



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Board of Education Appoints Interim Executive Director

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The State Board of Education (SBE) appointed Deb Merle as interim Executive Director at their special meeting on Tuesday. Former Executive Director Ben Rarick submitted his [resignation](#) on September 18.

Merle will begin as SBE’s interim Executive Director on October 1 for a period of 90 days while the Board begins a search process for a new executive director. Merle is currently a senior policy advisor to the governor on K-12 Education, and will take a leave of absence during her interim role with SBE. She will return to her work in the governor’s office once a permanent executive director has been named.

At the special meeting, Merle stated, “I look forward to helping SBE through this interim time and during their search for a new executive director.”

Merle has worked in education policy in Washington for almost 20 years, including at OSPI, SBCTC, and WSSDA as well as for Govs. Locke, Gregoire, and Inslee. She also has served as executive director of the California State Board of Education.

“The State Board is looking forward to working with Deb and her depth of knowledge regarding public education in our state,” State Board Chair Kevin Laverty said.

The Board is finalizing the process and timeline for recruiting a new executive director. At the special meeting yesterday, the Board delegated the selection process for a permanent executive director position to a Board search committee, to be designated by the chair. The committee’s search process will include input from the full Board.

Contact: Alissa Muller, SBE Communications Coordinator, (360) 725-6501

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About the State Board of Education: The State Board of Education provides advocacy and strategic oversight of public education. The Board comprises 16 members: five are elected by school board directors, seven are appointed by the Governor, two serve as student representatives, and one serves as a private school representative. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is also a member. For more information on the State Board of Education: www.sbe.wa.gov