

April 10, 2009

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Washington State Governor
416 14th Avenue SW, Suite 200
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

Washington state has a chance to receive new money to aid public education through the Obama Administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This opportunity may be lost for our students if lawmakers do not pass basic education legislation aligned with the reform principles of ARRA this session.

Two streams of money are at risk:

1. Approximately \$330 million that our state anticipates receiving this fall from the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) to help school districts plug deficits and avoid layoffs.
2. Hundreds of millions in additional dollars that Washington can compete for from the \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top Fund," the \$650 million "Invest in What Works and Innovation Fund" and over \$550 million in other competitive grants to help school districts and the state accelerate student performance.

The first round of SFSF funds—roughly \$670 million—will be released soon based on Governor Gregoire's "commitment to the following four essential areas of reform:

1. Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and ensuring that all schools have highly qualified teachers;
2. Making progress toward college and career-ready standards and rigorous assessments that will improve both teaching and learning;
3. Improving achievement in low-performing schools, by providing intensive support and effective interventions in schools that need them the most;
4. Gathering information to improve student learning, teacher performance, and college and career-readiness through enhanced data systems that track progress."

The federal government will not release the second round of SFSF funds—the extra \$330 million—unless Washington "demonstrates that it collects the required data [related to the four reforms], and that it will make the data easily accessible to the public." Without legislative action this session, our state cannot do this—leaving hundreds of millions of dollars on the table at a time when our communities and schools are hurting for resources.

Further, the largest of the competitive grants—the \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top Fund"—is designed to help drive substantial gains in student achievement by supporting states making dramatic progress on the four reform goals. To keep Washington competitive, we should align our basic education bills to these goals.

The House and Senate have shown leadership by passing elements of what is required to be eligible for Washington's full share of SFSF dollars and compete for millions more. But, by the end of this session, both chambers must come together to pass legislation that:

1. Defines basic education based on college and work ready standards;
2. Authorizes the state to take action related to chronically low-performing schools;
3. Enables a data system to track student learning and success across the P-20 education spectrum; and

4. Expands performance-based teacher certification and evaluation.

Last year, Washington turned away \$13 million from the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) for Advanced Placement math and science programs because individual teachers would have received extra pay. In this time of economic crisis in our state, we cannot continue to shortchange our students by passing up much-needed resources.

As you continue to do your best to fund critical programs in this difficult time, taking strong action on basic education legislation will open the door for hundreds of millions of dollars for our students. We implore you to act now on behalf our state's students

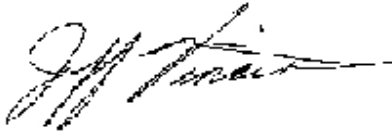
Sincerely,



Brad Smith
Chair, Partnership for Learning
SVP & General Counsel, Microsoft



Steve Mullin, President
Washington Roundtable



Jeff Vincent, CEO & President
Laird Norton Company



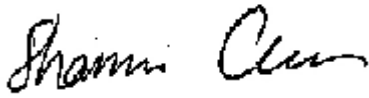
Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools



Susannah Malarkey, Executive Director
Technology Alliance



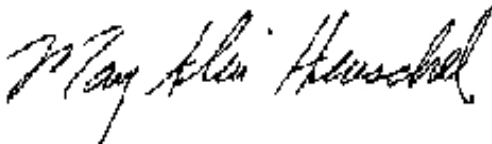
Terry Byington, Executive Director
TechAmerica



Shannon Campion, Executive Director
Stand for Children



Chris Korsmo, Executive Director
League of Education Voters



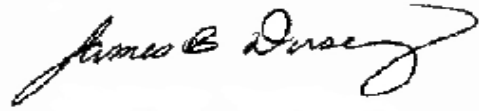
Mary Alice Heuschel, Superintendent
Renton School District



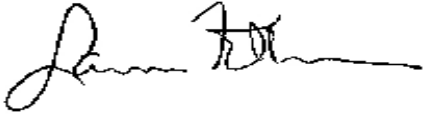
Trish Millines Dziko, Co-Founder &
Executive Director
Technology Access Foundation



Mark Johnson, Superintendent
Nooksack Valley School District



James Dorsey, Executive Director
Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement (MESA)
University of Washington



Laura Kohn, Executive Director
The New School Foundation

Enclosures: April 1, 2009 Letter from Education Secretary Arne Duncan to Nation's Governors

CC: Washington Legislators