

Meeting Highlights

January 29, 2007

On January 25th and 26th, the State Board of Education met in Lacey to tackle its two major projects of the year: examining a meaningful high school diploma and building an accountability performance system.

Board Action on Education Standards

The Board took action on two critical items:

- Adoption of a resolution to reaffirm its strong support for linking robust standards and the WASL assessment to competitive high school graduation requirements.
- Adoption of a charge to begin an independent review of Washington's current K-12 mathematics standards using national consultants who have experience in reviewing state mathematics standards.

Public Hearing: Strengthening High School Mathematics and Other Graduation Credits

The Board feels it is necessary to clarify the rules for high school credits needed for high school graduation. A public hearing was held on January 25 regarding a meaningful high school diploma and the proposed rules changes. The Board will adopt final rule changes at its March meeting to ensure the credits high school students earn are aligned with the content in the ninth and tenth grade, Grade Level Expectations (GLEs).

Meaningful High School Diploma

The Board began its review of what kind of high school diploma students need to be ready for work, college and citizenship in the 21st century. A Board committee, chaired by Eric Liu, will meet monthly on this topic and work with a group of advisors to develop a report with recommendations by December 2007.

The Board heard from three high school principals from the Vancouver, Bellevue and Rainier School Districts. The principals felt strongly that the state's high school graduation credits must align with the state standards for students to be successful, and that professional development for teachers to enhance meaningful instruction is key.

Median Number of Credits for a Standard High School Diploma

	Mathematics	English	Social Studies	Science
Median Credits for 43 States	3	4	3	3
Washington	2	3	2.5	2

Source: Education Commission on the States as of August 2006

Some of the key issues the Committee and Board will examine include:

- What is the knowledge and skills students must have for college and work?
- Should Washington provide a variety of diplomas?
- Should the Board adopt more flexible requirements for students to choose credits from more than one area (e.g. arts or a foreign language)?

Board members encouraged the committee to look at methods by which a student may obtain a credit and not to just add more credits without looking at the type of credit and how it fits into the overall picture of what students need.

Data Systems

The Board examined what data are currently available for improving student achievement. Lead researchers from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee presented findings from their K-12 Data Study. The study identified critical expenditure, student, teacher, and school and community data reporting on those that are currently available in data bases and those that are missing. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's CIO reported on the progress made on the statewide longitudinal data project. The pilot is nearing its end having successfully retrieved data from pilot district databases and stored them in the data warehouse at OSPI. This process of pulling data from district databases to OPSI's data warehouse will result in a three-fold increase in data elements available for research and accountability. Dr. Plecki, associate professor at UW, reported on studies she has conducted on Washington's teachers. She also provided a view on how we can improve our state's capacity with regard to data on teachers. The Professional Educators Standards Board reiterated their need for a state data system that can provide an accurate picture of the educator workforce. At present, comprehensive data are not available for informing policymakers on aspects such as the quality of the workforce or the supply and demand for teachers in different subject areas. The Board was introduced to the national Data Quality Campaign as a resource to states as they work towards establishing quality longitudinal data systems.

Accountability/System Performance

The Board will examine its initial work on accountability with top priorities on obtaining the data needed to focus on improving student achievement and finding ways to work with schools that do not meet performance goals. For a copy of the briefing paper, visit the Board Web site at: www.sbe.wa.gov.

A board committee has started monthly on accountability/system performance and work with a group of advisors. It plans to have recommendations for a first phase of an accountability system by December 2007.

Currently, the greatest accountability for performance rests on the backs of students not the K-12 system. There are no mandatory state interventions to strengthen school management systems (except withhold funds). The state funded focused assistance program is available only for Title I schools (those with 40 percent students on free and reduced lunch) that volunteer help. The No Child Left Behind requirements have added complexity to creating a statewide accountability system. Most of the accountability we have focuses on a compliance framework rather than a performance framework.

Some of the key issues in the first phase of work for the Committee and Board are:

- Examine the data needed to focus on improving student achievement
- Create an annual State Board of Education report card to identify which schools perform well and which don't
- Create a mandate for schools that do not meet performance goals within two years to engage in improvement efforts.

School Improvement Process Briefing

The Board heard presentations on opportunity gaps that can impact achievement gaps. OSPI staff reported on this year's amendments to Washington's Accountability Workbook required by the U.S. Department of Education. The 22006-07 is the first time all grades 3-8 and 10 will be required to meet NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. This increase in the number of grades is likely to increase the likelihood of schools not meeting AYP. That possibility brings into question whether the state has the resources need to assist schools that do not meet AYP. The Center for Educational Effectiveness, a contractor to OSPI, reported on the current situation with regard to 353 schools that were identified as needing improvement for not meeting AYP targets. Compared to the state, these identified schools had higher ethnic minority populations, higher poverty, and higher percentages of English language learners (ELL). The highest percentage of schools, 47%, did not meet AYP targets because of math only; 1% reading only; 10% math and reading; 7% special education or ELL only; and the remaining 35% for multiple reasons. Nevertheless, only schools who have not met AYP targets for more than one year and are receiving Title I dollars are required to be in school improvement. Of the 353 schools serving 243,000 students, 208 serving 170,000 students are not Title I schools. Title I schools that are required to be in school improvement can voluntarily place themselves in OSPI's School Improvement Assistance Program (SIA), through which they receive assistance in various areas from OSPI as they work towards improvements. Schools that were a part of OSPI's SIA showed

improvements in terms of OSPI's nine characteristics of high performing schools; reductions in the achievement gaps between White and Hispanic and White and Black students; and higher annual achievement gains compared to the statewide averages. Given the positive results of participation in the SIA program, the question remains as to whether participation for school should be voluntary and whether the requirement of being in school improvement should be limited to Title I schools.

BERC, another contractor to OSPI, reported on the purposes of high schools and college and career readiness. The presentation offered Achieve's purpose as preparing all students "for postsecondary education, work and citizenship by raising academic standards and achievement in America's schools." The main focus of the presentation was on the notion that to be college ready requires three factors: college awareness, college eligibility, and college preparedness. Awareness refers to knowing what courses are required; eligibility is having taken the courses that are required to get in to the college of one's choice; and preparedness refers to having the knowledge and skills needed to be successful at college-level work without remediation.