



Washington Learns recommendations lack substance, strength

• Washington Learns, the Blue-Ribbon task force commissioned by the Legislature to conduct a comprehensive study of public education in Washington State, released its preliminary report for public comment early last month. The report, which is available on the Washington Learns website at www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov makes a series of recommendations for public schools in our state. The report is the outcome of 14 months of work by the Washington Learns Steering Committee. Early Learning Advisory Committee, K-12 Advisory Committee, and Higher Ed Advisory Committee. The report itself was written by the Steering Committee. While a number of recommendations are very positive, other aspects of the report are very troubling

• *The report does not define basic education, despite strong recommendations from the K-12 Advisory Committee to do so.* In

fact, the K-12 Advisory Committee even suggested what that definition should be. Currently, we're operating (and are being funded) under a definition that was developed over 25 years ago.

- *The report completely ignores the recommendations* from a consultant, hired by Washington Learns at a cost of \$850,000, on how schools should be structured. The consultant's study outlines research-based recommendations on what a prototypical elementary, middle school, and high school should look like in order to obtain optimal student achievement. It covers class size, staffing, supplies, and just about everything else that makes up an effective school.
- *Class size reduction is not addressed* beyond relying on I-728 dollars, even though Washington has just moved from 46th to 47th in the nation in class size.
- *The report is extremely weak on special education funding,*

despite the fact that by every measure the state is significantly underfunding this legal obligation.

- *The report relies heavily on improving teaching* as a major solution to increasing student achievement. This comes in the form of instructional coaches, additional professional development, and performance pay for those teachers whose students show gains.

The report does make several very encouraging recommendations:

- *Phase in all-day kindergarten programs* for all students, targeting resources first to high-poverty schools.
- *Increase opportunities* for career and technical education.
- *Benchmark per-pupil spending and school employees' salaries* to the Global Challenge States, which are states that are positioned to do well in the new economy.

Washington Learns Steering Committee is working on a final report due out November 13th.

November 2006

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News You Can Use:

Want to save money and increase your income?



Did you know you can ***increase your take-home pay*** by lowering your income tax and Social Security deductions each month? It's possible to do this by opening up a "Section 125 Flexible Spending Account."

Please look at the list below and check to see if you have any items that you currently have as out-of-pocket expenses. If so, you can save money in taxes.

- Daycare Expenses
- Prescription drug co-pays
- Office visit co-pays
- Medical insurance deductibles
- Orthodontia (you can now take an advance from your account for this)
- Dental care
- Eye exams
- Laser eye surgery
- Contact lenses or glasses
- Contact lens solution & enzyme cleaners
- Chiropractors
- Hearing aids & batteries
- Insulin
- Lab fees
- Acupuncture
- Christian Science practitioners
- Certain corrective surgeries
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatrists, psychologists
- Medical equipment
- Mileage related to medical care
- Certain over-the-counter meds, such as pain relievers, acid reducers, & antihistamines

It's easy to set up a Flexible Spending Account. Simply add up all the qualifying expenses you anticipate you'll have between January 1 and August 31, 2007. Divide this total amount by 8, and then request that amount to be deducted from your paycheck each month.

This deduction will be taken right off the top of your gross income, **BEFORE** taxes are calculated. Therefore, it will essentially lower your taxable income, thus causing you to pay less in taxes.

The money is then deposited into your personal Flexible Spending Account for you to make withdrawals throughout the year. You can use this money to pay for any unreimbursed qualifying expenses, completely **TAX-FREE**.

For example, if you know you spend \$50 every month on prescription drug co-pays, you can have that \$50 taken from your paycheck **BEFORE TAXES**, therefore lowering your taxable income. Then when you spend money on your co-pays, simply use your Flexible Spending account to access your tax-free dollars.

Although you should use up your entire account by August 31, 2007, **new IRS rules** allow you to have a 70-day grace period after that point to spend any unused money. This will greatly ease the pressure of making sure you estimate your expenses accurately.

To find out more information on Flexible Spending accounts, including a comprehensive list of which items are allowed and which are not, contact

representative Scott Florsheim at scott.florsheim@afgroup.com or call him at (866) 576-0201 ext 34. Scott would also be willing to come and work with you even at your worksite.

Note: You must meet with an American Fidelity representative to enroll.

The deadline is December 15, 2006!



NEA Member Benefits

Three \$100 Target Gift Cards

Register with NEA Member Benefits

Cash-in-pocket is a good thing to have for holiday gift buying or home decorating! NEA members can register any time during the month of November 2006 in the Free Giveaways area of the NEA MB Web Site (www.neamb.com) for a chance to win one of three \$100 Target Gift Cards!

Giveaway entry begins at 12:00 a.m., ET, on November 1, 2006, and ends at 11:59:59 p.m., ET, on November 30, 2006. No purchase necessary to enter.



READ ACROSS AMERICA

NEA's Read Across America e-newsletter will provide the latest news in reading from Read Across America and its partner organizations. You'll also find links to grant information, classroom and parents materials, and more. To join, NEA members should send a blank e-mail to :

join-nea-ra-enewsletter@list.nea.org.

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Know Your Contract

This month's
Contract Question



Congratulations to Dena Walker (Mt. Baker) for answering last month's Contract Question correctly! The correct answer was The Decision Making Model.

Look for another Contract Question in the December issue of the Viewpoint.



Shared Sick Leave



Melissa Powderface-Custodian

Deonna Steffy-Admin. Asst.



If you have over 22 days of accumulated sick leave and would like to share extra days, please contact the office manager in your building for the shared sick leave form. You may donate up to 6 days each year.

THE AEA MARKETPLACE

Your source for goods and services from our membership community

FOR SALE

Delightful 2 bdrm/2 bath rambler on a level lot in Leavenworth. Walking distance to town. Great views of mountains. \$297,500. For questions, contact Rick Nelson (AHS) 253-380-2984



Complete interior remodel of a 1.5 story Craftsman in downtown Auburn. 3bdrm/2 bath on large lot. 1800 sq. ft. plus unfinished basement w/lots of potential. Jacuzzi soaking tub in master bath. Tile, laminate and carpet new in 2002. A must see!! \$297,500 for Appt. call Travis or Crystal Jilbert (ARHS) 253-939-2407 or 253-797-5040 (Travis)



2003 Grand Am GT

3.4 Liter 3400 V-6 Ram Air Induction, 30,000 miles. Wonderful cond./no accidents/no body work/verify regular maint. Black/4 dr, sunroof, spoiler & much more! \$14,000 - Contact Trish Bachelder - (Olympic) trishbachelder@yahoo.com or 253-217-8315

2 Story, 1300 sq. ft., 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath, end unit town home in Federal Way near Weyerhaeuser. All appliances stay. 1 assigned covered parking. New oak laminate floors in living/dining areas, new vinyl in kitchen. Prefer to rent it furnished, but will consider unfurnished, \$1100/month. No pets no smoking please. For more information contact Janet Stark (Chinook) at 253-278-9334 after 5pm.

Available November 1, 2006



VACATIONS

Newly remodeled 1 bdrm, ocean view condo for rent in Gearhart, Oregon. King in bedroom, sofabed, wood burning stove, DVD/VCR, newly built pool/jacuzzi. Located directly across from golf course & clubhouse/rest. Non-smoking & no pets. 2 night minimum. Winter rates: Nightly \$88.20/2 nights total \$176.40. Make your reservations at www.gearhartresort.com and request unit number 602.

Susan K. James (Evergreen Heights)

WANTED

West Auburn High School



is looking for a ping pong table to be used in PE. Good condition only, please. Pick up can be arranged. If you have one that you are willing to donate or part with for a very moderate fee please contact Don Wilson (West Auburn) dwilson@auburn.wednet.edu or call 253-931-4990.

- Ads are run in the AEA Marketplace on a first come, first served basis pending available space.
- Ads are accepted only in written form.
- Direct ads to Kimberly Greene via e-mail at auburnea2@mindspring.com
- Ads are subject to approval from the Executive Board and content may be edited for length.