



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

SUMMARY OF THE SEATTLE COMMUNITY FORUM

Prepared for the July 2018 Board meeting

Overview

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-six participants attended the forum, including representatives of state agencies, community groups, parents, students, educators and school and college administrators. The meeting was held on June 20, 2018, in Seattle, 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 regarding strategies to overcome barriers 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. Grade-level and graduation requirements, and transitions beyond high school
5. Funding

Themes

STUDENT WELL-BEING

Students need individualized guidance, as well as instruction, to achieve their goals for high school and beyond. They need to have a sense of belonging in the school community, to include having their voices heard in parent/teacher/student conferences and in school climate surveys. Students need an opportunity to become community leaders, especially within their schools and districts.

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

- "Mentors/advocate for students to help them navigate school, career options, social emotional development. Help kids on different paths – 4-year, 2-year, vocational, etc."

- "School climate surveys and use of data to improve practice."
- "Integrated student support. Mental health, ACIS [Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service], MTSS [Multi-tiered System of Support], nurses, teacher training and support, and more."

COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS

Students and families need clear communication to make informed decisions about education and career pathways. Likewise, school administrators and state leaders need to understand the needs of the students and families across the state to enact policies and support processes meeting those needs. Students, families, cultural communities, and educators from the classroom and administrative levels all have a role in communicating expectations, questions, and support for student success. Developing strong connections amongst these various contributors to the conversation requires mindfulness of potential language or cultural barriers, as well as awareness of and appreciation for the unique demographics of each district. To develop connections beyond communication of expectations and requirements, and further strengthen support systems, educators must meet with students and families in their communities, as well as welcoming parental and family involvement in the school.

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

- "Family and community engagement that meets them where they are (tribes, churches, community centers, events)."
- "Descriptive, skills-based report cards."
- "'Natural leaders' programs for parent engagement."

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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 problem-based learning environments that connect to students' career and other interests. Students should be actively engaged in discussions of how their education is benefiting them, and students should also have opportunities to voice their experiences of barriers that are inhibiting their success.

Students need teachers who are well-prepared for the highly diverse needs of their students. This may include bilingual skills and skills in teaching English Language Learners, as well as broader skills in identifying resources for students with specific needs such as language-based disabilities (an example is dyslexia). Facilitating learning and assessing student achievement using multiple methods (such as Universal Design for Learning) to meet students' needs requires flexibility, time, and expertise; teachers and staff need training during career preparation and then throughout their careers to provide this type of learning environment.

A few examples of participant suggestions for improvement include:

- Robust guidance for students and their post-high school plans.
- Integrate career-related information and exposure into high schools so young people have clearer understanding of possible careers and what's required in those different career fields.

- Develop capacity for students to graduate from High School fluent in two languages, which means dramatically increasing the number of trained, bilingual teachers.
- Improve teacher prep to include cultural competency and teaching in diverse classrooms.

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

Students and families need to understand why the 24 credit graduation requirements are important, and how the required coursework relates to the student's career and post-secondary plans. Dual credit opportunities or other post-secondary transition opportunities should be available to all students. High School and Beyond Plans can be strong tools for planning and supporting students' success in their individual pathways. All students should be supported in taking ownership of their dynamic High School and Beyond Plan and using it as an ongoing guide and expression of their personal aspirations.

- Better identify and clarify options and support for meeting graduation requirements.
- Consistent, quality implementation of the High School & Beyond Plan. Connect it to families, higher education, employers, other stakeholders.
- “Running Start” type pathway for transition-eligible students with disabilities. Or, ability to use Running Start dollars for college-based transition programs.

FUNDING

Students need adequately funded systems of support. Funding should be needs-based to accommodate differences in individual students, schools, and districts. Funds should be used to provide equitable opportunities for students to participate in accelerated learning programs, arts, ELL and special education programs, among other programs. Needs-based funding may provide for teacher professional development, education support staff, social workers, counselors, nurses and others who are critical to supporting student success.

Participants offered the following suggestions regarding funding:

- "Pay teachers well."
- "Fund the arts."
- "Advocate legislature for a true student needs-based funding system."

APPENDIX A

Notes provided by SBE staff, summarizing small group discussions.

TABLE ONE

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

- Students become good citizens of the world - responsible.
- Students attain jobs that can support a family.
- Students have multiple opportunities when they exit school. I.e. college, work, etc. ready to make a good decision for the next step.
- Multiple options after graduation. Being able to compete.
- Students being able to visualize a future and how they can proceed ahead.
- Equipping them to respond to change in the future.
- Students leaving (K12) with a sense of belonging, that they had connections with their education system.

BARRIERS

- Math confidence and math skills. They give up a career not being able to...
- No connection between courses and their future aspirations.
- SEL has fallen by the wayside because of standardized testing.
- Increased mental health needs - lack of skills to address. Depression, anxiety, school refusal.
- Tools to get them back. (Becca bill not helpful.)
- Mind sets of professionals. All kids can learn. Do we communicate that to kids? Do teachers have confidence they can reach those kids? Giving students the recognition that they can do it or have done it.
- Not immune to ACEs [Adverse Childhood Experiences], homelessness, parents non-documented students.
- Tensions specific to graduation requirements vs. structure we have (inside the box). Days, limited time, staff.
- Don't provide support students need to meet higher requirements.

STRATEGIES

- Exposure to people with different careers - what it takes to get there.
- Include student voice. Be deliberate. They need to be asked to come to the table. District wide committees. Give them opportunities to be heard. Using them to evaluate, for instance, assessment.
- More mental health support at schools but also a defined pipeline and coordinated with community resources for therapy. School-based health center.
- How to measure competency in SEL [Social Emotional Learning], etc. No accountability. Not currently reflected in course work. Need measure in support SEL for example.
- Need high school completion specialists much earlier.
- Cognitive domain, easiest to measure. But affective domain has high impact.
- A tool that would measure the health of the school. Student survey - school climate surveys (but not funded) comes out of local levy dollars. Problem is distribution of resources.

- Advocate for a consistent decision on high stakes testing. Should not be year to year.

TABLE TWO

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

- Livable wage career.
- Teacher training, PD around dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities.
- Love of learning.
- Finishing HS with all options open.
- Students believing in themselves.
- Students feeling fully included beyond just education, race/gender representation.
- All students being given an opportunity to be accelerated and have access to advanced coursework.
- Accountability in K12 for advanced coursework and acceleration.
- Resources/supports to get back on track.

BARRIERS

- Gap of implementation in language learning. Have a course on dyslexia.
- Mental health (depression, anxiety).
- Help students to manage mental health.
 - Accommodations
 - Adult manifestation of ADHD
- Teachers of color to match student demographics.
- Homelessness, programs to complete H.S
- Systemic inequities.
- Institutionalized racism (for instance, tracking students into remedial coursework) “self-select challenge” to opt into advanced coursework.
- Highly qualified and certified and within endorsement.
- Arts, music, theater, health, PE, technology.
- Too much testing. Law to reduce testing time to twenty minutes.
- Schools should not all be the same - diverse options.
- Internships - 12 year model of education is gone (ways to transition out).
 - Applied problem-based learning.
 - Well-designed units of PBL.
 - Professional Development.
- Kids need to create, present, respond. Kids need to be the star for at least a while.
- Students of color are being tracked into lower-level coursework.
- Fear.

STRATEGIES

- EOS - Partners with districts to examine how districts provide acceleration.
- Equal opportunity schools, happening in Kent. Acceleration: North Shore, Federal Way, Kent, Tacoma.

- Teaching / mentoring programs create a little fiefdom for new teachers.
- HSBP, exploring.
- Student voice, how to integrate student voice into.
- Interest in the subject (Malcolm Knowles concept).
- How to make good experiences the majority of the likelihood for kids rather than the exception.
- *Anchor students to school through an interest. Some interests are in CTE.
- Noncompliance - compliance process if district. After 60 days. Check on credit hours.

TABLE THREE

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

- Focus on literacy 47% of 3rd graders not at standard.
- Not making progress on % meeting standard.
- More support (especially literacy) for SWDs.
- Reading research to inform practice.
- Early interventions.
- Curricular link from preK-K-3rd.
- HS-post sec essential. All will need some post sec.
- Close gaps.
- State funding system/not really “needs based” Basically flat PPEX. All aspects (SPED/LAP/ELL) all under-funded.
- Workforce diversity.
- More experiences/more arts/more extracurricular.

STRATEGIES

- Discovery labs but a lot of \$ total engagement by all.
- Skills centers - West Yakima but limited.
- Equity lens.
- SQSS measure in WASIF (Dual Credit).
- Address inequities in PreK.
- Horizontal & vertical integration.
- K12 is too narrow, should be P-20.
- Special education funding.
- Build in safety nets.

TABLE FOUR

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

- Sense of community for everyone in the community.
- Every child, whole child.
- More teachers who look like the children.
- Communications in same language.
- Opportunity gaps.

- No homeless kids. Basic needs met.
- More counselors.
- More career education.

BARRIERS

- Barriers to access for students with disabilities. Varied advocacy, relationships between parents and schools.
- Disproportional representation of Native students with IEP [Individualized Education Plan].
- IEP meeting can be intimidating. Parents don't always know they are full members of the team.
- PD for cultural competency. How to have difficult conversations between people from different cultures?
- Inclusion is an issue.
- Capacity. Over crowded schools.

STRATEGIES

- Build strategies and best practices for getting meaningful parent and student input on decision-making.
- Connect CTE to community and technical college prof-tech.
- Student voice at school and district level.
- Teacher pipeline to develop local teacher workforce.
- Further develop SBE's outreach and feedback from parents. Going to where parents and students already meet and feel safe.

TABLE FIVE

STRATEGIES

- Learning environ.
 - Need arts programs/integrated with social/emotional learning. "Whole child."
 - Universal design for learning.
 - Childhood focus.
 - PD - teacher training, discipline program, learning issues, strong school leadership.
- Student well-being (homelessness and hunger).
- Kinesthetic opportunities/social emotional learning, teaching soft skills, behavioral counseling.
- Communications and connections w/stakeholders.
 - Bring stakeholders together without trying to fix things "just listen".
 - All levels. Schools need to have communication plans.
 - Making sure all students know about scholarship opportunities, disability equitable transition resources.
 - Equitable education office - not students with disabilities.

TABLE SIX

HOPES AND DREAMS

- Focus on literacy and closing gap (40% not at standard).

- Get kids reading earlier.
- Better support student w/learning disabilities (UDL).
- Earlier support for students lacking skills.
- Bringing research into teacher training and classroom.
- Earlier identification and support.
- Integrating early learning and K12.
- Bring together B to 8, integrate w/K12.
- Close gaps. Income, racial, special ed.
- Follow our plan of closing opportunity gaps.
- Fix the funding system so that is needs based.
- New teaching strategies and pedagogy.
- Re-think the AP program.
- Look at diversity of teachers and administrators.
- Teaching algorithms & coding at younger ages.
- More comprehensive education.
- Smaller classrooms.
- Adapting technology in classrooms.

BARRIERS

- We don't listen to our students.
- Northshore Elem - HS - Plan is on their website. Student leaders from each school say what's missing from our education - life skills, finances, etc. (to create their strat plan).
- Make content more real: PBL!
- Concerned about high stakes assessment - specifically new WCAs being tied to graduation.
- Is in favor of 24 credits, but some most SDs aren't prepared.
- Students and families don't understand the 24 credit and why (to reduce remediation they have to pay for).
- Scale up Ready WA Northshore Family engagement.
- Access to dual credit (esp. rural) how to pay for it.
- Teacher shortage/diverse, prepared workforce.

STRATEGIES

- Skills to help teachers learn how to work with different populations / cultural competency.
- Placement in a district different than you grew up in, in your teacher prep. And classroom experience sooner in teacher prep.
- BEST (Beg. Edu Support Team) for new teachers to be teamed w/mentor teacher (Northshore and others) when implemented with fidelity, it is effective (Seattle has STAR). OSPI administers through grants.
- Diversity. Grow your own. Conditional grants to go into teaching. Back in the old days, Future Teachers of America. Renton does something similar.
- Childcare needed to do your teaching internship.

- Natural leaders --- the parents get stipends to go out to their groups and share (they're trained first).
- In Vancouver SD, Fruit Valley Elem. Community of Hispanic mothers who are welcoming /supporting students.
- Northshore is going to Chinese and Indian community centers to engage with these communities.
- Increase funding to dual credit opportunities.
- Teaching study skills/time management in MS/9th grade.
- More MS counselors.

APPENDIX B

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

STUDENT WELL-BEING

- Recognize innovation districts that are doing the work.
- Student sense of belonging.
- Student-led IEPs.
- School climate surveys and use of data to improve practice.
- Students on the school board. School leadership must listen to ASB/student leaders. Adopt student leadership as a district-wide value.
- Student voice - what do STUDENTS want from their education?
- Student access to mental health resources (acute and ongoing). School-based health centers. Access/coordinate with community resources.
- Texas study prison population - 48% have dyslexia. Need to build in layers of intervention and safety nets for kids not meeting standard. We can reach them.
- Integrated student support. Mental health, ACIS, MTSS, nurses, teacher training and support, and more.
- Mentors /advocate for students to help them navigate school, career options, social emotional development. Help kids on different paths - 4yr, 2 yr, voc., etc.
- Individual plans for each student to meet academic and non-academic needs (K-12, not just HS).
- “Sound Discipline” program. Dr. Jodie McVittie, pediatrician. Trains teachers to work with whole child.
- Fix poverty and racism.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONNECTIONS (STUDENTS, FAMILIES, SCHOOLS)

- Clear expectations for graduation.
- Descriptive, skills-based report cards.
- College/career for all students. Inform families/teachers/admin.
- Training on student/family led IEPs.
- Student voice represented authentically and systemically. Students as partners.
- Two-way communication between decision-makers at state, district, and school level and families, students, and community to develop solutions.

- Family and community engagement that meets them where they are (tribes, churches, community centers, events).
- Meet families where they are (in the community) and institutionalize strong procedures for shared governance.
- Every district partnered with a tribe and (when available) Native/indigenous organization from SDs community - model for other populations.
- “Natural leaders” programs for parent engagement.
- Parent partnership - everyone has assets within the conversation.
- Prioritize ELL communication when communicating with parents. Principal’s robo-calls only in English.
- Better horizontal integration with other social sectors. Better vertical integration with pre-K and postsecondary sectors including teacher prep.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- Robust guidance for students and their post-high school plans.
- Connect HS and Beyond Plans to post-secondary institutions.
- Elevation of HSBP so HSs take it seriously to really impact kids.
- College planning for students with intellectual disabilities.. Disparity to access of these kids. Comprehensive transition program leading to jobs. “Jogging Start” 18-21 years old.
- Strong programs connecting CTE in high school to prof-tech programs at CTCs.
- Study skills classes in MS to better prepare for success in H.S. with one AP/IB/class for every student.
- Study and success skills for all students - elementary, MS, & HS, so they can be more successful as they advance.
- Student-centered placement policies.
- Student voice elevated.
- Student voice. Focus groups, co-design, more student talk and less adult talk, surveys.
- Students need to be listened to.
- All students feel like they belong and are contributors to the educational system.
- Active project learning. More arts. Create, perform, present, respond. Meaningful, transferable, engaging, students are stars!
- Support after-school programs which include project-based learning.
- Connect content to real world. Project-based learning.

- Link CTE offerings as on equal footing as “academic” programs. Not an “other.” Work out how to provide access across school buildings.
- Integrate career-related information and exposure into high schools so young people have clearer understanding of possible careers and what’s required in those different career fields. Use counselors and other resources more effectively.
- Marshall data already being collected, supplement with specific areas identified by research to be highly predictive of academic success and design/implement early screening and intervention to close achievement gap.
- Make sure students achieve mastery of grade level math K-12. Eliminate school district-based pressures for students to skip years of math, regardless of parents wishes against.
- Develop capacity for students to graduate from HS fluent in two languages, which means dramatically increasing the number of trained, bilingual teachers.
- Arts integration.
- All students can doesn’t need to mean all students need to learn the same thing at the same pace.
- Adequate special education curriculum.
- Universal Design for Learning!
- Invest in support staff and PD for school staff on how to support students.
- More professional development time for staff. We can’t expect change without new directions in teaching as school teams.
- Inclusive education (focus on the general education environment).
- Improve teacher prep to include cultural competency and teaching in diverse classrooms.
- Increase diversity of educator workforce.
- Diversity of teachers to reflect diverse demographics of students.
- Teacher recruitment and training: diverse workforce, cultural competence training, PD for learning disabilities, ELL populations.
- Comprehensive preservice training and district prof development around dyslexia and related learning issues. Without early screening and intervention we won’t close opportunity gaps.
- Belief that all students can succeed.
- Teacher training and support.
- Teacher ownership of all students.
- Access to high quality educators and prepared (work in equity/teaching in diverse environment and mental health).

- Teacher pipeline with college credits in HS.
- Teacher pipeline - recruit from community we serve. Grow your own. West Oahu HS teacher pipeline program. Credit transfer to U.H.
- Teacher training that supports work with diverse student populations (e.g. SpEd, ELL, read).
- SBE Strong state leadership helping students be successful in post-secondary education.

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

- Concern: Graduation requirements and high stakes test, especially science.
- Better identify and clarify options and support for meeting graduation requirements.
- Barrier: families not understanding why 24 credit grad req are important.
- “Running Start” type pathway for transition-eligible students with disabilities. Or, ability to use Running Start dollars for college-based transition programs.
- Dual credit/accelerated learning opportunities for students of color --equity issue.
- Do not allow “skipping” of math content. Instead, provide compacted math option that families can opt into.
- Inclusion with support.
- Training for student/family-led IEPs.
- Academic, career, and behavioral health counselors. More counseling.
- Consistent, quality implementation of the HS & Beyond Plan. Connect it to families, higher ed, employers, other stakeholders.
- More advisors and counselors for HSs and CCs. (No less than 1 counselor per 100 students.)
- Responsibly based project ladders.
- Ongoing leadership with post secondary - needs to translate into system change.

FUNDING

- Needs-based funding.
- Pay teachers well.
- Fund the arts.
- Advocate legislature for a true student needs-based funding system.
- Needs-based funding system for education support associates, social workers, counselors, nurses, etc.