



eMemo

December 2006



WASHINGTON LEARNS – OR DOES IT?

The Washington Learns Task Force, appointed by Governor Gregoire completed its work and presented its report on November 13. The document was made available to the public on November 15. While there are a variety of opinions surrounding whether or not the commission completed the task assigned by the governor and legislature, the group did spend countless hours analyzing data, comparing Washington with other states and countries to develop strategies to address the needs for improvement in educating Washington's children from early childhood through college. Their vision is for a world-class, learner-focused, totally integrated educational system with a common mission. In the ten year plan that was outlined, five strategies are presented that will help accomplish this mission. These focused initiatives include the establishment of a Department of Early Learning, the renovation of the state's math and science programs, personalized learning profiles for all students, the development of public and private partnerships, and a statewide system of meaningful quality and accountability programs to measure success. In her new budget, just submitted to the governor, Terry Bergeson identifies many of the costs needed to address these changes.

Where does private school education fit into this? Presently, private education is outside of the boundaries of the commission's purview, with one exception. That appears to be in the area of Early Learning. Currently, private schools enjoy representation to OSPI through the Private School Advisory Committee and are represented at the college level by individuals that sit on Professional Education Advisory Boards (PEAB) for all educational programs from teachers to superintendents. We are also represented on the Professional Educator Standards Board and other state committees. The strategies outlined for the accomplishment of the early learning goals may have unintended consequences for private providers. Because the majority of preschools and daycares are operated by private individuals or groups, WFIS is providing testimony and influentially monitoring upcoming legislation in order to ensure the representation of our private schools in each phase of the process.

On Thursday, November 30, WFIS Executive Director, Judy Jennings, gave testimony to the Senate Education Committee regarding the early learning issues along with other stakeholders from around the state's educational community. These testimonies were

given in response to the presentation of the Washington Learns Report. As legislation is being developed to implement the commission's findings, WFIS will be there to protect the interests of our schools.

You can access the Washington Learns report on their website at www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov or call Karen Tvedt in the Governor's Office at (360) 902-0547.

WFIS Winter Dinner
Tuesday, February 13, 2007
Museum of Flight, Seattle, Washington
Keynote Speaker: Jack Klenk,
Director of NonPublic Education,
U. S. Department of Education
Tickets: \$65.00
Best of Washington Award
Winners Will Be Honored
Invitations will be mailed the end of December.

WFIS Executive Board Meeting Highlights

December 5, 2006

The Executive Board met at the WIAA building for the second of three annual board meetings to complete internal board work, to hear from education stakeholders, and to position the Federation for the upcoming legislative session. The following is a summary of the actions of and presentations to the Board of Directors.

1. The board unanimously approved the membership timeline and the responsibilities of board members regarding membership. This information was distributed to each board member meeting and discussed at the meeting.
2. The minutes of the September 28, 2006 board meeting were approved.

3. After a presentation from Donna Christianson and Sister Sharon Park of the Washington State Catholic Conference, the board voted to support a bill that will be introduced to fund the WASL for private schools. They will be meeting with the Attorney General in January to get an opinion regarding the constitutionality of the bill.
4. The board voted on the Columbia Award to be given at the Winter Dinner. This individual will be announced at the dinner.
5. The executive committee of the board met after the meeting adjourned to review and choose the recipients of the other Best of Washington Awards. These will be sent on to you at a later date.

Discussion, Presentations and Reports:

- Donna Foxely, our region 10 representative from the U.S. Department of Education presented an overview of the upcoming Congress, and the NCLB issues that could be of difficulty as result of the November elections and the changing climate in Washington for private education.
- Lynne Tiedeman from the School of Education at PLU presented their program for Professional Certification. They will bring a program to your site if you have 10 or more teachers involved in the process. They do not all have to be from your building.
- Don Johnson reported from the PSAC. Martin Mueller is the new Student Services person at OSPI. Pat Eirish will be of assistance in the transition within the office. The next meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2007. Don asked that WFIS consider emphasizing membership opportunities for preschools. The board will look at this at the May meeting.
- Mike Colbrese, Executive Director for WIAA, reported in lieu of Ross Hjelseth on the most recent WIAA Executive Board meeting. Ross will be sending out a full report to the entire private school group regarding issues that involve all of our WIAA member schools. MC asked Judy Jennings to attend to Rep Assembly amendment meeting January 23 at Emerald Downs to provide insight into some of the upcoming amendment proposals regarding the use of a multiplier for private schools.
- Jack Schuster reported in abstentia that the November SBE meeting dealt with the approval of the coordinated plan between the SBE, OSPI and other stakeholders in dealing with the low WASL scores in the Math and Science programs and the development of strategies to address the problem. The board also approved the collection of evidence criteria as an alternative to passing the WASL, and the date change for mandatory passing of the WASL, moving it back to 2010.

First Annual Fall Workshop Deemed Success

While November 15 proved to be a stormy day with many power outages, more than seventy private school administrators from across Washington braved the elements to participate in a variety of workshops. A wide array of topics challenged those in attendance.

CICS speaker, Kip Ward, presented proven methods to improve interviews and references for new hires. Bob Wilken from Educator Resources challenged participants to review employee benefit packages to find win-win combinations for both employee and employer. A development directors' track was also provided. Ms. Bonnie Hilory, Executive Director from the Saul Haas Foundation and Laura Fixler from Benevon shared methods to improve fundraising and ways to access grants from around the country. Rich Lienesch, an Education Specialist from the Museum of Flight came with demonstration models to show educators the kinds of science programs available at the museum as well as at school sites. The most popular workshop of the day was presented by Craig Apperson and Barb Thurmon from OSPI on how to develop an emergency preparedness plan for your individual school. At the completion of the workshop, those attending were given a test to take in order to receive their NIMS (National Incident Management System) certification. WFIS will repeat the NIMS workshop again at a later date.

WFIS wants to thank the participants, speakers and most of all the hosts for our Fall Workshop, Marta Foldi and Gulsevin Kayihan. Spring Valley Montessori School in Federal Way, one of our member schools provided a great venue for us.

Private Schools Day at the State Capitol

Wednesday, February 7, 2006

Entire Day Reserved for Private Schools!

Make your tour reservation by calling Michelle Hall at 360-902-8880

HAVE YOU COMPLETED THE WFIS SALARY AND TUITION SURVEY?

On December 1, the annual WFIS Salary and Tuition Survey was launched on Zoomerang and sent via email to all private schools in Washington. This survey is of vital importance to WFIS as well as many others, including the Department of Education, our member schools and others around the state. Many of our schools use this document when establishing next year's budget and WFIS uses the information throughout the upcoming year to respond to inquiries from the media, our national organization (CAPE) and others.

The survey will be open until December 22. Please take time to complete the form. If you have misplaced the notification in your "inbox" please e-mail jmorrison@wfis.org for a new link. We will post the results in early January.

WFIS Position Statement for 2007

The private, independently funded school community of Washington State is comprised of over 500 approved schools serving a richly diverse population of more than 80,000 students. This diversity is reflected in the full spectrum of economic, cultural, familial, educational and religious traits of our enrolled families; families whose collective dual sacrifice as responsible tax payers and tuition contributors saves this state over \$500,000,000 annually.

The Washington Federation of Independent Schools (WFIS) is honored to bring together these uniquely varied educational institutions in order to fulfill its mission "to strengthen educational quality in Washington while serving as the advocate and voice of independent schools." Representing schools enrolling the vast majority of students attending private institutions in Washington, WFIS is truly a representative voice and the only full time, statewide forum for Washington's privately funded, independent school community. Our expectation is to participate to the fullest extent in all levels of the state's collective educational dialog.

To assure school-focused input and perspective, WFIS by-laws call for local school heads to be elected by member schools to its Board of Directors. Each fall, WFIS holds regional gatherings throughout the state to guide the Board of Directors in establishing direction as well as its educational policy agenda. As a result of this process, the bulk of our 2007 agenda in support of the state's independent schools will be focused in the following areas:

EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION AND EQUITABLE APPLICATION:

While the debate continues over interpretation of language that would allow state directed resources to be used in schools under religious auspices, it remains clear that numerous programs are already available on the local and federal level. Unfortunately, not all of these opportunities make their way to the children for whom they were intended. The erroneous assumption that state constitutional language also applies in these situations often causes confusion for local application.

WFIS will continue to advocate for private school student access to all programs designed to enhance the quality of education in this state. In addition, we will seek resolution in cases where local application results in double standards or inequities.

FEDERAL – The re-authorization of the educational entitlements in the No Child Left behind Act includes newly strengthened provisions for private school student inclusion. We will work for seamless application of those programs in all districts

within the state. The re-authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has been successfully monitored for opportunities to increase the overall level of funding for children of special needs and for greater flexibility for their parents to choose the provider of those services.

STATE - WFIS supported the Educational Reform Act of 1993 and the right for independent schools to voluntarily participate. The final legislation leaves the decision to participate to each independent school board. We will continue to insist that a school's curriculum is best determined at the local level in concert with a community-discerned mission and vision. At the same time, WFIS believes that where the independent school community finds resonance with the goals and performance objectives crafted for the state-operated schools, they should be welcomed and encouraged to embrace and fully participate in the resources available to ensure quality implementation. Further, students and families attending private schools choosing to link to the reform movement and/or assessment process should not be billed additional fees in order to do so.

With the publication of the **WASHINGTON LEARNS** report in November, 2006, many new initiatives have been introduced to promote a world class educational system in our state. While the private school community has been intrinsically involved in the K-20 arena, there has been little input from private preschools and daycares in the development of the newly-established Early Learning Department. With the vast majority of early childhood providers coming from the private sector, WFIS will seek to partner with this new department to assist in establishing policies, regulations and legislation to serve all of Washington's pre-kindergarten students.

LOCAL - We will continue to actively encourage counties and municipalities to exercise their leadership role to the benefit of all children within their jurisdiction whether they are enrolled in public or private schools. While these local charters exclude any specific role in K-12 education, the regulations they enact – specifically in land-use, health and safety, and parks and recreation – often neglect to include the perspective of private school students and their families. The creation and application of these policies must be evenly maintained.

EDUCATIONAL LIBERTY:

Today, millions of Americans exercise their right to choose schools. This freedom, however, depends on their ability to pay tuition at a privately funded school or to live in neighborhoods where the state-controlled system meets the needs of their children. WFIS believes that while parents with children enrolled in private, independent schools value a strong public school system and willingly accept their responsibility to contribute to the common good, our state's constitution does not equally affirm their parental right to educate their children in the school of their choice. The U.S. Supreme Court has demonstrated how locally supported choice programs could successfully meet federal constitutional restrictions.

Recognizing the increasingly diverse background of the families we serve, WFIS will continue its efforts in the pursuit of additional legal opinions that will pave the way for

funded educational choice programs for families who so desire to participate. These programs must include both: (1) a priority for assistance to low and middle-income families, providing increased educational options for their children; and (2) an inclusion of private and religiously affiliated school options among those choices. Our goal would be to craft any choice program in a way that benefits both the public and private school systems.

MONITORING TRENDS:

WFIS takes seriously its role in helping shape the face of K-12 education in this state. To that end we will continue to monitor and, when appropriate, speak to specific initiatives and trends in the public forum. Areas we are closely watching include:

(1) Teacher Supply, Certification and Professional Development - WFIS stands in concert with the belief that a quality professional teaching and administrative staff is one of the most critical elements for a successful educational program. To that end, we actively support state proposals designed to recognize, support and enhance professional instruction in Washington's public and private schools.

In previous sessions, WFIS has supported the need for significant increases in state teacher salaries, benefits and incentives in order to help attract and retain the caliber of educator required for educating a world-class student of the 21st century. We have advocated for strategies to keep this workforce motivated and updated to successfully meet the needs of our growing student populations. In support of the 4,500 state certificated teachers (and the hundreds of other alternatively certified and competent instructors and paraprofessionals) employed in Washington's private schools, WFIS participates in efforts of the State Board of Education (SBE), Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), the Early Learning Department and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to coordinate the standards for teacher preparation, professional certification, continuing education and leadership cultivation.

Specifically, we believe that any resources directed to support, enhance or augment the professional teaching ranks of this state should be accessible to all practitioners. Directing such resources through providers (e.g. colleges and universities) rather than through beneficiaries (e.g. districts) is a viable avenue. We continue to advocate for an increased role by preschool and K-12 practitioners in the development and approval of teacher and administrator preparation programs.

At the same time, WFIS believes that all school sponsors (whether a publicly elected board or private institution) should have the ability to attract and retain the professional staff that best meets their local mission and educational philosophy. Each system is ultimately accountable to the families it serves and has a responsibility to hire the best staff possible with the resources available.

(2) Governance - We continue to follow with interest the growing sentiment that educational governance in Washington needs change. The families of Washington can best be served with a streamlined system that directs resources to the classroom and away from regulation, burdensome administration and maintaining the status quo.

Any serious proposals must not only retain but also enhance avenues for full choice among alternatives. We will work hard to retain our proportional voice and place at the table.

(3) Tax Restructuring and Resource Development – No discussion of economic stability for the state in general, or education in particular, proceeds very far before the topic turns to retooling the collection of state revenues. Should this massive undertaking receive serious consideration by a future Legislature, WFIS would strongly advocate for the kind of creative leadership that would support innovative proposals benefiting K-12 education for all of Washington’s children. A personal and/or business tax-credit solution, modeled after those successfully providing significant benefits to public and private school students in other states, could be a logical first step. Any initiative or referendum that fails to consider the sacrifice private school parents make annually to the benefit of the general fund appears shortsighted and discriminatory.

(4) Election 2007 – As an advocate organization, WFIS accepts its role in seeking inclusion for private schools, students and families in state programs as warranted and appropriate, while at the same time vigorously defending each sponsoring body’s right to define its unique local mission. We will actively seek out candidates’ positions on education in Washington, paying special attention to their understanding and support of private schools within that mosaic. Those seeking office who focus on possibilities rather than limitations would earn significant support.

Our Commitment as Peers and Partners is important to WFIS and its member schools. We believe that privately funded AND state-controlled schools serve the same public: **the student-citizens** of our state. We have more in common than we often acknowledge.

WFIS believes we should build and focus on what we share in common rather than perceived differences. Our member schools will not tolerate efforts to penalize one sector to benefit the other. At the same time, we will not accept being left out of the design. We pledge to work together for a larger commitment to education for all.

We are committed to strategies that do so.

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