

- Addressing our lowest performing schools - A Required Action Overview

Synopsis: The [Washington State Board of Education](#) (SBE) is submitting legislation in 2010 designed to turnaround our lowest achieving schools.

How do we measure schools? The introduction of [state standards](#) (the essential academic learning requirements and the grade level expectations) in conjunction with [state assessments](#) (the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, and starting in the spring of 2010, the Measurement of Student Progress and the High School Proficiency Exams) have provided a clear picture of our schools' capacity to foster student achievement.

How are our schools doing? By and large, Washington state students have steadily improved on state assessments over the last decade. Unfortunately, that is not the case with every school (see the [Washington State Report card](#) for detailed information on your school or district).

What have we done in the past to help low performing schools? Until now, district participation in state/federal programs to address persistently low achieving schools was completely voluntary. This voluntary action has worked for some schools, but not all.

What about schools that continue to underperform? In these cases, the State Board of Education is proposing Required Action, a state/local partnership designed to turnaround our lowest achieving schools.

What does Required Action entail? Required Action Districts will receive extra school improvement funds from the state, designed to support the following steps:

1. A team of external experts will conduct an audit of the school, identifying areas in need of improvement.
2. The district will work with its teachers, parents, students, and community to devise a plan to turn around its struggling schools. The plan must address the findings of the audit and must follow [one of four federal models for school improvement](#). These models will provide schools with more flexibility for hiring, hours, and operations. If necessary, the district and its labor unions will reopen collective bargaining agreements to address issues raised in the academic performance audit.
3. The district must submit its plan to SBE for approval.
4. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will provide SBE with reports of the districts' progress.
5. OSPI will report back to SBE whether a district is eligible to leave Required Action status after three years of its turnaround implementation.

How long will a district remain in Required Action? Schools that don't improve after three years in Required Action must then devise a new plan for reform once again approved by SBE.

Why are we doing this now? Unfortunately, we have an educational opportunity gap in this state, and thus certain students are subjected to a subpar education as a result. Our students, our parents, our community and our state deserve a much better return on our investment in public education.

How are we funding this? The federal government is providing funds, with the requirement that districts utilize one of four federal school improvement models.

Required Action: *A state system ensuring all students in Washington have the opportunity to receive an exemplary education.*

For additional information and Board meeting materials, go to: www.sbe.wa.gov
or call the Board office at: 360-725-6025.