

These are challenging times for our schools. We implemented the new Smarter Balanced Assessments this past spring and saw Washington students perform better than expected on the more rigorous College and Career Ready standards.

However, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), first enacted 14 years ago, remains the Federal law of the land. Over that 14-year timeline, the law held out the aspiration that districts and schools would make 100% of our students proficient regardless of special needs, English language mastery, or other life-impacting circumstances.

Over the next few weeks, all districts and schools are required to send notices to parents if we have failed to help 100% of our students become proficient on the new Smarter Balanced Assessments.

In the Puget Sound region, school districts range from single-school districts in isolated rural areas to urban systems that serve more than 50,000 children. King and Pierce County schools teach 400,000 children from hundreds of cultures who come to school speaking more than 125 different languages.

In a show of solidarity, 30 Puget Sound area school districts are sending you this letter to notify you that our districts and schools did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as required by NCLB. Despite the Federal label, our schools are not failing. Please know that our educators continue to work hard on preparing every student for a successful future

We readily accept the fact that we are accountable for results. But hold us accountable for the standards set here in Washington and in each of our individual districts – not for unrealistic standards from Washington, D.C. that presume to tell us that nearly 100% of our schools are failing.

Our schools have done their best to make sure no child is left behind. It's time for policy-makers to enact the necessary changes to NCLB so that it works in concert with, rather than contrary to, the state's existing efforts.

For now, NCLB requires us to set aside approximately 20 percent of Title I funds we receive from the federal government - \$40 million statewide. This money is reserved for the district to either transfer students to a school that meets the federal requirements or pay for private tutoring. In addition, parents whose children attend schools that don't meet federal standards and receive Title I funding are mailed this notice.

The label of "failing" schools is regressive and punitive. Some of our state's most successful schools are being labeled "failing" by an antiquated law that most educators and elected officials acknowledge isn't working. The NCLB law, now seven years overdue for an overhaul, is finally scheduled to be updated this fall.

Please know your child's school district is effectively addressing the needs of all students. Our progress is due to the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders through high-quality instruction, effective leadership, and authentic partnerships. On behalf of the districts in our region, we appreciate your continued support of our students, staff and schools.

Sincerely,



John P. Welch, Superintendent
Puget Sound Educational Service District



Faith Chapel, Superintendent
Bainbridge Island School District



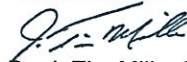
Thomas Seigel, Superintendent
Bethel School District



Krestin Bahr, Superintendent
Eatonville School District



Dr. Alan Spicciati, Superintendent
Auburn School District



Dr. J. Tim Mills, Superintendent
Bellevue School District



Debbie LeBeau, Superintendent
Clover Park School District



Michael A. Nelson, Superintendent
Enumclaw School District

Dr. Tammy Campbell, Superintendent
Federal Way Public Schools

Dr. Frank Hewins, Superintendent
Franklin Pierce School District

Dr. Calvin Watts, Superintendent
Kent School District

Dr. Gary Plano, Superintendent
Mercer Island School District

Dr. Marci Shepard, Superintendent
Orting School District

Dr. Timothy Yeomans, Superintendent
Puyallup School District

Dr. Anthony Smith, Superintendent
Riverview School District

Rebecca Miner, Superintendent
Shoreline School District

Kathi Weight, Superintendent
Steilacoom School District

Carla Santorno, Superintendent
Tacoma Public Schools

Dr. Nancy Coogan, Superintendent
Tukwila School District

Janel Keating, Superintendent
White River School District

Dr. Kevin Alfano, Superintendent
Fife School District

Ron Thiele, Superintendent
Issaquah School District

Dr. Traci Pierce, Superintendent
Lake Washington School District

Larry Francois, Superintendent
Northshore School District

Chuck Cuzzetto, Superintendent
Peninsula School District

Dr. Art Jarvis, Superintendent
Renton School District

Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools

Joel Aune, Superintendent
Snoqualmie Valley School District

Dr. Sara Johnson, Superintendent
Sumner School District

Robert Morrow, Superintendent
Tahoma School District

Michael Soltman, Superintendent
Vashon Island School District