



## WSSDA Boards of Distinction Application

### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Applications are due by **September 21, 2017**. Submit the application as a single Word or PDF document to Connie Lauderdale at [C.Lauderdale@wssda.org](mailto:C.Lauderdale@wssda.org).
2. The date range for this year's application is 9/1/16 – 9/1/17.

### TIPS

You will be asked to submit two written sections (hereafter referred to as “essays”) with accompanying evidence: one on the opportunity gap and one you select. The optional topics are benchmarks from three different WSSDA School Board Standards.\* Guiding questions for the judging, and therefore recommended for the essays, are:

1. What decisions did the board make?
2. What is the evidence of the results?
3. How this evidence fits the standard?

We suggest approaching the application in the following order:

1. Identify the evidence of your board's success from the past year.
2. Select the benchmark option your board will address in this application, based on what your evidence supports best.
3. As a board, assign tasks to complete the application, such as:
  - a. Who writes each of the two essays
  - b. Who fills out the application
  - c. Who edits and or checks the content

*\*Each of the five school board standards has several benchmarks. Each benchmark has a number of indicators for success. All are in the standards document accessible from the link on the Boards of Distinction webpage.*

### ESSAYS & EVIDENCE INSTRUCTIONS

Essays may be in the form of narrative, bullet points, or a combination of the two, and should reflect the work/decisions of the board. For each essay & evidence (opportunity gap plus one of your choice):

- Please submit an essay of no more than 300 words explaining up to three ways in which the board supports the topic.
- Please consider mentioning whether this is an initial decision made by the board or if you are monitoring progress towards goals.
- Please identify supporting documents by name within each essay, e.g. “Appendix A.”

***Immediately after each essay, insert no more than three pages of the evidence selected to support that essay*** (e.g., portions of board meeting minutes, protocols, policies, evaluation tools, communications, etc.).

- Evidence demonstrates the impact of your actions or outcomes relevant to the essay topic.
- The same piece of evidence may be used to support more than one essay.

## SECTION I: DISTRICT INFORMATION

School District Name: Raymond

Street Address or PO Box: 1016 Commercial Street

City: Raymond

State: WA

ZIP: 98577

Student enrollment:  1 – 1000  1001 – 9000  9001 and over

Board Chair: Ron Bell

Superintendent: Dr. Steve Holland

## SECTION II: BOARDSMANSHIP

1. What was the date of your most recent superintendent evaluation? June, 2017
2. What is the date of your most recent board self-assessment? February, 2017
3. Do you have a current strategic/district improvement plan?  Yes  No
4. What years does it cover? 2015-2018

## SECTION III: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is a common element among highly successful boards. **In a short paragraph or a few bullets, please describe one professional development activity your board completed together, and the outcome.**

Enter your answer below this line.

The board invited a WSSDA trainer to teach about the roles of board members and the superintendent. This led to better understanding and relationships between all concerned, as well as a commitment to develop a strategic plan.

## SECTION IV: ESSAYS AND EVIDENCE ON OPPORTUNITY GAP (REQUIRED)

**For the opportunity gap content, please address numbers 1-4, below.**

1. What decisions did your board make this past year to positively change the opportunity gap?
2. What evidence of success resulted from previous decisions by the board?
3. Demonstrate how you analyze data and how you apply the results towards closing the opportunity gap.
4. Link your evidence to your decision-makers.

Enter your narrative (essay or bullets) below this line.

The Raymond School District strategic plan sets goals to close the opportunity gaps experienced by the economically disadvantaged, as well as ELL populations. Specifically, the plan calls for effective early learning programs and increased readiness for higher education opportunities for those who are typically under-served. Tactics to achieve these goals include:

- Effective Early Learning
  - Building Birth-5 partnerships that help parents and students be successful
  - Providing parent education
  - Reducing out-of-pocket education costs for parents when possible
  - Implementing tiered interventions for students who arrive at school unprepared for academic requirements
- Increased Readiness for Higher Education
  - Graduation requirements that graduates prove readiness for the next step in their life
  - Fostering links to higher education
  - Fostering career and educational opportunities beyond the town's borders

## Effective Early Learning

### *Save the Children*

In 2015/16, the Raymond School District began partnering with the national organization “Save the Children” to support and teach good parenting skills. A full-time home visitor works with families to teach “Early Steps to School Success” (ESSS). Early Steps provides quality early learning through home visits, weekly book exchanges and parenting groups that help ensure children 0 to 5 years old develop the language and literacy skills needed to enter school ready to succeed. The home visitor also teaches parents and caregivers ways to best support their children's individual needs and growth. When kids need special help with language, social or emotional development, they provide that as well.

After two years of implementation, we have achieved the following:

- A caseload of 20 students, each of whom receives 1-2 visits per month in their home
- Each of the Birth-3 students is read to an average of 59 times per month
- Each of the 3-5-year-old students is read to an average of 45 times per month

*A Success Story: Seven years ago, “Jane’s” mother had her parental rights terminated by the state for her first daughter. When Jane and her mom joined the ESSS program, they had just moved back to town due to a domestic violence issue with Jane’s father. CPS once again became involved; however, this time it was different. Jane’s mother is doing everything right in protecting and caring for her child. The CPS case-worker is very excited because they see what a great job Jane’s mom is doing. Jane and her mother have come a long way in the last several years, even as they still have issues with the father. This is a case of mother who lacked a lot of skills and made poor choices with her first child and who is now determined to do everything she can to ensure that her daughter has best of what she can give. Jane’s mom does a great job using the information that our program brings; each visit she is well prepared with questions and ready to engage in the new topics. It is amazing to see how this mother and daughter team are overcoming the obstacles they have faced.*

### *Parent Education*

For the past two years, Raymond School District has offered parent education classes. In 2015/16, parents learned about the “40 Developmental Assets” that increase personal success. The class was taught monthly, with dinner and childcare provided. These 40 assets provide a framework that identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults.

In 2016/17, the District trained a counselor and offered six classes to parents and adolescents to teach skills from the “Strengthening Families” program. This research-based program has been nationally recognized and found to significantly improve parenting skills and family relationships, reduce problem behaviors, delinquency and alcohol and drug abuse in children and to improve social competencies and school performance. Child maltreatment also decreases as parents strengthen bonds with their children and learn more effective parenting skills.

### *Reducing Out-of-Pocket Education Costs*

The Raymond School District has taken aggressive action to limit the out-of-pocket education costs for parents. Since the introduction of our Strategic Plan in 2015, we have applied for and been approved for the Community Eligibility Provision. This allowed us to expand our food service plan to include *all* children, offering them *both* breakfast and lunch at no cost. Additionally, we now provide all elementary classroom supplies (exclusive of backpack, pencil case and tennis shoes) at no charge to the parents. With these two actions, we believe we positively impact all children, but especially those youngest students who are newest to our school.

### *Language for Learning*

A 22% transitional bilingual rate requires that we approach early learning differently. In addition, we have an elementary free and reduced lunch rate of 60-70%, a rate which certainly impacts school readiness. Two years ago, Raymond Elementary introduced the *Language for Learning* program in an effort to help vocabulary-poor students. Children acquire the words, concepts, and statements important for oral instruction and written language. Designed for kindergarten and primary-age students as well as ELL learners, this program builds a foundation for educational and developmental success. These students have not yet reached 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, so there is no state assessment data. However, internal assessments show significant improvement in language skills.

## Jump Start

The summer of 2017 saw the introduction of a new program intended to help incoming kindergarteners get a jump on learning. Five staff members (3 paraprofessionals and two teachers) received professional development in phonemic awareness, Language for Learning, Write and See, Read Well and assessment in order to help them be as effective as possible for the 20 days of Jump Start. All incoming kindergarteners were invited to organized learning activities for 3 hours per day for 20 days; of the approximately 50 incoming students, 21 signed up. The results of the various pre- and post-tests were as follows. As can be seen, significant oral language progress was made and we anticipate a better entry into kindergarten for these students.

	<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>
Mean Length of Utterance ( <i>National Average 4.3</i> )	4.4	6.3
Mean Number of Nouns	13.0	17.7
Mean Number of Verbs	6.0	14.9
Mean Number of Modifiers	2.4	4.8
Mean Number of Direct Objects	2.8	6.2
Mean Scores on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test ( <i>Average 80 – 110</i> )	107	111
Language for Learning Placement	Lesson 31 and 41	Lesson 49 and 59
Mean Handwriting Level	4	9

## Increased Readiness for Higher Education

### *Readiness for Next Steps*

A number of years ago, the Raymond School Board created a graduation requirement that graduates prove readiness for the next step in their life. Policy 2410 states that “No student will graduate from Raymond High School who is not ready for his or her next step. In particular, this means that each student will have, at a minimum, either a(n):

- a) Bona fide job contract with a career path
- b) Acceptance into a college, university or technical school
- c) Acceptance into a bona fide training program
- d) Certification in a career field
- e) Diploma from a 2-year institution
- f) Military commitment/national service
- g) Service mission commitment

This commitment to ensuring that students leave high school with not only a goal but a commitment to continue to grow, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of students attending college. 32 of 33 graduates in 2017 had concrete plans to attend colleges and universities around the state and beyond. (The 33<sup>rd</sup> student planned to attend “a community college”, but did not have confirmation as to which one.)

### *Fostering Links to Higher Education, as well as Career and Educational Opportunities Beyond the Town’s Borders*

All high school students are required to create a five-year plan and participate in both the World Class Scholars and College Bound programs. As an example of the effect of these requirements, of the 33 graduating seniors in the class of 2017, 19 of them were World Class Scholars. This scholarship pays for their first year’s tuition at Grays Harbor College. 20 of the 33 qualified for Washington State College Bound scholarships. These numbers are due to our requirement that all students enroll in 7<sup>th</sup>-grade for these two pathways to higher education. Additionally, approximately 25% of our Juniors and Seniors attended Grays Harbor College as Running Start students in 2016/17.

Finally, Raymond School District is a charter member of the Twin Harbors Skills Center (in Aberdeen), a branch of the New Market Skill Center in Tumwater. This cooperative gives our students access to both college credit and 2<sup>nd</sup>-party certification in such fields as Certified Nurses Assistant, Medical Assistant, Auto Mechanic, HVAC Technician and Digipen.

## SECTION V: ESSAYS AND EVIDENCE (SELECT ONE OF THE OPTIONS BELOW)

Please select one of the options below and check the box next to your choice. Address the underlined benchmark in your essay and evidence. Indicators have been included for your convenience to identify areas of narrative content and evidence applicable for that benchmark.

- Standard 1/Benchmark C: Provide responsible school district governance by respecting and advocating mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendent.

Indicators:

1. Does the board recognize the superintendent as an integral part of the governance team and model collaboration and commitment to a shared purpose?
2. Does the board delegate through written policy authority for the superintendent to manage district operations and implement policy?
3. Does the board provide the superintendent with a clear statement of its expectations for his/her performance which is used in the superintendent's evaluation?
4. Does the board honor the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and staff?
5. Does the board thoughtfully consider recommendations of the superintendent and staff prior to making decisions?
6. Does the board establish and commit to written protocols for respectful internal and external interactions?

- Standard 4/Benchmark A: Hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations by committing to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district.

Indicators:

1. Does regular communication from the board to the staff and community reinforce its commitment to high levels of achievement for all students?
2. Does the board establish and follow a schedule for the timely review of the district plan?
3. Does the board ensure a high degree of coherence between the district's plan and individual school improvement plans?
4. Does the board annually review district and school improvement plans?
5. Does the board publicly recognize the efforts of individuals and schools in improving student learning?

- Standard 5/Benchmark C: Engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools by ensuring district information and decisions are communicated community-wide.

Indicators:

1. Does the board ensure that a proactive communications system is in place to disseminate information and address issues in the schools and community?
2. Does the board identify and use key communicator groups to provide input and disseminate district information and decisions?
3. Does the board communicate district performance to the public in clear and understandable ways?

Enter your narrative (essay or bullets) below this line.

Standard 5/Benchmark C

The Mission of the Raymond School District is “the continuous pursuit of educational excellence.” Our Vision is that we provide quality learning, quality partnerships and quality support for our students, staff and community members. It is critical that the board communicate the Mission and Vision through formal reports as well as through actions. We have done this by:

1. Establishing formal and informal communications systems in order to inform the community what is happening at school.
2. Asking for input in an organized way on an annual basis from students, staff and community members and responding to that input.
3. Communicating our district’s performance in many areas and many ways, openly and frequently.

Insert up to three pages of evidence below this line.

*Informing the Community Regarding School Activities and Issues*

Keeping the community informed has always been a challenge. While we have a very supportive community, we have an older population, many of whom have no direct link to the schools. Common communication methods, such as newsletters, emails and web sites sometimes miss the mark when trying to connect with those outside of the system. Over the past two years, we have added two additional avenues to reach those who have typically been disconnected from the District.

The Superintendent has been directed to write a monthly column in both of the local papers. These articles address specific school issues, as well as general educational topics. Over the past year, topics included community mentors, 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning, school funding, motivation for learning, developing a vision, etc. These articles have been received well and help the district communicate what our schools are doing and the issues we are dealing with.

During this past year we deployed information kiosks at several locations throughout the city. These 32” screens may be found at the library, a bank, the Elk’s club and an optometrist’s office. They are connected wirelessly to our news desk and the District’s Facebook page, both of which are updated frequently. These kiosks highlight student achievement in academics and extracurricular activities, as well as provide information about such mundane things as meals, PTO meetings and school calendars. Once again, the public has seemed to appreciate the extra communication channel.

## Annual Climate Survey

This year marked the third year of our annual climate survey, distributed to students, staff and community members. The survey is administered in both English and Spanish and asks respondents to use a 4-point Likert scale to indicate their agreement with the following 29 questions.

**The response scale is 1 = Disagree, 2 = Slightly Agree, 3 = Mostly Agree 4 = Agree.**

Question	Average Response, 2015	Average Response, 2016	Average Response, 2017
1. The school has a clearly defined purpose and mission.	3.13	3.20	3.35
2. I support the goals of the school.	3.27	3.35	3.43
3. The school's primary emphasis is improving student learning.	3.14	3.25	3.33
4. The school communicates its goals effectively to families and the community.	2.77	3.10	3.10
5. All students in the school are expected to meet high standards.	2.86	3.04	3.10
6. Students understand what needs to be learned.	2.65	2.76	2.87
7. School work is meaningful and made relevant.	2.71	2.89	3.09
8. Teachers do whatever it takes to help my child meet high academic standards.	2.83	3.18	3.08
9. Teachers make adjustments to meet individual student's needs.	2.90	2.94	2.93
10. Classes challenge students to think and solve problems.	2.89	3.06	3.19
11. Students receive detailed information about the quality of the work they do.	2.68	2.78	2.98
12. Teachers give students extra help if it is needed.	3.10	3.10	3.20
13. Grades are given in a fair manner.	2.96	3.16	3.30
14. Students respect those who are different from them.	2.81	2.83	2.80
15. The adults in the school show respect for all students.	2.90	3.10	2.83
16. Discipline problems are handled fairly.	2.76	2.96	2.93
17. School leaders act fairly and with integrity.	3.00	3.13	3.17
18. Children feel safe at school.	2.94	3.17	3.10
19. The school environment helps the learning process.	2.98	3.05	3.05
20. School staff listen carefully when I express my opinions and concerns.	2.89	2.96	2.89
21. Teachers are constantly trying to become better teachers.	2.89	3.06	3.17
22. The teachers and other adults in my school show respect for each other.	3.00	3.27	3.22
23. School leaders show they care about all students.	2.99	3.15	3.11
24. The adults in the school work well together.	2.96	3.27	3.16
25. The school contacts the families of students who are struggling academically.	2.93	3.14	3.20
26. There is frequent, two-way communication between school staff and families.	2.67	2.91	2.92
27. I feel welcome when I visit the school.	3.25	3.15	3.19
28. The school works with many community organizations to support its students.	2.91	3.14	3.21
29. Many parents and adults from the community come and help at the school.	2.49	2.67	2.75

The results of this survey are shared with the Board, as well as staff and community. We track the historical results, and administration is charged with responding to the results of the survey in the School Improvement Plans. We have generally seen an increase over time in both the satisfaction levels reported and the number of respondents to the survey.

### *Communication of District Performance*

An interactive Strategic Plan has been placed on the District's web site (<http://bitly.com/RSDStrategicPlan>) in an effort to communicate clearly to the public what the District's goals are and the benchmarks by which we measure progress. The site allows the public to drill down and see the various parts of the plan, including timelines, who is responsible and the progress being made. The site interweaves the six primary areas of focus with our School Improvement Plans, ensuring that our efforts are mutually supportive.

The board has a scheduled review of the six primary areas of the Strategic Plan:

- **September:** College and Career Readiness
  - Career and Technical Ed/Articulation Agreements
  - Develop skill center options
  - Teach life skills
  - Foster strong partnerships with Higher Ed
  - Help students deserve and receive scholarships
- **October and November:** Powerful Teaching & Learning
  - Providing multiple pathways for student success
  - Ensuring strong core courses
  - Providing flexible and useful professional development
  - Developing strong relationships with students through cultural awareness and mutual respect
- **December:** Healthy District Culture
  - Be skilled at hiring and evaluating
  - Maintain strong union relationships
  - Maintain strong relationships with effective teachers and support staff
  - Inculcate a culture of "continuous improvement"
- **March:** Effective Early Learning
  - Heightened outreach
  - Implement intervention curriculum
  - Develop effective partnerships
  - Identify barriers
  - Provide early parent education
- **April:** Partnerships
  - Community organizations
  - Media
  - Neighboring Districts
  - Business community
  - Parents
- **July:** Honorable Stewardship
  - Develop budget focused on strategic goals
  - Maintain adequate reserves
  - Effective Board governance
  - Be inclusive and transparent with the community

During these months, data is reviewed as well as progress in the various benchmarks. The agenda to these meetings is posted and the public is welcome to attend and ask questions.