

March 26, 2007

Dear Legislator:

With less than a month remaining this session, we are pleased to see that education continues to be one of the top issues on the Legislature's agenda.

We appreciate the fact that many of the educational priorities identified in the College & Work Ready Agenda are progressing through the legislative process, and we urge you to move these important measures to final passage. In particular, we are encouraged by the progress made to date on the following fronts:

- Strengthen the quality of early learning programs: Proposals to create a quality rating system and provide increased training for providers of these services both have passed their houses of origin. We are pleased by efforts to improve the quality of early learning; however, we hope to see greater progress in creating a statewide set of clear indicators of kindergarten readiness.
- Improve math and science education: We applaud proposals to limit the number of state-approved math curricula, expand funding for the LASER hands-on science instruction program, improve teacher credentialing, reduce out-of-field teacher placements and create other incentives to improve teacher quality. Efforts to create a common placement test for determining whether students are "college ready" in math also seems to have strong momentum. Taken in total, these actions represent important steps toward higher quality math and science instruction.
- Increase production of high-demand degrees: We are encouraged by indications that the budget will include authorization for additional degree slots, especially in high-demand fields. We also support SB 5731, which would codify our goal of 10,000 new bachelor's degrees by 2020 and authorize a study of our state's capacity in high-demand fields.
- Enhance support for public university research: We are pleased by indications that the budget will include support for commercialization of new discoveries at our research universities and additional research capacity in areas like global health and bio-products. We believe these investments hold great promise for our state's future competitiveness.

In addition to these priorities, we are keenly interested in the ongoing deliberations around graduation requirements and the state assessment system. We recognize and appreciate the desire to address concerns regarding the existing math and science WASL. Yet we've been alarmed by efforts to dismantle the WASL graduation requirement before other assessment formats are fully vetted.



Standards should be the “anchor” of the system, with all other elements, including curriculum, professional development and assessments, aligned to those standards. Legislation to mandate end-of-course exams would make the tests themselves, rather than the standards, the centerpieces of our state education system. The State Board of Education is already moving forward with a comprehensive review of Washington’s math and science standards. This process should inform further conversations about changes to our assessment system. We strongly encourage you to actively engage the State Board and other educational experts in a more thorough and deliberate process before making a final decision on this critically important policy decision.

In addition to our advocacy efforts, we are also making significant progress in building broader public understanding and support for the important legislative priorities contained in the College & Work Ready Agenda. Traffic to our Web site ([www.collegeworkready.org](http://www.collegeworkready.org)) continues to grow, and last month we had over 10,000 hits to our “Progress Report” blog. We have reached key opinion leaders around the state through presentations to business and civic organizations, and more are scheduled. A “Math Matters” television advertising campaign is about to be launched, and we will soon be airing public service announcements featuring Governor Gregoire discussing the importance of math education. Print materials for parents will be mailed to schools, districts and community organizations in April.


The organizations supporting the College & Work Ready Agenda are committed to working with you in the coming weeks and years to make meaningful improvements to our education system. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

For questions or comments about our advocacy efforts please call Marc Frazer with the Washington Roundtable (206-225-0705) or Angela Kerwin with the Prosperity Partnership (206-587-5061). For questions about our communication efforts please call Melissa Heaton with Partnership for Learning (206-625-9655). Thanks again for your efforts.

Sincerely,



Don Brunell, President  
Association of Washington Business



Stacey Cowles, Chair  
Washington Roundtable



Rick Bender, President  
Washington State Labor Council



Brad Smith, President  
Partnership for Learning



Robert Drewel, Executive Director  
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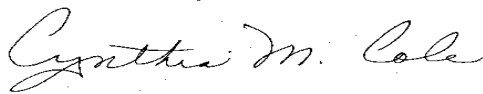
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