



April 16, 2009

Dear -,

It has been a while since I've written to you. It has been a busy time in Olympia, and a most difficult one. I'm sure you have read about our budget problems and the various proposals from the governor, Senate and House to meet the challenge.

The next week will tell if we can get our three budgets completed by the scheduled date of April 25th. I continue to expect that we will, but the final budgets will be ones no one will like.

I will write more about the budget next week as we start to see the outlines of an agreement. Today, I want to write again about education and the work of the decade to meet the state's constitutional duty, the paramount duty, to fully fund education.

This afternoon, I told my colleagues in the Senate it was fifteen years ago, as I was wrapping up my service as a city councilmember and elected official, that I received a call from our school superintendent asking if I would be willing to serve on a strategic planning committee. After some hesitation I said, "Yes," and began to learn the intricacies and arcania of our state's education system. In time, it led to election as a school board director and to the state legislature.

Over that time, I cannot count the number of committees, studies and "visioning" meetings I've been involved in. Most recently, the Basic Education Task Force (BETF) I have written several times about.

Today, the Washington State Senate passed HB 2261, an act concerning the state's education system by a vote of 26 to 23. We expect the House to concur in the next few days and the governor has committed to sign the bill into law.

HB 2261 enacts the recommendations of the BETF. While it is only one more step, it is a big step toward making our K-12 system a competitive, Twenty-First Century system. A high level summary of the bill would include:

- A new definition of basic education based on requiring 24 credit hours for a high school diploma (currently, the state funds 20 and requires 19 - meeting that standard means students don't qualify for any four year college or university in the state and would require remedial courses before they could begin community college).

- A basic education definition including transportation to and from school (currently not considered basic and underfunded by over \$100 million a year), all-day kindergarten, highly capable funding, and the intent to add early learning for children considered at risk.
- A new funding formula, termed a prototype school model, which defines the state's commitment to fund districts in terms people can understand, for example class size, administrators, librarians, janitors, energy and technology - today we use abstract, opaque ratios hidden deep in the "omnibus budget").
- An accountability system using multiple measures, not just WASL scores, to compare the performance of schools against similar schools, measures which will set higher standards for all schools, not just those with the poorest performance.
- A new certification system for teachers based on performance standards linked to effective teaching and student learning.
- A standard set of accounting and performance data to allow comparability across the state. Included is a student information system which permits longitudinal measurement, meaning schools will be able to track student performance over

Obviously, this will not happen overnight. The bill sets 2018-19 school year as the target for full implementation and full funding, and while that is later than I'd wanted, the current economic challenges create a mood of conservatism in the legislature regarding expanding programs, even the education of our children.

What are the next steps?

- The State Board of Education needs to complete their work on new graduation standards. The Board has been working on a proposal called "Core 24" to make high school diplomas meaningful. They must now complete that work knowing the legislature will fully fund the "24" in "Core 24."
- The Professional Educator Standards Board must complete their work with the colleges of education to re-define the certification standard for new teachers based on performance standards linked to student learning. This work is underway and informed much of the discussion of the BETF.
- financing work group will design the details of the prototype, moving from the concept to an operational formula to drive funding to school districts and recommend approaches for funding the phase in. The funding task is a loose end from the BETF.
- A supplemental funding work group to look into the rules for local levies and the levy equalization system. Again, a loose end from

the BETF.

A compensation work group to design a new salary allocation model, the way the state determines how much to send to school districts to pay teachers. I expect this will result in a design which links compensation to student learning.

- An early learning work group to work through implementing an early learning program for at-risk kids.
- The Quality Education Council to bring recommendations on teacher mentoring, early learning, and a recommended schedule for the phase in of the changes in the instructional program of basic education, the new allocation formula, and the transportation funding formula.

As I said, there is much more work to do. But establishing a new definition of basic education, one which legislators must vote on, builds a foundation for that work and for our kids.

The bill now goes to the House where we expect a vote concurring with the bill we passed today and then to Governor Gregoire.

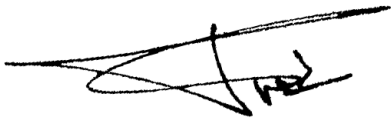
As always, I'm interested in your thoughts, especially regarding how we deal with our budget challenges. Over the next few weeks we will be making serious and consequential decisions.

If you have concerns or questions please contact my office in Olympia. I appreciate hearing from you, and will keep trying to catch up with my responses.

You can reach me either by e-mail (Jarrett.Fred@leg.wa.gov) or phone (360.786.7641).

And, let me know if you want to have your name taken off the distribution list or a friend added.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jarrett Fred", with a long horizontal line extending to the left.