

The Good News - The 2009 Basic Education Definition

2009 marks the beginning of new and vital ways to improve education in Washington state. The 'basic' of basic education is now clearly defined, and that contemporary definition paves the way toward a vastly improved education system for our children.

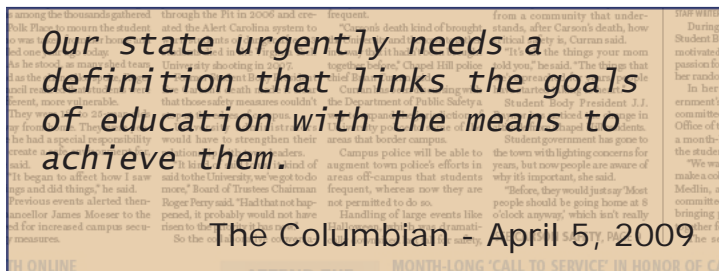
Flashback: 1977 - A Landmark Year for Public Schools

In 1977 the Washington Legislature introduced the Washington Basic Education Act. The goal of this legislation was to provide all students with "the opportunity to become responsible and respectful global citizens, to contribute to their economic well-being and that of their families and communities, to explore and understand different perspectives, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives."

At the time, this was an important action on behalf of Washington students to improve the funding of their education.

Yet what worked for us in 1977 doesn't quite fit the bill today. Studies consistently show that we must:

- Start early with our youngest learners.
- Educate all students to a higher level.
- Focus on individualized instruction.
- Close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates.
- Prepare students for an evolving work force and global economy.



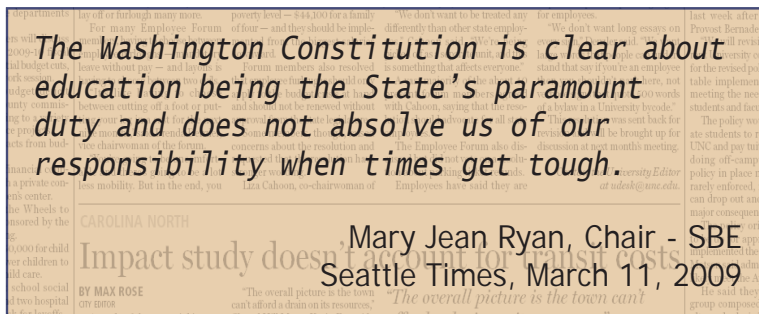
A Meaningful Diploma

The Legislature affirmed the State Board of Education's (SBE) work on a meaningful high school diploma and graduation requirements. ESHB 2261 defines a meaningful diploma as providing students with an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the state-established high school graduation requirements that are intended to allow students to graduate with a diploma that prepares them for postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. Basic education

by necessity is an evolving program of instruction that provides the educational opportunities needed to equip students for their role as productive citizens.

The essence of the meaningful high school diploma begins with early learning, quality instruction, aligned standards and assessments, and culminates with the opportunity for high school students to experience an education of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for life after high school.

ESHB 2261 enables us to start with our youngest learners (with early learning programs for at risk learners and all day kindergarten), preparing them for success as they progress through the K-12 system and beyond.



An Excellent and Equitable Education for All Students

ESHB 2261 charges the Washington State Board to continue its work on a system of school accountability that identifies successful schools and those that need greater assistance. There is an urgent need to strengthen a system of continuous improvement for all schools and districts. The Board's accountability framework consists of three components: 1) an accountability index to identify schools and districts that are exemplary or need greater assistance, 2) targeted and intensive voluntary programs to build district capacity, and 3) required action for challenged schools and their districts if there is no improvement in student achievement.

The Board supports a reciprocal state and local partnership that is accompanied by comprehensive basic education funding reform. The Board and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction will work together to ensure that there is one accountability system in place to meet federal and state requirements.

The new Accountability Index is a measure of success that is designed to close the achievement gap and to supply schools and the general public with transparent and easy-to-understand information on how a school/district is performing, where its strengths lie, and areas to target for future improvement.

A school's performance will be measured based on five school/district variables (reading, writing, math, science, and, for secondary schools/districts, the extended graduation rate). This data is then stratified into four subgroups:

1. Achievement of non-low income.
2. Achievement of low income.
3. Achievement vs. peers (schools of similar demographics).
4. Improvement from previous year

The Board and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction will use the Accountability Index this fall to recognize Washington's many successful schools.

The Board continues its work on the implementation of the Accountability Index as well as programs and timelines to help challenged schools and will present a report due to the legislature by December 1, 2009.

A Prototypical School Funding Model

The school funding equation should be fair, comprehensive, and transparent. By 2011, the state will adopt a funding system that meets this standard. Allocations will be based on how schools compare to prototype models that illustrate "the level of resources needed to operate a school of a particular size with particular types and grade levels of students using commonly understood terms and inputs." The new funding model includes enhancements for highly capable, Career and Technical Education, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, Learning Assistance Program, bilingual, and special education.

Enhancements to Basic Education Funding

ESHB 2261 makes provisions for several additional allocations of revenue that were not included in the 1977 Basic Education Act. For the first time, the definition of basic education includes:

- Increased instructional hours for secondary education from 1000 to 1080.
- Opportunity to complete 24 high school credits.
- All day kindergarten (phase in highest poverty schools first).
- Highly capable (at 2.3% of student enrollment).

