THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Accountability | World-Class Math and Science Standards | Meaningful Diploma/CORE 24

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

UPDATE ON CORE 24 IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE AND MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

SUMMARY OF POLICY ISSUE/STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (SBE) STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

One of the Board's three goals is to improve student preparation for post-secondary education and the 21st century world of work and citizenship. Revision of graduation requirements needed for a meaningful high school diploma is a primary strategy to accomplish this goal.

BACKGROUND

Since 2006, the Board has been considering the components of a meaningful high school diploma, including revising the purpose of a diploma (January 2008) and approving a proposed framework of CORE 24 graduation requirements (July 2008). The Board approved a charter in November 2008 to establish the CORE 24 Implementation Task Force (ITF). The charter asks the ITF to advise the Board on strategies to implement the proposed requirements. The ITF has met twice to date. At the same time, the Board is continuing to address the unfinished policy issues related to the meaningful high school diploma.

CORE 24 Implementation Task Force. Twenty practitioners from all over the state have met twice to date to consider implementation issues associated with CORE 24. Board members Steve Dal Porto and Jack Schuster serve as co-leads. The ITF will meet again on: May 18, August 7, September 28, November 2 and a date to be announced in February 2010.

At the first meeting, the ITF reviewed the Task Force charter. Staff provided a baseline of knowledge about the origins of CORE 24 and current state requirements, while Duane Baker of The BERC Group, Inc. gave an overview of current course-taking patterns, using data from the transcript study of 2008 high school graduates. [1] Task Force members discussed what they would need to know in order to analyze the issues the Board asked them to address[2] and suggested strategies for obtaining the information.

At the second meeting, the ITF focused its attention on issues pertaining to the definition of career concentration and to considerations for the benefits and drawbacks of a "two for one" or "credit plus" policy. A "two for one" policy would enable students participating in a career and

[1] Baker, D. B., Gratama, C. A., Peterson, K.M., and Bachtler, S.D. December 2008. Washington State Board of Education Transcript Study.
[2] In the July 2008 motion language approving CORE 24, the Board specifically asked the ITF to address: a phase-in implementation schedule that addressed issues such as teacher supply, facility, infrastructure, etc.; ways to operationalize competency-based methods of meeting new graduation requirements; ways to assist students with credit retrieval and advancing their skills to grade level; ways to provide appropriate career preparation courses and career concentration courses, and scheduling approaches to 24 credits that can meet the required 150 instructional hours.

technical education-equivalent course to receive one credit for the academic course-equivalent and "check off" that they have completed one of the three career concentration requirements. Two OSPI staff members and a panel of six skills center and career and technical education directors provided a foundation for substantive discussion by the ITF.

Generally, the ITF supported a flexible definition of career concentration that would:

- Enable students to fulfill their career concentration requirements in a variety of ways, including through general education and career and technical education courses.
- Be connected to the high school and beyond plan.
- Assure that one of the three credits addressed the standards of an exploratory career and technical course.

There was also general support for the concept of "two for one" or "credit plus" as long as there were clear parameters established by the state.

Meaningful High School Diploma (MHSD). The MHSD Advisory Committee met in a work session on March 24, 2009 to consider policy questions related to essential skills, career concentration, and the relationship between CORE 24 requirements and Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) admission standards. The committee heard a presentation about the Navigation 101 curriculum and its connection to essential skills such as financial literacy, career and life planning, public presentation, etc.

The main ideas that emerged from the career concentration discussion were:

- There needs to be flexibility and that flexibility should be tied to the high school and beyond plan.
- A concentration is not a "major," and therefore the Board's guidance that the career concentration should be a course "sequence" should be interpreted very loosely—or at least not interpreted as a mandate that the student must stick to an initially-chosen program. Students need to be able to change their minds.
- The substance of the current occupational education requirement should remain.

HECB staff provided details about the current four-year public minimum admissions requirements. Board member Eric Liu noted that the Board had a point of view about what constituted a well-rounded education for students in the state—in some cases, CORE 24 requirements exceed the HECB requirements, or require credits in areas that the HECB does not. That said, students intending to pursue entrance to a four-year public college in Washington need to meet the specific HECB content <u>and</u> credit requirements.

How—or whether—the Board connects the CORE 24 requirements with the HECB requirements is yet to be determined. The Board could decide to do nothing, and expect that districts will have sufficient information about the HECB expectations and will guide students to the appropriate courses. Or, the Board could be specific about alignment. Several K-12 practitioners on the Advisory Committee thought that specificity would assist districts that might not be aware of the details of the HECB requirements. For example, the HECB requires students to take two lab credits, and one of them must be algebra-based in biology, chemistry or physics. CORE 24 currently does not address the nature of a second lab credit. Should the Board elect to be more specific, this specificity could be expressed informally in the detail accompanying public handouts or graphics that the Board creates around CORE 24, and/or formally through rule.

CORE 24 and MHSD-related Research Projects. Staff is working on four related research projects, using Gates funding to support them.

1. **World Languages Competency-based Credit.** Staff is working in collaboration with OSPI staff on a project that will help seed a conversation about what competencies could reasonably be expected of a student who has taken two years (credits) of a world language. Gates funding is supporting the reading, writing, and speaking assessment of college students who have completed two quarters/10 credits of world language in college (generally considered equivalent to two years/2 credits at the high school level), and the reading, writing, and speaking assessment of high school students who have completed two years/2 credits in a world language. Assessment data in French, Spanish, German, Chinese, and Japanese is being sought. This is not a definitive research study, but rather a means of securing information about the performance of students in Washington in order to begin a conversation about what constitutes competency. The project will be completed by December 2009.

2. **Transcript Study Follow-Up I.** Staff has contracted with the BERC Group to learn more from the transcript study data, and will receive research briefs by the end of May 2009 that provide more detail about students' course-taking patterns:
   - In areas specified by CORE 24,
   - In schools with different percentages of low-income students,
   - In their senior year,
   - In alternative schools and in schools with different schedules.

   Research briefs are also being prepared about the course-taking patterns of students who fail classes. Briefs on English Language Learners, and students from different racial/ethnic groups will provide information about these specific groups of students.

3. **Transcript Study Follow-Up II.** Staff plans to pursue a second study that will track the postsecondary choices made by the 2008 graduates in the study, and will match data with those attending community and technical colleges (CTC) to determine the performance and curriculum of students in their first year of CTC study i.e., what courses (particularly in math) did they take, and how well did they do? The CTCs are interested in knowing what courses students took in high school. Data about the first year of postsecondary study will not be available until August 2009, so this study will be conducted in Fall 2009.

4. **Algebra II-based Career and Technical Education (CTE) Course.** The CTE community is very interested in developing a mathematics class that would demonstrate the practical application of Algebra II concepts in different CTE career clusters. In this sense, it would be an interdisciplinary course, incorporating mathematics and multiple CTE fields. Gates funding will be used to seed the early development of the course, bringing mathematicians and CTE specialists together to develop modules that will ultimately become part of a coherent course districts could adapt for their use. Some modules will be completed by December 2009.

CORE 24 ITF and MHSD Work Plan. The work plan is included on the following page. The Board can expect to receive an interim report at its September 17-18, 2009 meeting with recommendations and analyses of phase-in considerations. A final report with general recommendations and analyses on all the issues considered by the Task Force and the

Meaningful High School Diploma Advisory Committee will be presented to the Board at the March 2010 meeting, following the last meeting of the Task Force.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

Recommendations and ideas emerging from the CORE 24 Implementation Task Force, Meaningful High School Diploma Committee, and various research projects will ultimately inform the Board as it:

- Continues to refine the proposed CORE 24 graduation requirements framework and move toward implementation, and
- Begins to work with the Quality Education Council created by SHB 2261 to recommend and inform the ongoing implementation by the legislature of an evolving program of basic education and the financing necessary to support the program.

EXPECTED ACTION

Information only; no action required at this time.

CORE 24 Implementation Task Force and MHSD Work Plan

Date	Topics/Outcomes
March 2, 2009	Orientation to charge and scope of task; identification of questions and strategies in topic areas identified by Board.
March 12-13, 2009 Board Meeting	**Update on ITF Task Force Work.**
March 24, 2009	**MHSD Work Session** on policy questions related to essential skills, career concentration, and relationship between CORE 24 requirements and HECB admissions standards.
April 13, 2009	**ITF Board charge:** Make recommendations about ways to provide appropriate career preparation options, as well as career concentration options. **Outcomes:** Preliminary recommendations/considerations for: • Operational definitions of career concentration. • "Two for one" or "credit plus" policy.
May 14-15, 2009 Board Meeting	**Update on ITF Task Force and MHSD Advisory Group Work.**
May 18, 2009	**ITF Board charge:** Make recommendations about: 1) scheduling approaches to 24 credits that can meet the required 150 instructional hours and 2) ways to operationalize competency-based methods for meeting graduation requirements. **Outcomes:** Preliminary recommendations/considerations for: • What might be needed from the state level to increase the practice of awarding competency-based credit? • Instructional hour definition of a credit. • Impact of CORE 24 on different types of school schedules.
July 15-17, 2009 Board Meeting	**Report by BERC Group on First Transcript Study Follow-Up (deeper analysis of data); Update on ITF Task Force Work.**
August 7, 2009	**ITF Board charge:** Make recommendations about ways to phase in CORE 24, addressing issues such as teacher supply, infrastructure, etc. **Outcomes:** Preliminary recommendations/considerations to analyze realistic phase-in scenarios for CORE 24. (This information will assist the Board as it reflects on phase-in recommendations to be considered by the Quality Education Council established by the legislature.)
September 17-18, 2009 Board Meeting	**Interim Report presented at regular Board meeting on recommendations and analyses pertaining to phase-in considerations; Interim Report on World Language Competency Project.**
September 28, 2009	**ITF Board charge:** Make recommendations about ways to assist struggling students with credit retrieval and advancing their skills to grade level [and flexibility to accommodate all students]. **Outcomes**: Preliminary recommendations/considerations to analyze ways to assist the system to support particular groups of students.
November 2, 2009	**ITF Board charge:** Make recommendations about ways to assist struggling students with credit retrieval and advancing their skills to grade level [and flexibility to accommodate all students].

Date	Topics/Outcomes
	Outcomes: Preliminary recommendations/considerations to analyze ways to assist the system to support particular groups of students.
November 12-13, 2009 Board Meeting	**Final Report on World Language Competency Project; Interim Report on Algebra II-based Career and Technical Education Interdisciplinary Course Development; Update on ITF and MHSD Advisory Group Work.**
Fall 2009 (Date TBA)	**MHSD Work Session** on policy questions related to essential skills, culminating project, high school and beyond plan, and middle school.
January 13-14, 2010	**Final Report on Second Transcript Study Follow-Up (transition to postsecondary opportunities); Update on ITF and MHSD Advisory Group Work; Final Report on Algebra II-based Career and Technical Education Interdisciplinary Course Development.**
February 2010 (Date TBA)	**ITF Board charge:** Begin the High School and Beyond Plan in Middle School. **Outcomes:** Preliminary recommendations/considerations to analyze: • The advisability and logistics of satisfying high school requirements in middle school. • What needs to happen in middle school to increase the likelihood students will enter high school prepared for high school level work? • Guidelines for the High School and Beyond Plan.
March 18-19, 2010 Board Meeting	**Final Report presented at regular Board meeting on general recommendations and analyses of all the issues considered by the Task Force and the Meaningful High School Diploma Advisory Committee.**