

Submitted to the SBE on November 7:

Hi, I am following up on my comments of today, Nov 7. Thank you for the opportunity to speak when I was not signed up on the right paper.

As I mentioned, I am a resident of the Highline School District, with a son in 12th and a daughter in 10th who goes part time to the public school and part time to an online school.

Strategic Plan

Dr Barbara Oakley co-leads a Coursera class called "Learning how to Learn." She has written some books. I believe the lessons of the books should be incorporated into the strategic plan. Our students face a very fast-paced world. I read the other day that UC Berkeley now has a Data Science major, and that there are 1300 students taking the intro class. This field did not even exist a few years ago. Learning how to learn after finishing school is going to be critical. I would suggest an emphasis on learning how to learn be included in the SBE strategic plan. Here is her web site:

<https://barbaraoakley.com/>

Graduation Requirements

1. It is really hard to understand school district budgets. Maybe clarity should be a goal of the strategic plan. But this relates to Core 24 because some school districts can afford a 7 period day, while others can not.
2. My sense is some districts have a much easier time with grad requirements than others. A district with 7 periods, high test scores, high parent support and flexibility to provide supports through summer school, after or before school programs etc, is going to have a much easier time with meeting the current Core 24 requirements than others.
3. Core 24 takes a lot of counseling support to implement effectively. PPR in particular takes some real guidance.
4. Core 24 sets up incentives for shell games with the number of credits.

In my comments, I read a quote from a parent in Renton talking about the shell game that goes on with trimesters being implemented in their district this year. Here's the quote:

"As a result of the new graduation requirements, our school district has moved to a trimester system that only has five classes at a time. My son who's a junior had planned on taking four years of Spanish, and four of Band. But, with only five slots, and the need to take Pre Calc, AP English, Physics, and US History, he could not fit in both Spanish and Band."

I would add, there's some gamesmanship going on with some of the subjects in Renton, where students supposedly can get 36 weeks worth of content in two trimesters of 12 weeks. But no one is pretending a student can learn all that content in less than a year, so then it is impossible to fit in all the extra requirements like PE, CTE etc. I've tried to figure out how to make schedules work and really, they don't.

So what to do?

1. Please do not allow shell games to be implemented, such as a trimester system. This possibly improves one number at most, at the cost of nearly all other outcomes.
2. Because of the time needed for counseling in a high school, and the very limited time counselors have to take on additional tasks, I would suggest dropping the second year of Art / Personal Pathway Requirement (PPR). Just have one year. Now we're down to 23 credits.
3. Fitting in an extra class to help with test prep for SBAC is not really feasible with a six period semester system that has 24 total credit opportunities. Fitting in a re-take of a failed class is also not possible. So, I would like to suggest dropping the number of electives required by one or two credits. Now we're down to 21 or 22 credits.
4. If districts want to add on to this requirement, they can certainly do so. But my suggestion of "Core 21" or "Core 22" would give a lot more flexibility to schools.
5. Advocate for improved opportunities for summer school, and / or zero hour or after school opportunities for credit retrieval.

I do like the idea listed in your discussion packet of increased opportunities for students to earn credit in middle school. The challenges I see with this:

1. Districts with more resources are much more likely to be able to pull off all the teacher training, and differentiated instruction, that's needed.
2. My hunch is districts with lower grad rates currently are also more likely to have issues with low achievement in middle school. For example, lower achieving students could not earn math credit for graduation until taking Algebra 1, and this is not always an something kids are ready for in middle school. Ditto a full year of world language that is at the high school level. (When I was in junior high, 7th grade French was equal to high school semester 1, and 8th French was equal to semester 2.)

To close, thank you again for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to contributing to the exchange of ideas about what will help our kids be prepared for post high school.

Best wishes,

Stuart Jenner