

New School Foundation Joins Forces with League of Education Voters Foundation

Focus will be on access to high quality early learning for all kids in Washington State

SEATTLE, WA (June 22, 2011) -- Two organizations with extensive histories in early learning and K-12 policy and implementation announced that they are joining forces. The New School Foundation will be merging with the League of Education Voters Foundation effective July 31st.

"Reading by third grade is a key predictor of school success and is a shared goal of our organizations," said **League of Education Voters Foundation CEO Chris Korsmo**. "Together, we can make sure more kids meet that benchmark. The New School Foundation has been a leader in this work, and we share their commitment that all kids in Washington deserve the opportunity to succeed."

Washington State is one of the few states where the academic achievement gap is widening, and both groups base their work on the evidence that shows that with the right strategic investments and support, every child can succeed, regardless of background. Over the past decade, an increasing number of studies have shown that quality early learning that includes pre-kindergarten to third grade lays the foundation for a child's ongoing success in school and life. The greatest gains are among low-income children where academic achievement gaps are most pronounced and student needs are highest. (See, for example, the most [recent issue of Science Magazine](#).)

The merger brings together two proven organizations with extensive histories of working on increasing support and access to quality education for all children. The New School Foundation has been at work in Seattle schools since 1998, fine-tuning a comprehensive approach to public education that focuses on high quality schooling that begins with a year of pre-kindergarten and extends through the early elementary grades and beyond. Its approach is demonstrated at the South Shore PreK-8 School, a public school in Southeast Seattle where student achievement has historically surpassed performance at demographically similar schools in the state.

"We know how important early learning is for the success of our students," said **Dr. Susan Enfield, Interim Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools**. "Thanks to our partnership with the New School Foundation at South Shore PreK-8 School, we are seeing significant gains by focusing on curriculum designed to begin before kindergarten, and extend throughout elementary school. I am hopeful this merger will help provide our students in other schools with similar opportunities."

The New School Foundation sought to magnify the impact of its work at South Shore through replication and policy advocacy. Joining forces with the League of Education Voters Foundation made perfect sense. Over the past decade, the League of Education Voters Foundation has helped to improve education policy and increase education resources, both in localities and statewide, for early learning, K-12 and higher education.

"The League of Education Voters Foundation is ambitious for Washington's children and impatient with status quo practices that we know are not serving kids," said **Laura Kohn, Executive Director of the New School Foundation**. "This merger blends the New School Foundation's on-the-ground expertise in early education with the League's skill at spreading the best ideas for improving public education in our state."

Bette Hyde, the Director of the Washington State Department of Early Learning is thrilled by the merger. “LEV has a great track record of getting things done, including in the area of aligning pre-kindergarten through third grade efforts. We are delighted about this merger, which will support improved learning for children in Washington.”

The merged organization will keep the League of Education Voters Foundation name. In addition to the League of Education Voters existing work, the new organization will focus on the administration of an annual grant to South Shore PreK-8; staffing Seattle's PreK-3rd Partnership; and working statewide on policy, advocacy and implementation related to PreK-3rd alignment projects.

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ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL FOUNDATION

Founded by philanthropist Stuart Sloan in 1998, the New School Foundation has helped foster tangible student success in Seattle public schools for more than a decade. By starting with pre-kindergarten, relentlessly supporting academic skills, and ensuring that schools give equal attention to each child's social and emotional development, the New School Foundation's unique model has played a transformative role in shaping the way students learn and succeed. With support from an anonymous donor who was drawn to the organization's early success at TT Minor Elementary, the New School Foundation began working with Seattle Public Schools to launch what is now known as the South Shore School. Through careful use of the latest research and evolving strategies, the schools became thriving places that nurtured the success of all students. The secret: a model that builds consistent teamwork between students, teachers, parents and administrators and starts early, focusing on PreK-3rd grades.

ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF EDUCATION VOTERS

The League of Education Voters works to create an educational system in which every student has an equal and adequate opportunity to succeed in college, work, and in life. Washington's children are our first and most important constituents. Citizen-founded and citizen-funded, LEV is the only Washington-based organization working to improve education from early learning through higher education. This wide lens allows us to identify promising reforms across the educational spectrum and unite diverse constituencies to improve outcomes for children.