

News release



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Everett Public Schools board named *Board of Distinction*

Of the state's 296 districts, only 17 Washington school boards earn the award in 2014



(Left to right) Board President Pam LeSesne, Director Carol Andrews and Director Caroline Mason during a board meeting.

Next week, when school board directors from around the state meet in Spokane, Everett Public Schools' five-member board will be honored for exemplary school district performance.

That exemplary governance is measured against standards established by the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA). The standards identify elements of good governance and effective board leadership drawn from best practices and current research – including leadership and professional and personal conduct that leads to improved student learning.

Boards of Distinction are named each year, based upon nominations that detail standards-based practices and student achievement and adherence to five core principles:

1. Responsible school district governance
2. Communication and commitment to high expectations for student learning
3. Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success
4. Holding the district accountable for student learning
5. Engagement of the community in education



Director Ted Wenta gets instructions from a student. An important factor in the board's award is the extent to which it involves student perspective.

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Directors LeSesne (left) and Mason (right) visit with a student during a public open house discussion about best ways to use district properties.



Director Traci Mitchell hears Spanish-speaking parents' thoughts about student enrollment growth with the help of an interpreter.

Everett's nomination highlighted multiple accomplishments aligned with WSSDA standards and core principles.

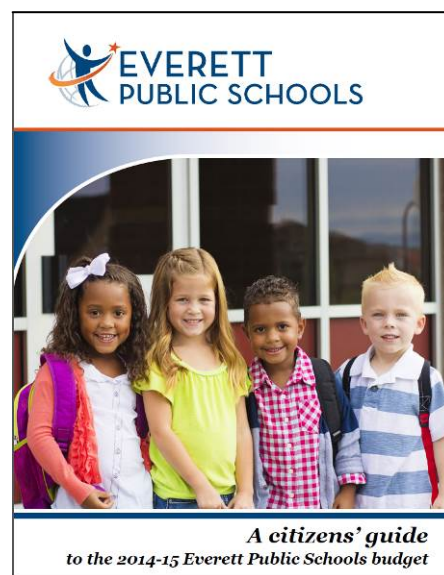
Students are learning well in Everett Public Schools. The graduation rate has increased steadily for more than a decade. The language support given to non-English speaking students is helping them excel academically. Advanced Placement enrollment is up in high schools. GEAR UP and AVID programs are inspiring middle and high school students to prepare for college – and to be the first in their families to graduate from high school or go on to schooling after high school.

Partnerships with other organizations and businesses are leveraging local and regional resources and talent. Collaborative work with the Gates Foundation and other school districts is expanding quality preschool opportunities so more children are kindergarten-ready and thus positioned for K-12 academic success and beyond. The district has increased the number of full-day kindergarten classes available with partnership funding from the Everett Public Schools Foundation. Local businesses are helping fund the district's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. Rotary of Everett has undertaken a multi-year *Next Generation Project* that helps 240 students per year prepare for and

enter college. The one-year-old Community Resource Center is living up to its name and purpose as a partnership center, catalyst for excellence, collaborative workplace and community center.

The district's strong financial history, high credit rating and the board's involvement in financial decisions are also among reasons for the board award. Cited in the nomination are the multiple times the board reviews the district's financial status. Noted too is the finance departments reader-friendly [budget document](#) which helps translate bureaucratic financial language into an understandable explanation of where district money comes from and how it is used.

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The WSSDA judges also noted the significance of the district's student board representatives – and the level to which those students are included in board activities. “Students go with us to conferences; they are strong voices when we visit with legislators. They bring unique and priceless perspective to our board discussions,” explained Board President Pam LeSesne.

When learning the board was named a *Board of Distinction*, LeSesne was quick to give credit to past board members for leadership that laid solid foundation for today's achievements. “Responsible financial management and accountability to the public began long before these individuals were elected,” she said. “We have a responsibility to them and to the public to continue that work and to follow previous board members' examples of focusing our attention upon and investing our resources in our communities' children.”



Superintendent Cohn and Director LeSesne meeting with student representatives discussing plans for a legislative visit in Olympia.

Superintendent Gary Cohn emphasized the current and past school boards' willingness to commit long hours and thoughtful, strategic deliberation for the good of each child. “This district is particularly fortunate to have a history of so many exemplary directors who understand the time it takes to do this work well. They are responsible for oversight of public funds and decisions that impact individual students and our communities for generations. It is truly an honor to work for and with such individuals and public-minded team.”

The ceremony to honor Everett Public Schools Board of Directors is at 12:30 p.m., Nov. 20 in Spokane at the Spokane Convention Center.

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