

Statement of WSSDA President Mari Taylor on the newly passed education budget

March 14, 2014

We'd like to thank the legislature for stepping up this short session with additional K-12 funding. We recognize it's tough to do without new revenues, but legislators understood the need to make a larger investment in our kids. The modest funding addition, restoration of some basic education funding to districts that receive timber payments and approval of the 24-credit bill are real wins for our students.

The additional K-12 funding includes \$58 million for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs. This money means a boost of about \$50 for a total of nearly \$850 per student in the 2014-15 school year. MSOC funds a broad range of expenses, from technology to books to utilities. The budget also includes an additional \$164 per student in grades 9-12 to begin to phase in the 24-credit diploma.

With SB 6552, legislators adopted a thoughtful approach to increase rigor and better prepare our students for college and careers. They acknowledged that funding, flexibility and fairness need to be part of the final solution when they authorized this new 24-credit requirement for our high school students.

HB 2207 is the first step to restoring funding for all 215 districts that receive federal forest payments and have their state basic education funding reduced by an equal amount. The bill allows 81 districts, those with the highest poverty, to keep both their federal funding and their state money. This breaks a 32-year-old state practice of deducting the payments from districts that receive federal timber funding to offset the loss of taxable property.

There is still a lot of work to do to implement the new basic education funding structure and activities and to ensure that the state revenue to meet the state's paramount duty to our K-12 students is stable, sustainable and comprehensive. We look forward to working with legislators on the next biennial budget to get the state on track for full funding of basic education.