

The Goal: Increased High School Graduation Rates

Policy Considerations

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WASHINGTON STATE GRADUATION RATE ESTIMATES DIFFER -- DEPENDING ON THE SOURCE

Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008

- State Reported: 70.1%
- U.S. Dept. of Education: 74.6%
- Independent Estimate: 66.5%

About the Alliance: The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy and advocacy organization that works to make every child a high school graduate - to prepare them for college, work, and to be contributing members of society. Founded in 2001, the Alliance focuses on America's six million most at-risk secondary school students - those in the lowest achievement quartile - who are most likely to leave school without a diploma or to graduate unprepared for a productive future.

DROPOUTS AND POORLY PREPARED STUDENTS HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008



- Approximately **29,800** students did not graduate from Washington's high schools in 2007; the lost lifetime earnings in Washington for that class of dropouts alone are more than **\$7.7 billion**.
- Washington would save more than **\$436.1 million** in health care costs over the lifetimes of each class of dropouts had they earned their diplomas.
- If Washington's high schools graduated all students ready for college, the state would save almost **\$125.4 million** a year in community college remediation costs and lost earnings.
- Washington's economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about **\$111 million** each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%.

January 2009 Commission Reports to the SBE

- Latino students represent about 14% of Washington's K-12 population. Only 56.5% graduated with their class in 2006.
- Asian students are a diverse group that make up approximately 8% of K-12 students. Dropout rates for some disaggregated Asian groups are as high as 60%.
- African American students represent 6% of Washington's K-12 population. Over 30% do not graduate on time.
- Drop out rates among Pacific Islanders in the Seattle School District are more than twice as high as the district average.
- Native American drop out rates are approximately 30%.

Socio-economic status is a contributing factor in all groups.

Policy Considerations



- ✓ Build on OSPI's Building Bridges Projects
- ✓ Utilize a network of allies already focused on increasing graduation issues
- ✓ Congruent with all three of SBE's goals to:
 1. Improve achievement for all students,
 2. Improve graduation rates, and
 3. Improve student preparation for post-secondary education and the 21st century world of work and citizenship.

Provide recommended graduation percentage targets to the Legislature as suggested in Bridges recommendation

Advantages:

- Provides an identifiable target for school districts, the SBE, and the Legislature
- Targets could be set for each disaggregated high-risk group
- Targets could be incorporated into SBE's Accountability Index
- A "target" contributes to SBE's commitment to transparency and reciprocal accountability

Disadvantages

- Without a history of successful strategies, setting targets would be "best guesses"

Advocate for the continued development of personalized student progress monitoring data to identify students who demonstrate early warning indicators as suggested in Bridges recommendation #2.

Advantages

- Supports professional literature recommendation for an early warning/early intervention system to support at-risk students
- Makes productive use of Washington State's (developing?) student identifier system
- Acknowledges student progress monitoring as an essential component of personalized instruction

Disadvantages

- Requires systematic and sustained development and maintenance of student data
- Requires some professional development to prepare teachers to utilize sensitive progress monitoring and learning strategies
- Requires a wealth of effective intervention strategies for students once they've been identified

**Consider raising the high school early leaving age from 16 to 18
(or completion of graduation requirements).**

Advantages:

- Could provide schools with a tool to encourage student attendance
- Would communicate an expectation that all students should graduate to students and their families
- Is congruent with state and local district stated goals focused on increase graduation rates

Disadvantages

- Could result in increased and unenforceable truancy law pressures
- Some schools may not want to accommodate resistant and hard to serve sixteen and seventeen year old students
- There could be additional expenses for services to high-risk learners



Review: Potential Actions...

- 1. Provide recommended graduation percentage targets as suggested in Bridges recommendation #1. (To the to the Legislature?)**
- 2. Advocate for the continued development of personalized student progress monitoring data to identify students who demonstrate early warning indicators as suggested in Bridges recommendation #2.**
- 3. Consider raising the high school early leaving age from 16 to 18 (or completion of graduation requirements).**

Next Steps

- Determine if any of the three suggestions provided here should be eliminated from consideration.
- Determine if there are additional policy initiatives we should consider.
- Determine priorities and timelines for moving forward.
- Identify others who need to be involved.