

Washington State Superintendents Support Race to the Top Reforms

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Members of the Washington State Legislature:

As superintendents of school districts across the state charged with ensuring our students are prepared for college and careers, we are actively watching the Race to the Top legislation in the state Senate and House (SB 6696). We applaud the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, and the many legislators who are deeply committed to this effort. The goals of the Obama Administration's \$4.35 billion Race to the Top grant—effective teachers and principals, turning around low-performing schools, better data systems and higher standards –not only call for the right reforms at the right time, they will help us accelerate the achievement of every student.

Right now, across Washington state, districts not only lack the ability to adequately identify, evaluate and compensate their most effective teachers and leaders, we are unable to support a system where they are teaching the students who need them the most.

This legislative session, we have a chance to change things: Race to the Top provides states with an opportunity to drive and fund bold innovations that increase student performance and close the achievement gap.

We know Washington is starting behind many other states, but we are up to the task the Obama Administration has set before us and believe that, with the political will and several critical reforms, our state could lead the nation with an education system that prepares all its students for the challenges of tomorrow. In order to meet this challenge, our state's Race to the Top legislation must include the following critical elements:

- **The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must work collaboratively with the Washington Education Association and the Association of Washington School Principals to develop a common, required system for effective teacher and principal evaluation, including measures of student growth.** Washington must agree on a common definition of an effective teacher, an effective principal and how to measure student growth statewide.
- **A significant portion of the teacher and principal evaluation system must include multiple measures of student academic growth.** If we are serious about closing the achievement gap, we need to make sure teachers and principals are first, supported to address the diverse learning needs in our schools and classrooms, and then, evaluated and held accountable for the academic growth of every student.
- **Once the new evaluation system is implemented, teachers and principals who receive unsatisfactory evaluations must be given professional development and support to improve. If these interventions do not impact a teacher's or principal's effectiveness for two consecutive years, the teacher should be placed back on provisional status and, after a third year of support that still results in unsatisfactory performance, the teacher or principal should lose his/her contract.** Every student deserves an excellent teacher, and every school, an excellent principal. We need to make sure we are giving all teachers and principals the opportunity to grow and providing those who do not, an expedient way out of our schools.

If the state passes strong Race to the Top legislation, is successful in getting federal funds, and works together on a statewide system, we will be able to transform our present evaluation systems and create one that provides teachers and principals with support for effective professional development and meaningful feedback focused on increasing student achievement.

As a state, Washington must support educators who help our children learn, grow and succeed. It is the key to our future.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn

Anacortes Superintendent Chris Borgen

Auburn Superintendent Kip Herren

Bainbridge Island Superintendent Faith Chapel

Bellevue Superintendent Amalia Cudeiro

Bethel Superintendent Tom Siegel

Clover Park Superintendent Debbie LeBeau

Dieringer Superintendent Judy Neumeier-Martinson

Eatonville Superintendent Ray Arment

Educational Service District 105 Superintendent Jane Gutting

Educational Service District 112 Superintendent Twyla Barnes

Enumclaw Superintendent Mike Nelson

Fife Superintendent Steve McCammon

Highline Superintendent John Welch

Kennewick School District Superintendent Dave Bond

Kent Superintendent Lee Vargas

Lake Washington Superintendent Chip Kimball

Mercer Island Superintendent Gary Plano

Nooksack Superintendent Mark Johnson

Northshore Superintendent Larry Francois

Northwest Educational Service District 189 Superintendent Jerry Jenkins

Odessa Superintendent Suellen White

Orting Superintendent Michelle Curry

Peninsula Superintendent Terry Bouck

Puget Sound Educational Service District Superintendent Monte Bridges

Renton Superintendent Mary Alice Heuschel

Seattle Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson

Shoreline Superintendent Sue Walker

Skykomish Superintendent Jeff Long

Snoqualmie Valley Superintendent Joel Aune

Sumner Superintendent Gil Mendoza

Tacoma Superintendent Art Jarvis

Tahoma Superintendent Mike Maryanski

Tukwila Superintendent Ethelda Burke

University Place Superintendent Patti Banks

Vancouver Superintendent Steven Webb

Vashon Superintendent Michael Soltman

West Valley School District Polly Crowley

White River Superintendent Tom Lockyer