



April 6, 2007

Dear Seattle Senators and Representatives,

We write to you on behalf of the 5000 members of the Seattle Education Association. Our members and we have considerable anger about the shape of the budget and what is happening in the WASL arena.

Budget's Impact on the Seattle Public Schools

All three versions of the budget result in a worsening of the Seattle Public Schools financial situation. The negative impact ranges from approximately \$2.5 million with the House budget to more than 5 million with the Governor's.

This negative impact will directly affect students through reduced support.

Budget's Impact on the Seattle Education Association Members

We greatly appreciate the full funding of I-732 COLA and I-728.

Seattle Public Schools, staff, parents, and students all went through trauma making hard decisions to correct decisions that were made 20 years ago to build and operate small schools. Many of you have chastised the district for not taking on the issue, making the case of why should the state pay for Seattle's mistakes. SEA members stood with the SPS on the need to close and consolidate schools and in becoming more efficient.

- Elimination of gainsharing. All three budgets fund the new math initiatives by taking away gain sharing from our Plan 3 and Plan 1 members. All the rhetoric aside, the elimination of gainsharing from Plan 3 reduces an already poor retirement plan to horrible. It also represents a breach of trust since Plan 3 was sold to Plan 2 members as an improvement. The only reason to switch to Plan 3 was the assumption the TRS made and taught that gainsharing would result in better benefits at retirement. Saying now that the law creating Plan 3 really didn't mean that gainsharing would remain is disingenuous. TRS, which developed the

presentations and sold people on Plan 3, never disclosed what now looks like fraud to the people they are charged to serve.

- Under funding insurance. All three budgets fund the new initiatives by under funding the costs of insurance. Using an estimated increase in cost of 3% when all predictions are for increases closer to 9% means our members with families will be seeing significant out of pocket rate increases.
- Equalization without equity. Using nearly \$50 million dollars to equalize salaries in suburban and rural districts while doing nothing to address the higher cost of living in Seattle, a situation that already drives our members from Seattle to the suburbs is just plain wrong. Seattle will end up in an even worse competitive position as a result.

Budgets and WASL Impact on the Seattle students

All three budgets put new resources into the Governor's math and science initiatives. Both the House and the Senate are considering legislation to set aside the math WASL as a graduation requirement while the State gets the class size, curriculum and professional development aligned.

This is a story of Institutional Racism and Institutional Classism.

The impetus for the increasing funding for math and the de-coupling of math from the WASL is the fact that 56% of 10th grade students did not meet the math standard on last year's WASL. When disaggregated by race and economics you will see that about 51% of the white students are not meeting the math standard.

The response by policy makers that the use of the math WASL, as a graduation criterion, must be delayed until the "problem" of class size, professional development and curriculum are resolved. This is a reasonable and logical result.

We urge you to consider another aspect of the disaggregated WASL numbers. Between 40 and 45% of children of poverty, many of whom in Seattle are children of color, are not passing the reading and writing sections of the WASL. **These sections will not be set aside; these children will be denied a diploma.**

- There is no concerted funding initiative to support the needs of the students not meeting reading and writing standards. There is currently no active bill to set aside using the reading and writing WASL as the graduation requirement for the 40% of the Students of Poverty and Students of Color who are not meeting the standard.
- This pure and simply is the definition of Institutional Racism and Institutional Privilege. SEA and SPS are working to eliminate the horror of Institutional Racism and Privilege wherever we find it.

- The members of SEA also are fighting for a system that provides **equity in the results** for children and young adults, not a system that sorts children of color and children of poverty and relegates those children to lives of poverty.

It is not too late to act

- We have proposed through Senator Kohl-Welles that the legislature fund the SPS for the work that SEA and SPS are jointly doing (with support from the NEA Foundation) to close the achievement gap in our highest needs schools. We asked for 5 million dollars for that effort in 2007-08 and 7.6 million dollars in 2008-09. That is the kind of resources that it will take to provide the schools and school staffs with the resources necessary to close the achievement gap. We ask that you take the necessary steps to get these levels of resource into the budget.
- We have proposed that the WASL be set aside as a graduation requirement until there is both the funding and the use of multiple measures that are necessary to treat all students equitably. The members of SEA work every day to meet the needs of students, they believe in holding themselves and students to the highest standards. We ask that you balance the playing field, set aside all the WASL graduation requirements, not just math.

Seattle legislators have long held the mantle of progressives, of liberals, of men and women who care about the voiceless people. Please find your voice again and stand with the school employees, parents and students of Seattle.

Sincerely yours,

Wendy Kimball
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