



*Our students will lead and shape the future*

## News release

**Feb. 9, 2016**

### ***Annie Cole, J.D., to be district diversity officer and general counsel***

*Former Bellevue School District attorney will assume legal duties and support the district's equity and access progress and partnerships*



*Annie Cole, fourth from left, was introduced to the school board on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2016*

On Tuesday, Feb. 9, Superintendent Gary Cohn announced the appointment of Annie Cole, J.D., as the district's chief diversity officer and general counsel, as of April 1, 2016.

In that role, she will assume much of the district's legal work previously outsourced to law firms at hourly rates reaching as much as \$500 per hour.

Cohn explains how the appointment fits in with the district's strategic plan and cost saving measures. "The board and I have long sought the right person to take on the specialized task of public education law as a way to save funds now expended externally for services ranging from contract advice to employment advice to contract negotiations to public records disclosure advice. She will advise ongoing policies and procedures revisions, student discipline, bullying and harassment, and help us maintain our record of adherence to the Open Public Meetings Act."

(more)

Cohn also notes Cole will be leader of the Superintendent's Equity and Access Advisory Council. "She will guide our efforts to expand professional development for increased equity and access in our schools and support services. Annie will be a member of the team which designs our professional development, and she will teach these skills as part of our efforts to improve this aspect of our work."

Dr. Janice Greene, president of the NAACP, Snohomish County Branch lauded the district for, "its continued commitment to close achievement gaps and increase the diversity of staff and school leadership. We share the district's belief that each student must succeed in school and transition smoothly to college and career – no matter that child's skin color or zip code."

Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson credited the district for their "*forward thinking in the area of equity and access for our community's children. I look forward to further partnership between the city and the district as we continue to build a vibrant and welcoming diverse community.*"

Cole's past work experience includes leadership roles in equity, access and social justice work, and in school district and public sector law. She has experience in public sector human resources work and in public policy work. She has taught school law to new Washington state principals and has taught college level political science.

Everett Community College Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Maria Peña welcomes Cole as a, "full partner in the college and district's ongoing work to remove barriers for students of color to graduate from high school, transition and succeed in further education."

"Throughout her career, Annie has been involved in equity and social justice work in her communities, at the college/university level, and in K-12 education. She shares our district's core value of 'equity,'" emphasized Cohn.

Cole has most recently served as general counsel for the Bellevue Public Schools where she has served as general counsel and previously as assistant general counsel. She earned her law degree through Gonzaga University School of Law and a Political Science degree from Eastern Washington University. She is a member of the Washington State Bar Association.

**For more information:**

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