

Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee

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Memorandum

Date: January 5, 2010
To: State Board of Education
From: Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee
Subject: Recommendations

As part of its legislative charge to assist the State of Washington in closing academic achievement gaps, the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee submits the following recommendations to the State Board of Education (SBE).

- 1. The Committee recommends that SBE advocate for modifying Washington's local control statutes and regulations.** The Committee recommends that the State Board of Education and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction work to modify our existing educational system, which functions under local control, in order to ensure that state-level agencies can better support, monitor and regulate districts and hold them accountable for educating all students. The Committee further recommends an accountability system which ranks schools based on student achievement, with particular focus on the elimination of racial/ethnic achievement gaps. Schools that perform well under these metrics should be granted relative flexibility and autonomy, while schools with high achievement gaps should be subject to further intervention and regulation by the state. The process for this modification should include meaningful opportunities for public discussion, including input from constituents of color and other stakeholders.
- 2. School Improvement Plans (WAC 180-16-220).** The Committee recommends that SBE revise its regulations (WACs) in order to strengthen existing or develop new statewide requirements for school district improvement plans including, but not necessarily limited to, the following areas:
 - Closing racial/ethnic achievement gaps, using disaggregated data to identify gaps and measure progress.
 - Developing formal relationships with tribes, communities of color and immigrants.
 - Adopting a family and community partnership policy and plan.
 - Engaging and welcoming families and strengthening school-community partnerships.
 - Communicating with parents whose first language is not English, and other disenfranchised parents, using multiple approaches of communication.
 - Developing a dropout reduction plan that includes a credit retrieval system.
 - Including a plan for increasing the number of students who graduate without the need for remediation.
 - Including a behavior/discipline plan with input from families, students and community members.
 - Including a plan for decreasing disproportionality in special education and increasing the number of students of color in gifted and advanced placement programs. The participation of students in these programs should proportionately reflect the ethnic/racial breakdown of total student enrollment.

3. The Committee opposes the adoption of Core 24 graduation requirements. The Committee strongly advocates for funding decisions that ensure students can meet existing as well as future graduation requirements. If, as a state, we cannot say that students of color are meeting graduation requirements, then Washington State is not supporting basic education adequately. The Committee has grave concerns about the implications of implementing a new set of graduation requirements at a time when a high percentage of students of color are dropping out and/or not meeting current graduation requirements.

The Committee further recommends that prior to the adoption of any new graduation requirements, the following items be analyzed and reported to the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee:

- The impact that new graduation requirements would have on students of color.
- The impact on extended and on-time graduation rates for students of color and ELL students in other states as a result of those states' varying credit requirements for graduation. Any analysis should include other factors, such as additional professional development or student supports, that were added in those states to address changed requirements.
- A review of proposed graduation requirements for bias and fairness.
- An analysis of the cost and districts' capacity required to implement new state graduation requirements.