



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Governance | Accountability | Achievement | Oversight | Career & College Readiness

November 21, 2014

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

On behalf of the State Board of Education, I ask that you give careful review to the [recommendations the Board has made](#) toward strengthening our state's K-12 education system as you prepare your 2015-17 budget.

As a state, we have ambitious goals for our students, but we have failed to support those goals with ample state investments. In our view, these investments will need to come in the form of targeted financial supports, and in programs that help meet our state's goals and our students' needs. Our recommendations therefore, center on several key ingredients to an effective K-12 education system, including: sustainable revenue for our schools; state support for educator professional development; robust supports for postsecondary planning processes for students; and streamlined science assessment requirements for a meaningful high school diploma.

As you may know, the Board has shown leadership in [taking a position that additional revenue is needed](#) to support a sufficient response to the *McCleary* lawsuit. It's clear that the scale of investment required cannot be achieved by mere efficiencies and "belt tightening." On this point, we believe the level of commitment shown in your initial budget proposal will set the tone for how the Legislature ultimately responds to the *McCleary* mandate this session. We urge you to make a bold proposal in this regard.

Another essential component to our investment in basic education is professional development for educators. To achieve our goals for students, we must support our teachers. We need to make sure all teachers have on-going opportunities to develop as professionals, stay current on changing standards and assessments, and share best practices. Indeed, nothing could be more fundamental to our efforts to implement career and college-ready standards in our state than professional development. We cannot continue to treat professional development as a non-essential extra; something for unreliable local tax levies to support when possible. Accordingly, the Board recommends that [80 hours of district-directed professional development](#) be included as part of the program of basic education. This will ensure that our teachers are given the tools to meet the needs of our students now and in the future.

Isabel Muñoz-Colón, *Chair* • Ben Rarick, *Executive Director*

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The Honorable Jay Inslee

November 18, 2014

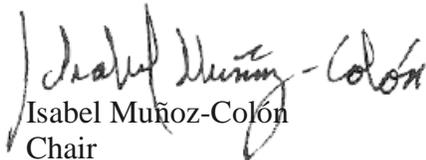
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The State Board of Education will also be issuing a report in December, prepared in collaboration with peer agencies, on the [overall health of our educational system](#) and reforms that will help to improve our system's performance. In addition to state-funded professional development, the recommended reforms include enhanced postsecondary planning, opportunities for expanded learning opportunities for K-12 students; and perhaps most importantly, increased access to quality early learning programs for all eligible families.

Not all of our recommendations cost money, however. The Board is also interested in streamlining our high school graduation requirements as we transition to college- and career-ready standards. The Board believes that we should [discontinue requiring the Biology end-of-course exam as a graduation requirement](#). Instead, we should devote our full attention to implementing Next Generation Science Standards, which emphasize cross-cutting concepts of deeper scientific knowledge, and place a renewed emphasis on knowledge and skills that practicing scientists and engineers actually use. Now that we require three credits of science in Washington, using test results from the first course students often take as 9th graders – Biology – to determine their eligibility for a diploma as seniors, seems misplaced. Graduation requirements are powerful incentives to the system; it's our responsibility to make sure that our requirements are reinforcing the knowledge and skills we want all students to have.

This is a pivotal time for education in Washington state. We have the opportunity to create one of the best educational systems in the nation—one that best supports our students to realize their full potential. Though difficult, the right investments in our teachers and reforms can improve the outcomes for every Washington student in this and future generations. Let's seize the opportunity.

Sincerely,



Isabel Muñoz-Colón
Chair

bdr

cc: Members of the Washington State Board of Education
Ms. Marcie Maxwell