



August 18, 2008

Dear WSA Members:

I want to thank you for your incredible support of WSA over the past year. WSA is working hard to provide your program with the services you need and to really listen to what programs want for their membership. I hope you are finding our work at WSA valuable and useful in your day to day work. Please accept our many thanks!

WSA's board met last week to finalize our budget for 2009, the strategic plan, and our advocacy goals for the upcoming year. Here is what was decided:

Advocacy Goals

After a healthy discussion based on our survey results and discussions with directors, staff, and parents, we developed four advocacy goals for 2009:

1. **The creation of an Early ECEAP/Early Head Start Program.** This new state program would mirror the federal Early Head Start program and build off of the very successful ECEAP program. It would provide Early Head Start, ECEAP, and potentially child care providers with a funding stream targeted towards the birth to 3 population.
2. **Protected Eligibility for Child Care Subsidies.** Currently, families enrolled in Head Start and ECEAP maintain their eligibility regardless of a change in their income. However, many parents often lose their eligibility for working connections child care when there is a change in income or job status. WSA is proposing that parents enrolled in Head Start or ECEAP would automatically maintain their child care subsidy during the program year. This would ensure parents are able to receive a continuity of high quality child care for their children and at the same time reward parents who work or receive pay increases.
3. **Increased funding for Head Start.** Head Start funding was cut by \$10 million nationally last year. WSA is working with our congressional delegation to obtain a small boost for programs before the November election and will work the new Congress and Administration to ensure that Head Start receives a meaningful increase next year.
4. **Early learning should be part of the school funding formula.** WSA will continue to encourage lawmakers to support including early learning within the definition of basic

education and the school funding formula. By including ECEAP and other early learning programs we could potentially secure a permanent funding stream for our programs and ensure that more children and families could be served.

Our board also discussed our strong support for home visiting programs and wanted to work in coalition with other organizations that are making this a focus of their advocacy campaigns. Finally, we acknowledged that due to the dire budget deficits facing state lawmakers and the Governor come January we need to be reasonable in our requests and prepare for the possibility that WSA will need to fight to maintain current funding for ECEAP and other critical programs serving low income children and families.

WSA Budget

At the moment the budget situation is positive at WSA. We are even likely to have a very small surplus at the end of our fiscal year August 31. We will be submitting a new draft budget to our members for review at the fall meeting in October. The budget will take into consideration all new projects and funding streams and an analysis of what current programs might have to be scaled back if the Governor's current contract freeze persists into next year.

Strategic Plan 2009 to 2011

Over the past year WSA staff and board members have gone through an intensive process to develop a new 3 year strategic plan and work plan. We would like to present to you the final strategic plan at the fall meeting. The latest version of the strategic plan is attached. Please get comments back to us by August 27th to allow us some time to incorporate any possible changes.

By-Laws Revision

Attached you'll find the WSA bylaws, which include some minor changes that the membership will vote on at our October Meeting. Please review and let us know if you have any concerns.

Over the next few months you can expect the following activities and events:

Higher Education Work Group

WSA is going to be completing work on a series of papers that will assist local programs in meeting the new Head Start teacher credentialing requirements. We will follow with targeted training and resources for local programs. WSA is working closely with the Region X Administration for Children and Families to ensure clarity on the new requirements as well. We want to again thank the Department of Early Learning and the Region X Office for supporting this project.

New Foster Care Project

WSA will be receiving a grant from Casey Family Programs to develop a first of its kind curriculum for foster care children and families participating in Head Start and ECEAP. We will receive support for a series of training events, networking opportunities for staff, and the development of a curriculum that could be used at local programs. WSA will be sending out specific opportunities for member involvement very shortly. We will need folks to serve on an advisory council and to work with us on the development of all aspects of the curriculum. The first training opportunity will be at the WSA Fall meeting taking place October 15th to October 17th in Kennewick.

ECEAP Directors Meeting

We will hold our first ever annual ECEAP directors meeting on December 2nd in Tukwila. After conferring with local programs we hope to have an agenda for the meeting out to everyone by the middle of October so programs can make a determination about joining us.

New Policy Council Training

WSA will be hosting a policy council training most likely in December/or early January. At this training we provide parents, staff, and interested board members an overview of the new changes to governance as a result of the Head Start Act, specific training on the roles and responsibilities of policy council members, and trainings that will inspire, educate, and motivate your Head Start and ECEAP policy council parents. We hope to have more information about this opportunity out to programs shortly. We want to thank Puget Sound ESD for suggesting that WSA put this together.

Child and Family Outcomes Project

WSA continues to meet with the Department of Early Learning staff to talk through this project. We are hopeful that we will receive some funding to support the collection and dissemination of data and any training that might be beneficial to local programs around assessments and outcomes.

Parent Ambassadors' Program

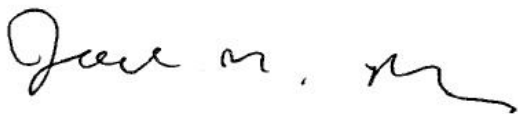
WSA will receive funding from the Peppercorn Foundation to support a parent advocacy program for ECEAP and Head Start parents. Parents chosen for this program will go through a year-long training on legislative advocacy and grassroots organizing, be responsible for training parents back in their local programs, and participate in organizing WSA advocacy campaigns like our Advocacy Day in Olympia.

Training and Technical Assistance Grant

WSA submitted a proposal with Washington State University and Whatcom Community College to manage the state T/TA grant for Washington. Under our proposal WSA would receive funding to hire a full time assessment and training coordinator. This new staff person would work with us to significantly expand our training opportunities and activities. WSA should receive a response fairly soon regarding our proposal. We will let folks know as soon as we hear something.

Please accept my many thanks on behalf of WSA for your support. We look forward to seeing many of you at the fall meeting in October and working in close partnership with all of our members on the many upcoming projects.

Sincerely,



Joel M. Ryan
Executive Director