

The Washington State Board of Education

Governance | Achievement | High School & College Preparation |
Math & Science | Effective Workforce

State Board of Education Spotlight

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August may mark the end of summer (and the winding down of our rare Pacific Northwest sunny weather), but it also signifies the beginning of our most important annual endeavor: public education.

I am honored to join the State Board of Education as the new Executive Director in this time of transition.

Educators, parents, and students alike are gearing up this week for the start of another school year. Families are squeezing in final vacations and gathering school supplies, teachers are readying their classrooms and fine-tuning curriculum, administrators are working diligently to ensure faculty is empowered and ready to maximize student learning, and thousands of others are doing their part to make sure the upcoming school year is a good one.

And what role does the Washington State Board of Education have in this important endeavor?

The State Board of Education has a statutory responsibility to provide strategic oversight of the public education system. Our work is equal parts reflection and projection, examining closely what works and what doesn't, and looking ahead to shape a system well-suited for future challenges. We are proud to provide broad-based policy leadership, all in support of what is best for Washington's children.

As we are a public board comprised of volunteer members, we are also in a unique position to serve as a gateway between the public at large and the state educational system. Public input, through Board meeting testimony, written correspondence, outreach sessions, phone calls, emails, online surveys, social networks, and more, help shape the Board's efforts on behalf of students.

Our work, governed by our strategic plan, continues to evolve.

In the coming months, we will be taking a closer look at

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how we can create meaningful and well-crafted goals to help shape our priorities. This requires us to go beyond generic statements such as "increase mathematics achievement" or "make students internationally competitive in science." Rather, our goals should zero in on data-driven objectives, a task calling for a finer focus. Well-crafted objectives and strategies will undoubtedly affect our work and priorities, which in turn may lead to difficult choices about which areas of concern should be addressed and in what order.

Our goals should define the measures of success. That definition will be supported through the establishment of clear and data-dependent objectives, identification of successful strategies necessary to meet those objectives, and the promotion of tactics practitioners and others can employ to meet those targets.

Of course, we will be evaluating and adjusting along the way, holding steadfast to our primary objective: ensuring every student has the opportunity for an excellent and equitable education.

On behalf of the Washington State Board of Education,

Ben Rarick
Executive Director

Middle-Level Survey

One of the State Board of Education's strategic planning goals is to provide policy leadership to increase Washington's student enrollment and success in secondary and postsecondary education. Throughout our three-year review of high school graduation requirements, the Board has repeatedly recognized pre-high school preparation as a contributing factor to high school success.

Middle and junior high schools hold the primary responsibility of preparing students for high school.

The transition from middle-level grades to high school can be difficult for many students. High schools' rigorous coursework and credit requirements necessitates that middle level educators be proactive in helping their students enter high school ready for the challenges ahead.

So what strategies are schools using to strengthen students' transitions?

Unfortunately, no centralized pool of information about middle level career- and college-ready programs currently exists. To address this, the Board has created a middle-level principal survey. The survey, posted [online](#) and designed to collect information from middle-level principals on the career- and college-ready strategies employed in their building, will create a statewide inventory of current districts' programs. Districts can then use this information to share best practices in their efforts to strengthen students' transition from middle level to high school and beyond.

The goal is to provide a complete inventory of all schools serving students in grades six through eight. The responses are listed by school on SBE's website, and we will continue to add to the spreadsheet as more schools weigh in ([excel](#)).

While our focus this year will be on information-gathering, we will also use this data to determine what state-level policy recommendations the Board might want to consider to increase the number of middle school students prepared to succeed in high school.

During our September Board meeting, staff will review the findings thus far (185 responses collected, representing slightly better than one-third of Washington's middle level schools). The preliminary data is promising; most middle-level principals are implementing college- and career-ready strategies in their buildings. Over 70 percent of the respondents utilize a minimum of four specific career- and college-ready strategies in their schools.

Though we can't yet draw connections between the implementation of career- and college-ready strategies and student achievement, the survey data will be helpful as the Board identifies practices warranting further study. Pending case studies of successful middle level career- and college-ready programs may shape future policy as well.

Graduation Requirements Rule Changes

Though the Board has developed a new career- and college-ready graduation requirements framework ([link](#)), we did not recommend the Legislature's adoption of the framework during the 2011 session. The state's economic

recession and resulting budget cuts have put full implementation of the Board's 24-credit proposal on hold.

However, the Board will consider rule revisions to move forward on the changes that OSPI determined would have no fiscal cost. These changes were forwarded to the education committees during the 2011 legislative session and to the Quality Education Council, as required in [RCW 28A.230.090](#).

At the September Board meeting, members will review draft rules addressing policy recommendations from the Core 24 Implementation Task Force, a yearlong advisory panel comprised of K-12 practitioners, administrators, Board members, and others.

Proposed rule changes maintain the state-mandated number of credits at 20, but include the following adjustments:

- Increase English from 3 to 4 credits.
- Increase social studies from 2.5 to 3 credits (adding .5 credit of civics per RCW 28A.230.093).
- Decrease electives from 5.5 to 4 credits.
- Clarify that 2 credits of health and fitness are .5 credits health and 1.5 credits fitness.
- Make satisfactory completion of Washington state history a noncredit requirement noted on students' transcripts.
- Substitute a non-time-based definition of a credit for the current time-based definition (150-hour credit requirement).
- Enable a "two for one" policy that would allow students to earn one credit from taking a career and technical education (CTE) equivalent course while satisfying two graduation requirements

Note: Any rule changes approved during the November 2011 meeting would go into effect for the graduating class of 2016.

The rule changes largely provide greater flexibility to school districts by removing the 150-hour definition, changing Washington state history to a credit requirement, and empowering students to satisfy two requirements when they take CTE equivalent courses.

The reallocation of 1.5 credits will require adjustments from

some districts. Approximately 16 percent of districts with high schools will need to add 1 credit of English, and/or .5 credit of social studies.

We believe these changes are important to better prepare our students for their next step after high school.

There will be time during the September meeting for public comment.

A public hearing on the final rule language will be held during the November Board meeting.

Basic Education Compliance

The State Board of Education is responsible for ensuring school districts operate in compliance with the Basic Education Act. Starting this year, schools will be reporting compliance online through [iGrants](#), form package 600. The submission deadline is September 15.

Each public school district must show that they meet the following requirements:

- **Kindergarten Minimum 180-Day School Year** (RCW [28A.150.220](#) / WAC [180-16-215](#)) - The Kindergarten program consists of no less than 180 half days, or the equivalent, per school year.
- **Kindergarten Total Instructional Hour Offering** (RCW [28A.150.220](#) / WAC [180-16-200](#)) - The district makes available to students enrolled in Kindergarten at least a total instructional offering of four hundred fifty hours.
- **Grades 1-12 Minimum 180-Day School Year** (RCW [28A.150.220](#) / WAC [180-16-215](#)) - The school year is accessible to all legally eligible students and consists of at least 180 separate school days (or less in the case of granted waivers) for students in grades 1-12.
- **Grades 1-12 Total Instructional Hour Offering** (RCW [28A.150.220](#) / WAC [180-16-200](#)) - The district makes available to students enrolled in grades one through twelve at least a district-wide annual average total instructional hour offering of one thousand hours.

Schools are also asked to submit copies of their high school graduation requirements so that the SBE database is an accurate reflection of current district requirements.

More details are available on the Basic Education

Compliance FAQ ([pdf](#)).

Board Member Highlight - Tre' Maxie - Appointed to fill vacancy

Tre' Maxie joined the State Board of Education in July 2011, filling a seat left open by departing member Warren Smith.

Tre' has spent over a decade leading non-profits, largely focused on the development of children and youth in public schools. He currently serves as the Executive Director of Powerful Schools, a Seattle-based advocacy group. Tre' previously served on the staff of a U.S. member of Congress. In this position, he worked primarily on increasing the graduation rates and college preparedness among underrepresented youth.

"The opportunity to serve on the Washington State Board of Education is an honor for me," said Mr. Maxie. "It is also an extension of my commitment to our schools and the children they serve."

An avid traveller, Tre' has trekked throughout the United States and beyond, visiting almost every major U.S. City, five continents, and over 20 countries.

Tre' has a B.A. in Political Science Pre-law from Morehouse College and a certificate in Creating Business Strategy from Columbia University Extension School in Tokyo. Tre' earned a certificate from the Non-Profit Executive Leadership Institute at the Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington and is a graduate of the 2011 Class of Leadership Tomorrow Seattle.

You can learn more about Tre' Maxie and other Board members by visiting our [Board member roster](#).

Upcoming Board Meeting

September 14-15
Pacific Lutheran University
Chris Knutzen Hall
Tacoma, Washington

Meeting materials are available on our [website](#) prior to the meeting. Email your thoughts and questions to SBE at sbe@k12.wa.us.