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March 10, 2014

José Banda
Superintendent, Seattle Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent
Seattle, WA 98124-1165

Dear Superintendent Banda:

I am writing from Massachusetts, where I direct CIRCLE, known as the leading research center on civic education. We have helped write the new framework for social studies standards (C3: College, Career, and Citizenship), we have studied the effects of state and local policies on students' civic skills and knowledge, and we have worked with hundreds of districts and nonprofits across the country.

Seattle is poised to be a national leader in civic education. Your city boasts the Civics For All Initiative, Prof. Walter Parker's hugely influential effort to base A.P. US Government on student projects (which causes AP test scores to rise), the youth social media site known as Puget Sound Off, Eric Liu's Citizen University, the Seattle Civic Health Index, and a supportive Secretary of State. We have had the privilege of working in various ways with each of these programs. Even though I am 3,000 miles away at the other end of I-90, I regard Seattle as a potential model.

But realizing your potential will require additional attention and stronger district policies.

I would be very happy to provide additional information and support, but for now, here are a few key points:

- Civic education is good for young people's academic success and prospects on the job market.
- Civic education is well aligned with the English/language arts Common Core
- The new SAT will include (every year) a reading passage from one of the nation's founding documents or a discussion of those texts. Civic education will prepare students for that question on the SAT.
- Only 2% of Seattle's non-college-educated adults have any kind of civic leadership role, meaning that their voice is missing in the city's neighborhoods. Seattle's high school students who are not on a path to college need more education and encouragement to participate in civic life.

- Existing state policies for civic education—including those in Washington State--do not ensure strong and equitable civic education. School districts must develop their own policies to provide excellent civics for all their students.

Again, I commend Seattle for exceptional efforts to educate young people for civic life, but I think the city's potential as a national leader will only be realized if you adopt stronger and more coordinated policies, like those offered by Civics for All. If I can be helpful, I would be delighted to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Levine".

Peter Levine
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