

FORUM

NWREL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Richard McCullough (Chair)
Adjunct Professor, Western Washington University

Jerry Colonna (Vice Chair)
Superintendent, Beaverton School District (OR)

Dr. John Davis (Secretary-Treasurer)
Superintendent, Bering Strait School District (AK)

Dr. Terry Bergeson
Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction

Susan Castillo
Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction

Tom Luna
Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction

Linda McCulloch
Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Roger Sampson
Alaska Commissioner of Education & Early Development

Doreen Brown (Parent Representative)
Supervisor, Indian Education, Anchorage School District (AK)

Karanja Crews
Teacher, Beaverton School District (OR)

Rubén Degollado
Assistant Principal, Hillsboro School District (OR)

Rudy Edwards
*School Board Member
Snoqualmie Valley School District (WA)*

Dr. Joanne Erickson
Assistant Professor, Montana State University–Bozeman

Jeff Estes
*Manager, Office of Science Education Programs,
Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (WA)*

Jeri Harris
Teacher, Seattle School District (WA)

Dr. Larry Harris
Dean, University of Alaska Southeast

Dennis Haverlandt
Principal, Deer Park School District (MT)

Dr. Jannette R. Hill
*Chair, Division of Education,
Lewis-Clark State College (ID)*

Jerry Keane
Superintendent, Post Falls School District (ID)

Nancy Larsen
Teacher, Coeur d'Alene School District (ID)

Richard Mauer
Chair, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

Dr. Bill McDiarmid
Professor, University of Washington

Dr. Geoffrey Mills
Dean, Southern Oregon University

Ted Popplewell
Director, Elementary Education, Twin Falls School District (ID)

Kay Purcell
Principal, St. Rose Parish School, Longview (WA)

Barbara Riley
Community/Business Representative, Missoula (MT)

Dr. Perla Rodriguez (Parent Representative)
Principal, Forest Grove School District (OR)

Dr. Doug Sullivan
Superintendent, Sidney School District (MT)

Carol VanDerWege
Teacher, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (AK)

Dr. Joan Parker Webster
Associate Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Labeling Students

I am very appreciative of the information shared on your Web site and completely thrilled and excited about the research Virginia, Bob, and others at University of Washington conduct in the field of learning disabilities (“Why Can’t I Read?” in spring 2003). I am the chair of the special education department at Seattle University and teach graduate students. My students read many of the journal articles that come from these studies.

My issue is the phrases used such as “LD kid,” “learning disabled kid,” etc. I strongly believe in person-first language and believe we should label the disability, not the kid. I know that Dr. Berninger and the authors of this article are respectful of children and people with disabilities, but I would hope that a little more time could be taken with language and describe “a child with a learning disability.” I actually “charge” my grad students a quarter if they say “SPED kid,” “BD kid,” or “MR kid.” I also believe very strongly in self-advocacy and self-determination for all people, including children with disabilities. I am not suggesting that children and families are not completely knowledgeable about the learning disability, but rather that we are careful with our language. Thanks for hearing me out!

Cinda Johnson
*Professor of Special Education
Seattle University
Seattle, WA*

PS. In addition to being a professor here at SU, I have a state-needs grant in transition services that I always want to share with parents, students, and teachers. The Web site is www.seattleu.edu/ccts/. I do follow-up research with youth after they leave high school (postschool outcome studies) and provide training technical assistance in secondary special education.

Kudos

“Creating a Culture of Readers” (in spring 2004) is a truly inspiring and hopeful description of how to create an environment that’s safe and welcoming for students. Incredible!

Kari Rustand
*High School English Teacher
North Sioux City, SD*

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to the editor, comments on current and past issues, article ideas, and tips on places where good things are happening to nwedufcedback@nwrel.org. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.