



September 8, 2008

Distinguished Members of the
Washington State Board of Health
101 Israel Rd SE
Tumwater, WA 98501

Re: Proposed School Health Rule Revision, Chapter 246-366A

Dear Board Members:

My name is Mary Sue Linville, I am the Director of Risk Management for the Washington Schools Risk Management Pool, which is a self-insured property and liability co-op comprised of 68 Public School Districts, 7 Educational Service Offices and excess-insurer of an additional 31 Districts, in Washington State. We insure all sizes of school districts, from the very large to the very small. I've been honored to serve on the School Rule Development Committee since its inception on behalf of the Washington Association of School Business Officials (WASBO).

I cannot speak specifically to the events that have been reported to you that occurred 5, 7 or 10 years ago in the Seattle School District or at Cle Elum, but I can testify to what has happened these past 5 years in the many schools that we insure, what my staff and I see on a daily basis.

The introduction of the K-12 Health and Safety Guide set a new standard of accountability for school operations. Prior to its development and introduction, many school districts did not know where to find information on the "best standards and practices" for school facilities and operations. This information was segmented and resources were unknown or difficult to find.

Since its introduction, school health and safety continues to improve, each year, based on this focused approach. The content of this guidance document form the backbone for training programs that are regularly provided by school property/liability and worker's compensation insurers, WASBO and WAMOA; and consistency of school inspections preformed by school staff, the insurers and local health inspectors. There has been a concentrated effort by our Risk Pool and the other insurers in Washington State to refer to this document as the prime resource for safe school facilities.

WSRMP continues to take a serious look at all claims involving student injuries at school. Our statistics for the 5 school years, starting with 2002 – 2003 and ending with 2006 – 2007* indicate the following facts:

	2002 – 2003	2003 – 2004	2004 – 2005	2005 – 2006	2006 - 2007
# of Dist/ESD	86	84	82	78	76
# of Student FTE**	458,762	461,227	452,271	433,465	428,920
# of Playground Claims	95	97	92	74	53
# of Science Lab Claims	1	5	3	2	1
# of CTE Shop Claims	8	13	12	11	7

*Statistics for 2007 – 2008 are being compiled but not yet available

**Full Time Equivalency

It is important to note that of the playground claims indicated above, the vast majority of these claims are a result of either students making “contact” with each-other or running into playground equipment; or students “slipping, tripping or falling” somewhere on the playground. Only 1 claim in the past 5 years has been attributed to “playground equipment failure” and the student injury was very minor.

These playground statistics are on a consistent decline, each year for the past 5 years; and are 50% fewer each year than those reported annually prior to 1994, when WSRMP first began to teach school districts how to inspect, repair and supervise playgrounds.

90% of the Science Lab claims reflected above can be attributed to improper instruction and/or improper supervision. The only “lab equipment” related claims are a result of breaking of glass pipits. WSRMP has, twice in the past 7 years, focused on science lab safety; providing incentives for our districts to be in compliance with the Department of Labor and Industries science lab regulations. This emphasis has included requiring Chemical Hygiene Officers; current chemical inventories; proper hazardous waste disposal protocols; emergency response plans; regular inspections and elimination of dangerous and/or unstable chemicals.

Since 1999 we have reduced the numbers of claims relating to shop classes by 50%. Again, this is based on the guidance of the K-12 Health and Safety Guide and continued education and inspections. We focused twice in the past 7 years on shop safety; teaching shop teachers the rules and regulations related to machine guarding and housekeeping. We provide inspection worksheets for each “type of shop” and conduct inspections, along with district staff, to assure compliance and that they understand the essentials of safe shops. These inspection worksheets mirror the K-12 Safety & Health Guide.

I firmly believe that we are not in need of new laws, but better education and a support system aimed to help districts know what constitutes best practices; how to implement these practices; and where to go for help when they need resources and education.

Based on the continued hard work of our school staff; the loss control assistance from their property/liability insurers and the Educational Service Districts that provide self-insured Worker's Compensation loss control support, districts continue to make great improvements in school health and safety. It is measureable.

I recommend serious consideration be given to limiting the addition of new laws; but expanding and updating the K-12 Health and Safety Guide. I also encourage the State Department of Health and the Local Health Departments to work with existing school organizations (WASBO, WAMOA) and insurers in expanding education programs and support of our districts that want to do what is best for students and staff, but need support, help and guidance.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Sue Linville, ALCM, ARM-P
Director of Risk Management & Operations
Washington Schools Risk Management Pool