



Northwest Educational Service District 189

Together We Can

Board of Directors:
Claudia J. Burston
Linda M. Byrnes
Dr. Alan Erickson
Gordon W. Griggs
Merle Kirkley
Leann Swanson
Claudia Talmadge
Dr. Jack Thompson
Mark Venn

1601 R Avenue, Anacortes, WA 98221
360-299-4000 • Fax 360-299-4070
www.nwesd.org

Dr. Gerald W. Jenkins, *Superintendent*

December 11, 2015

Melinda Dyer
State Coordinator of Homeless Education
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
PO Box 47200 (Old Capital Building)
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Ms. Dyer:

We are writing on behalf of Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) region school districts that serve homeless students pursuant to McKinney Vento. This group of districts support roughly 14% of the Washington state homeless student population and share the same challenges as districts in other regions. Recent work originating in Snohomish County resulted in the identification of uncertainty when applying 'reasonableness' to the McKinney Vento criterion. The passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) will likely generate additional uncertainty and the need for guidance clarification related to serving our homeless student population.

Pursuant to regional discussion, we are requesting OSPI create a stakeholder group to discuss and clarify McKinney Vento issues, including:

- ESSA rule development related to homeless students;
- clarification of the 'reasonableness' criterion, guidelines, and parameters, absent any extenuating individual circumstances; and,
- resource identification to provide homeless liaison 'best practices' professional development.

The ESSA reauthorization language will allow, in some situations, homeless children/youth transitioning from feeder schools to remain in their school district of origin. We are concerned this option not become a default allowance, even though the provision only applies if it is in the student's best interest. Our representative group of districts has noticed transitional housing has changed the characteristics of homeless students/families. As a result, if students are not tracked and reassessed at school completions then transitions to new school districts/communities will become less likely.

The NWESD region school districts are dedicated to serving students pursuant to McKinney Vento. To this end, greater consistency would permit maximized use of limited resources, in order to better support a growing population of homeless students.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jerry Jenkins
NWESD Superintendent

Anna Esquibel
NWESD Regional Transportation Coordinator

c: NWESD Region School District Homeless Liaison Contacts
NWESD Region School District Transportation Supervisors
NWESD Region School District Superintendents