



News Release

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League of Education Voters Releases Grades for Washington's Schools in Face of Budget Cuts

Schools have made progress, but next two years to reveal commitment to children's future

SEATTLE – Jan. 15, 2009 – Washington's schools made progress according to the League of Education Voters (LEV) Foundation newly released *2009 Citizens' Report Card on Washington State Education*.

"Our grades have improved, but no child would be proud to bring these grades home," said Chris Korsmo, executive director of the LEV Foundation.

The *2009 Report Card* reveals an alarming finding—Washington's ability to prepare its students for college and work has declined. Washington's businesses reported an increase in difficulty finding qualified workers and college-going rates have decreased among white and Latino students.

"Our children are counting on us to get them ready for life. These next two years will reveal our collective commitment to our children and their future," Korsmo said. "We need to seize this moment to make long-term, structural reforms to education."

Overall, the *2009 Report Card* gives better, but still mediocre, grades to Washington's education system compared to the *2007 Report Card*. Grades improved slightly in early learning, academic achievement, math and science, and school funding.

"Our *2009 Report Card* shows that our state's investments in early learning through higher education made a difference in our kids' education," said Lisa Macfarlane, co-founder of the LEV Foundation. "However, proposed budget cuts to education could jeopardize future prospects for thousands of children across our state."

Washington State's grade in math and science improved the most over the *2007 Report Card* due to the State Board of Education's approval of high school graduation requirements that are better aligned with college and workforce training standards. However, the requirements will not take effect until the state Legislature can provide adequate funding.

"Our economy is demanding higher levels of skills and knowledge than ever before," Macfarlane said. "Yet, too many of our young people graduate without basic life skills. We can no longer afford an education system that leaves so many children behind."

As the nation's economic crisis threatens funding for state education programs, the LEV Foundation is responding to this challenge through its ongoing *Ready for Life?* campaign to engage parents, educators, and community activists.

The campaign is guided by the LEV Foundation's research, including its well-respected biennial *Citizens' Report Card on Washington State Education*, and listening to education advocates across the state. The campaign integrates a broad range of conventional and new organizing tools, such as YouTube spots and print ads developed with high school students, web-based social networking to support its large grassroots network, and civic participation during the legislative session.

"More than 20,000 *2009 Report Cards* will be distributed this first week," said Kelly Munn, statewide field director for the LEV Foundation. "Education advocates will use the *Report Card* as a wake-up tool to empower parents and students in their communities. It's up to all of us to ensure our children receive the education they deserve."

To view an electronic copy of the *2009 Citizens' Report Card on Washington State Education*, visit www.levfoundation.org/2009reportcard.

For more information about the *Ready for Life?* campaign, visit www.educationvoters.org/readyforlife.

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