

The Washington State Board of Education

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State Board of Education Spotlight

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At the time of this writing, we have crossed the halfway point of the 2012 Legislative Session and are now at the cutoff for bills to move from one legislative chamber to the next. A select number of education bills have survived thus far, which is quite a difference from the legislative activity a few weeks prior, when we were tracking nearly 70 education bills.

Underlying the wave of this year's proposed legislation run two strong currents: the Washington State Supreme Court McCleary ruling and the realities of a daunting budget deficit.

The McCleary ruling: The State Supreme Court's majority decision confirmed what many of us have long known - that Washington State has not been meeting its duty in amply funding basic education. Our often overcrowded classrooms, worn textbooks, largely unfunded all-day kindergarten, and underfunded pupil transportation programs provide evidence of this. The Supreme Court's decision spotlights an existing remedy, urging the Legislature to fully fund basic education by 2018 and to move ahead with the program commitments outlined in House Bills 2261 and 2776. The following passage from the McCleary decision makes it clear the legislature must make reasonable progress towards the goals it set for itself, and the Supreme Court will remain active in its monitoring of the situation.

"... timely implementation remains uncertain. For instance, SHB 2776 called for continued phasing-in of all-day kindergarten, with statewide implementation to be achieved by 2018. The operating budget provided some funding for the all-day kindergarten program, but it expanded the program to only 21 percent of school districts in 2011-12 and to only 22 percent of school districts in 2012-13. Needless to say, a one-percent per year increase does not put the State on the path to statewide implementation of all-day kindergarten by the 2017-18 school year (... at the current pace, the State would not fund all-day kindergarten for all eligible students until the

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2090-91 school year)...

This court cannot idly stand by as the legislature makes unfulfilled promises for reform. We therefore reject as a viable remedy the State's invitation for the court simply to defer to the legislature's implementation of ESHB 2261. At the same time, we recognize that Plaintiffs' proposal to set an absolute deadline for compliance in the next year is unrealistic. The changes that have taken place during the pendency of this case illustrate that any firm deadline will, of necessity, be moved."

The budget deficit: Legislators came into this session aware of the necessity of cuts, reforms, and/or additional revenue. The supplemental budget, passed in December 2011, provided a starting point, but the brunt of the work is ahead of us. We have a long way to go before reaching a final budget this late spring.

So what effect will the McCleary ruling and the budget have on education?

The reality of the dire budget may result in education funding reductions in the final budget. Then again, the McCleary ruling could result in an education budget that reflects the Legislature's intent to work towards meeting the full-funding basic education commitments in HB 2261 and HB 2776. The [House Budget is now available](#), with the Senate Budget to be released soon.

We will continue to monitor the 2012 Legislative Session closely. We will also continue to advocate for policies that support our vision for Washington's public schools - a learner-focused state education system that is accountable for the individual growth of each student, so that students can thrive in a competitive global economy and in life.

On behalf of the Washington State Board of Education,

Ben Rarick
Executive Director

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Waiver Update - by
Kris Mayer, Ph.D. (SBE Member)**

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced the approval of eleven states for a waiver from the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act requirements. Other states will be submitting their applications in the coming weeks.

The State Board of Education (SBE) is collaborating with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to draft Washington's waiver application to the Department of Education.

The waivers are granted in exchange for a series of state reforms similar to the expectations within Race to the Top and the Obama administration's Blueprint for Reform, its 2010 policy recommendations for reauthorization.

The waiver offers relief from Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rules, including consequences for Title I schools and districts who fail to make AYP in math and reading. With a waiver, for example, Title 1 schools and districts may no longer be required to send school choice letters nor set aside 20 percent of Title I funds for tutoring and other supplemental education options provided by outside vendors.

We are supportive of the waiver application, as it is a natural extension of SBE's legislative mandate to create the framework for a state accountability system.

We intend to stay focused on a college and career ready framework for accountability that includes high standards, clear measures and goals for student achievement, increased graduation rates, and diminishing achievement gaps.

The Washington Achievement Index (see our article on the Index below) is the backbone of the proposed statewide accountability system. The waiver proposal includes a timeline to update the Index to include disaggregated subgroup data and student growth.

World Language Competency Credit Update - By Michele Aoki, Ph.D. - World Languages Program Supervisor - OSPI

In July 2010, SBE endorsed the dissemination of a model policy and procedure for districts to offer competency-based credits for world languages (i.e. based on a student's demonstrated proficiency in a language). The model policy and procedure were developed by a partnership of SBE, the Washington State School Directors' Association

(WSSDA), and OSPI. The OSPI World Languages Program is now working with districts across the state to adopt and implement the policy and procedure to support students in earning competency-based credits in world languages. To date, at least four districts (Aberdeen, Mt. Adams, North Thurston, and Seattle) have adopted and begun implementation of the policy and procedure for competency-based credits.

The Seattle School Board adopted its district competency-based credits policy and procedure in March 2011. During 2011-2012, Seattle Public Schools has partnered with the OSPI World Languages Program to support Seattle students earning competency-based credits for languages learned outside the school setting.

In September 2011, Seattle Public Schools launched an effort in collaboration with the Washington Association for Language Teaching and OSPI to offer world language competency-based credits to students in Seattle Public Schools through Washington World Language Assessment Days. So far, the Seattle School District has hosted two assessment days, in November and December 2011.

The nationally available proficiency assessment offered on these days was the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) from Avant Assessment in Oregon. Currently, STAMP is available in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional Characters), and Arabic. The district paid the \$30 test registration fee for all current ELL students. Other students or their families paid the \$30 fee directly to WAFLT, which handles all the test administration arrangements with Avant Assessment.

After the tests are evaluated, OSPI receives the score reports from Avant Assessment and prepares a packet for each student with their STAMP score report, a certificate of recognition signed by OSPI and SBE, and a letter indicating the recommended credit equivalencies based on their proficiency ratings.

Since the spring of 2011, 96 students in Seattle Public Schools have qualified for world language credits by participating in Washington World Language Assessment Days and completing the STAMP test, including 64 current ELL students and 32 non-ELL students.

More information about world language competency-based credits is available at the OSPI [website](#).

If you know of a district other than the four already mentioned that has adopted a world language competency-based credit policy, please [notify us](#).

The Achievement Index and the Measure of Performance

SBE is proud to offer a tool to help users better understand school performance. The [Washington Achievement Index](#) compiles scores from the state assessments (in reading, writing, math, and science) to develop a snapshot of a school and district's performance. Users of the Index can also see the achievement of student subgroups (by ethnicity or income level), how a school performed compared to schools of similar student demographics, and how a school has improved over time.

SBE partners with OSPI to use the Index for recognition of Washington's top-performing public schools. This annual recognition program, the Washington Achievement Awards (see the article below), celebrates the state's highest-achieving schools in multiple categories.

With Washington's anticipated waiver from the current federal No Child Left Behind requirements, the Index may evolve to be the primary measure for all of our state's schools' performance. The Index is an improvement on the federal government's preferred AYP calculation, which sets unrealistic goals and lacks multiple measures of success.

If the Washington Achievement Index is identified as the new statewide and federally-approved accountability measure, we will make every effort to ensure that schools identified for improvement have the resources necessary to make meaningful reforms.

We encourage you to use the Index. Explore your local schools. See who some of the top-performing schools are in your area, and take note of schools that are heading in the right direction.

And finally, remember too that the Achievement Index is just one measure of a school. Test scores are one helpful way of gauging a school's progress, but test results alone cannot reflect the rich array of knowledge and skills that good public schools impart to their students.

Should We Test Writing?

The statewide writing assessment has faced scrutiny from Legislators this session. One bill, SHB 2538, proposed the elimination of the statewide writing assessment as a graduation requirement.

Given the fiscal challenges facing districts, now is the right time to think about providing flexibility and eliminating needless requirements. But it is not the right time to fundamentally redefine what a meaningful high school diploma requires.

To be career and college-ready, high school graduates will need to know how to write. In an increasingly digital world, the ability to earn a living and contribute to a democratic society relies on fully developed writing skills.

Because the federal No Child Left Behind law doesn't require writing assessments, some legislators may view the elimination of the writing assessment as a viable cost-cutting option. But what federal law does or does not require should not drive what a meaningful high school diploma in Washington should be. Policymakers, employers, and concerned citizens in this state have been clear: high school graduates need to be able to write effectively to be successful citizens.

In fact, the Legislature designated four basic education learning goals in law (RCW 28A.150.210) that outline bedrock expectations for all of our students. The ability to "write effectively" is a cornerstone of the very first basic education goal. If it's a goal we are serious about, we should continue to measure our progress towards it.

Our future depends on graduates who can not only process information, but also interact with the world around them. We want our graduates to be able to write and voice concerns, to vote, to fill out applications, to write college essays, to compose letters to the editor, to draft papers required for a degree or certificate, and, in general, to have the ability to convey thoughts and ideas in a logical manner.

Elimination of the statewide writing assessment as a graduation requirement may be sold as a cost-saving

measure, but the costs are simply shifted. Though the current educational system may save some money on assessments, ultimately there is a price to pay for weakening the rigor of a high school diploma. An education that does not adequately support and teach the value of writing will have serious implications for future graduates.

The Washington Achievement Awards

A total of 275 schools are receiving Washington Achievement Awards, representing an increase of nearly 50 percent in comparison to last year. The Washington Achievement Awards program, now in its third year, is based on the Washington Achievement Index.

While the number of schools recognized for "Overall Excellence" remained constant, the number of special recognition awards increased by more than 200 percent. The most significant gains occurred in the "Improvement" and "Closing Achievement Gaps" categories, where the number of schools recognized increased from 15 to 53 and 24 to 61, respectively.

Schools are being recognized for being top performers based on two-year averages in seven categories:

1. Overall Excellence
2. Language Arts
3. Math
4. Science
5. Extended Graduation Rate (only awarded to high schools and comprehensive schools)
6. Improvement
7. Closing Achievement Gaps

"It is an honor to celebrate schools making a difference," said Jeff Vincent, SBE Chair. "These 275 schools reflect the many great things happening in our classrooms."

The award-winning schools will be honored during an award ceremony on April 25 at Mariner High School in Mukilteo, itself an award winner for "Language Arts."

Third Annual Student Video Contest

February marks the beginning of the third annual [SBE Student Video Contest](#). This year's contest asks students to create a short documentary or creative film that celebrates learning in language arts, social studies, or other liberal arts courses.

Students will work in teams of three to produce films 5-10 minutes long. The students' DVD creations will eventually make their way on to the [SBE YouTube channel](#). You can find last year's entries on this channel and our website as well.

The video contest will end in May, so there is plenty of time to encourage the students in your life to participate.

New Board Members

Two new Board members joined SBE in 2012 after winning their respective Washington State School Directors' Association elections: Kevin Laverty (Mukilteo) and Cindy McMullen (Spokane).

Kevin Laverty has been active in school leadership, both as a local school board member and as a member and former president of the Washington State School Directors' Association. Mr. Laverty and his wife, Tomoko, have two grown daughters and reside in Mukilteo. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California - Santa Barbara, and a Master's in Communication - Digital Media from the University of Washington.

Cindy McMullen served for 24 years on the Central Valley School District School Board before joining SBE. She and her husband Dennis have three married daughters scattered across the country. Mrs. McMullen holds a BA degree in Political Science from Stanford University and a JD degree from Gonzaga School of Law.

A third member, Connie Fletcher (Issaquah), is slated to rejoin the Board after her appointment to SBE by Governor Gregoire. Ms. Fletcher previously served on the Board from 2009 through 2011 as a representative of the Washington State School Directors' Association. Though her term has

expired as an elected member, Governor Gregoire has nominated Ms. Fletcher to join the Board once again as an appointee, filling a vacant seat left by past Board member Eric Liu. Ms. Fletcher's educational leadership experience includes 16 years with the Issaquah School District School Board and three years as president and officer of the Washington State School Directors' Association.

Board Member Highlight - Bob Hughes (Kirkland)- WSSDA Elected

Bob Hughes joined the Board in January 2009. Before retirement, Mr. Hughes worked for The Boeing Corporation in Seattle, spending the last ten years there as the Corporate Director of Education Relations. This position contributed to Mr. Hughes' passion for education, and he found the work at Boeing both professionally and personally rewarding.

Mr. Hughes has extensive experience working on behalf of students in Washington State, including nearly thirty years with the Lake Washington School Board, six years on the Governor's Council on Advanced Technology in Schools, nine years with the Washington Roundtable's Working Committee on Education Reform, and six years as a member of the WSSDA Board of Directors.

Mr. Hughes graduated from Western Washington University with a B.A. in economics. He and his wife Linda have two children and four grandchildren.

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

Upcoming Board Meeting

February 23
The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Olympia, WA
&
March 14-15
Green River Community College
Auburn, Washington

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