

**From:** [Superintendent](#)  
**To:** [EPS.MailList](#)  
**Subject:** Seahawks, SOSRs, Bonds and Levies -- Oh My!  
**Date:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 7:22:17 AM  
**Importance:** High

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Dear Colleague,

What a fantastic *Super Bowl* game! What a great run-up to Sunday's game, and what a wonderful celebration for the returning players! It's been a treat to see and be a part of all the pre- and post-game hoopla – almost as much fun as that blow-em-out-of-the-stadium win! Hundreds of thousands attended yesterday's victory parade and experienced a once-in-a-lifetime event. Personally, I look forward to the next once-in-a-lifetime victory parade in downtown Seattle following next year's Super Bowl – when the Hawks win back-to-back Bowls. I'm a positive thinker.

While our region's attention has been centered on the *Super Bowl*, our schools have steadfastly focused on the less attention-getting, but no less high-stakes challenge of students' academic success.

In January, with all this wonderful *Super Bowl* energy swirling around us, the district launched our own annual ritual – our State of the School Reviews (SOSRs). During our SOSRs, school teams lay out what is working, what is not, how real-time data is driving classroom and school instructional practices, and what support is needed for school teams to be even more successful.

You and I know that SOSRs don't make headlines or attract loud, boisterous crowds, although they should. Nevertheless, SOSRs are the stories of heroes, celebrations of great work and victories earned one-student-at-a-time. SOSRs are unheralded examples of what happens when staff are able to work in teams, to collaborate, and to strengthen skills and expertise.

SOSRs are vivid examples of our district's effort to support quality instruction with quality collaboration and team time and relevant professional development. That careful balance of instruction, collaboration and professional development is crucial to our most important work of ensuring that each student succeeds.

Unfortunately, this year's legislative session includes proposals that seek to chop away at the balance by eliminating collaboration time – critical time to work in teams – and questioning the need for professional development. These proposals come as we work diligently together to successfully implement TPEP, the Common Core, and to prepare students for Smarter Balanced Assessments which begin next year. I believe in high expectations and high support. These legislative proposals are all about expectations, minus the support it takes to achieve those expectations.

When our school board and student representatives attended the WSSDA Legislative Conference two weekends ago, we met with legislators to advocate for the time we need for collaboration and professional development. By sharing improvement data from our schools, we attracted some attention, and we expanded some perceptions. We won't know the results of this effort until the legislature concludes.

We also won't know how or if the legislature will act this year to honor the court-ordered funding requirements of the Supreme Court's McCleary decision. Neither will we know, until at least Feb. 11, the outcome of the Educational Programs and Operations Levy and Capital Facilities Bond measures district residents are considering now. Both of these measures support high expectations and high quality schools and educational technology in our classrooms.

No matter where you live in this region, it is likely you received a ballot with school-related issues in your home mailbox. Everett Public Schools and many school districts in this county and our region have placed ballot measures before voters. Ballots are due into each county elections office by Feb. 11, less than a week from now.

As a public employee, I am bound by the letter and the spirit of the laws of our state and may not use our resources to influence yours or anyone else's decision about how to vote.

As superintendent, I am also responsible to provide you with facts to help the public (which includes you) make well-informed decisions as voters – and to help you respond to questions you may be asked about these ballot measures.

My message today includes links to factual information about these two ballot measures and responses to many of the questions we've been asked since Nov. 26, 2013, when the board approved the ballot measures. I strongly encourage you to take the time to read these facts and the questions and answers and to visit the district's web site for more information.

To save you a "click," some of the basic information appears below; much more is [online](#).

### **What is on the Feb. 11 ballot for Everett Public Schools?**

Everett Public Schools residents will find two school proposals on their ballots.

**Proposition 1** is a *Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy*. Presented to the voters every four years, this operations levy will replace the one which expires in December. It represents 23% of the district's annual operating costs, or almost \$1 out of every \$4 spent for textbooks, salaries and benefits, educational programs and professional development to help students achieve to high standards and to graduate. Over 85 percent of our operating budget is *people*.

**Proposition 2** is a Capital Improvement and Construction Bond. It includes funds for:

- Educational technology throughout all of our schools
- Repair of "systems" such as ventilation, heating and roofs
- Modernization of Woodside Elementary School and North Middle School – as part of the district's [40-year, eight-phase building modernization schedule](#).
- Modernization of Cascade High School's science building
- Classrooms for all day kindergarten and for lower class size in grades K-3
- A new elementary school in the south end of the district – where enrollment is growing the fastest (January's enrollment count at Woodside Elementary was 718 students – making it the district's largest elementary school – in a facility built for approximately 500)
- The first phase of a fourth comprehensive high school – also in the south end of the district. (January's count for Cascade High was 1,784, and for Jackson it was 2,005 – in schools built for 1,500 students) Phase I of a new high school is not intended to be a "small high school."

### **Why is the district asking for local school support when the state has been ordered to fully fund education?**

The Supreme Court did order the state to meet its Constitutional obligation to amply fund schools by the year 2018. Just last month, on Jan. 14, the [Court reprimanded the state legislature](#) for not making adequate progress to meet its obligation. While we are hopeful that the state's legislators and the governor will abide by the Supreme Court order, they have not yet done so. Until that "ample funding" is a reality, Everett Public Schools and the majority of others in our state must rely on local levy support for basic education programs and other programs the state does not adequately fund.

For any district to make long-range educational program plans based solely upon the McCleary Decision would be like making long-term retirement plans based solely upon winning a lottery.

### **Property values are going up now that the economy is beginning to recover. Does this mean the district will collect more in property taxes?**

No. School districts collect only a total dollar amount approved by voters. The tax rate may vary, but the total dollar amount collected does not increase when property taxes go up. (Take the *True and False* quiz on [page 10 of the district newsletter](#) for more tax

basics. Also on that page is a simple drawing and explanation of what happens when property values go up or down. The same information is presented in a [video format](#).)

Other questions and answers you will find online:

- **Did the district repurpose bond funds to build the Community Resource Center (CRC)?** (No – clarification of misinformation about this is [online](#))
- **Could money used to build the CRC lower class size or pay our teachers more?** (No – learn why [online](#).)
- **Did the district buy property to build the CRC?** ([No](#))

If you have any questions about Everett Public Schools' ballot measures or legislative proposals that might affect our schools, please don't hesitate to ask!

One of the great lessons from this Super Bowl is how important teamwork is to success, and how critical solid, long-term commitments are to professional development (coaching and practice, practice, practice). Every indication is that our Seahawks are outstanding individuals who, together, complement one another so well that they have become the very best. I can't think of a better way to describe the successes we are experiencing in our Everett Public Schools.

Have a great February and Hooray Hawks!

Warm regards,  
Gary