



THE STANDARD DEVIATION

Fall 2003

Washington Educational Research Association
<http://www.wera-web.org>

University Place, WA

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Hot Website

If you haven't visited <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>, check it out. Individual school and district WASL/ITBS reports are presented in a user friendly format. K – 12 sample math WASL questions are available, by strands, on <http://www.pasd.wednet.edu/school/mathwasl>.

Blue Ribbon Schools

The U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon School Program has been in existence since 1982; however, recently there have been significant changes to reflect *No Child Left Behind*.

- First, this program will honor schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These schools must show dramatic improvement of all students to high levels (scoring at least 55%) in reading and math on state assessments, or assessments referenced against national norms at a particular grade, over at least the past three years.
- Second, consideration will be given to those schools whose students, regardless of the background of students in the school, achieve in the top ten percent in reading and math on state tests or are in the top ten percent in the state on assessments referenced against national norms at a particular grade.

Below are the seven schools Washington State provided to the Department of Education for consideration. The schools meet either of the above criteria. The final selection will be made by the Department of Education in September 2003 and referred to as exemplary schools by the U.S. Department of Education and honored in a ceremony held in Washington, DC.

Schools with Disadvantaged Students and Dramatic Improvement

Moses Lake S. D.	Tacoma S.D.	Spokane S.D.	Cheney
Peninsular Elementary	Franklin Elementary	Madison Elementary	Cheney Middle School

Schools Performing in Top Ten Percent on State Assessments

Lake Washington S.D.	Mercer Island S.D.	Bellevue S.D.
Laura Ingalls Wilder Elementary	Islander Middle School	Newport High School

WERA/OSPI State Assessment Conference

“Showing How You’re Growing: Evidences of Learning”

December 4-5, 2003 (Pre-Conference December 3)
Seattle Airport Hilton Conference Center
17620 Pacific Highway South
Seattle, WA 98188

Phyllis C. Hunter, a nationally recognized authority on literacy and national education policy, will be our keynoter on Friday, December 5th. She serves on the National Center for Family Literacy Board of Advisors.

WERA recognizes that our conference attendees have diverse needs, so the fifty-five planned breakout sessions was selected to address those varied needs. Strands will focus on teachers, principals, central office staff, OSPI updates, and current research.

With the Certificate of Mastery requirements looming, high school educators will find a number of sessions geared specifically to their needs. Break-out topics include further information related to culminating projects, the Partnership for Learning’s planned Campaign for the Class of 2008, redesigning high schools, student perceptions of their own education, and current research on dropouts and students success.

Our **Pre-conference session on Wednesday, Dec. 3** will offer seven half-day pre-sessions:

Culminating Projects: Examples of What They Are and How to Manage Them

(Separate and different morning and afternoon sessions)

Math Grade Level Expectations-Aligning Instructional Practice and Assessment

Implementing NCLB in Washington

Standards for Grading – What is Student Mastery?

Professional Certification for Teachers – What it Really Means

Data Displays for Data Analysis – How to present the data

Look on WERA’s Web site for registration and additional conference details - <http://www.wera-web.org>, Upcoming Events. Register quickly as the conference is filling up. Hotel rates are guaranteed until **Nov. 14**. We look forward to seeing you in December.

A Letter from the WERA President

Michael Power

As Bob Dylan wrote, “*Ain’t no use to sit and wonder why, babe, if you don’t know by now.*” K-12 education is awash in an alphabet soup of initiatives (ESEA/NCLB/AYP, Mini-WASLs, Goal 2 CBA, COM, CP [culminating projects], LSMFT [oops!], etc.) which have the potential to redirect all of the positive energy and resources that educational reform has generated and put it all into accountability and compliance. Just the list of reports that have to be generated by school districts to meet the new ESEA requirements is several pages, and school and district staff are stretched much too thin to cope with it all.

Only through effective communication within our profession can we hope to stay afloat and still have time and energy to devote to assuring quality education for our students. This is the critical role that WERA and other educational associations in the state play – bringing us together to learn from each other, identify effective strategies, build alliances, and be reinforced in our priorities.

“*Ain’t no use to sit at home and cry, babe.*” Attending professional events and chatting up our colleagues is clearly not enough, however. This is the time to be active in communicating our beliefs to our elected (or appointed) representatives, newspapers, professional publications, and neighbors. Presidential candidates are in the process of taking positions on the new federal requirements, and at home the legislature and State Board of Education are going to have to make some decisions very soon about graduation requirements, assessments and whether to hold the line on the state performance standards.

Line up, sign up, reenlist! Whatever your position on these issues, your voice needs to be heard. WERA would love to hear from you in the form of a guest column in this newsletter, conference presentation proposals, and suggestions on how we can better support each other. Together we represent a voice which is often cited but rarely actually consulted – folks who actually know something about educational research, assessment, and real life in public schools!

The WERA Board adopted several goals for this school year, one of which is “Strengthen connections among members through improving communications and exploring partnerships with other organizations that support education.” We have two great conferences coming up, we’re working with the Oregon Program Evaluators Network on a white paper on test preparation practices, and we are improving our Web site to make it more useful to our members. We welcome your ideas on how we can better serve you. Contact any of the Board members listed on the last page of the newsletter.

We’re looking forward to a very interesting and exciting year!

Mark your Calendars Now! 2004 WERA Spring Conference

"Proven Practices and Scientific Evidence"

March 10-12, 2004

Seattle Airport Hilton Conference Center

For Proposals Contact

Bob Silverman at rjsilverman@puyallup.k12.wa.us or
Duncan McQuarrie at duncan_macquarrie@hartcourt.com



The WERA Spring Conference will be built around two connecting themes: proven educational practices and the nature of those proofs. Assisting us in exploring these themes will be Robert Marzano and Gerald Bracey. Dr. Marzano will discuss proven instructional practices and Dr. Bracey will address the uses and misuses of research to support practices.

Bob Marzano is highly regarded among practitioners for his practical research based strategies. His writings have focused on various aspects of effective practices including instruction, assessment, and classroom management.

Readers of the Phi Delta Kappa journal, the *Kappan*, will recognize Jerry Bracey as the author of that journal's educational research column. Last April he was honored by the American Educational Research Association for his writings in non-research publications about connecting research to practice. He is known for his thoughtful interpretations of research findings and his willingness to debunk claims that he believes cannot be supported by the data found in the studies.

In addition to their keynote addresses each of these researchers have agreed to facilitate a session following their keynote addresses. Conference organizers are planning more than twenty breakout and pre-sessions coordinated with the conference themes.

The mission of the Washington Educational Research Association is to improve the professional practice of educators engaged in instruction, assessment, evaluation, and research.

WERA Services

- WERA provides professional development through conferences, publications, and seminars.
- WERA provides forums to explore thoughtful approaches and a variety of views and issues in education.
- WERA provides consultation and advice to influence educational policy regarding instruction, assessment, evaluation, and research.

WERA Reads!



This issue, Lorna Spear, Principal of Bemiss Elementary in Spokane and a WERA board member, reviews *Change Forces With a Vengeance*. (2003, Routledge Falmer)

Change Forces With a Vengeance is a slim volume published in 2003 by Michael Fullan, one of the leading authors on education change who teaches at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. It is the third in a trilogy that seeks to help the reader understand complexity theory (previously known as “chaos theory”) and educational reform. Fullan’s first two books focused on understanding the real complexity of educational reform in action. Moral purpose remains at the center for Fullan, a main focus of this book. Do we as educational leaders have the will to make substantive change so the achievement gap is closed and all of our students are achieving high standards?

Fullan believes that true educational reform must involve three levels of purposeful intervention . . . school, district, and state - a “tri-level reform model.” The book describes in a concise and clear way the responsibilities of each level to systems change and how the levels must work together for reform.

While Fullan is clear that the examples of large districts’ work to improve student achievement are still few and the examples in the book are not necessarily generalizable to those outside of the district where the reform is occurring, there is still hope and a great deal of information about systemic reform to be gained within the chapters of *Change Forces With a Vengeance*.

The New Meaning of Educational Change, Leading in a Culture of Change, and The Moral Imperative of School Leadership are also authored by Michael Fullan.

(Each issue of the *Standard Deviation* features a book review by a WERA member.
If you would like to write a review, please contact the editor.)



Practical Ways to Promote Active Learning

(2nd in a series of articles based on Dr. Richard Paul's Critical Thinking Principles)

by Sara Smith, editor and WERA board member

Each of the strategies presented in this article represents a shift of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student. The strategies can be applied immediately. Many involved partner or group processing. When students work together they can correct each other's misunderstandings and make quicker progress.

Modeling careful reading, questioning, or problem-solving provides an opportunity for students to "see" more clearly what critical thinking involves. In order to make it meaningful, the teacher's think aloud must be at the students' reasoning level. This includes making mistakes and reasoning your way out of them.

Promoting active learning requires that teachers speak less so students think more. Stop talking about every ten minutes and have students (in pairs or small groups) discuss an application of the concepts just presented. Often questions will arise out of their discussions that generate deep classroom dialogue or clear up misunderstandings.

Ask students to keep two-column notes in their learning logs. One column would contain the key points from materials they read or hear in a lecture. Conversely, the other column would be their **own** thinking about what they're learning – questions, graphic organizers, reactions, hypothesis. These learning logs can be shared with a partner or a small group and serve as a history of their learning.

"What do you mean when you use that word? What evidence do you have to support that statement? How did you arrive at that conclusion? Is there another way to look at it? How is _____ like _____ (analogy/metaphor)? How might this look from _____'s point of view?" Make it a habit to ask probing questions which deepen and broaden student thinking.

Teach for usefulness. Demonstrate how the concepts can be used as solutions for real problems and as a method of analyzing significant issues. Actively engage students by asking application questions. "How and when can we use this (knowledge/process)? How is _____ applied in the larger world? How could we use _____ to overcome _____ (obstacle, constraints, challenge)?"

Getting students actively engaged in their learning is powerful. Preparing for instruction which involves active learning requires critical thinking on the part of the teacher, but it results in exciting, meaningful learning.

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