



WSSDA

direct

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020

Seeing the big picture

Effective boards focus on the big picture, [p.14](#); Local leader joins national steering committee, [p.10](#);
Hearing the represented, [p.5](#); From strike to pandemic: a student board rep reflects, [p.6](#); Understanding
LEA, [p. 7](#); Being African American is..., [p.16](#) And more! >>

PHOTO: Casey Madison/Tacoma Public Schools.

Ready to Reopen Playbook

No matter where meals are served, we're still doing everything we can to keep mealtime as a time for students to **relax, recharge and enjoy a sense of happiness.**



Objectives

- Identify flexible solutions for keeping kids fed
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- Create and curate relevant resources for executing meal service models
- Continue to serve up happy and healthy!



James Kleinke

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We've worked around the clock to support our district partners and communities to reopen the 2020-2021 school campaign. In many cases, we know you will need to consider a blend of learning environments across your schools and feeding avenues for your students.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Add your voice!

Use *Direct* to share your learning with peers.

DIRECTOR TO DIRECTOR

We're looking to spotlight WSSDA members who'd like to share their insights as veteran board members, newcomers or as exemplars of small, medium or large districts. If that's you, let us know!

PASSION PIECES

Is there a subject you feel strongly about that you'd like to raise with fellow school directors? Then submit a "passion piece" in which you share why the issue is important to you, what you've learned that others may not know, and explain how this issue has informed your work as a school director.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

If your district has experienced success (or failure) that would be instructive to others, let us know so we can help you tell the story!

REVIEWED BY PEERS

Is there a book, a training or professional development event, software or even an app that has benefited you? Write a review about it.

For submissions, questions or comments, contact Sean Duke, Communications Officer, at s.duke@wssda.org. **To advertise in *Direct*,** contact Josh Collette at j.collette@wssda.org.

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From the Executive Director

Your leadership is crucial

By now you've probably heard the word "unprecedented" an unprecedented number of times thanks to COVID-19. Hopefully, by the time you read this, precedent has finally been set and all of us are well on our way to realizing new forms of success in the work we do.

I am so proud of all our school boards and how they have worked tirelessly to absorb and respond to all kinds of new information, requirements, and situations. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: your leadership is crucial to the success of students in your community and of K-12 education statewide.

As elected representatives, I'm sure you'll appreciate our article "**Hearing the represented**" on page 5. Finlay Adamson was the latest in a long line of student interns we've been fortunate to work with, and he was a big help with the Suicide Prevention Workgroup.

Many thanks to *The Columbian* for allowing us to reprint a story that brings even more student voice to light. **See page 6 for "A front-row seat."** Battle Ground School District student Sidnie Boadwine details quite an experience as she served on a board tackling issues that were anything but run-of-the-mill.

And congratulations are in order for Tacoma's Andrea Cobb. **On page 10, we hear how she joined the NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education.** CUBE's focus is on finding solutions for underserved and underrepresented students and closing achievement gaps. To that end, you'll find **a terrific resource on page 12 compiled by one of our newest staff members, Rashaad O'Neal.**

And finally, **sage words from true sages are available on page 14.** Doctors Lorentzen and McCaw have been researching school boards for 10 years. Their article gives strategies to help prevent the urgent from obscuring the essential in governing your school district.

Thank you all, and please enjoy the latest issue of WSSDA *Direct*.

Tim Garchow, WSSDA Executive Director



Photo above: Image from Tacoma School District. See page 10

From the Board President



New Year's Eve parties, parades, and ball games are lots of fun, but my year always starts in September with the first day of school. Beginning with my own first days, then later with my children's, now the new year begins for me on the first day of school for all of the youngsters in my school district. What could more exemplify the start of a new year than the excitement of back to school and the hopes and dreams that have the youngest of our community facing forward?

This year is unlike those we have experienced in our lifetimes. The challenges are vast and varied. You have been working to maintain that sense of wonder and new beginnings for our students, even when they have to start in a fully remote environment. Along with the perpetual objectives of community connections, budgets and bargaining, policy adoption, scheduling and advocacy, you are dealing with restarting plans, digital equity, online platforms, universal design for learning, meal delivery, child care connections, student supports and creative ways to serve those children who are the farthest from educational equity.

I see you meeting these challenges. I see the hard work you are performing, both in your own communities and as part of the statewide WSSDA effort. You work hard on effective committees, governmental workgroups and community partnerships bringing WSSDA to the forefront of education decision-making at the local, state and national levels. Later this month, your participation in the new and virtual General Assembly will help us create a legislative agenda that will carry us with one voice through the coming year, a year that may be the most critical we have seen for public education. Our staff has worked tirelessly to ensure that this event is a success for our members and our association. I hope the voice of each and every board member is included in this process.

Your thoughtful leadership is vital to our communities and to our state. I respect and admire each and every one of you and I am forever grateful for your selfless commitment to all students and our WSSDA family.

Brenda Rogers

Brenda Rogers, WSSDA Board President

WSSDA direct

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Leadership Development *–Tricia Lubach*

“Courage. Kindness. Friendship. Character. These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness.” As these are not easy times to be a school leader, I lean on those words from acclaimed children’s book author R. J. Palacio. In our current crisis, nearly every decision has significant downsides and will be criticized. The students in our schools are entrusted to us to make decisions in their best interests that balance their mental and physical health, their equitable access to education, and the realities of their life circumstances. **Educational justice is complicated...and more essential than ever.** Educational equity advocate Erin Jones notes that school leaders have an unprecedented opportunity now “to reimagine what school could and should look like, particularly for staff and students who have not experienced school as an empowering, affirming safe place.” School directors have the opportunity and responsibility to lift others up and serve all students in ways they’ve never done before. As expressed in this year’s annual conference theme, now is the time for each of us to “reflect, reimagine, and relaunch.”



Coming soon....

Virtual OnBoard — online training for on-the-ground impact. Join an interactive training for school directors starting in October. More info at wssda.org/onboard.

Strategic Advocacy *–Marissa Rathbone*

“Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime.” Civil rights icon and congressional member John Lewis left an indelible mark on our humanity. His words, like those above, have challenged us to think differently about our individual and collective responsibility to end racism and to create a more equitable society. This endeavor continues and our advocacy as school leaders is essential if we are to achieve these aims. Nowadays, it is frustrating and tiresome to be faced with constantly changing information and a parade of obstacles derailing our planning processes. It’s too easy to focus on the emerging need of the day, when it is actually the long game that matters more for positive and lasting change. When we keep students at the forefront of our hearts and minds, in the midst of our struggle, we remember our reason. We are therefore called to advocate for students farthest from educational justice. We remain hopeful and committed because we must persevere for their sake. Together we can work to create more equitable learning environments for our students in greatest need.

Policy and Legal *–Abigail Westbrook*

Responding to COVID-19 related issues has kept us busy! These responses include developing new model policies to enable your district to offer mastery-based credits, which in turn supported high school graduation for the class of 2020. Other COVID-19-related issues include the waivers and suspensions to the **Open Public Meetings Act**—currently in place until October 1. Be sure to review the August edition of *Policy & Legal News*. Our latest issue addressed items such as revisions based on Title IX rule changes that require immediate attention. We expect more legal issues will emerge as we move from summer to fall.



State advocacy starts with engaged legislative representatives

Legislative representatives serve as a voice for their board by representing their district's priorities, needs, and values. They are the theoretical bridge between local priorities and state advocacy. A strong legislative representative (a.k.a., "leg rep") can maintain timely communication between their fellow board members, WSSDA staff, and state policy-makers. By actively representing their district and community, leg reps can shape the messaging at the state level to reflect their school districts and communities. Leg reps play a crucial role in successful advocacy. As we look ahead to the 2020 General Assembly on September 25th, and the legislative session(s) to follow, their role is more critical now than ever. For this month, the graphic to the right lists the important steps that leg reps can take to advance their district's goals and have their board's voice reflected in WSSDA's legislative platform. To stay apprised of more advocacy opportunities, subscribe to the legislative representative email distribution list at wssda.org/lists.

Year-Round Advocacy Cycle: Where Are We Now?

Most important thing you can do right now!



Get Warmed Up
OCTOBER - DECEMBER

➤ **Get familiar with the permanent and legislative positions that get passed at WSSDA's General Assembly.**

- Get to know** your local legislators and their goals
- Invite** them to your schools and events
- Share** your district and WSSDA legislative priorities
- Provide input** on issues and bill drafts
- Align messages/priorities** regionally and locally

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Virtual delivery, real impact



We're taking to heart the 2020 Annual Conference theme by reflecting, reimagining and relaunching the conference itself. **For the first time ever, the Annual Conference will be a fully-virtual event.** While we will all miss the irreplaceable experience of meeting, learning and engaging together, the virtual conference offers some unique advantages. **Three outstanding pre-conference sessions** will kick off your learning. Newer board members may want to attend Board Boot Camp. You can also join the Law Conference or the Leading for Equity workshop. And for those looking to unlock the mysteries of education funding and budgeting, WSSDA OnBoard is back. As always, you'll enjoy powerful, **top-notch keynote speakers like Seattle-based writer Ijeoma Oluo**, whose book *So you want to talk about race* is creating conversations all across the country. *The Seattle Times* described her book, saying Oluo "pulls the most exasperated among us back from the brink and reminds us of what's to be gained from continuing the discussion." **Expanded access to content is another advantage** of a virtual conference. Most of the breakout sessions will be accessible for up to a year after the conference. While you have eight opportunities to attend breakout sessions at an in-person event, on-demand access to up to 50 learning opportunities can serve as year-round professional development for you or your board-superintendent team. Join us as we reimagine how to take the best of K-12 public education and make it even better at WSSDA's Annual Conference November 18-20. **Watch for more info coming your way.**

Hearing the represented: Finlay Adamson's take-away



“ While interning with Senator Patty Murray’s office in Washington, D.C., attending briefings, writing memos and researching immigration and labor bills, I met Logan Endres, the strategic advocacy coordinator for WSSDA. In high school, I had been a school board student representative for the Peninsula School District, so I was excited to hear Logan mention he worked at WSSDA.

I continued to stay in touch with him over the year, and when I returned to Washington state, I applied and was accepted as an intern with WSSDA. The best part of the varied experience there was assisting with the Suicide Prevention Workgroup, a collective of student representatives, school administrators and government officials helping districts comply with H.B. 2589, a policy that requires all Washington schools to print mental health and suicide hotline numbers on student ID cards.

While serving on that group, the thing I really appreciated and recognized about WSSDA was how deliberate WSSDA is about getting student voice on issues. For the workgroup, we probably got a lot more information from talking to students as opposed to just administrators or school board members. That’s also something that I recognized when I was on the school board in high school. So, I guess something I’ve learned is that it’s kind of a necessity to get the people that you’re representing into the conversation.



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A front-row seat

Sidnie Boadwine's story starts with a strike and ends with a pandemic.

By Katie Gillespie, *Columbian Education Reporter*

PHOTO: ALISHA JUCEVIC/The Columbian

The 18-year-old Battle Ground High School senior has had a front-row seat to some of the most consequential events for her school district. Since she was sworn in as a student representative to the school board in 2018, she's lent her perspective as the board has responded to boundary changes, sexual health education curriculum and the novel coronavirus pandemic.

It's an intersection of student and government leadership that Boadwine said has given her a deeper understanding of policy, as well as a sense of power in advocating for her fellow students.

"I never thought I would casually have conversations with our superintendent," Boadwine said. "It has taught me so much about talking to people ... and not being afraid."

Student representatives are uncommon in Washington. The Washington State School Directors' Association estimates that about 20 percent of school boards have a student member.

The Battle Ground School District, meanwhile, has two: Boadwine, and the junior representative, Battle Ground High School student Addelynn Smith. Student representatives' terms last for two years, and Boadwine is the first since the program began in 2018 to complete hers. She heads to Boise State University this fall to study medical science.

"I'm trying to think of other students who would be willing to put in that much time, and there are very few," said language arts teacher Heather Smithline, who nominated Boadwine for the position two years ago. "It takes up so much of their lives."

Student representatives attend all board meetings, workshops and public forums. They don't vote—they're appointed by the school board, not elected—but school board president Troy McCoy said Boadwine's perspective has been helpful on high-profile issues.

"Just recently they've been really helpful as far as sharing experiences on remote learning, what kind of graduation events they would like," McCoy said. Boadwine agreed.

"It has felt like the student reps have more responsibility," Boadwine said, adding that she's reported back to the board on how online learning is going, how her teachers are feeling, what life at home looks like and more.

"We have even more input and more responsibility now," she said. "Our input is what matters at the end of the day."

But a pandemic hasn't been the only eventful period during Boadwine's tenure. She was sworn in as teachers in Battle Ground and across the state prepared to go on strike following the resolution of the McCleary school funding lawsuit.

Boadwine recalled being sworn in with a sea of red-clad teachers behind her.

"All the teachers smiled at me because it was my first board meeting," she said. "It was a long process and really hard for a lot of people."

Boadwine also had the difficult job of keeping time for public commenters during the school board's debate over sexual health curriculum, which drew pressure from Battle Ground's politically and religiously conservative population.

"It's a lot for high school kids," she said. "These are adults who are getting up there for three minutes and spilling everything. Everyone has a right to say what they feel, but it's a lot to hear sometimes."

It hasn't all been drama, though. Boadwine championed the return of a policy allowing seniors to decorate their graduation caps.

"That's more my job, the stuff that comes from students themselves," she said.

Unfortunately, Boadwine won't be able to see the fruits of her labor. This would have been the first year students could have decorated their caps, but the coronavirus means in-person ceremonies won't be held.

Boadwine understands, though, and besides, at least next year's seniors will be able to enjoy this small legacy she leaves.

"You really try to make everyone happy," she said.

This story originally appeared in the Columbian on May 22, 2020, written by staff writer Katie Gillespie, titled "Battle Ground senior's time as school board's student rep quite an education."

"I never thought I would casually have conversations with our superintendent," Boadwine said. "It has taught me so much about talking to people... and not being afraid."

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Understanding and Protecting Local Effort Assistance (LEA)

– Daniel S. Lunghofer, MPA

Many Washington school districts rely on Local Effort Assistance (LEA) to serve the academic needs of students. For property-poor districts, LEA is essential for keeping doors open and providing rigorous instruction. While districts are navigating how to open schools and hold classes during the 2020-21 school year, the Legislature will meet in regular and possibly special sessions to address the revenue shortfall brought on by the current recession. Although we have heard that basic education funding will be preserved, we must be vigilant as the Legislature considers the reduction, or even elimination, of budget items outside of basic education—especially LEA.

What is LEA?

LEA is state funding provided to make up the difference between the amount a district is able to raise on its own through a levy and the amount set by the state as a minimum that a district should have.

The state has recognized a disparity in the ability of districts to raise money through local levies due to the differences in property values from county to county. In response to this disparity, legislators created Local Effort Assistance, which many district staff refer to as “levy equalization.” The intent of LEA funding is to help districts achieve a minimum level of combined state and local enrichment funding in an attempt to put all districts on equal ground.

The Legislature has also stated that LEA funding is not considered part of “basic education funding.” That means LEA is not within the state’s mandate of providing ample funding for all students; therefore, LEA is more vulnerable to budget cuts.

As mentioned above, LEA funding is intended to provide funding assistance for districts that cannot raise funds through local levies to the same extent as other districts. For 2020,* the Legislature

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LEA, CONTINUED FROM PG.7



Additional funding for programs that might not otherwise receive sufficient funding

has set a “threshold” amount of \$1589 per pupil; this is considered the minimum amount each district should be able to receive for enrichment funding via levy.

How is LEA calculated?

To calculate LEA, the state has set a levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, divides that by the district’s resident student enrollment, and compares that number with a threshold value of \$1,589 per pupil. If this formula generates less than \$1,589, a district may receive LEA funding to bring it up to that level.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction calculates LEA for every school district and then determines eligibility. The primary qualification to receive the funding is already having a voter-approved levy. Currently, only six school districts do not have a voter-approved levy. LEA applies only to enrichment levies. Other levies, like capital projects levies or technology levies, cannot be supplemented by LEA funding.

What about the “levy lid?”

The levy lid, or maximum amount that a district can levy, is the lesser of \$2.50 per \$1,000 of the assessed value of property or \$2,563 per student. For districts without a large property value base or a very large student enrollment count, it is difficult or near impossible to reach \$2,563 per student or even the state’s minimum threshold of \$1,589. That is where LEA comes in.

Determining LEA for an example district

A district can raise funds with a local levy up to the “lid” of \$2,563 per student plus receive LEA. For example, the McCleary School District in Grays Harbor County has an assessed value for 2020 levies of \$282,559,479. With a levy lid of \$2.50 per \$1000, this means that, for 2020, the district can generate \$706,399 in levy dollars, which happens to come out to \$1,745 per pupil.

For LEA at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, the levy would be \$423,839, which divided by the district’s resident enrollment of 404.76 gives a value of \$1,047 per student. The district will then receive \$542 per student in LEA funding to bring it up to the threshold of \$1,589. That yields a total of \$219,324 of LEA for 2020.

Why don’t some districts receive LEA?

First, as stated above, a district must have a voter-approved levy for the state to provide LEA funding.

Second, if a district’s per-pupil levy at a levy rate of \$1.50 is above the LEA threshold (\$1,589 for 2020), the district would not receive LEA funding. For example, Tacoma’s levy at \$1.50 is \$1,660 per pupil (levy amount of \$46,864,250 divided by an enrollment of 28,233.18). Since that number is higher than \$1,589, the district is ineligible for LEA funding.

What is LEA used for in districts and buildings?

Per RCW 28A.500.010, LEA funding may only be used for enrichment purposes, and not to provide a program of basic education. The state lays out what is considered “enrichment,” and it essentially includes any activity above and beyond what the state provides funding for. The listed enrichment activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Providing additional staff units above the number generated by the state’s funding formula.
- Additional program offerings above and beyond the state’s definition of basic education.
- Staff salaries for providing said additional program offerings.
- Extracurricular programs, like after-school programs, student athletics, student clubs, etc.
- Additional funding for programs that might not otherwise receive sufficient funding (i.e. student transportation, child nutrition, etc.).

How does LEA impact student learning?

This answer is really up to each district and the decisions they make. The amount of LEA funding that a district receives can vary from year to year, so the uses would be variable based on the district’s needs.

“The state has recognized that there exists a disparity in the ability of districts to raise money through local levies due to the differences in property values from county to county. In response to this disparity, legislators created Local Effort Assistance.”

“...a district must have a voter-approved levy in order for the state to provide LEA funding”.

Why is LEA important?

In 2018-2019, 223 districts reported receiving over \$375 million in LEA funding, which is approximately 3.23% of all revenues received by those districts during that school year. The amounts ranged from under \$10,000 to over \$15 million for some districts. If LEA revenue were cut statewide, these districts would find themselves having to make cuts to various enrichment programs they offer above and beyond the state funding. Even though the amount of funding changes from year to year and is never guaranteed – either because of changes in property values, student counts or Legislative action – districts that are currently receiving LEA plan on that funding continuing in the future. The continuity of this revenue plays a part in districts producing their four-year budget projections.

How can districts better communicate the importance of LEA?

Before districts can communicate the importance of LEA, they should prepare by collecting their information. The information should include how much LEA the district gets, what percentage of revenues it means for the district, and what would happen if the district lost that money.

The impacts of losing LEA funding are specific to each district, so that information should be tailored to reflect your own district’s needs and individual situation. For example, one district losing LEA may have to cut para-educator positions, while another might need to delay implementation of new curriculum or technology, and a third might need to cut part of an after-school program.

Like school boards and district staff, our legislators are faced with difficult decisions as they work to promote the welfare of Washington’s citizens. However, as you connect with your local legislators, having clear, detailed information to share will help them make informed decisions that will hopefully lead to protecting Local Effort Assistance.



Extracurricular programs, like after-school programs, student athletics, student clubs, etc.

* Local Effort Assistance and levy limits are adjusted annually to account for changes in inflation, as measured by changes in the annual average consumer price index for Seattle.

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TACOMA SCHOOL
BOARD DIRECTOR,
ANDREA COBB,
STEPS UP
TO A NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP
POSITION

by Alisa Reynolds

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Andrea Cobb has been a Tacoma School District board member for nearly five years. Since being on the board, she and her fellow board members have worked through several crises of varying severity. “It has been a crazy three years for board members,” Cobb expresses. “This year COVID-19, last year strikes, and the year before that we had some measles and mumps to deal with.” Though this turbulence seems to cause nothing but stress in the moment, when more closely examined, it can create positive outcomes that have a powerful impact.

Cobb explains that dealing with grander issues, “has forced board members to turn off autopilot in completing the regular tasks and be more proactive and reactive to what is happening in the current moment.” Turning off autopilot, as Cobb describes it, is an essential step in creating positive change. When you monotonously move through everyday tasks, you may miss opportunities for growth or ingenuity.

While managing COVID-19 closings and re-openings have been the highest priority for Cobb this year, she has still taken on a new and



“Turning off autopilot, as Cobb describes it, is an essential step in creating positive change. When you monotonously move through everyday tasks, you may miss opportunities for growth or ingenuity.”



vital role that helps her remain mindful of valuable opportunities to help her district and those with similar demographics.

In June, Cobb was appointed to the steering committee of the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), a national membership organization created by the National School Board Association (NSBA). Urban schools and underrepresented students are at the heart of CUBE's work.

CUBE believes that in order to meet the needs of historically underrepresented and underserved students you have to address the educational challenges in urban centers, close the student achievement gap, and provide all students equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education.

CUBE works toward these goals by creating educational opportunities for urban school board leaders to gain the knowledge and skills they need to serve as effective local education policymakers and advocates for equity in public education. They also provide school board members with professional development opportunities that assist them in developing knowledge and skills as a school board governance team.

Cobb describes CUBE as emulating a small community inside the larger NSBA group, and one that serves as a good barometer check for your district's equity work. As current events have led districts to take a closer look at their equity policies or lack thereof, CUBE has continued to equip its members with the tools they need to serve their students.

When asked if the recent growth of the Black Lives Matter movement has impacted CUBE's work, Cobb said, "CUBE has been saying for years what is being said now. What makes the difference is now others are included in the conversation. CUBE has more open ears to help enact change and create policy."

Cobb said she'd love to see even more Washington districts engaged with CUBE, and she's not the only one. Cobb believes that her appointment to the steering committee reflects the group's desire to work closer with more districts in the Pacific Northwest.

The CUBE Conference is a great place to learn more about the organization and how you can become involved. "Usually the cost of travel can be a barrier for school board members attending conferences, but this year the CUBE conference is virtual. I encourage board members to join in the conversation about achieving more equity and access through CUBE."

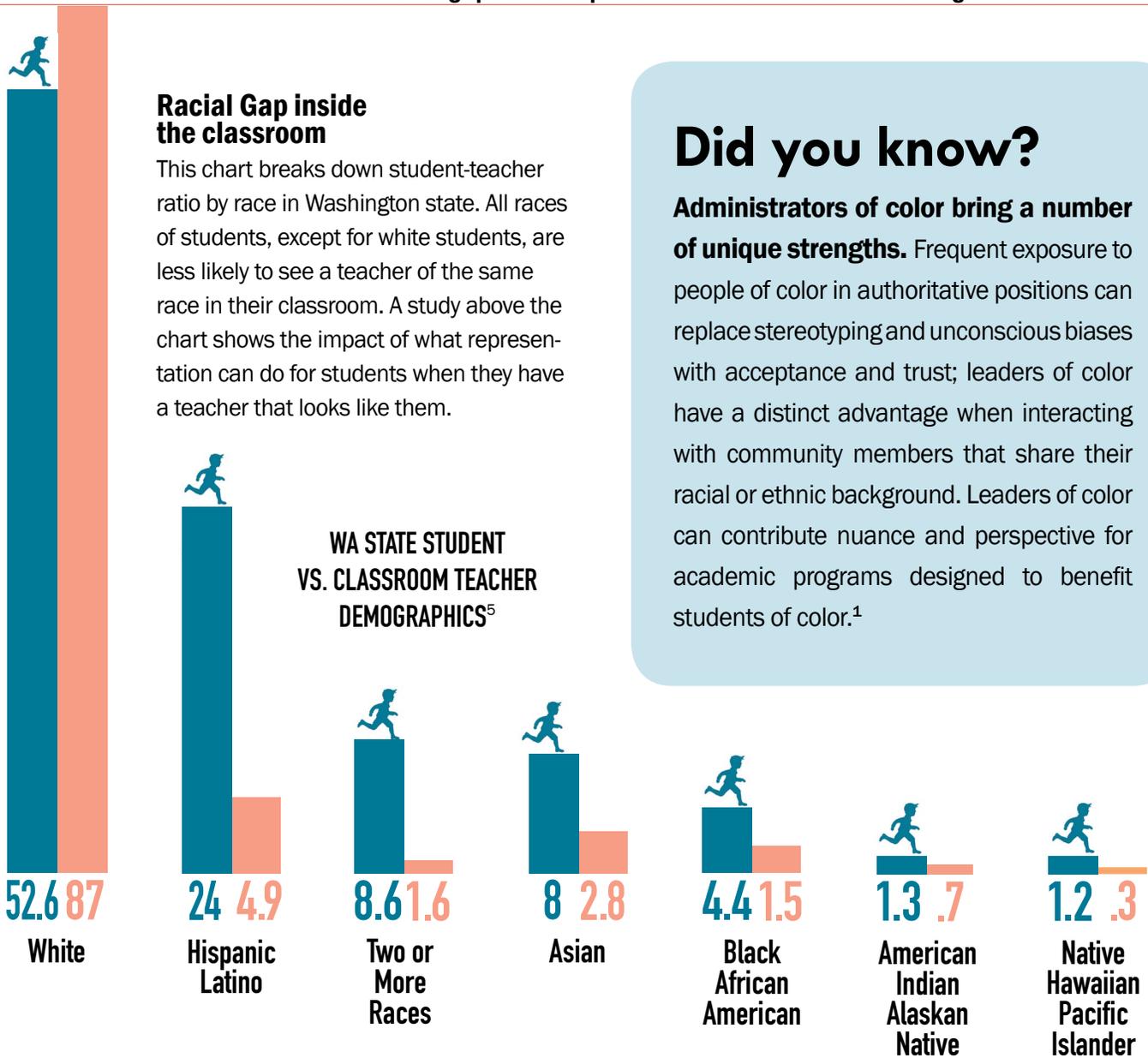
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Bridging the gap

by Rashaad O'Neal

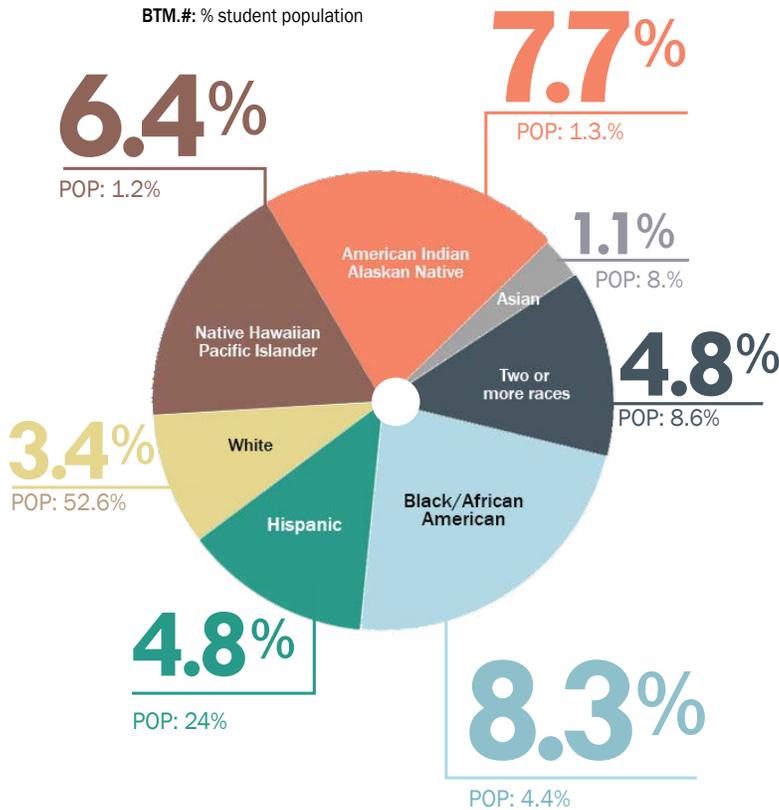
REPRESENTATION MIXED WITH EQUITABLE PRACTICES can lead to limitless success for all students in your school district. WSSDA has created an infographic that highlights eye-opening statistics from OSPI and studies conducted across the country. The infographic exhibits the importance of equity and representation in public schools and breaks down the educational gaps underrepresented students face in Washington state.



= % student = % teachers of same ethnicity

RATE OF STUDENTS EXCLUDED FROM CLASS³

TOP#: % students excluded from class
BTM.#: % student population



Discipline Gap inside the classroom

Washington state's discipline gap pie chart, also broken down by race, displays alarming statistics of students excluded from class for disciplinary reasons. According to OSPI, there are approximately 12 white students for every Black student in the state. Even though more white students are disciplined than Black students, only 3.4 percent of white students were disciplined, compared to 8.3 percent of Black students. Therefore, Black students are 20 times more likely than white students to be removed from class for disciplinary reasons.

School boards

that are more ethnically diverse (comprised of Black, white, and Hispanic board members) **reduce the probability of disciplinary suspensions for all students.** Studies also find that board diversity significantly **reduces disparity among minority and white students.**²



Equity just doesn't apply for students, it also applies to the faculty and staff employed in your districts. Creating equitable and welcoming workspaces for your employees of color plays a huge factor in retention rates for your teachers, school-level administrators and superintendents.

Black students **13%**
who'd had just **ONE** Black teacher by third grade were **13%** more likely to enroll in college; those who'd had two, were **32%** more likely.⁴

A national study published in the March 2017 Elementary School Journal found that **Black students are more likely** to be recommended for gifted programs in schools that have a **Black principal.**⁶

FOOTNOTES/SOURCES: ¹Racial Threat, Intergroup Contact, and School Punishment by Cresean Hughes, Patricia Y. Warren, Eric A. Stewart, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Daniel P. Mears (Research Paper first published Jan. 29, 2017); An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of K-12 Latina School Administrators in One California Region by Helen Rodriguez (University of California, Santa Barbara Dissertation published in 2017). ²Racial Threat, Intergroup Contact, and School Punishment by Cresean Hughes, Patricia Y. Warren, Eric A. Stewart, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Daniel P. Mears (Research Paper first published Jan. 29, 2017). ³Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)-Discipline Rate by Student Demographics in Washington State (2018-19 School Year). ⁴The Long-Run Impacts of Same Race Teachers by Seth Gershenson, Cassandra M. D. Hart, Joshua Hyman, Constance Lindsay, Nicholas W. Papageorge (Issued in The National Bureau of Economic Research on Nov. 2018). ⁵Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)-Enrollment by Student Demographics in Washington State (2019-20 School Year); Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)-Classroom Teachers by Teacher Demographics in Washington State (2018-19 School Year). ⁶Teacher and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs: Evidence from National Data by Jason A. Grissom, Luis A. Rodriguez, and Emily C. Kern of Vanderbilt University (Online on Feb. 10, 2017).



Offense or defense?

Effective boards focus on the big picture

by Dr. Ivan Lorentzen and Dr. William McCaw

Change is a tricky thing. Most of us prefer change to be incremental, self-initiated and personal. We currently find ourselves faced with change that is sudden, forced and public. As we are now painfully aware, we do not get to choose when or what kind of change arrives at our doorstep. But we do have a choice of how to respond.

The unwanted change we are currently experiencing doesn't mean that everything will get worse. While there has been tragedy and loss, some things will get better. New businesses will be invented, new careers will emerge, health strategies and preparedness will improve, and personal dreams and desires will re-focus on a new and different tomorrow.

Before that happens, though, schools and school boards are under intense pressure and scrutiny as they adapt to improved ways of providing effective student learning. If we are smart, we can use the current situation as an opportunity for significant improvement of public education by fixing things too-long postponed. Done right, the public education that emerges could be better than before. It all depends on whether we use this as an opportunity to strengthen those things that worked and honestly and bravely re-examine those things that never did.

Follow the research

Boards should start by looking inward at their own performance. This is a time to enact changes in boardsmanship shown to advantage all students and abandon harmful and counterproductive practices of the past. These changes should not be based on personal preference, intuition, or political promises of board members, but on research showing which board behaviors are correlated with student outcomes.

But what does effective boardsmanship look like? More than two decades of research and data describe how the most effective boards go about their work. Effective boards focus on the big picture - on strategic-level issues and on collaborative teamwork. To use a metaphor, consider whether your board is playing offense or defense. While both strategies have their place within the governing board, boards need to spend more time collaborating on issues of importance and playing offense, and less time arguing about urgent or operational issues and playing defense

By their very nature, urgent issues call for quick reactions and often lead to controversial or contentious board meetings where board members advocate for conflicting solutions. Resulting board debates can elevate these differences and the discussion escalates beyond the importance and implications of the actual incident. When too much board time is spent reacting to urgent or operational issues, little time or energy is left for more important issues that make a real difference for the students in their district.

Playing offense by focusing on the big picture

If boards instead focus on offense, their time will be spent on strategies designed to move the district toward the overarching goal for public education— success for each and every student.

Board agendas of the most effective districts are filled with issues of district-wide importance with long-term implications – things only the board can address. A board's focus on issues like community engagement, accountability, establishing high expectations, improving effective governance, and creating the conditions for student and staff success is statistically related to higher student achievement.

School boards set the tone

Focusing on issues of district-wide importance and conducting meetings in a professional, collaborative, and business-like manner puts the focus on student well-being and achievement. Research shows a relationship between high levels of board collaboration and high student achievement.

Research also reveals that with a board agenda freed from divisive urgency, time can be better spent discussing important issues vital to student success and can create a climate and culture of collaboration. Developing policy consistent with legal constraints, collaborating on safety and security improvements, studying facility or technology updates, or improving community interactions are all examples of a board playing offense. Issues such as these – which generate little or no fanfare - are the most important issues a board can address and can lead to an increased collaborative working atmosphere within the board.

Establishing a respectful, business-like atmosphere also steals publicity and notoriety from individual board members intent on using their position for personal or political gain. Board meetings reduced to public theater can become a vehicle for any individual to champion a cause detrimental to the well-being of the district and its students, which negatively impacts the entire system. Board meeting agendas that are dominated by contentious or urgent issues are typical for a board playing defense, which occurs at the expense of advancing student achievement. In contrast, boards

playing offense design agendas to address important issues that benefit student achievement. Managing the kinds of items on the agenda – urgent vs. important – is a way for districts to steer the conversation to issues that really matter for student success.

Highly effective school boards govern effective districts

The time is ripe for transforming board governance of public education into a system that works for every student. Board members take an oath to serve as stewards of public education and thus are duty-bound to do thoughtful, hard, and good work on behalf of students. Every school board’s goal should be to govern the district for high achievement with every student in mind, producing high graduation and low dropout rates. This happens when boards operate not from intuition, but from informed decision-making. So pay attention to the agenda; avoid unnecessary drama; create a respectful, professional climate in which people are treated with respect; and play offense by focusing on important, long-term issues. Everyone wins with this strategy.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Dr. Ivan Lorentzen (left) is a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, MT. Dr. William McCaw (right), is the William C. Shreeve Chair in Educational Leadership at the University of Montana in Missoula. They have conducted research for ten years using student achievement data and WSSDA’s Washington School Board Standards in five states that established a correlation between board behaviors and student outcomes.

Research shows that boards in effective districts, as measured by student achievement scores, focus their work on “playing offense” rather than “defense.”

<p>PLAYING OFFENSE MORE effective boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat each other and staff with a high degree of respect and professionalism • Work to collaborate on long-range initiatives and strategies • Delegate most urgent issues to the superintendent • Create board agendas filled with issues of district-wide importance and long-term implications 	<p>PLAYING DEFENSE LESS effective boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an adversarial or mistrustful relationship with staff and peers • Focus on items not connected to an over-arching strategy • Regularly debate urgent issues • Create meeting agendas filled with urgent issues that fall within the operational realm, leaving no room for long-term or visionary work
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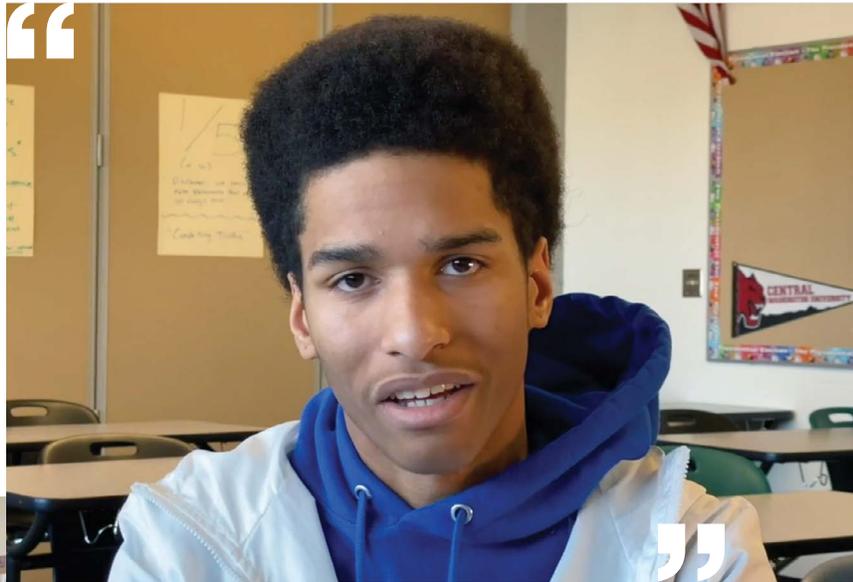
Links to top news in education: ed policy, opinion, legislative impact, research and more.

wssda.org/eclippings

BEING AFRICAN AMERICAN is...

Being African American to me is just one of the more important things in my life considering it's who I am. Being Black to me means that I can do what others think I can't.

SANTANA T., STUDENT >



Being Black has given me even more of a reason to stand out, and not necessarily in a bad way. Sometimes it's great to be that one person in the crowd that everyone's looking at because, you know, honestly, Black people are so beautiful and it makes me feel special because it gives me more of a reason to succeed and push myself harder and be what maybe people don't expect me to be.

< JENASIS L., STUDENT

There's so much goodness to it, especially in culture, because there's just so much love, joy, creativity, and imagination; and it's practically just limitless. My effort would be to educate people because not many people know about my culture, who I am, who my friends are, why I am the way I am.

DESMOND B., STUDENT >





WSSDA **ONcall**

What can schools say about current hot-button issues?

Schools are the heart of the community, confronting a myriad of social issues — racism, the role of law enforcement and public health, to name a few. Handling hot-button issues isn't easy, but there are skills all of us can develop.

Know where you are

Schools constitute a laboratory of civic engagement — teaching and illustrating how to engage in constructive dialogue to students, staff, and the community. It would be irresponsible for schools to teach about historic conflicts but ignore the conflicts of today. Such discussions bring curriculum to life, develop critical thinking skills, and create the foundation for generations of civic dialogue. A first step is to recognize that we can welcome reasoned disagreement instead of seeking to avoid it. Still, it will be important to understand how your district, your office, and you personally, handle controversial issues. There likely are written policies; there probably are unwritten expectations as well.

Recognize the goal

Whether one-on-one, via social media or through virtual meetings, the goal of difficult conversations is to find common ground and build mutual understanding, not to decide who is right. Invest in yourself. Educate yourself and expand your knowledge about the topic you will be addressing, no matter how much you think you know.

Pay attention to relevance

Things will go smoother if you develop a sense of timing. Some emails, phone calls or other interactions call for an immediate response. But no matter the urgency, always take time to think through your responses beforehand.

Construct the conversation

Resources abound to learn how to conduct respectful conversations. Though many techniques sound simple and obvious, they require forethought and practice:

- Avoid leading questions, such as, "Don't you think ...?"
- Consider the unexpected and prepare for it. Someone might bait you into arguing. How will you respond? Role-playing in your mind or in front of a mirror is helpful. Practicing with others is even better.
- Check your own assumptions, biases, and generalizations. Each person's experiences are unique, despite whatever similarities they share. Respect their individuality, not expecting them to be the spokesperson for a certain group or experience unless they assume that role.
- Acknowledge that each of us has more to learn.

Practice does not make perfect, but it does improve the odds of a positive outcome.

This was excerpted from a longer article that appeared in WSSDA's OnCall. Subscribe to OnCall for ready-to-use district communication content, tools, and tips.

I want kids to come to school and feel like they belong here and not have to leave a part of themselves behind. I want them to be able to have a home here, have friends, have some kind of support system. And I feel like we can give them that as BSU. And if we all come together, then it'll be a lot better than just them being by themselves. We're the people that can change what happens here. If we feel like something isn't right, then we can do that, and we can make it right.

MARISSA L., STUDENT



> Marysville School District is proud of students' efforts to raise awareness about racism and share ideas on how to improve, together. More plans are underway for listening sessions to lead the way for positive change. #WeAreMSD #BLM. Check out "Marysville Black Student Unions" from MarysvilleSD on Vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/429428090>



This story and many more can be found at ourkidswa.com. Let districts statewide see your good news by sending it to ourkids@wssda.org.

direct

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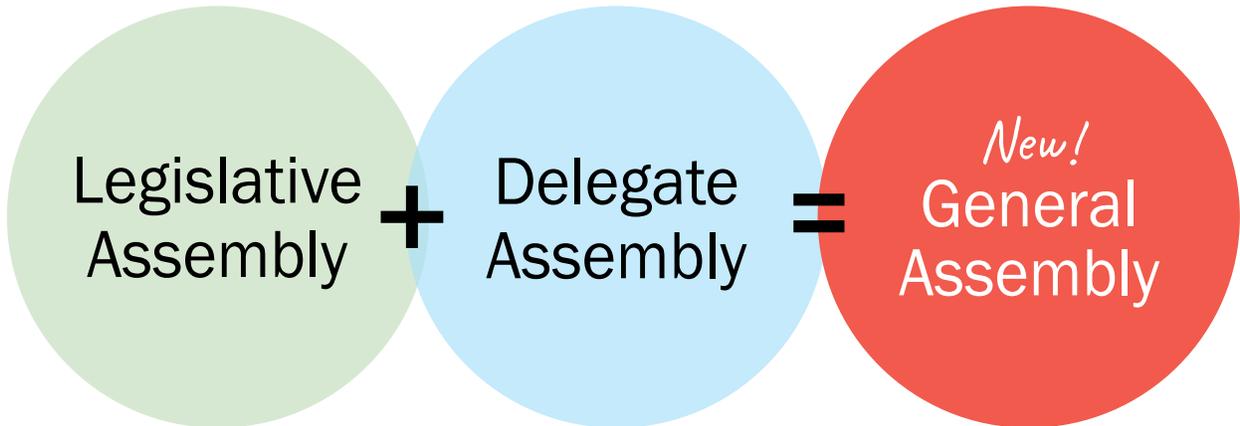
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