



# 2014 Annual Report

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Using the power of public education to change lives

*"To say my fate is not tied to yours is like saying that your end of the boat is sinking." -Hugh Downs*

Over the past year, WSSDA and school board members across our state have made an unprecedented effort to step up. Many of the challenges in public education have been brought into sharp relief by our willingness to call out problems and seek solutions, rather than blame.

From NCLB waivers to ESEA reauthorization, from McCleary to equity, this was our year to take on the big ones.

In early 2014, after the dubious honor of being the first state to lose our NCLB waiver from the US Department of Education, WSSDA formally requested a moratorium on the "failure" letters required by DOE. WSSDA led the charge that prompted 170 school board resolutions demanding reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

No Child Left Behind, as the law is also known, was an aspirational effort to identify and support our most struggling students. Twelve years later, it has become outmoded and destructive. In its current form, the law has resulted in punitive actions against nearly all public schools - remember those "failing school" letters? - including financial sanctions that are most damaging to our most vulnerable kids.

WSSDA members joined school directors from across the nation in Washington DC to work with congressional leaders, legislative staff and others to find a path to reauthorization. We brought a clear message: *Our nation's children are not partisan bargaining chips. We demand action to pass a law that supports a quality, equitable education to every child regardless of his or her background or zip code.*

With income inequality at its highest level in history and more than 20% of America's children living in poverty, the urgency of our task is clear.

After more than a year of pressure, there appears to be some progress. Congressional leaders are certainly more aware of the critical nature of reauthorization and have put forward legislation that may actually become law. This would eliminate the need for waivers and damaging accountability measures. It would allow us to put more of our energy into providing a quality education for every child. Washington's congressional leaders have been instrumental in this progress.

At the state level, roughly two-thirds of board members at Legislative Assembly voted to approve a statement urging the state legislature *"to enhance revenue in order to provide ample funding for K-12 education to comply with the court order in the McCleary case... without harming other parts of the budget that support students in school and in life."*

The final statement was the result of passionate, vigorous and respectful debate on the responsibility and role of board members in a challenging time - a commendable example of democracy at work.

WSSDA has begun to address the other side of the oft-quoted Paramount Duty statement: *"to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex."*

Somewhere near July 2011, we reached a tipping point in the US. According to the Census Bureau, children of color made up 50.4% of infants in our nation. Fast-forward to 2014-2015 school year - the first ever that public school enrollment

nationwide is a majority students of color. With a child poverty rate of more than 20%, students face unprecedented barriers to school success.

We can no longer afford to treat underserved students as a footnote in our academic achievement efforts. These ARE our students. We are responsible for their success.

Many districts across our state are making remarkable progress in reducing achievement and opportunity gaps and eliminating barriers for students of color and those living in poverty. WSSDA has undertaken efforts to support the development of board members of color and to empower existing board members to better serve all children “without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex.” This is critical work: moral, ethical, socially responsible and economically beneficial.

This has been a year of courageous, visible leadership on the part of school board members across our state. Our united voice is making a difference for kids.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to an equitable, quality education for each of Washington’s children. Together through the power of public education we can change children’s lives, building stronger families, stronger communities and ultimately a stronger nation.



**Mari Taylor**  
**WSSDA President, 2014**





## A busy year of conferences, regional meetings and legislative prep

# Meetings with school directors highlight my first year at WSSDA

by Alan Burke

As a new Executive Director, my introduction to WSSDA was a professionally rewarding—and busy—experience. After a productive Legislative Assembly in September, much of the fall was devoted to preparing for the 2015 legislative session, one that promises to be a watershed moment for public education. Notably, WSSDA positions on school funding, assessment changes, USED waivers and the like were established with plenty of time to assure that our message was delivered to key legislators.

The annual conference in Spokane was a rousing success, with a crowd that exceeded 1,000 and keynote speeches and breakout sessions that underscored the theme of “Inspire. Celebrate. Lead.” The gathering included roughly half of the Washington’s elected school board members and well over half of the state’s superintendents. The positive conference evaluations backed up what we saw and heard during the three-day event. Indeed, this was one of our most successful conferences ever.

Financially WSSDA is in a good position. Dues remained frozen at 2011 rates, and member services like policy reviews, leadership development workshops, board self-assessment, and Board Docs, our official online board information and support program, remain popular items. Our policy services department, particularly, enjoyed increasing membership and interest from the field.

Attendance at spring and fall regional meetings was strong, with evaluations that showed consistently positive reactions from participants. In the fall, the

topics of adequate funding, paramount duty, and legislative proposals dominated conversations.

As in the past, we enjoyed perspectives from representatives of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education at each of the 11 regional meetings. Personally, I attended most of the fall regional meetings and completed a tour of small districts in Southeast Washington. I always find it illuminating and rewarding to visit schools and board members on their home turf.

On the communications front, eClippings, our daily listing of key education articles from newspapers and other information sources, continued to be hugely popular with subscription numbers hovering around 3000. It is rare to find anyone in the Washington education policy world that does not rely on eClippings as their daily news source. And, importantly, Our Kids, Our Future, with its wonderful series of video clips showing the good things that are occurring in schools, enjoyed positive reviews and increasing viewership.

All in all, 2014 was a good year at WSSDA. For me, watching carefully as our 1,477 members do their everyday work supporting kids and staff in their local communities, I was more than impressed. Our system of local control works—in 295 different ways across the state. The contributions of citizen board members who give up their time and energy to make schools successful is heartwarming—and crucial to the future of public education.

Thanks to board members for what they do each and every day.



## A LOOK BACK AT 2014

# WSSDA's top accomplishments



### Dues held steady for fourth consecutive year

WSSDA kept a tight rein on its spending in 2014, allowing it to hold dues flat for the fourth straight year. The conservative spending also allowed the association to make needed investments in its policy services and reduce long-term debt. Revenue of \$3.1 million assured the association's financial health. "We are optimistic we'll be able to continue to keep dues steady in the near future and still cover unanticipated emergencies," said then President-elect Chris Nieuwenhuis. Spending in 2014 was about the same level as seven years ago, despite inflation.



### WSSDA hires new executive director

In June, the WSSDA Board of Directors officially hired Alan Burke as the association's executive director. Immediately after the announcement, WSSDA received numerous messages of congratulations. Burke had previously been deputy superintendent at OSPI and before that, a long-time educator with a 35-year career as teacher, principal and, eventually, superintendent of the Yelm School District. The press release announcing his hire was downloaded nearly a thousand times, making it one of the most popular items on the association's website.



### Three boards get top honors as Boards of the Year

Union Gap, University Place and Everett got top honors in the 2014 Boards of Distinction program. The three boards were chosen from a field of 23 nominated from across Washington State. "Each of the boards has shown how a commitment to quality education for all kids can translate into real progress, said Mari Taylor, outgoing WSSDA president. Sunnyside was honored for five straight years of recognition as a board of distinction. An independent review panel named 17 boards across the state as Boards of Distinction. In addition to the above four, they included: Bellingham, Clover Park, Ferndale, Issaquah, Kent, Lake Stevens, Pasco, Pullman, Puyallup, Riverview, Tacoma, Tumwater and West Valley (Spokane).







### **Annual conference attracts another large crowd and high marks**

More than 1,000 people flocked to WSSDA's 2014 Annual Conference in Spokane. Attendance and evaluation marks matched the year before, which was one of the most popular in conference history. The crowd included 710 school directors and 184 superintendents, both well above the number for the year before. Social media was incorporated into the conference for the first time and 660 people downloaded the app, much higher than anticipated. The conference theme was "Inspire. Celebrate. Lead." It included 60 breakout sessions and a busload of attendees also took advantage of an opportunity to get a hands-on view of a new skills center, Spokane Valley Tech. New open government training sessions were quickly filled.



### **WSSDA policy services launches major upgrade**

WSSDA launched the upgraded Docs Online system powered by BoardDocs. The system provides districts with cutting-edge policy management technology, featuring exceptionally fast search, sort and download capability. It also delivers two flagship services, Policy and Legal News and Model Policy Online. The upgrade led to a jump in subscriptions and customer satisfaction, as well as traffic to the WSSDA website. The busy year also saw four new policies and procedures and the update of 46 others. Committee work was on time and on budget. Finally, WSSDA contracted with five school attorneys to expand policy services statewide.



### **Our Kids, Our Future launch leads to new resource for thousands**

A WSSDA-led partnership spurred the February launch of a new website to highlight stories of education excellence across Washington State. By the end of the year, the site was visited 11,000 times with 34,000 story views. Districts from across the state - large and small - provided nearly 700 articles and videos. The partnership itself also grew from six to eight organizations. Top stories during the year covered topics ranging from Chromebooks to professional umpiring and from the use of STEM learning in school construction to a music video done to the tune of RESPECT.



### **WSSDA hires first Eastern Washington representative**

In September, WSSDA brought on board Tricia Lubach, a leadership development training specialist. Lubach, a school director and training consultant from Quincy, became the association's first staffer based east of the mountains.



### **Member Survey**

School directors gave WSSDA relatively high marks in the association's second online member survey, which is now done every two years. Most products and services received an 80 percent satisfaction rate, which is above average by industry standards. While awareness of the association's flagship products remained high, work still needs to be done in some areas. Ninety percent of members said WSSDA has contributed to their understanding of the education system. Three quarters of respondents said their experience on school boards has been "very positive." Two thirds said they devote 11 or more hours per month to school board work.



### **Fall Regional Meetings draw large crowds**

The 2014 Fall Regional Meetings drew the largest crowds ever when a total of 441 attendees, including 337 school directors, went to 11 Director Area sessions. The total compared to 413 in spring of 2013, a previous high. More districts were also included. One hundred and thirty-six different districts attended the fall 2014 sessions, the most for any set of meetings for which WSSDA has a count. Evaluations of regional meetings have also improved over the past several years, reflecting the increased popularity.



### **Legislative Assembly prepares WSSDA for big session**

September's Legislative Assembly in Yakima attracted 125 delegates from 85 districts across the state. The assembly approved 45 new positions in preparation for what was anticipated as an education-focused legislative session. The event was the inaugural one for new Government Relations Director Deb Merle, who received major help from former school director Kathryn Simpson. The assembly set stable funding, capital construction, learning environments and state mandates as top legislative priorities. Following the assembly, WSSDA established new protocols for weekly legislative updates, bill and budget watches and conference calls with the Legislative Committee, board, and legislative representatives.



### **WSSDA Website sees sharp growth in traffic**

Customers flocked to WSSDA's Website in increasing numbers during 2014. In the second half of the year, users came to the site nearly 200,000 times to view nearly 400,000 items. Visits were up 27% during the six-month period, and users downloaded 55,000 documents. Much of this was driven by the increasing number of subscribers to eClippings, which promoted items at the site. All told for 2014, the site had 380,000 visitors viewing a total of more than 823,000 pages. The six most popular pages included, eClippings, policy resources, the annual conference, board of directors, calendar and superintendent openings.

## FINANCE REPORT

# Strong financial growth in 2014

The report is a condensed summary of the Statement of Position and Statement of Activities as of December 31, 2014. WSSDA ended the 2014 fiscal year with an increase in revenue over expenditures of \$518,581.

## STATEMENT OF NET POSITION

The report provides a broad overview of the association's finances and serves as a useful indicator of WSSDA's financial position in 2014 compared to 2013.

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

The Statement of Activities focuses on revenue and expense activity for the year. As of December 31, 2014 revenue of \$3,095,218 exceeded expense of \$2,576,637 adding to the fund balance \$518,581.

The Statement of Net Position and the Statement of Activities correspond with each other with a total fund balance of \$3,398,021.

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Long term debt decreased \$80,000.
- The Annual Conference in Spokane provided revenue of \$559,015 with an expense of \$433,494.
- No annual dues increase in 2012, 2013 or 2014.
- Revenue exceeded expense, adding \$518,581 to the fund balance.



## FINANCE REPORT

# Statement of net position

### ASSETS

	2014	2013	Amount Increase (Decrease)
Current Assets	\$2,665,255	\$2,197,356	\$467,899
Capital Assets, Net of Depreciation	1,206,706	1,226,664	(19,958)
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>3,871,961</b>	<b>3,424,020</b>	<b>447,941</b>

### LIABILITIES

			Amount Increase (Decrease)
Current Liabilities	184,401	146,375	38,026
Long-Term Liabilities:			
Compensated Absences	109,539	138,206	(28,667)
Mortgage Due after One Year	180,000	260,000	(80,000)
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>473,940</b>	<b>544,581</b>	<b>(70,641)</b>

### NET POSITION

			Amount Increase (Decrease)
Net Investment in Capital Assets	866,706	886,665	(19,959)
Unassigned	2,531,315	1,992,775	538,540
<b>TOTAL NET POSITION</b>	<b>\$3,398,021</b>	<b>\$2,879,440</b>	<b>\$518,581</b>

## FINANCE REPORT

# Statement of activities

## EXPENSES

### Current by Program

Association Services	\$979,145
Less Capital Asset Outlays	(17,474)
Less Principal Payment on Mortgage	(80,000)
Plus Disposals (net book value)	(554)
Plus Depreciation Expense	37,986
Decrease in Compensated Absences Liability	(28,667)
<b>TOTAL ASSOCIATION SERVICES</b>	<b>890,436</b>

Policy and Legal Services	480,904
Governmental Relations	304,078
Leadership Development	291,891
Annual Conference	398,074
Communications and Marketing	211,254
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>2,576,637</b>

## REVENUES

### Program Revenues

Charges for Services:	
Association Services	1,746,483
Policy and Legal Services	567,428
Governmental Relations	72,506
Leadership Development	90,707
Annual Conference	558,163
Communications and Marketing	38,058
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3,073,345</b>

### Other Revenue

Interest Income	12,973
Other Income	8,900
<b>TOTAL GENERAL REVENUE</b>	<b>21,873</b>

**TOTAL REVENUE** 3,095,218

Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues over Expenses	518,581
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### Changes in Net Position

Beginning	2,879,440
Ending	\$3,398,021



## OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# WSSDA Leadership

### 2014 OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

**Mari Taylor**

Lake Stevens

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PRESIDENT-ELECT

**Chris Nieuwenhuis**

Deer Park

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VICE PRESIDENT

**Chris Nation**

Marysville

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IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

**Debra Long**

Spokane

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### 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DIRECTOR AREA 1

**David Iseminger**

Lake Stevens

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DIRECTOR AREA 2

**Carol Van Noy**

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DIRECTOR AREA 2

**Nancy Merrill**

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DIRECTOR AREA 3

**Rick Maloney**

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DIRECTOR AREA 4

**Cindy Kelly**

Port Angeles

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DIRECTOR AREA 5

**Chuck Namit**

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DIRECTOR AREA 6

**Patty Wood**

Kelso

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DIRECTOR AREA 7

**Aurora Flores**

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DIRECTOR AREA 8

**Bruce Drollinger**

Naches Valley School District

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DIRECTOR AREA 9

**Joanne Greer**

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DIRECTOR AREA 10

**Harmon Smith**

LaCrosse School District

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DIRECTOR AREA 11

**Larry Ayre**

Finley School District

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# About WSSDA

## MISSION

The Washington State School Directors' Association provides leadership and advocacy, and empowers its members with knowledge and skills to govern with excellence

## VISION

All Washington School Directors effectively govern to ensure all students' success.

## BELIEFS

- Public education is vital to our country's democratic way of life and local school boards are vital to the success of public education.
- Quality schools require ethical, effective governance and transformational leadership in order to maximize student learning.
- School directors are the Association's primary customers. They are best served through an innovative, professional and flexible organization which provides exceptional training and services in advocacy, governance and leadership.
- The Association is uniquely positioned and empowered by statute to provide training and services that are consistent with the roles and responsibilities of school directors.
- High functioning local school boards have a positive impact on the learning and development for each student.





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