

MEA Frontline

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PRIORITY SCHOOLS

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

by Arden Watson, MEA President

Making Priority Schools A Priority!

In early 2010 the Marysville School District was notified that Totem Middle School and Tulalip Elementary were in the bottom 5% for student achievement and that we were eligible to compete for a School Improvement Grant. In the spring of 2011, Quil Ceda Elementary was also added to this group and ultimately received a SIG as well. Much work, change, collaboration, and anguish have occurred between January 2010 and today! When I reflect back on all that has taken place, both the great and not-so-great, during this period, I am truly amazed. I am so proud of the MEA members, principals, and other district employees who have committed themselves to this work. Your efforts have been noticed by professionals from across the United States; including other SIG schools, WEA leadership and staff, elected officials, and by the NEA Priority Schools Campaign.

I wanted to share some of the efforts taking place in support of our three priority schools, and some additional resources available to you. There is much to share, but here are a few highlights!

Who Is Supporting Your Work in Marysville?

- ◆ **Marysville Education Association & Marysville School District** collaborated on the SIG application, a new 4-tiered evaluation, and an annual Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that specifies how some grant requirements will be fulfilled in Marysville. The original MOA developed in Marysville, and largely written by **Pilchuck UniServ Director, John Morrill**, became a template used across the USA. The hours of meetings on these and other topics related to our priority schools have been truly collaborative and highly focused on supporting your success.
- ◆ **Washington Education Association** was the first state affiliate of NEA to reach out to locals that received SIG. **Ann Randall**, a WEA staff member who works on federal initiatives such as SIG, has brought leaders and members from priority schools together to learn from each other and to provide timely information and professional development. This past August, **WEA's Summer University**, had an entire "school" specifically for members from SIG schools. MEA members from Totem, Tulalip, and Quil Ceda attended Summer University where they learned about training and resources that WEA can bring to each school.

- ◆ **National Education Association**, through the Priority Schools Campaign (PSC), selected Marysville to be one of 19 school districts across the country to receive intensive support from NEA. This partnership began with a school visit by **Princess Moss (NEA Executive Committee)**, **Sheila Simmons (Director, NEA PSC)**, **Mary Lindquist (WEA President)**, and **Kim Mead (Everett EA & NEA Board director)** who saw the outstanding work and efforts taking place at our SIG schools. **Ellen Holmes**, NEA staff member from PSC, was assigned to Marysville and has provided assistance in a number of areas including RTI, transition work with Tulalip/Quil Ceda, data analysis, and knowledge of NEA PSC programs/trainings that might fill a need that we have. Ellen continues to be a valuable resource for members and district administration. NEA Priority Schools Campaign funded a team from each school to attend the NEA PSC Forum in November. This provided an opportunity for school teams (including administrators and school board members) to reflect, learn, and collaborate about the changes and innovations needed to support student achievement. Several participants mentioned that this was by far the best SIG related conference that they have attended. Much more to share about what we learned there, in the coming months.
- ◆ NEA Priority Schools Campaign has provided a **\$10,000 technology grant** to Marysville. These funds will be used to provide a much needed computer lab at Totem Middle. We will also receive another grant, up to **\$10,000, to implement the Parent Engagement Project (PEP)**. NEA staff **Roberta Hantgan and Brenda Vincent** will provide guidance and training as we look for new ways to involve our community in closing the achievement gap at our schools.

It is clear that each of you has taken on a huge responsibility and that you are making progress that benefits students. I hope that by reading this summary you will be reminded that you are not in this alone. Thank you for your hard work to bring about change.

RESOURCES



WEA Children's Fund The goal of the WEA Children's Fund is to help meet the modest and immediate needs of students encountered by WEA members in their daily workplaces. The intent is to ensure that the physical, social and emotional needs of students do not stand in the way of success within the school setting. To get additional information or to access these funds, please follow this link: www.washingtonea.org/childrensfund.



Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council) is an international association of learning educators committed to one purpose in K-12 education: *Every educator engages in professional learning every day so every student achieves.* Membership in Learning Forward allows for web access to resources and a community of peers. Thanks to a partnership with NEA, staff at PSC schools may access a complimentary membership to Learning Forward. Go to www.learningforward.org/psc for more information and to register.

P R I O R I T Y
S C H O O L S
C A M P A I G N

NEA's
Priority Schools Campaign
invites you to join our
Virtual Learning Community

*Reflect and grow in the company of
priority school colleagues from
across the country*



*Explore your practice
in a private, safe,
online community led by
accomplished teacher mentors*

NEA's Virtual Learning Communities

Forty-one accomplished teachers—many of them National Board Certified Teachers and/or mentors in their own high-needs schools—are ready to serve as virtual mentors to their peers in priority schools. The mentors were trained in collaboration with our partner, The Center for Teaching Quality, which has considerable expertise in cultivating teacher leadership to address student learning.

The mentoring will take place in a number of theme-based, virtual-learning communities or VLCs. What exactly the guiding themes may be, depends on what teachers would like to explore about their practice, but some possibilities include: classroom management, differentiated instruction, National Board or Take One!, family-school-community partnerships, technology in the classroom, ELL, etc. With over 40 trained mentors, there's a broad range of expertise at all levels to tap. For any particular themed VLC to launch, a minimum of twenty mentees is required.

Teachers can sign up alone or in cohorts. The service is free. See the FAQs at the link below for more information. All a teacher needs to do is fill out the online form, and we will take it from there.

<http://neaprioritieschools.org/virtual-learning-community/>

Call for Submissions from the U.S. Department of Education

Share your SIG Success Stories

Across the country, there are close to 1,000 schools implementing one of the four intervention models under SIG. In just under a year, many of these schools have seen encouraging growth in leading indicators as well as transformations in school culture and climate. The Department of Education believes these stories must be shared widely – to highlight successes, to inspire colleagues, and to validate the work being done in your communities.

We are calling on all educators who are undertaking school turnarounds to make your story known by sharing with us the positive changes you are seeing in your schools and districts. Specifically, we are asking states and districts to submit names and contact information of schools that are making improvements under the SIG grant. Your school may then be featured in an upcoming School Turnaround Newsletter.

Please submit the name of the school, contact information, and a brief summary of school highlights to www.school.improvement.grants@ed.gov. We look forward to hearing back from you!