

...NewsLinks

Special Edition

A Web-based newsletter for the staff of Everett Public Schools

Dec. 1, 2009 *Special Edition* (NewsLinks articles are now [archived on Docushare](#))

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT – two new councils, a community engagement process and an invitation to say thank you to two departing school board members

Each year at this time I am struck by how much important work remains to be accomplished in such a few short weeks before the New Year. Of course, the nature of our work changes from winter to winter, but this incredible sense of urgency about our business of education is unique and seems never to diminish. I believe it is knowing that each of us makes a difference in the lives of children that sets the stage for our perennial impatience about doing that one more thing that reaches that one more student. It's a drive that only those of us who work in schools know well. Thank you for that extra effort you make for each student today.

Like you, I feel a sense of urgency to move forward with efforts that will make a difference for students, staff, and our community. Two new councils are forming to help us with some of this urgent work. One is the successor to the Diversity Task Force that worked all last year, and the other is the successor to the Budget Advisory Committee the district has used for several years. Both the Equity & Access Council and the Fiscal Advisory Council are designed to involve staff and community members in collaborative fashion. After talking with many staff, students and community members during the past five months about the challenges facing us, I believe these redesigned councils will help us to improve our ability to achieve greater student success in the coming year. You can read more information about each of these councils and the work ahead for them in the [news release](#) that is linked to this message.

The news release also announces the school board's plans to undertake a 20-month project of engaging the community in conversations about education. Last fall, your school board invested two and a half days working together with me and several experts in student learning, community engagement, strategic planning, diversity, and board policy development. While some of that time was necessary just to get to know each other better, we spent the bulk of those warm, sunny August days in

an Everett Community College classroom studying what this district has achieved and exploring how to build upon those achievements to reach the next level of excellence. Out of those discussions arose the initial plans for the community engagement series and strategic renewal process we plan to begin in January. By March 2011, we will have held a minimum of eight public sessions, spoken with and heard from a cross section of hundreds of staff, students, parents and community members about the district's vision and work. I look forward to your involvement and to visiting with you during that process.

On Tuesday, Dec. 8, we will say "thank you," but not "goodbye," to school board members Sue Cooper and Karen Madsen – both of whom were inspirational and supportive of the council structure and community engagement process I've explained. At the board meeting on Dec. 8, Sue and Karen will be succeeded by Jeff Russell and Jessica Olson. We know many of you will want to send Sue and Karen off with a thank you for their dedication on your behalf (together their volunteer service on the board totals 37 years!) and to welcome and witness Jeff and Jessica take the oath of office. Because of the expected audience for this meeting, we are gathering in the large meeting room at the Educational Service Center instead of the smaller board room.

January is officially School Board Appreciation Month. Our school board, including the two departing members and the two new members who have already spent countless hours becoming familiar with the district, is deserving of our appreciation for the work the board members have done and the challenges that lay ahead. Please join me in thanking them for their selfless service to our students and to each of us.

Dr. Gary Cohn
Superintendent

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