



# COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2015 EDITION

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*By Gene Sharratt, Ph.D.*

The 2015 Legislative Session has offered numerous opportunities for Washington Student Achievement Council members and staff to support policies that will improve outcomes for Washington's students. Many of those policies align with the Council's [Strategic Action Plan](#) (SAP), which includes recommendations to help Washington meet its educational attainment goals. In addition to supporting these policies, the Council remains committed to a continuum of educational funding, from early learning through postsecondary education.

Both the state House and Senate continue to demonstrate a commitment to increasing educational access, support, and attainment for Washingtonians. With session about halfway through, progress to date is encouraging. Additional information and materials related to the Council's legislative efforts are available on [our website](#).

The Council is also continuing its work with the [Governor's STEM Education Innovation Alliance](#), which is focused on aligning the state's education- and career-training systems with the workforce needs of Washington's economy. The alliance provides counsel to the Governor in the development and implementation of policies to advance STEM education in Washington. This collaborative effort among business, labor, and educational leaders will work to close the gap between identified STEM workforce positions, current and projected, and workforce and educational training programs designed to fill the openings. The project is funded through a two-year grant from the [National Governors Association](#).

## DUAL CREDIT LOOKUP TOOL DECIPHERS CREDIT-BY-EXAM PROGRAMS

Washington colleges and universities offer a variety of options for students to earn college credit during high school. Among these are credit-by-exam programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge International. The amount of college credit awarded varies by test type and score, which can result in a complicated array of options for students weighing college choices.

To alleviate the confusion, the Washington Student Achievement Council has developed an interactive [dual credit search tool](#). This tool allows students to search and compare how their high school AP, IB, and Cambridge exam scores will apply as college credit at various public and private institutions in Washington State. Students simply choose the type of exam, select their exam subject area(s), enter a score(s), and select up to five colleges. The resulting table will show how the selected colleges award credit for each exam and provide a link to the school's website for further information.

Overall, this search tool will create more transparency for students and families about how credit-by-exam courses will be awarded college credit

### **NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM TRAINING PUTS THE PEP IN "TPEP"**

*By Caroline Brumfield, Marketing and Publications Manager, Association of Washington School Principals*

Recent changes to the principal evaluation process can be challenging to work through. That's why the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) has teamed up this year with the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) and the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) to bring building leaders and their evaluators a brand new workshop series designed to address the "how" of using the AWSP Leadership Framework for principal evaluation and the Framework's supporting user's guide.

The workshop series is unique in that it is specifically designed for *teams* of principals, assistant principals, and their evaluators, and focuses on implementing the AWSP Leadership Framework as an administrative team for effective evaluation of building administrators. The content of the series covers topics such as writing and evaluating student growth goals, having effective conversations, looking at human resource issues, and working as a team to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Workshop 1 took place January 20, 21, and 22 in Spokane, Tumwater, and Everett, respectively. All three locations were highly attended; the Tumwater location sold out.

"The first set of workshops was so much fun," reported Paula Quinn, AWSP Director of Professional Development. "We're going to have to book larger venues for workshops 2 and 3 to accommodate all the teams who are interested in attending."

"The best part of the workshop was the gift of time," said Scott Seaman, AWSP Professional Development Specialist and Director of High School Programs. "District teams had time together to discuss and design how to support the principal growth process. This was not a 'sit and get' training. Participants were engaged in guided table conversations throughout the entire day."

Workshops 2 and 3 are taking place in March, April, and May. Learn more about the training on the [AWSP website](#).

## WSAC LAUNCHES FAFSA COMPLETION PORTAL

In order to better assist school district personnel working with college-going students, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) now offers an online portal to access completion data for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The portal provides up-to-date FAFSA completion data for Washington's 12th grade students. Counselors will be able to follow each senior's progress, provide individual support, and target services to help students complete the FAFSA.

The FAFSA is required for students seeking federal or state aid for postsecondary education. FAFSA completion is a critical indicator of what students plan to do beyond high school. Studies have shown that over 90 percent of students who complete the FAFSA enroll at postsecondary institutions within 12 months of high school graduation. For many students, completing the FAFSA is the first step taken in pursuit of financial aid and higher education.

WSAC is able to offer this tool as part of the Student Aid Internet Gateway effort, a joint initiative from the U.S. Department of Education and the states. It is highlighted in the First Lady's *Reach Higher* initiative, an effort to inspire every student in America to take charge of their future by continuing education beyond high school. In February, all 295 school districts received information on how to access the portal. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Sarah Weiss, Assistant Director of College Access & Support, at 360-753-7630 or [sarahwe@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:sarahwe@wsac.wa.gov).

## MATERIALS HELP CLARIFY LEARNING STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

The Ready Washington Coalition, in partnership with the Improving Student Learning at Scale (ISLS) collaborative, provides several resources to help educators and parents better understand the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced assessments.

- The [Using Smarter Balanced Scores to Chart Your Path](#) infographic details how the new Smarter Balanced Assessment scores can inform a student's pathway to high school graduation and beyond. Schools and districts are encouraged to provide copies to counselors and teachers for use as advising tools.
- A [four-minute video](#) accompanies the infographic. Using the content from the infographic, the video tells the story of one student's path to graduation.
- Ready Washington also released a [parent-friendly handout](#) that explains the move to higher standards and how the standards can help students be more prepared for our global economy.

For more information on college readiness efforts in Washington State, please visit [readywa.org](http://readywa.org) or the [WSAC website](#).

## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GET PROGRAM

The Guaranteed Education Tuition program (GET), now in its seventeenth year, continues to help Washington families save and prepare for college costs. GET has launched a [new website](#) that provides online account access, information about the program, and a wide variety of helpful resources for current and prospective college savers.

Learn more about GET by reading the latest issue of their [quarterly newsletter](#), perusing their [2014 annual report](#), or taking a glance at their [award-winning infographic](#), which maps out important milestones in a child's development and the benchmarks for families seeking to save for college.

The last day to open a new GET account for the 2014-15 enrollment period is May 31.

## **COUNCIL WELCOMES ALAN HARDCASTLE, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH**

The Student Achievement Council is pleased to welcome Alan Hardcastle as our new Director of Research. Alan came to the Council from Washington State University, where he worked for seven years as a senior research associate at the WSU Energy Program, leading the organization's workforce and education research team. Alan has a Ph.D. in higher education from UCLA, a master's in organizational psychology from California State University-Long Beach, and a bachelor's degree from Western Washington University (WWU).

### **What role has education had in your life?**

Education has had a huge impact on me. I grew up in a small town in Alaska where the opportunities for growth were limited. I had many interesting jobs—in a sawmill, doing construction, as a crew member on a seiner, and as a tug boat deckhand and cook—but I was searching for something more. Attending WWU was life-changing for me; it turned me onto learning and opened many new doors, and I just kept going.

### **How does research contribute to policymaking?**

Accurate, meaningful information and analytics are fundamental to good policymaking. Lacking data-driven analysis and recommendations, important policy decisions are too easily influenced by speculation or political considerations. Good research provides an anchor for public policy discussions and can systematically drive effective decision-making.

### **What is your favorite place in Washington State and why?**

One of my favorite things to do is to hike and fly-fish the forks and tributaries of the Skokomish River in the southeast corner of the Olympic National Forest. The scenery is stunning, the trout-fishing is challenging, and the remote, natural beauty of the area provides a tranquil, restorative sanctuary.