



**Washington School  
Counselor Association**

Promoting best practices in, and advocating for,  
Professional School Counseling.

May 11, 2011

TO: Spokane Public Schools  
Board of Directors  
1807 North Washington Street  
Spokane, WA 99205-4758

Dear School Board Directors,

The Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA) acknowledges the current economic reality that is placing significant financial stress on our school systems. We understand and respect the difficult financial decisions you have to wrestle with regarding budget cuts and increasing needs. Nevertheless, WSCA members are distressed with the decision to single out one particular category of professional educators for reduction in force, rather than making proportional cuts to many programs.

There are several reasons for the community to be concerned. First, there is now a substantial body of research that demonstrates a fully implemented comprehensive K-12 guidance and counseling program results in reduced dropout rates, higher academic performance on standardized reading and math tests, and improved school climates. A significant amount of peer-reviewed research has been done right here in Washington by Dr. Christopher Sink at Seattle Pacific University and Dr. Chris Wood at Seattle University. Second, the work of professional school counselors allows teachers to focus on the academic needs of students in their classrooms. Research shows that school counseling interventions significantly decrease the anxiety and depression levels of students. Also many of your district principals will attest to the reduction of office discipline referrals from teachers who directly benefit from the work of our school counselors. Finally, the Spokane School District is in a position to be a leader of education in Eastern Washington and in Washington State. To take this particular action as a solution to budget woes may start an area trend that will be difficult to undo.

By summarily reducing the number of counselors, you could have a far-reaching impact, not just on the lives of those counselors, but on the quality of the programs Spokane Public Schools have worked so hard to implement. Ultimately, without support from school counselors to address social/emotional problems and to support the development of college/career readiness, students, families and teaching staff will suffer.

The Washington School Counselor Association respectfully asks that you reconsider the decision to eliminate such a large portion of your professional counseling staff.

Sincerely,

Richard Cleveland  
President of the Washington School Counselor Association