

As my colleague Director Art Wightman share in his recent letter, a significant focus of our board's attention this past January and February, along with our Superintendent Dana Rosenbach and a changing cast of teachers, parents, students, citizens and board members, was on the Legislature. Some of us testified, lobbied or both two or three times. As you know the Legislature's proposed education package included a "regionalization" factor. We were stunned to learn that Bremerton, South and Central Kitsap were assigned factors of 18% and Peninsula 12% while we received 0. Each of these neighboring districts is within a half hour driving time, or less, of us. This disparity means we are funded to only pay our teachers \$10,000 less than these neighboring districts. The effect of this disparity is to put NMSD at a disadvantage both in hiring new teachers and in retaining those we have. Since teacher retirement is pegged to salary the zero regionalization factor also is an incentive--even for teachers who would prefer to stay—to find work elsewhere. Thanks to some very heavy and repeated lobbying on our part and the efforts of Reps. Dan Griffey, Drew McEwan and some timely help from the Washington Education Association, who used our district as a poster-child for the need to give regionalization a second look, we received an adjustment of 6%. This helps but does not truly stabilize our situation. Many of our outstanding teachers are considering moving to neighboring districts because of this difference in salary funding.

As we move forward next year we hope to revisit the regionalization issue with the legislature. We believe school funding must be equitable and not determined by zip code. We are also at work in supporting abolition of State Sales Tax on building construction. Under the current arrangement what the state gives in matching funds for school construction it takes away in taxes. Finally, we continue to work with other districts in attempting to get the bus allocation formula revised. Why the State cannot factor in twists in the road especially around bodies of water with the realization that our buses are not amphibious is an additional "regionalization factor" we continue to struggle to have recognized and addressed.

As we work with our state legislature around these important issues, we appreciate the strong support our community has for our schools.

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