



# Rural Education Center

Jim Kowalkowski, Director  
jkowalkowski@davenportdsd.org  
Web Site: <http://ruraledcenter.wsu.edu/>  
In Partnership with...  
Washington State University & NEWESD 101

Housed at Davenport School District  
801 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Davenport, WA 99122  
Ph.: (509)725-1481 • Fax: (509) 725-2260

## News & Notes to Members

February 12, 2019

### Updates from Olympia

I spend three days last week in the Capital and here are some brief highlights:

#### ❖ OSPI Supt. Roundtable Meeting:

- Krestin Bahr (Eatonville), Randy Russell (Freeman) Susan Bell (Touchet) & I serve on this roundtable along with a number of other superintendents from across the state. Chris Reykdal receives feedback from those us in the field regarding hot topics and issues that are impacting our districts.

#### ❖ Testimony on Education Bills:

- Simple Majority for School Bonds: Marcus Morgan (Reardan-Edwall Supt.) & I provided testimony to the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee hearing on **SB 5066 (simple majority for bonds)**. The hearing room was packed and there was tremendous support from everyone who testified, including a number of high school students. OSPI Supt. Chris Reykdal provided strong testimony and pointed out that a number of current legislators would not be serving in Olympia if they would have been required to receive a 60% of the votes coast. There were some comments regarding the “burden” placed on landowners made by two legislators who serve on this committee and why they believe this requirement is in place. OSPI Supt. Reykdal provided his perspective and a respectful but rather intense interchange took place.



Committee member Senator Padden even mentioned that perhaps consolidation of districts needs to happen so money could be saved by not having so many high income superintendents. I am still starching my head regarding those comments (more on the topic of consolidation below). When you have a chance, I encourage to watch a recording of this hearing on TVW:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?eventID=2019021094>

(continued on next page)



# News & Notes to Members

Page 2 –Feb. 12, 2019

## ❖ Testimony on Education Bills (continued)

- Modernization Grants for Small Schools -SB 5572: At the request of the prime sponsor (Senator Jim Honeyford), I testified on this bill last Friday that would establish a small school district modernization grant program for school districts with 1000 or fewer students. During the 2017-19 biennium, 74 small and rural districts applied for modernization grants for a total of over \$120 million in requests. Only \$15 million was available so many needs went unaddressed. Sen. Honeyford is the assistant ranking member on the Senate Ways & Means Committee (Capital Issues) & he recognizes that many of our small rural districts are unable to pass construction bonds but need help to upgrade their facilities. I urge you to contact your legislators and encourage them to support this bill!
- Increasing Staffing Ratios for School Nurses & Counselors and Requiring Districts to Maintain a General Fund Balance of no less than 8.5% - SB 5465: I testified in support of any efforts to improve the prototypical funding model and we certainly need more state funds for nurses and counselors. I did voice concerns about the 8.5% requirement and stated that some of the language in the bill that would be very restrictive to districts and that more work was needed on this topic. OSPI is recommending this bill and wants to provide some “bumpers” for districts in regards to collective bargaining. I told the committee during my testimony that perhaps the following strategy should be considered:

**If you want to help provide bumpers on collective bargaining, then consider for the upcoming school year, limiting salary increases for certificated teachers to no more than the IPD—currently projected at 1.9%. You put limits on administrative salaries last year, you could do the same for teachers since almost all teachers across the state did receive significant salary increases (even though there is significant inequities in how salary allocation occurred). This one-year restriction would at least give us a breather and hopefully a chance for you, the Legislature, to make some structural changes in education funding that would address the inequities created “post-McCleary”.**

**Please let me know your thoughts on this advice to the legislators!**



# News & Notes to Members

Page 3 –Feb. 12, 2019

❖ Individual Meetings with Legislators: Don Vanderholm (Supt. for the Lind & Ritzville School Districts) joined Marcus Morgan and me last week as we spent two days meeting with the following legislators:

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Rep. Mike Steele  | Rep. Jenny Graham   |
| Rep. Paul Harris  | Rep. Laurie Dolan   |
| Sen. Judy Warnick | Sen. Pat Sullivan   |
| Rep. Tom Dent     | Sen. Mark Schoesler |

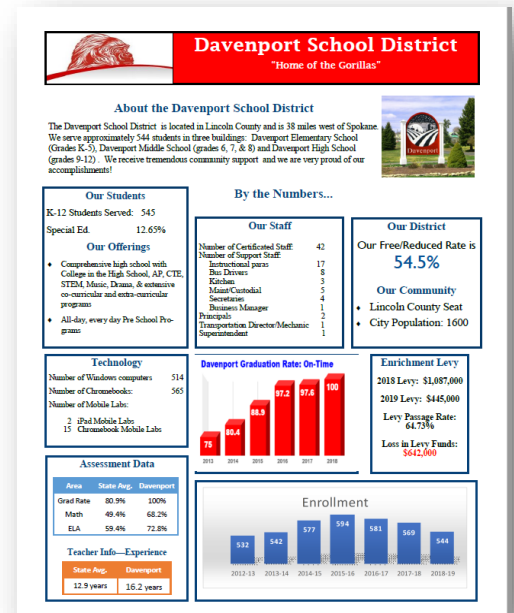
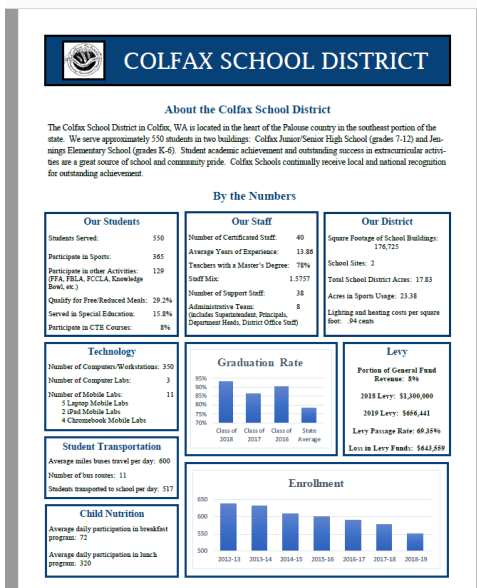
With each of these legislators, we shared our concerns regarding the financial impacts of the implementation of SEBB, the inequities of the new salary allocation model, the significant challenges of the loss of local levy and LEA funding, and a variety of other topics.



## Tell Your Story!

If you have not done so already, be sure to share with your legislators how the new education funding laws are impacting your district. Attached to this email are two “By the Numbers – Fact Sheet

Flyer” examples that provide specific information in a condensed format that can give legislators facts that many are not aware of. A special shout out to Colfax School District Superintendent Jerry Pugh for sharing his flyer ---I encourage you to create your own and tell your district’s story! (continued on next page)





❖ **WASA's Hold-Harmless and Improvements to Experience Factor Funding:**

For the past several months, this committee has been analyzing the impacts of the new education funding law (E2SSB 6362) on districts with the intent to develop a set of specific recommendations to the 2019 Legislature. The committee started its work looking only at our small district data. But it soon became clear to us that this is an issue impacting a number of larger districts across the state as well.. Below is a copy of the information that WASA Executive Director Joel Aune recently sent out. There is a great deal of information on two significant recommendations:

- Implement a meaningful “hold harmless” clause
- Increase “experience factor funding”

Click on the links in **red** below for detailed information:

Message from Joel Aune:

Our committee’s analysis revealed that 93 school districts would have less funding for basic operations in the 2019–20 school year than in 2017–18 school year and another 22 would receive negligible funding above the break-even point under the new legislation. WASA is proposing a short-term solution that would increase state funding to get these districts to a financial break-even point. It is important to emphasize this proposal is only a short-term solution that would minimize, not resolve, the budget challenges these **115 districts** are facing. *(Click link to view the **FULL BREAKDOWN** of districts.)* Like nearly all others in our state, these districts will still be making expenditure reductions during the next two years in order to maintain their financial sustainability. In addition to a proposed increase in state funding to districts incurring losses in funding, the committee also developed a recommendation to expand the state’s “experience factor” eligibility criteria to include school districts that exceed the statewide average for years of experience by 15%.

As we move forward together, it is critically important that WASA members who engage in conversations on this matter be well informed and speak in a unified voice that is both accurate and consistent. To that end, we have developed a collection of **resources** that can be accessed in order to familiarize yourself with the committee’s analysis and then communicate with legislators and other key constituents.

**CHECK THIS OUT!**

=====

Click on the link below for more details from WASA on the solution to “Hold Harmless”:

[http://wasa-oly.org/WASA/WASA/4\\_o\\_Government\\_Relations/Leg\\_and\\_Finance\\_Committee/Hold\\_Harmless.aspx](http://wasa-oly.org/WASA/WASA/4_o_Government_Relations/Leg_and_Finance_Committee/Hold_Harmless.aspx)



## News & Notes to Members

Page 5–Feb. 12, 2019

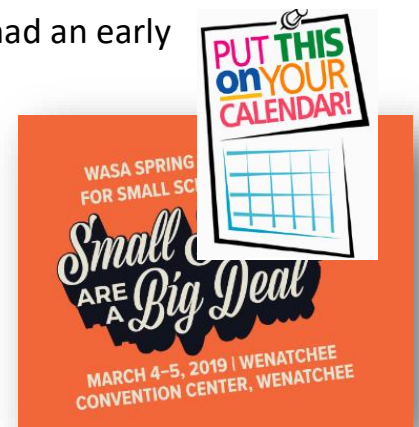
- ❖ **Consolidation Update:** Other than the comments made by Senator Padden that I referenced earlier in this report, there has not been any new action on forced consolidation of school districts. SB 5269 sponsored by Sen. Sam Hunt has not been scheduled for a hearing. The “word on the street” is that this bill will not be given a hearing but we will continue to keep watching.

### Reminder:



***Special Announcement: First Ever Annual Dinner Meeting for REC Members in Wenatchee @ WASA’s Spring Conference for Small Schools Leaders!***

During this spring conference, we have traditionally had an early morning meeting for members. We are going to try something new: **a dinner meeting for REC members! This will take place on Monday evening, March 4, beginning at 5:30 PM in the Wenatchee Convention Center.** We will have a brief business meeting at the start of the dinner followed by some fun and engaging activities. You will soon receive more information regarding this dinner meeting as we will need to get an accurate count of who will be attending.—stay tuned for more information! Members of the Rural Ed. Center and his/her guest will not need to pay for the dinner. This is one way that our organization can give back to our members!



### Register for the WASA Spring Conference for Small School Leaders

Registration is now open for this outstanding conference that will be held March 4 & 5 at the Wenatchee Convention Center. For more information, go the link below:

<https://wasa-oly.org/spring19>

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance to you.

Jim Kowalkowski  
Director – **Rural Education Center**  
& Superintendent – Davenport School District  
Work Phone: 509-725-1481  
Cell Phone: 509-721-0277  
Email: [jkowalkowski@davenportsd.org](mailto:jkowalkowski@davenportsd.org)

