

## **Tacoma Public Schools Statement About Lawsuit Settlement**

**(OEU v Rice, et al)  
(Cause No. 09-2-07058-5)**

**August 13, 2010**

In 2007, former teacher Jennifer Rice was accused of molesting two Tacoma School District students. Rice is currently serving a 25 year prison term. Tacoma employees were not aware of anything about the molestations until after Rice was arrested. The parents and the two students sued Rice, Tacoma, Bethel and Yelm School Districts. Rice's conduct came to light less than two weeks after Art Jarvis became Superintendent of the Tacoma School District. Upon learning of the situation, and the fact that school employees around the State of Washington were accused of sexual molestations of students each year, Dr. Jarvis lobbied the legislature and OSPI for new laws and regulations to protect children from sexual misconduct by school employees.

In 2008, Tacoma School District became one of the first school districts in the nation to provide training to its employees that was aimed at identifying inappropriate boundary invasion behaviors by employees that could lead to sexual grooming and molestation of students. Based on efforts which began in Tacoma, this past year, Washington became one of the first states in the nation where school districts are provided boundary invasion model policies at the recommendation of the Washington State School Directors' Association. This was in response to the concerted efforts of Tacoma and people associated with Tacoma to protect students.

Superintendent Jarvis and the Tacoma School District, in announcing the \$1.2 million settlement reached with the family through their insurance risk pool, wish the two boys and their parents the very best in their futures. What happened to them was something that should not happen to any student. However, this case is having a significant impact and influence on how school districts throughout Washington and the nation educate their employees to prevent such things from happening in the future.