDA President, represented school directors on the Online Learning Advisory Committee, which consulted with the policy workgroup. School districts have until August 2010 to adopt policies which become effective for the 2010-2011 school year.

The model policy—found at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) > Policy & Legal > Policy Services (link in right sidebar)—establishes the board's goals for online learning, summarizing the board's beliefs regarding online learning and their support for the district making online learning accessible. It also addresses:

- Informing students, parents and staff
- Granting credit
- Supporting student success
- Determining student eligibility
- Courses and programs available
- Equity of access
- Whether course fees are appropriate
- Alternative learning programs

Additional information and resources are available at OSPI's Web site, [www.digitallearning.k12.wa.us/](http://www.digitallearning.k12.wa.us/). OSPI's Digital Learning Department is also available to provide technical assistance.

## WASA Small Schools Conference

*Innovating during challenging times: Going the distance* is the theme of this year's gathering of school administrators and school directors from small districts throughout Washington state. Districts with approximately 2,500 students or less will have an opportunity to address unique challenges of small district operations, program needs, fiscal limitations and community expectations.

The conference occurs March 1-2 in Yakima. Similar to last year, an optional box-lunch Consolidation Mini-Summit will take place at the close of the conference. The conference attracts a range of 125 to 175 superintendents, administrators, school directors, and others. For agenda and registration, go to [wasa-oly.org](http://wasa-oly.org) and click on "2010 WASA Small Schools Conference" on the home page.

## Report examines what it takes to get into college

In a new report released last month, the Center for Public Education finds that taking harder and higher-level courses, especially in math and science, does more to increase students' chances of being accepted into college than does a higher GPA. A higher score on college entrance exams such as the SAT or ACT also beats out a higher GPA.

Jim Hull, senior policy analyst for the CPE, is author of *Chasing the College Acceptance Letter*.

According to CPE's report, minority and low-income students are less likely to earn the credentials that will give them a 50/50 shot of being accepted into a competitive college (as defined by Barron's Profile of American Colleges). For instance, while 66 percent of white students earn these credentials, only 37 percent of minority students and 38 percent of low-income students do.

According to the most recent national data available, the average applicant earned a 21 on the ACT, completed trigonometry and chemistry, and earned a 3.12 GPA. This translated into a 75 percent chance of being admitted into a competitive college.

The full report, as well as an executive summary, is available online only, at [www.centerforpubliceducation.org](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org). Follow the links for "*Chasing the College Acceptance Letter*."

The Center for Public Education, a national resource for credible and practical information about public education and its importance to the well-being of the nation, is a joint initiative of the National School Boards Association.

# WSSDA shares in Shannon Award

The 5-State Policy Project: Targeting Student Learning has been awarded the 2010 Thomas A. Shannon Award for Excellence in School Board Leadership. This award, presented by the NSBA, recognizes the staff and leaders from WSSDA, along with the Illinois Association of School Boards, California School Boards Association, Maine School Boards Association, and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association for their vision and collaboration to define excellence in local school governance.

“These teams took a leap of faith and what a pay-out,” said Sonny Savoie, president, National School Boards Association. “Your work is so powerful and its progress tells our story: local school boards—with the necessary tools, support, and training—can be community leaders at the vanguard of providing a quality education for our students.”

The award, named in honor of former NSBA executive director Thomas A. Shannon, was established in 1997.

The 5-State Policy Project: Targeting Student Learning began in 1996 with Maine’s invitation to state school boards associations to meet and discuss school board policy and

student achievement. Out of this meeting came a long-term collaboration between five states of varying sizes, locations, and governance models—Maine, Washington, Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania—committing staff and resources to balance the important aspects of policymaking with student learning. This collaboration enables the project to go beyond individual state-based models and develop a process and tool for policy-making that can be used by public schools boards across the nation.

The 5-State Policy Project, operating as a think-tank, authored the *Targeting Student Learning Workbook*, providing a process and identifying key policy topics to help school board leaders focus on student achievement.

“The work of these teams was ahead of its time. It was born and underway before No Child Left Behind was even ‘put to ink,’” said Anne Bryant, executive director, NSBA. “These teams’ valuable thinking, processes and tools continually improve local school board policy decisions and student learning. The teams’ expectations are extraordinary: every student achieving. Their work is an example to follow.”

## Regional Meetings: Dine and discuss with colleagues



Spring 2010 promises lively discussions among WSSDA members who attend regional meetings. Share a meal and discuss hot-button issues affecting your district right now.

WSSDA’s 2010 Spring Regional Meetings are scheduled in 12 locations around the state to make them accessible for association members. Attend close to home, or attend in another region. These meetings give school directors an opportunity to exchange success stories, discuss challenges, and meet other directors.

A preliminary agenda is posted at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) > Conferences and Meetings > Regional Meetings. Topics include legislative, WSSDA, and SBE updates, as well as a list of possible issues for roundtable discussions. Bring your questions and concerns and receive instant feedback from peers. You may also send topic ideas in advance to your WSSDA Board of Directors representative. (Contact information 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.)

Fall Regional Meeting dates are posted at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) as well.

## New Board Orientation: Fast Track to School Board Success

You're a new school board member with a couple of months' experience on the board. Do you feel overwhelmed with information? Do you have unanswered questions about your school board service?

You want your efforts to have a positive impact on kids in your schools, so how can you best accomplish that? WSSDA understands and wants to help. We are offering a workshop at a location near you that will:

1. Help you understand how important the role of the school board is for improving student learning.
2. Demonstrate how—done right—you can be an effective member of your board.
3. Explain key topics for you to better understand, organize and move forward in your new role.

This workshop is a must for new school directors who were unable to attend the WSSDA Conference Early Bird Workshop. Many will find it valuable to attend again. While similar to the conference session, this workshop is structured to give more time to individual questions. With several locations around the state, a smaller attendance is anticipated for each, providing the opportunity to network with neighboring districts, build camaraderie, and share experiences. Register online at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) > Conferences and Meetings > Workshops and Training.

### Saturday, Feb. 20

**Spokane:** Spokane Public Schools  
200 North Bernard Street

**Renton:** Puget Sound ESD,  
Cedar Room  
800 Oakesdale Avenue SW

**Vancouver:** ESD 112, Clark Room  
2500 NE 65th Avenue

### Saturday, Feb. 27

**Mount Vernon:** Best Western Cotton  
Tree Inn, Lopez Room  
2300 Market Street

**Pasco:** Best Western Airport  
2811 N 20th Avenue

**Olympia:** WSSDA Conference Center  
221 College Street NE



## WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference The Paramount Duty

February 7 – 8, 2010

Olympia Red Lion and the State  
Capitol

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). And take a message to The Hill: Support our students and schools.

Detailed information about agendas, registration and accommodations is found at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org) under "Upcoming WSSDA Events," and in the Legislative Information area of WSSDA's Web site.

Questions? Contact Sheila Chard ([S.Chard@wssda.org](mailto:S.Chard@wssda.org) or 360.252.3010).



## Follow us on Twitter

WSSDA has created a WSSDA Twitter site where you can get "tweets" on education news and association activities. Join us at [www.twitter.com/wssda](http://www.twitter.com/wssda).



## Find us on Facebook

Connect with WSSDA and colleagues by becoming "fans" of WSSDA's Facebook Page. To join, you must have a Facebook account (visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and follow the instructions). Click on the "Find us on Facebook" link at [wssda.org](http://wssda.org), then click on "Become a fan."

## ACROSS THE BOARD

An article from *University Place School Director Rick Maloney* is featured in the latest issue of *American School Board Journal*. Maloney, who also serves as Director Area 3 representative on the WSSDA Board of Directors, discusses how misperceptions about the school board's role are obstacles to moving boardsmanship from volunteerism to respected occupation. The article, *Governance as a*

*Profession*, is published in the February issue of ASBJ ([www.asjb.com](http://www.asjb.com)).

**Yakima School Director and WSSDA Immediate Past President Martha Rice has been elected Vice Chair of the National School Boards Association's Pacific Region.**

The election took place at the Pacific Region Meeting in Phoenix this past December.



WSSDA Direct is published monthly by the Washington State School Directors' Association to provide information of interest to school directors and the education community.

Kevin Laverty, President . . . . . 206.498.8726
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- WSSDA Resolutions Committee, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 6
WSSDA IAC, Renton . . . . . Feb. 6
WSSDA Legislative Committee, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 7
WSSDA/WASA Legislative Conference, Olympia . . Feb. 7-8
AESD Executive Board, Olympia . . . . . Feb. 8
Presidents' Day . . . . . Feb. 15
New Board Orientation, Spokane, Renton, Vancouver . . Feb. 20
New Board Orientation, Mt. Vernon, Pasco, Olympia. . Feb. 27
Annual Conference Planning Committee, Spokane. Feb. 27
WASA Small Schools Conference, Yakima. . . . . March 1-2
Regional Meeting, Renton . . . . . March 8
Leadership WSSDA, Olympia . . . . . March 12-13
Regional Meeting, Port Angeles . . . . . March 13
Regional Meeting, Tumwater. . . . . March 15
Regional Meeting, Gig Harbor . . . . . March 16
Regional Meeting, Stevenson . . . . . March 17

For event details, visit wssda.org, "Calendar of Events."

WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

- WSSDA/WASA 2010 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
Olympia: Feb. 7 - 8
Olympia Red Lion Hotel and the State Capitol
WSSDA NEW BOARD ORIENTATION: FAST TRACK TO SCHOOL BOARD SUCCESS
Spokane, Renton, Vancouver: Feb. 20
Mount Vernon, Pasco, Olympia: Feb. 27
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
NSBA 70th ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION
Chicago, Illinois: April 10-13