



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

SUMMARY OF THE YAKIMA COMMUNITY FORUM

Prepared for the July 2018 Board meeting

Summary

The Washington State Board of Education (SBE) hosted a community forum to solicit input on highest priority issues to be addressed in the 2018 strategic plan. Thirty-three participants attended the forum, including representatives of state agencies, community groups, parents, students, educators and school and college administrators. The meeting was held on May 8, 2018, in Yakima, Washington.

SBE staff and board members opened and closed the meeting, and also participated in the small group and full group discussions. Staff members served as facilitators and notetakers at each roundtable discussion. Noreen Light, consultant, served as an overall discussion facilitator.

Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives on hopes and aspirations for students, as well as broad barriers to success. They were also asked to share their suggestions for state and district-level policies and strategies to overcome the barriers they identified.

The following themes were noted in the discussions, staff notes, and participant-written suggestions:

1. Student well-being
2. Communication and connections between schools, families, and communities
3. Learning environments and cultural competency
4. Structure and logistics of the school year
5. Early learning and pre-kindergarten
6. Grade-level and graduation requirements, and transitions beyond high school
7. Funding

1. Student Safety and Well-Being

Students deserve and require a learning environment that is safe and supportive, both physically and psychologically. Many students are struggling with trauma and stressors such as bullying, violence in their neighborhoods or homes, inadequate housing and food, drug abuse, suicide, and poverty. The Board supports investments in training current staff and educators and recognizes the need to increase access to staff and/or community providers who can specifically address these challenges as well as mental health issues.

A few examples of participant suggestions for overcoming barriers to student well-being include:

- “Social emotional “soft skills” in early elementary.”
- “Teaching students to intervene, and advocate for other students.”
- “Mental health access. More, more, more.”

2. Communication and Connections

Students need a cohesive education system, with coordinated efforts and support from family, schools, social and cultural communities, and employers. Relationships must be built to facilitate collaboration. Each district will have distinct needs regarding culturally-relevant communications and policies. Multilingual communications are required in many communities. Schools should be specific in communications about who to contact for specific information or assistance, and what parental involvement is encouraged and supported.

A few examples of participant suggestions for improving communications and connections include:

- “Define family engagement.”
- “Meet parents where they are, when it’s convenient for them.”
- “Add parental outreach coordinators or develop natural leaders from the community to serve as interface for families with schools.”

3. Learning Environments and Cultural Competency

Students need teachers and support staff who understand and are able to create culturally-relevant learning environments that meet the academic and career needs of their students. Teachers and staff need ongoing preparation and support to create innovative, contextualized learning environments that incorporate technology and up-to-date research on assessment, teaching and learning methods. Facilitating learning and assessing student achievement using multiple methods to meet students’ needs requires flexibility, time, and expertise; teachers and staff need training from the career preparation p throughout their careers to provide this type of learning environment.

A few examples of participant suggestions for improvement include:

- “More internship and work-based learning. More hands on experiences.”
- “Whole spectrum schools. Gender-safe, LGBTQ, cultural competence, accurate history of US.”
- “Educator prep programs teach culturally explicit methods.”

4. Structure and Logistics of the School Year

A structure which assumes a loss of momentum and a need for re-learning - at every grade - is not optimal. Examining the current structure of the annual school calendar, the daily schedule, and the way achievement is measured (competency versus hours of attendance) through a lens of equity and an eye for college, career, and life requirements is required. In addition, other structures, including transportation schedules and limitations, should meet student needs to be fully involved in their school-community, including extracurricular activities.

Participant suggestions on addressing this issue include:

- “More balanced use of the calendar year to minimize learning loss.”
- “Transportation options that go beyond getting kids to/from school. For instance, support for getting to appointments and flexible bus systems for mobile students.”
- “Stop using “WA is a local control state” as an excuse! We have to have some state sponsored systems to combat inequality in small to large district opportunities.”
- “Through state policy, deregulate schools to allow a district to devise a school structure and plan to meet students’ needs in today’s and tomorrow’s technology driven economy.”

5. Early Learning and Pre-Kindergarten

Families are the first teachers. Developing habits of lifelong learning begins at home. Support for parents and children in the pre-kindergarten years is important to give each child the greatest opportunity for success in school. Access to pre-K education should not be limited by income or location. Outreach to children and their families should begin early on, with home visits and early learning access in local neighborhoods.

Participants suggested the following actions:

- “Access to early childhood education for ALL students - provide transportation.”
- “Home visiting programs for all families with young children.”
- “Early interventions. ECAEP. Early mental health identification.”

6. Graduation Requirements, and Transitions Beyond High School

State policies which allow for flexibility in assessing a student has met standard such as awarding credits for demonstrated competence - to meet grade-level and graduation requirements should be expanded. The High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) can be an effective tool. The HSBP should be incorporated into student planning at an earlier point and be used as a guiding document to support a successful transition to a student’s next steps after graduation. The HSBP should be electronic and portable to actually be used after high school, for college and career purposes.

- “State-level policy and oversight to ensure HSBP is an effective student tool.”
- “Standards based promotion vs. “grade level” promotion (promote when they are ready).”
- “Graduate requirements need to match post-secondary success.”

7. Funding

Students’ access to education opportunities and support should not be determined by the location of their residence. Small, rural and low income schools struggle to meet the needs of their students with the funding they are allotted. Additionally, the mental health issues and other trauma-related issues that affect a student’s ability to learn require a commitment of additional funding for staff and training.

Participants offered the following suggestions regarding funding:

- “Equitable funding. Equitable resource distribution.”
- “Re-vamp school funding to disconnect it from “seat time” (proficiency).”

- “Increase funding through collaborative grants between school districts and other entities w/same missions like CIS.”

APPENDIX A

Notes provided by SBE staff, summarizing small group discussions.

HOPES AND DREAMS / REPORT OUT

- Ready for his or her optimum postsecondary choices - work/life
 - Not just college -- needs to be postsecondary choices
 - Education
 - Internship
 - Apprenticeship
 - Jobs that don't exist
 - View from birth / pre-k
 - School as an integrated part of the community // mutually supportive school / community
 - Parent involvement through the process -- support for parents (GED / pre-GED), especially low-income / less educated parents
 - Need for longitudinal studies about kids as they move through the system
 - More emphasis on career training options
 - High school and beyond plan as a means to develop / support career interest and planning
 - What would make the plan really robust?
 - Don't want to pigeonhole kids
 - Need to make it real...
 - Opportunities for districts to share what they do.
 - Be good citizens (early learning example) –
 - Interact with each other
 - Interact with adults
 - Social / emotional and mental health
 - Barrier:
 - Lots of extreme behavior that's not being addressed
 - Soft skills...

BARRIERS REPORT OUT

- Remove personal barriers
- Give students a personal why
- Anti-bullying forum
 - Policy in Spanish that explains the anti-bullying policy and steps to follow.
- Connectivity with other students - leadership / mentorship
- Transition for kids from Montessori who are self-directed but have less opportunity for that after they move over
- Integration of sports and other activities
- Child wellness
- Opportunity and choice to succeed in school
- Barrier - not one-size-fits-all / college ready as a barrier for some kids?

- Every child: full access to career and higher education
- Every child has a chance to be successful, active citizens, their path
- Opportunity to explore and find niche in community
 - Pre-school
 - Arts / sciences
 - Job
 - Access to computer / technology
 - Misalignment of secondary and postsecondary expectations
- HS and Beyond Plan so it's not just check the box
- Path from college to career not limited
- Visibility of college and careers - role model / tools
- Out of date educational system - kids will be in careers that don't exist today.
 - Barriers:
 - Students who leave for work / to help provide
 - Overemphasis on teaching and lack of emphasis on learning -- appreciate multiple ways to learn
 - Traditional Calendar - annual planning for loss and need to review and to teach because of 11 week break in summer
 - Shorten time
 - Add intersession opportunities
 - Need to change something
 - Credits
 - Seat-time
 - Calendar
 - Low expectations put on kids
 - Kids not recognizing their interests are a gift / asset
 - Kids don't have the mental health support in school that they need
 - Suicide is a serious issue in schools - don't have the supports we need
 - Funding for mental health and students with disabilities a limiting factor (also small and rural districts; and/or high levels of poverty)
 - Uncertain futures for undocumented students
 - How we prepare our teachers to work with the kids we have now and are growing
 - Ties in to concerns about low expectations and outdated model of instruction
 - Re-image elementary and early learning to better serve the kids from multicultural backgrounds; poverty; etc.
 - Lack of communication between schools and families // families and schools.

ACTIONS / SUPPORT REPORT-OUT

- OSPI SEL [Social Emotional Learning] committee
- More play / interactive time
- Balanced calendar / year-round school
- Idea Categories:
 - Educator training / learning environment / cultural competency

- Graduation requirements / HS Planning [K12 student requirements]
- Wellness
- Engagement with communities and parents
- Engaging schools in communities - communication / services
- Ideas around better communication / connection - communities and schools...
 - Cross district issues / borderline issues
 - District boundaries and community boundaries not connected
 - More open doors to CBOs and to parents
 - Parents need to feel welcome!
 - Some parents intimidated by teachers / schools
 - Often relationship based
 - Language could be a barrier in some communities
 - Could be territory issues in some cases
 - Cultural differences
 - Quincy example of parent survey - in Spanish or translated
 - Innovation requires:
 - Will
 - Capacity
 - Identify policies to support the innovations needed
 - Graduation requirements:
 - Change language to "transition requirements"
 - Engage staff - identify strategies

TABLE ONE NOTES

- Early Learning/Early Interventions
- Teacher Education
- Measuring Graduation Requirements
- Whole-Child Wellness
- Communication w/ Family and Parents

Communication w/ stakeholders and connections

- No universal solution for all - each distinct
- Need advocates in each room/school
- Parents=outreach for others
- Change language "transition" requirements
- Deregulate the "system"
- Have Natural Leaders as advocates for school
 - Site councils that include everyone
- Business standards become the "transition" requirement.
- Availability to meet w/stakeholders at all hours, not just 7:15 to 3pm

TABLE TWO NOTES

Hopes, Aspirations and Barriers

Hope

- At any grade level to get their information regarding things available at their school.
- Increase population with a College Degree. Only 16% in Yakima Co.
- Learn how to learn. Apply in multiple settings.
- See that they are part of their community.

Aspirations

- Participating in their community - being a part of the activities
- For HS&B plan to be redeveloped so it is not just “check the box” - more effective tool
- Path to College/Career is not limited, there are no barriers only the question “which one do I want?”
- Want a child to become productive and be a part of the community

Barriers

- Opening the doors to exposure to be able to see College/Careers that are available
- Out of date educational system
- Still thinking we are teaching students for careers that exist although their careers don't even exist today.

TABLE THREE NOTES

Hopes and Aspirations

- Broad Barriers
- Bullying - son bullied for 5 years at West Valley High School.
- “What is Bullying?” - written in English, not Spanish
- Not getting answers from school district - why
- Anti-bullying conference. Why postpone until next year? Why only written in English? No information at school. They got help from school board.
- When needs and concerns are not met - kids react and act out.
- School districts need to reach out to Hispanic Communities
- Parent engagement partnerships -
 - Parent went to anti-bullying officer and got no where
 - Went to school board, made sure she got the help she needs.
 - 5 years it took!

Barriers

- Over emphasis on teaching and not enough about learning.
- Huge barrier for all students - loss, review, and reteach - it's measurable and proven. Overdue and creating more barriers. Year round school!
- Stuck in old ways - we need to be advocates for change.

- We value some things in school, but not all things.
- Help kids w/coping skills early on.
- Districts w/high levels of poverty
- How we prepare teachers—we prepare people to teach from 1950-1960 instead of related to today.
- Lack of communication between schools and families - problem for families in general
- What are the strategies for getting there?
- What would work well?
- Student led groups to get ALAS, achieving success
- Multiple methods of measuring graduation requirements
- Professional development for teachers
- Ask kids how their teachers are doing
- Disturbing that all kids are supposed to fit in one box

TABLE THREE NOTES

Hopes, Aspirations, Barriers

- (Teacher-ed) Certain students in K-12 think teaching makes sense for them. Certain reasons they don't for the majority of students
- Want our kids to be successful in life. So many paths. Running Start, etc. Then, 2, 4, brick & mortar, online.
- To fulfill their potential, become active citizens.

Barriers:

- Low expectations, barriers put on by adults (unsafe living conditions, etc.)
- Every student has unbelievable & unique potential—significant group that don't see that/don't feel that for their lives.
- Barrier could be culture: your parents don't speak English and they harvest.
- Kids don't realize their interests can be a gift.
- Get more students to be teachers in communities that have a need: grow your own.
- Need Professional Development for pre-K/ECE [Early Childhood Education.
- Doesn't help recruit kids when you're seeing teacher strikes.
- 1st generation to college, stumbled into it, wandered around Central. But I had enough supports from family that it was on my radar.

Communications with schools, communities, families

- Local issue: everyone is so different (urban/rural)
- Takes a lot of hard work over & over
- Bilingual policies of school districts - especially 400s policies (targeted toward funding)
- Giving teachers the time to do family engagement work/money for engagement time
- Build relationships with businesses - invite to forums
- Birth - 8
- Remediation in higher ed (CC)

- Free community college

TABLE FOUR NOTES

Hopes and Aspirations

- Implement EGOAC recommendations for improved equitable outcomes
- Minimalize state testing
- Meaningful classroom instruction - not to test
- Opportunity and choice to succeed in school

Broad Barriers

- Testing /summative /repetitive
- Institutional bias
 - Regatta race vs. canoe race
 - Shopping on Rodeo Drive not rodeo
- Not one size fits all - not everyone wants or needs “college” why require “college ready”
- Teacher prep not culturally competent
 - Drug abuse education
 - Effects of anti-depressants as med treatment for kids

TABLE FIVE NOTES

Hopes:

- Eliminate personalized barriers
- Partner w/families - equitable access to education
- Pathways
- Anti-bullying forum
- Policy in Spanish - steps to follow 1,2,3 anti-bullying
- Students pursue 2nd pathways or desires
- Schools integrated with communities
- Support parents to help support kids
- Within school system - leadership programs
- Student self-direction
- After school activities other than sports
- PE - focus on wellness
- Hope and aspirations of opportunity and choice. Not one size fits all.
- Every child have full access to career and higher education
- Every child active citizens - find right path
- No barriers - learn how to learn
- Barriers=open door to colleges, how to access tools to get to that

TABLE SIX NOTES

Broad barriers

- Students help support the family - students learn in variety of ways.
- Low expectations put on kids
- Uncertain futures for students
- Cultural competency
- Re-image elementary - re-examine how we educate
- Lack of communication - families to schools - schools to families
- Strategies and policies=how to improve discussion

APPENDIX B

Transcription of suggestions offered by participants during small group exercises, loosely grouped by common themes.

1. STUDENT WELL-BEING

- Mental health access. More, more, more
- Bringing in mental health professional. -Partnership with schools
- Introducing the idea of “Root of Empathy”
- Social emotional “soft skills” in early elementary
- Trauma informed teachers, especially in elementary
- Mental health support at all schools. (Will need more trained staff, e.g. counselors)
- Incorporating mental health skills sooner
- Teaching students to respect oneself (ex. personal space) self-advocacy, and respect others.
- ACE, counselors for students and families at every necessary school
- Trauma informed wellness-centered environment
- Teaching students to intervene, and advocate for other students
- Mental health assessments or check-ins at school
- Mindfulness techniques
- Prioritize social emotional learning
- Teach mindfulness and wellness practices
- “Severe behaviors” in early elementary (mental health support)
- More staff time for direct connections - mentoring
- Integrate mentoring components throughout education pathways

2. COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Define family engagement.
- Education block watch for reminders of school - school district activities - to create more community
- Education block watch - going to door - also to remind parents of the events. Increase familiarity. Parent-school communication.
- Meet parents where they are, when it’s convenient for them.
- Regular parent nights with access to Adult education. GED classes for parents.
- Meet parents within their community. Create events within the community - at their facilities. Parent - school communication.
- School districts to new parents out to the community so that they are more culturally aware of where the students are coming from. Parent-school communication.
- Publications available in different languages.
- Connecting to the same extent that we invite volunteers. Partners.
- Students sign that they received important information to prove it.
- A student hotline for when student asks for content help and doesn’t receive it they asked teacher - no help counselor - no help principal - no help
- Send information in the students’ backpacks, English and Spanish

- FAQ if your student's grades are failing contact teacher - counselor - principal - school district. FAQ on how to fix your problems
- Schools provide FAQs to families, parents. If you student is being bullied...contact teacher - counselor - principal - and bullying officer - etc.
- Digital Communication: Text messaging, apps, communication in different languages
- Resource fairs in elementary schools to connect with the resources in their communities
- More public/private partnerships. Bring industry experts into schools.
- Connections to community
- Establish community learning coalitions at each school w/needed services
- Parent and volunteer coordinators
- Parental involvement
- Community partnerships w/districts to support students
- Strategy: Partnership between higher ed and school districts to have student teachers do community outreach
- Computer kiosks w/in community for parent/student access to services
- Add parental outreach coordinators or develop natural leaders from the community to serve as interface for families with schools.
- Family engagement coordinators in every school.
- Re-vamp student led conferences concept.
- Increase collaboration efforts versus working(?) in silos
- Increase school district collaboration across counties

3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

- Whole spectrum schools. Gender-safe, LGBTQ, cultural competence, accurate history of US.
- Create child-ready schools instead of school-ready children - mindset shift -
- Barrier: Majority of teachers are white women. Strategy: Recruit underrepresented populations into the teaching profession. (Grow Your Own, etc.)
- Educator prep programs teach culturally explicit methods.
- Require cultural competency training for certification.
- Cultural competency/addressing intrinsic bias
- Funds of knowledge (Faciliator's note see: <https://serc.carleton.edu/resources/40768.html>)
- Align university coursework with the true job of a teacher.
- Develop incentives - e.g., free tuition for students of color to get teaching degrees provided they teach in the public schools for # of years.
- Change schools of education and teacher training model. (Create a better pathway for alternative certification of teachers.)
- Change/upgrade teacher prep, support staff prep. Currently doesn't align with current demographics.
- Barrier: Teacher bias. Strategy: Anti-bias training (and assessment) of cultural competency
- Culturally-relevant attendance policies - no punishment for participating in cultural activities
- Creating accurate and culturally relevant history classes
- Leaders who look like the students they serve
- Increase diversity of teacher workforce. Kids need teachers that "look like them."
- Strategy: In high school, junior/senior year paid internship as student teacher
- Change the perception that students "can't" or "won't" or "don't care"
- Imbed leadership from pre-K to post-secondary
- Language acquisition options

- Comprehensive sex education
- Arts, music, STEM programs
- Create system where the arts is equal to “academia”
- Making classes like math, science, English, relevant. Creating curriculum more in-tune w/students’ interests.
- Redesign math curricula, teaching and learning. Better alignment w/post-secondary. Identify what math students and citizens really need to know.
- Antiquated teaching ideals/methods
- Contextualize learning
- Rethink education philosophy. Welcome to 21st Century.
- Teach the kids you have not the kids you want
- Redesign “teaching” in a classroom - Grades [are not equal to] ability or competency
- Hands on learning. Skills not books.
- Eliminate seat time *Competency based
- Allow students to explore opportunities - activities - so they have a product.
- More internship and work-based learning. More hands on experiences.
- Improve access to enrichment/gifted programs and advanced course offerings at upper grade levels.
- More enrichment activity access, i.e. field trips.
- Do not force students to take an opportunity they don’t want.

4. STRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

- Stop using “WA is a local control state” as an excuse! We have to have some state sponsored systems to combat an inequality in small to large district opportunities.
- Through state policy, de-regulate schools to allow a district to devise a school structure and plan to meet students’ needs in today’s and tomorrow’s technology driven economy.
- More individual school autonomy. Allow the school to set the calendar, curriculum, extracurricular ...
- 11 month school year
- Different school schedule! High school specifically
- Year round schools *open-ended school calendar
- Barrier - traditional school calendar year that plans for summer learning loss for all - fall review, reteach, relearn classroom practices. Summer learning loss is cumulative year to year and limits student 9th grade course selection, leads to drop out, and post-secondary drop-out.
- Change annual school calendar to minimize learning loss
- Re-imagine structure/time of elementary schools to align w/learning standards
- More balanced use of the calendar year to minimize learning loss.
- Community schools until 6 p.m. for all students.
- Transportation options that go beyond getting kids to/from school. For instance, support for getting to appointments and flexible bus systems for mobile students
- Attendance policies need to be re-vamped.

5. EARLY LEARNING AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN

- Using early childhood brain research

- 3-4 year old state supported Pre-K with parenting component
- Access to early childhood education for ALL students - provide transportation
- More state-funded pre-K slots (esp. In low income schools)
- Preschools that come to kids, in neighborhoods where kids are
- Home visiting programs for all families with young children
- Early interventions. ECAEP. Early mental health identification.
- Universal preschool.
- Universal (free) birth - 5 preschool.
- Early learning evenings in our elementary schools.

6. GRADE-LEVEL AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, AND TRANSITIONS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

- Improve transition from high school to college/career
- Better use of high school and beyond plan (link to community college pathways)
- HSBP becomes an exploratory course on career options for children
- State-level policy and oversight to ensure HSBP is an effective student tool.
- Career paths incorporate more than college - more awareness of other options – work-based, trade.
- Redevelop graduation requirements
- Graduation requirements need to match post-secondary success.
- Life skills, work - used as credit for HS diploma
- Allow “life” classes to count for Grad. Ex: financial math NOT tied specifically to subject areas.
- Allow creativity for HS credits and graduation.
- Postsecondary planning and experiences that start early in education and are immersive (work-based learning for example)
- Focus on critical thinking skills, not test scores.
- Shift assessment burden from kids to adults/schools.
- Help students remember information for end of year tests - what techniques can be used to help them? * bring the info up - spiraling 9th subject math
- Provide counseling for students in class selection so they don’t miss out on the classes they really want- (math sequences so they can take STEM classes.)
- Standards based promotion vs. “grade level” promotion. (promote when they are ready)
- Eliminate standardized testing. Drains resources including time. Leaves no time or funds for the arts. Cuts crucial play time. No benefits to learning.
- Wait to fail model vs early identification and addressing issues early on
- Positive. Special education supports and IEP plans.

7. FUNDING

- Re-vamp school funding to disconnect it from “seat time” (proficiency).
- Equitable funding. Equitable resource distribution.
- Fund schools based on students needs vs adults
- Increase funding through collaborative grants between school districts and other entities w/same missions like CIS
- Data based economic return.

- Eliminate charter schools and return funding and control to local schools and school boards