

DRAFT KEY MESSAGES

Implementation Task Force (ITF) members were asked individually to respond to three questions posed by e-mail. Sixteen responses (84%) of the 19 members of the ITF responded by Friday, March 12, 2010. Their responses are summarized as the following key messages. ITF members will have an opportunity to review the messages, suggest revisions, and vote on the messages they want to send forward to the SBE at the March 15, 2010 ITF meeting.

1. Which aspects of Core 24 help meet the Board's graduation requirements policy goal to better prepare students for the job, career, and postsecondary education demands they will face after high school? (better means better than current state-prescribed requirements do)

- A. More demanding requirements will better prepare students.
- B. Multiple pathways will enable students to pursue preparation that best fits their goals.

2. What is your primary concern about the implementation of Core 24?

- A. Funding
- B. Science and arts facilities
- C. Two credits of arts
- D. Sufficient supply of highly-qualified teachers
- E. Challenge that Core 24 represents for struggling students

3. From the 30,000 foot level, what 1-3 changes are most needed earlier in the system (Pre-K to 8) to better prepare students to meet graduation requirements? (Note: The SBE may not have direct authority for the changes you recommend, but could consider using its bully pulpit/advocacy role to build coalitions of support.)

- A. Advocate for early learning support.
- B. Advocate for more counseling and support services in middle school.
- C. Advocate with higher education for more training for elementary/middle school science and math preservice teachers.
- D. Advocate for the importance of quality teaching and learning.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS SUPPORTING EACH OF THE KEY MESSAGES

EVIDENCE FOR 1-A: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

Increased requirements in five areas were affirmed most frequently: Math, Science, English, World Languages, College or Career Emphasis.

Math and Science

- The increased math is the primary change that I believe meets this goal. The flexibility on what math will count depending on a student's career path, goals, and achievement are critical.
- Increased math and science requirements.
- Three years of math: Students need more math and higher levels of math as we evolve into a more “technical” nation. A car mechanic used to be able to learn the skills needed on the “job.” Now, to be a car mechanic, I saw the statistic that students need through Algebra 2. We have hybrids, electrics, hydrogen, etc. engines that demand workers that can function at higher levels of skill, knowledge, and understanding. We must be able to compete in the global market for jobs. We can’t continue to demand credits that don’t prepare our students for the workforce. When we have 48% of our Technical and Community College students having to take remedial Math, we need to hold up the mirror and take a good long look at what education we are giving our children.
- The increased requirements in science but would like to see four years of math as a requirement for more effective transition into post secondary education opportunities.
- Science---3 years. We need a strong foundation in Science that teaches inquiry, research, testing, reasoning, deduction, etc. This builds people with the skills necessary to help solve the problems we face in the 21st century with pollution, energy, shrinking polar caps, etc. Real learning for real life challenges.
- I think that the increase in core requirements is what will make a significant impact for all students. Specifically requiring 4 years of English, 3 years of math and 3 years of science.

English

- Increased English requirement—Students need to know how to effectively communicate in writing and reading. What office doesn’t have some type of technical writing, directions, e-mail, etc.? Our students must have the skills to communicate non-verbally.

World Languages

- By mandating that there are 2 years of a world language, not only do we meet the minimal requirements for college/university entrance, but it enables a study and reflection of culture, the United States as well as one that may be unfamiliar, creating an international-mindedness in our citizens. I also think that this provides an opportunity for us to recognize those that are coming with a second language gift—a way for us to acknowledge their ability in their course of study.
- Requirement for two years of second language

College or Career Emphasis

- This 3-year requirement allows students to explore and learn about their interests. It enables students to go to a deeper level than “surface or survey” learning.
- Students will plan their high school coursework to meet one of the three strands for graduation
- The career concentration with the flexibility discussed (one CTE/Occ Ed credit minimum, tied to HSBP)

General Comments in Support of More Demanding Requirements

- Raising the bar is absolutely needed from the current 20 credits and CORE-24 certainly does that.
- More demanding courses. Presently students have the option of taking electives and some opt for an extra year of PE / music or art rather than “meaningful” core subjects that will better prepare them for job, career and postsecondary education.

EVIDENCE FOR 1-B: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

Multiple Pathways

- Providing a "safe harbor" pathway that ensures students will be both Career & College Ready is an important facet of CORE-24.
- Honors both the technical and college pathway to the high school diploma when students select that route for themselves.
- Showing that multiple pathways exist in support of students' post-secondary learning trajectory is an important step in making the system more student-centered.
- Allowing for flexibility to encourage student's next-steps whether it is vocational, collegiate, service, or career. It is unfortunate that we continue to talk about an either/or with college and career and have even memorialized it in the one diploma, but two paths (maybe 3—I think our conversations have reduced it back to two). We need to work on our language around that that these are options in order to encourage student learning, not an either/or concept.
- As an IB school, I absolutely want the flexibility for my students who are pursuing the IB diploma to have that considered as meeting the grad requirements.

OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT

- Expanding the credit options, doing away with any/all "seat time requirements" , aligning course curriculum, developing on-line learning opportunities that the state can centralize (the example we used last meeting was WA State History). I support "declaration a pathway" (of course, there must be flexibility). Making the High School & Beyond Plan matter through one, centralized "clearinghouse" would also support alignment of the high school experience.
- The discussion of equivalent credit and dual crediting opens the door for more options and flexibility for students.
- The focus on academic success starting in the 8th grade.
- Standardize graduation requirements across the state so that when students transfer....they are not behind.

EVIDENCE FOR 2-A: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- The cost to implement for small districts-will the state fund 24 credits?
- Implementation expectation without proper funding. What does "fully funding" really mean when the SBE makes this point?
- Funding. I have no faith that the state and/or federal funding will continue to support this. I think that they will see that there are improvements and then we will return to the unfunded mandates. Further, if we continue on the path of 6-period, time-based instruction, several students won't make it within the four years (addressed in the next bullet).
- Funding is the ultimate concern in an alternative world whereby students are coming from various districts or online.
- I am concerned because the cost to districts will be impossible to meet if the state does not begin with the necessary funding and keep up the level of funding needed to meet increasing costs.
- Practically, there has still not been a definition of what implementation "when there is funding" means. What, specifically, needs to be funded? Also, I am fearful it will be implemented with no funding.
- Adequate funding for a 7-period day for all and/or an extended day/year for those students needing it

EVIDENCE FOR 2-B: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- Additional science facilities need to be built
- The facilities issue is one concern. In an alternative school setting it is a concern in meeting the lab requirement.
- I am also concerned about building/room capacities for additional arts, CTE and science requirements. With the lower class sized being proposed and the additional courses being added how will schools be able to provide enough classrooms for enough students for them all to meet the requirements?

EVIDENCE FOR 2-C: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- I still struggle with the two credits of Fine Arts. I believe one credit is sufficient and the second credit can be an option of Fine Arts, CTE, further Core subjects of interest, etc. Not every student needs two credits of Fine Arts. They need the Math and the Science, but in reality they do not need two credits of fine arts. If the student likes the arts or is going into the arts, then let the students take that second credit of arts. If they are into their CTE program, World Language, Math, Science, then let them have the flexibility to take that second credit in another area of interest, according to their High School and Beyond Plan. I believe that one credit is sufficient to help a student be introduced to a field they may not have explored. Two credits is not looking at the diversity of student we encounter and their ability to make choices.
- Appropriateness of two art credit requirement for all

- My primary concern is the 2 credits of Fine Arts. Unless 1 requirement can be satisfied at the middle level, this becomes an implementation nightmare. Our schools do not have the staffing to meet this requirement and it will prevent students who want 4 years of art from being able to access it. It is in excess of the HECB requirement which I thought was the focus of Core 24.

EVIDENCE FOR 2-D: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- The second arts credit-hiring a part time arts teacher for small districts
- Lack of qualified math teachers
- Lack of qualified science teachers
- Long term: Shortages of qualified instructors, supplies and facilities for Science, World Language and Art
- Logistically, the concern revolves around teacher availability (math/science/the arts)
- A second concern would be meeting the HQ status to award credits in an alternative setting.

EVIDENCE FOR 2-E: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- Support for struggling students is my primary concern. Oftentimes we have the majority of students going down the “correct” track, but have little in place for those students that missed something along the way or by no fault of their own attended many schools and have “holes” in their learning. How can we provide for all students? How can we keep the majority moving and catch up the 20-30% that need special attention?
- Support for struggling students – Sp. Ed., ELL, kids from poverty
- Adequate support structures for struggling learners
- Need for longer school day
- Need for additional time during school day for tutoring, re-teaching, and enriching
- Overall flexibility to meet individual needs.
- Time for remediation for students over a four year period.
- May reduce "effort optimism" of at risk students and increase those students dropping out and perhaps encourage them to drop out earlier
- I am concerned that students will give up because the requirements are so high and because it will limit choices for them, particularly those that are not postsecondary education bound.
- De-motivating high school schedules, particularly for struggling or reluctant learners (loss of elective opportunities)

OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN

- That we continue to discuss it in a “timeframe” way, i.e. that students must graduate when they are 18. If we could truly get to a standards-based grading most students will probably take 4 years. However, there are those that may need 6 because of deficiencies or those that only need 3. Seat-time can’t be the “standard” anymore.
- There is concern among colleagues that a single default path for all students is the best option. I am not suggesting the present system is working, but CORE 24 is viewed by

many as a default college prep track that may leave some students feeling undervalued if that is not their choice or the final outcome upon graduation.

- Short term: uniform/ minimum instructional benchmarks implemented "with fidelity".
- Lost flexibility for students.
- Philosophically, there is still little support for Core 24 among superintendents and local boards.
- May cause districts to feel compelled to change bell schedules to 7 period days or 4 x 4 block schedules
- Having career concentration courses tied to HS and B Plan (that students create in 8th grade): who monitors, who decides, is it a hoop with no real traction for accountability...how different is it than how kids currently choose their electives.
- The signature on the 3rd math requirement is another procedure that is not practical, and not plausible given our current student: counselor ratio. What happens when parents won't/don't come in for signature....
- Access to the skills center program when combined with exploratory electives, whether CTE or basic education.
- Transportability of transcripts/HSPE/culminating project information is also a major concern shared at our state conference.
- Will there be enough FTE to enrich the CTE programs at the middle and high schools? If we want students to have a College and Career Emphasis, we need to provide Counselors, Writing and Math Centers, and CTE programs that have integrity and depth.
- I also contend that with options for graduation expanding (like the A.A. or Technical Degree), we need to make our high schools more flexible, relevant, and engaging. Twenty four credits can be meaningful or can be so restrictive that we lose our students because of our inflexibility to understand that we serve **all** students with varying degrees of need and passion.
- My biggest concern is how we are going to communicate the concept of CORE 24 to parents and students. We have language issues, disconnected families, students that don't care, and parents that remember that a D- was good enough to pass and graduate from high school.
- I am concerned that the flyer is too complicated. As an ITF we cannot agree on a concept or some of the CORE 24 requirements.
- Small schools' ability to offer required programming
- Differentiated world language requirement
- Sufficient tools to address collective bargaining impediments to implementation
- Difficulty meeting all requirements for IB diploma students
- Difficulty meeting all requirements for Skills Center students
- I'm not convinced it does [better prepare students]. Students who are planning for a job/career right out of high school take the courses that will help them achieve in their areas of interest. Students who are planning to attend postsecondary education take the courses needed to get them started in their school of choice. I really don't understand how this will help – it will mostly take away most of the few choices they currently have so that they can explore interests to help them narrow down their choices for after high school.
- Since 70% of students take world language and there is a third year math requirement, more kids are being prepared for post-secondary than ever. I am not sure Core 24 helps. However, additional counseling for post high school options will be beneficial.

- I am not sure some school systems will become more student-centered even if the SBE institutes CORE-24.
- Can CORE-24 be appropriately implemented without a systemic K-12 model? If a K-12 model is implemented, is this another sign of the continued erosion of local control?
- No SBE policy will force people to see every student as a human being with unlimited potential and our opportunity to help the student tap into this natural energy to learn.

EVIDENCE FOR 3-A: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- Early Childhood Education. The sooner we can identify the learning needs of those at a much younger age, the less worry and concern we have trying to meet graduation requirements for a 17 or 18 year old with a handful of credits.
- ALL Day Kindergarten. In our district the 3 schools with all day K are making amazing gains with students. Children of Poverty need this along with access to meaningful pre-school experiences.
- Fully funded Full Day Kindergarten for all students.
- Funding available EARLY (K-4) for students who come to us behind and need extra time and support to “catch up” that is NOT tied to SPED or Title Funding.

EVIDENCE FOR 3-B: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- Providing better social services to support families in poverty
- Fund support programs for after school tutoring
- College awareness programs for 7th and 8th grade students
- Expand the notion of the High School and Beyond Plan into the middle school.
- Clearly define how students who are ready for high school work can obtain high school credit for any and all requirements while in middle school. Create a “running start” model from middle school into high school.
- Strengthen counseling support throughout the K-8 grades with specific training in career inventories and career exploration.
- Counselors to help students with life skills, interests, plans, etc.
- Funding close to Dorn’s suggestions, especially focusing on the counseling and/or mental health-social worker support.
- There must be more counseling support for children K-8. The amount of trauma experienced by children, especially those in poverty, is stunning.
- Greater rigor and greater individual student support in middle school/junior high.
- Implementation of Navigation 101 in middle school
- Additional resources in place to assure students will not reach high school academically behind. Very few children drop out of high school who have strong academic skills. Struggling students need assistance.
- Adequate support structures for struggling or reluctant learners – must enter high school prepared for the rigors of Core 24
- The primary need at the K-8 level is resources for academic intervention and support.

EVIDENCE FOR 3-C: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- Need for colleges to restructure and redesign teaching programs to include more math and science for elementary/middle school generalists
- Someone needs to be working with the universities to gear up the pursuit of math, science, ELL, and special education teachers. We're going to need greater numbers of these specialists. Also, the support for CTE teachers who are coming into the profession from industry. In my experience as a principal, they create some of my biggest issues.

EVIDENCE FOR 3-D: INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

- The "elephant in the room" is the "C-/D" teacher. SB 6696 might be a step in the right direction, but real improvement in student learning cannot take place until all teachers/principals are outstanding. We cannot improve through policy; it has to be through people. (The bully pulpit could help in this change.)
- Better attention to standards and level of instruction in grades 5-8. Students need to enter HS ready. Better guidance and monitoring of student achievement in early grades. My concern is that students will not be successful if they are not better prepared upon entering HS. I am not convinced that just changing the graduation requirements for HS will generate better success if overall system changes are not included.
- Consistent science instruction in K-5
- Mathematics taught rigorously with standards at each grade level.
- English and Science taught with standards at each grade level.
- World Language introduced in throughout K-8 with students being able to earn credit at the middle school level.
- Exploration programs for children in the Arts, CTE, and electives.
- All of the above need competencies, standards, and Performance Outcomes or it will not have the integrity needed.

OTHER COMMENTS

- We've got to reduce teacher overall loads (reducing class size is one way, but reducing a load from 180 to 120 would be better overall) and provide for common planning time for teachers as a part of their daily practice.
- Declaring a Pathway will help determine an academic trajectory and lead students to more informed decisions. This will also result in the necessity for uniformity that will not occur without considerations of the issues of equity.
- Encourage the state system to HOLD STILL...any standard that "stays put" is better than the changing standards we have continuously endured.
- Stop changing the target so often. Now that we have new math standards....we are talking about common core standards...the teachers are getting confused!!
- Fully fund education so we can purchase new curriculum, hire sufficient staff and have support services for our students.
- Certification rule changes to allow high school credit to be awarded by K-8 endorsed teachers
- More ELL instruction; more science, math, CTE and music instructors; more help for underachieving students; motivation tools for students.