

Dear partner in education:

Greetings!

The coming of a new year often brings fresh resolutions. Whether it is to spend more time with family or eat one less cookie a day, our resolutions are motivations for improvement.

In many ways, 2008 was a year of resolutions for the State Board of Education, and we must now put those resolutions into practice for 2009 and beyond. We are resolved and committed to providing Washington students an equitable and excellent education.

Our resolutions represent a desire to make that happen, but we all know that change does not come easy. That is especially true today, when we face an economic crisis unprecedented in our lifetime. Families are working hard to make ends meet, unemployment rates are on the rise, and the state government faces daunting debt. Schools, likewise, are struggling financially.

However, we cannot lose sight of our most important resolution: to greatly improve the education of our children.

We are resolved to make 2009 a year of impact, heralding in change that will greatly improve Washington's schools.

This is not going to be easy. New Year's resolutions rarely are. But there is no more important task than this. The challenges that lie ahead are great, but not insurmountable. We can make a difference in the lives of our students, and if we work with due diligence and a common focus, we will.

Wishing you all the best in 2009.

Edie Harding

Learn more about our key initiatives

- [A Meaningful High School Diploma:](#) preparing students for life after high school no matter what path they choose.
- [World-class math:](#) providing students with the math foundation they need to succeed.
- [Exemplary science:](#) fostering science education to expand students' minds and broaden horizons.
- [Accountability:](#) providing assistance to schools and districts so that no student falls through the cracks.

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Spotlight: Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance Report

The Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance finished its [report](#). The suggestions are now up for review during the 2009 Legislative Session.

The report recommends:

- Phasing-in the implementation of [CORE 24](#), including recommending that the state provide funding equivalent to six periods per day
- Broadening the definition of basic education to include early learning for at-risk, preschool and struggling students, and CORE 24, the new high school graduation requirement
- Supporting the State Board of Education's Accountability System Framework
- Reducing K-3 classroom sizes
- Developing a new "model schools" approach to fully fund reasonable class sizes, teachers, support staff, and operating costs
- Setting minimum support levels for special education, bilingual education, vocational programs, and gifted education
- Implementing a new teacher compensation system that rewards teachers for proven success in the classroom

In light of the projected state budget deficit, the Joint Task Force recommends a six-year plan to fully implement the policy changes. Furthermore, the Joint Task force recommends the state's current funding allocations for schools remain intact.

The report included the Board's work on CORE 24 and the Accountability System Framework, both of which are integral components of SB 5444 and HB 1410. Recent public hearings garnered much support for both pieces of legislation, including the strong advocacy of many parents.

The Board is hopeful that the Legislature will support the key policy recommendations of the Joint Task Force for SB 5444 and HB 1410 and develop a plan for phasing-in and finding the resources to fully support the new requirements.

For additional information on the Joint Task Force and its report, please visit their [website](#).

Spotlight: Closing the Gap

In the January Board meeting, five groups presented their reports on the ethnic achievement gaps, as well as possible solutions for how to even the playing field so that all students receive an equitable and excellent education.

Spotlight: High School Math Curricula

In the January Board meeting, the Professional Educator Standards Board presented strategies for how best to attract and retain highly qualified math teachers.

Additionally, representatives from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) presented a review of high school mathematics curricular menu options that best fit the variety of solid, standards-based curricular choices that exist for school districts.

SBE will continue to work with its consultant and its Math Panel to review the OSPI recommended high school mathematics curricular programs. SBE will provide feedback to OSPI by mid-March.

Spotlight: CORE 24 Task Force

The 20 member CORE 24 Task Force, comprised of superintendents, principals, teachers, among other professionals, will convene in the coming weeks to begin their work on CORE 24 implementation.

CORE 24 is a vital component of the redefinition of Basic Education. The Task Force's review and recommendations of CORE 24's implementation will be essential as the Board continues to push for the phase-in of CORE 24 as a statewide graduation standard. Information about the CORE 24 Task Force membership is available [here](#).

Spotlight: Accountability Resolution

The Board approved a draft of the Accountability Resolution, which was then sent to the state Legislature. The resolution provides an Accountability System Framework to promote continuous school improvement so that all students receive an excellent and equitable education.

The Board believes this needs to be a part of the package for any revisions to Basic Education funding. The Board wants to create one system of accountability, which will include an Accountability Index to identify great schools for recognition and those that are struggling for help. This system of accountability will also ensure there are targeted and graduated voluntary programs of state assistance, as well as mandated action if after a certain time schools do not improve (whereby the state would place a district on Academic Watch). The state would work closely with local school boards to create ways to improve their schools that continue to underperform.

To view the resolution or for more information on SBE's work to create a shared system of accountability, visit the [SBE's website](#).

**Get to know your board members:
Bob Hughes, Seattle, WSSDA Elected Position
4, Western Washington.**

Bob Hughes joined the Board in January. He was elected by the Region 4 WSSDA directors, and he will serve on the Board until 2012.

Mr. Hughes has extensive experience working on behalf of Washington's students, including 29 years with the Lake Washington School Board, six years on the Governor's Council on Advanced Technology in Schools, and a term with the Washington Roundtable's Working Committee on Education Reform.

Before retirement, Mr. Hughes worked for the Boeing Corporation, spending the last ten years as the Director of Education Relations. This position contributed to Mr. Hughes' passion for education, and he found the work at Boeing both professionally and personally rewarding.

His motivation to work for the betterment of Washington's students is founded on the reality that what he is doing will make a difference for his grandkids and the millions of other children that will make their way through Washington's public schools.

"I've spent enough time working for schools," Mr. Hughes said, "to know that what we do can help students be successful."

Mr. Hughes is excited to join the Board, stating "It's going to be a privilege working with this group."

We want to hear from you!

[Upcoming Board Meeting:](#)

Board Meeting
March 12-13, 2009
New Market Skills Center
Tumwater, WA
For meeting agendas, click [here](#).

E-mail your thoughts and questions to SBE at sbe@k12.wa.us.