

Dear SEA Sisters and Brothers,

SEA Vice President Jonathan Knapp and I are pleased to forward on to you the following message from Seattle School Board President Michael DeBell on behalf of the board. Jonathan and I consider the statement to be a significant, positive development in the board's understanding of its responsibilities. We are also encouraged that the board has seen fit to reach out to you *first* with this explanation of how it intends to change its approach on the crucial areas of the state audit, governance and oversight, budgeting, and strategic plan evaluation. We appreciate this effort by the school board to address issues raised in the vote of no confidence and to establish better lines of communication with educators. Please take the time to read School Board President DeBell's comments below that are addressed to you.

The SEA Representative Assembly has voted to support the levy.

In unity,

Olga Addae, SEA President

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> our citizens will decide whether to approve a Supplemental Levy for Seattle Public Schools. This provides a critical opportunity to weather the current economic challenges in our state school funding with temporary local property tax revenue. This levy has proven considerably more controversial than past levies and needs the full support of our education community to succeed. The Seattle School Board has taken significant steps to address many of the issues that have been raised as reasons to oppose the levy. This work is not widely known and may help address doubts about the levy dollars supporting classroom instruction.

- State Auditor's Financial and Accountability Audit Findings- Five meetings of the Audit and Finance Committee have examined each finding in detail. The Board will vote on a Resolution addressing the State Audit on October 20<sup>th</sup> and has directed staff to create a web page on our audit response (link on SPS homepage). A project team is developing new internal controls and procedures to improve compliance and accountability in our use of taxpayer dollars. This will include an outside audit of areas of concern, a strengthening of our internal audit function and a tightening of our ethical standards.
- Governance and Oversight- The Board will be rewriting our policies to improve our oversight of the Superintendent and our major business functions. This work has already been outlined and will be completed with the support of an outside consultant chosen by the Board. We have consulted with the Port of Seattle, which recently reorganized their governance structure, as well as peer school districts. We have also restructured the

Superintendent evaluation instrument to reflect the emphasis on student academic achievement and accountability we seek throughout the District.

- Budgeting- The Board has directed staff to reverse our typical budget development process and build the school budgets first. The Board's guiding principals for use of our scarce resources begin with classroom instruction.
- Strategic Plan Evaluation- The Board and staff will review our progress at the half way point of our Five Year Strategic Plan. This will include the cost and effectiveness of all of the various strands of the plan. Our current budget situation and the capacity of the system to successfully implement new initiatives will be a key part of the discussion.

We should all be proud of the accomplishments of this school district and know where we need to improve as we go before the voters. We may never all agree on the best way forward in public education but should agree that success for all children will require resources. Please join me in doing all you can to promote and support Seattle Proposition 1, our Supplemental Levy.

Sincerely,

Michael DeBell President Seattle School Board [michael.debell@seattleschools.org](mailto:michael.debell@seattleschools.org)