

PUGET SOUND EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICT SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

An Open Letter to Washington State Legislators from the Superintendents of King County, Pierce County and Bainbridge Island – January 28, 2009 –

We are writing to you as the superintendents of the 35 school districts in King and Pierce counties and Bainbridge Island in Kitsap County. Together we have the privilege and responsibility of serving these communities including 390,000 children – nearly 40% of Washington's K-12 public school students.

Given our state's serious budget deficit, we understand the daunting task the legislature faces in the next few months. Our hope is to work as your partner in a united effort to solve our state's educational funding crisis.

Washington's constitution states, "It is the paramount duty of the State to make ample provisions for the education of all children residing within its borders without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex." As superintendents, we advocate for the State to uphold its paramount duty and recognize the moral imperative to provide adequate levels of funding for Washington's children.

Aligned with this paramount duty is our adherence to two guiding principles – equity and access. Access to quality instruction and programs that meet the diverse learning needs of students in Washington and prepares them to succeed in the 21st century must take priority in budget decisions.

We commend the work of the Basic Education Funding Task Force to create a sound education finance system. We believe that HB 1410 and SB 5444 begin to actualize the recommendations put forth by the task force and offer great promise for Washington's students. We pledge to work with the legislature to create necessary refinements to the bills and assure their passage.

As we work for a long-term funding solution, it is important that decisions made in the short-term move us toward this improved vision of equitable education finance that provides appropriate access for all students to quality public schools. The difficult budget cuts that must be determined by the legislature must consider the inequities in the present K-12 funding model and ensure any cuts in public education do not further exacerbate the already egregious inequities in the public school funding structure. We believe that the principles of equity and access must frame and guide immediate decisions about education funding in the 2009-2011 biennium budget.

We recognize that there will be various funding proposals to consider during this session and are well aware that they will impact K-12 education. Governor Gregoire's proposed K-12 budget includes significant reductions in 1-728 and local effort assistance funding for the 2009-2011 biennium. To inform your decision-making, we have attached data showing the impact of these cuts to each of our district's budgets.

We offer our voices, support and actions to your work both to minimize short term financial impacts on our students and to craft a long-term solution for education funding in the state of Washington. We look forward to our work together.

An Open Letter to the Legislature, January 28, 2009

The School District Superintendents of King County, Pierce County, and Bainbridge Island

Dr. Monte L. Bridges

Puget Sound Educational Service District

KING COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS

Dr. Kip Herren

Auburn

Ms. Karen Clark

Bellevue

Mr. Mike Nelson

Enumclaw

Mr. Tom Murphy

Federal Way

Mr. John Welch

Highline

Dr. Steve Rasmussen

Issaquah

Dr. Barbara Grohe

Kent

Dr. Chip Kimball

Lake Washington

Dr. Gary Plano

Mercer Island

Mr. Larry Francois

Northshore

Dr. Mary Alice Heuschel

Renton

Mr. Conrad Robertson

Riverview

Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson

Seattle

Ms. Sue Walker

Shoreline

Ms. Desiree Gould

Skykomish

Mr. Joel Aune

Snoqualmie Valley

Mr. Mike Maryanski

Tahoma

Ms. Ethelda Burke

Tukwila

Dr. Terry Lindquist

Vashon Island

KITSAP COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

Ms. Faith Chapel

Bainbridge Island

PIERCE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS

Mr. Thomas Seigel

Bethel

Mr. Scott Hubbard

Carbonado

Ms. Deborah LeBeau

Clover Park

Dr. Judy Neumeier-Martinson

Dieringer

Mr. Ray Arment

Eatonville

Dr. Steve McCammon

Fife

Dr. Frank Hewins

Franklin Pierce

Mr. Jeff Davis

Orting

Mr. Terry Bouck

Peninsula

Dr. Tony Apostle

Puyallup

Dr. Arthur Himmler

Steilacoom

Dr. Gil Mendoza

Sumner

Dr. Art Jarvis

Tacoma

Ms. Patti Banks

University Place

Mr. Tom Lockyer

White River