



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jeff Vincent, Chair

Old Capitol Building • PO Box 47206 • Olympia, WA 98504 • www.sbe.wa.gov

October 4, 2012

Dear Members of the Achievement and Accountability Workgroup:

On behalf of the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), thank you for your willingness to serve on the Achievement and Accountability Workgroup (AAW).

It is our intent that, through the work of SBE, OSPI, and the input of this workgroup, we can recommend the finishing pieces of a “coherent and effective accountability framework for the continuous improvement for all schools and districts,” as envisioned by the Legislature in E2SSB 6696 (Laws of 2010).

Our work will begin with a five-meeting sequence to provide input on the revision of our Achievement Index. The Index is currently used only for school recognition, but the recent flexibility offered by the U.S. Department of Education provides the opportunity to create a single tool for both recognition and identification of schools for additional support. In October, we will begin our work with a discussion of what essential data elements could be used to evaluate school success.

In July, the SBE passed a resolution stating that performance indicators in the revised Index will be “aligned with the goals of preparing students for postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship.” The SBE also had considerable discussion about what performance indicators it would like the AAW to explore. On September 27, the SBE approved the memo attached to this letter, which details a specific set of questions for the AAW. We will structure the October 10 AAW meeting around these key questions. Many of these same topics will likely be revisited in December.

The SBE and OSPI appreciate your participation in this endeavor to improve outcomes for all students. If you have questions between now and the October meeting, please contact us at (360) 725-6025 or email Aaron Wyatt, the SBE Communications and Partnerships Director, at aaron.wyatt@k12.wa.us.

Sincerely,

Ben Rarick
Executive Director

Alan Burke, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent
K-12 Education

Enclosure (1)

The Washington State Board of Education

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

Old Capitol Building, Room 253
P.O. Box 47206
600 Washington St. SE
Olympia, Washington 98504

October 1, 2012

TO: Members of the Achievement and Accountability Workgroup

FROM: State Board of Education

RE: Initial Input on the Revision of the Achievement Index

The SBE appreciates your willingness to devote your time and expertise to the Achievement and Accountability Workgroup. The ultimate intent of our endeavor is to recommend the finishing pieces of a “coherent and effective accountability framework for the continuous improvement for all schools and districts,” as envisioned by the Legislature in E2SSB 6696 (Laws of 2010).

Because of the complexity of the subject matter, the Board is making a particular effort to provide clear guidance to the AAW for each meeting. Our intent is to set up a clear set of questions and outcomes for each meeting in order to properly sequence input with SBE decisions. This is done to respect the time you have devoted to this task.

For the October meeting of the AAW, we ask that you provide input on the following list of four specific questions. We’ve asked SBE staff to generate a report reflecting your input on these questions, which we intend to consider in taking a vote on key performance indicators for the revised Index at our November meeting.

Focusing questions for October AAW meeting:

1. What school performance indicators should be included in the revised Index?

- Performance indicators are major accountability measures that are aligned with the goals of the system. This is a major design choice of the Index. It is not necessary in October to resolve all of the details of what subindicators will be included in the Index.
- As an example, the current Index is primarily an “academic proficiency” based Index – looking mostly at objective levels of student performance on state assessments. It also includes an “improvement” component that recognizes increases in scores, comparing different groups of children in a school, from one school year to the next.
- Common examples of performance indicators from other states will be shared prior to the AAW meeting, but include such examples as academic growth over time, academic growth gaps between subgroups, post-secondary readiness (such as graduation rates, and participation in college prep courses, dual enrollment courses, or industry certifications, etc).

2. What grade levels and what subject areas should these performance indicators measure?

- The current Index provides a framework for measuring student proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, and science standards. The SBE has already expressed a desire to continue including all four content areas in the revised Index, although changes to the assessment system could impact what subjects are tested at what grade level in the future.
- The question of weighting is important, because the current Index averages all subjects and tested grades within a school to generate a composite Index score. No subject tested in the statewide assessment system is excluded, or weighted more heavily than another. The consideration is whether all subjects and tested grades should be averaged equally, or if reading and math should be weighted more heavily because they are tested more often.

3. What approach should the revised Index take to disaggregation of student data by subgroup (income, language proficiency, race/ethnicity, disabilities).

- The current Index uses super subgroups to address race/ethnicity in the Index.
- Current Annual Measurable Objectives set expectations for each federally-mandated subgroup in terms of targets and reporting.
- Other subgroup options include the addition of new subgroups, such as a former English Learner subgroup or a low performing subgroup.
- There is an inherent tension between keeping the Index simple and understandable, while also shedding light on and exposing achievement gaps. What approach to disaggregation can best balance these two priorities?

4. In what ways could the usability or understandability of the current Index be improved in the revised version?

- What benefits exist in the current Index that we want to preserve?
- What limitations of the current Index do we want to address in the revised version?

Many of these questions and choices will become more clear as real examples are provided from other states. The SBE staff will endeavor to help provide this context during the AAW meetings.